

Consultancy Services for developing a National Open Source Policy and Strategy and Action Plan for Mauritius

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Open Source Policy for Mauritius

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National Open Source Software Policy for the Republic of Mauritius

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"If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I shall still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us shall have two ideas."

George Bernard Shaw

"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

Isaac Newton

Definitions

Open Source software (OSS) is a computer software with its source code made available and licensed with a license in which the copyright holder provides the rights to study, change and distribute the software to anyone and for any purpose. Very often Open Source Software is developed in a public, collaborative manner and is the most prominent example of a open source collaborative development model.

For the purposes of this document the following definitions and recommendations are used:

OSS: OSS definition from Open Source Initiative <http://opensource.org/osd>

OSS licenses: approved OSS licenses from Open Source Initiative

<http://opensource.org/licenses>

Open Standards: Open standards requirement for Software as defined by OSI

<http://opensource.org/osr>

Open Data: Open Data guidelines as defined in UK Government initiative

<http://data.gov.uk/>

Open Content: Content definition from OpenContent.org <http://www.opencontent.org/>

Background

The development of various global ICT services and models, and the use of a wide variety of software with a focus on innovation and flexibility is accelerating. Open source software and development models are the main innovation leaders in this field. Therefore, in recent years there has been a rapid growth of government policies and strategies for the open source usage and promotion. OSS is used as a lever for development of the information society, government and enhancing the competitiveness of the economy as well as an option for lowering the financial and technical barriers to access new ICT technologies.

Vision

The future development of information society in the Republic of Mauritius shall be based on a shared and open knowledge-based society, open standards, technological neutrality and broadly available ICTs to empower citizens and the private sector.

The Government of the Republic of Mauritius (Government of Mauritius) is clearly aware of the benefits and positive impacts of using and fostering the usage of OSS in the development of information society and human capital, in the development of prospective pillars of economy, specifically the ICT sector, and of the opportunities it provides in building an efficient eGovernment. OSS has to be used as leverage to achieve enhanced human capital, to increase the growth of a knowledge-based society, and to reduce the digital divide and software piracy rate.

The Government of Mauritius wants to create a cost-effective and connected eGovernment to increase their competitiveness, on-line presence and interoperability among systems, to reduce total cost of ownership of their ICT systems and to release, reuse, sustain and provide valuable public software created or paid for by the Government of Mauritius.

OSS is recognized as one of the key factors for the development of the knowledge-based economy and increased growth in the local ICT industry, and the enhancement of local ICT companies, universities and the public sector, by providing support to the released software and enhancing the integration of the OSS ecosystem in the Mauritian universities. OSS has to be demonstrated as a real opportunity for the private sector and, specifically, for SMEs.

The Government of Mauritius shall also foster all measures to design and create sustainable communities surrounding OSS and the growth of OSS user communities.

General Principles

The Government of Mauritius and governmental organizations and agencies are following general principles. Any decision not in accordance to these principles, has to be explained and justified.

Other stakeholders and the private sector are advised to follow the same principles.

1. Data Openness and interoperability

The usage of OSS, related open standards and open document formats is the main lever to promote and enforce concepts of data openness and interoperability. Thus the Government of Mauritius shall promote, support and encourage the use of data openness and interoperability in general, and specifically through their own example of using open standards and interoperability standards wherever possible. The Government of Mauritius shall, in accordance to their eGovernment strategy 2013- 2017, follow general Open Data guidelines and shall publish all data collected, edited by government organizations and all software developed by government organizations or paid for by taxpayers' money in such technical format and under such license scheme, to make it available to the public to the greatest extent possible to further study, analyze or reuse, without any license fees.

All Government of Mauritius communication with businesses and citizens shall be based on open standards and shall never require them to purchase or use systems from specific vendors in order to access public services or data.

All data collected and edited by government organizations shall be freely available as an open data in an open data format, where this is consistent with the law or state security measures.

2. Software reusability and exploitation.

The Government of Mauritius wants to increase efficiency and lower the costs of eGovernment and other ICTs to reuse software developed or paid by government, in the greatest extent and wherever possible.

The Government of Mauritius shall implement all available measures to software reusability and exploitation including, but not limited to licenses and development model issues.

3. Procurement and code release

The procurement system shall be structured in such a way as to encourage and enable equal treatment of all solutions irrespective of the technologies, tools and frameworks, as long as it complies with open standards. If there are two or more solutions that meet the requirements of the Government of Mauritius, the open source solution shall be used in preference to any other option.

The Government of Mauritius shall develop a procurement system and guidelines which will ensure usage of open standards and prefer usage of open source software.

4. Ownership and licensing

The ownership of all software made to a specifications or for use in government agencies, and paid by taxpayers' money, must be transferred to the Government of Mauritius. All RfPs and tenders for software must include clauses and license requirements which are in accordance with one of the OSI approved popular licenses. This allows the government organization to redistribute the paid software freely, both internally between organizations, as well externally and publicly, and take full ownership over the software code, documentation and configuration and right to redistribute and modify them.

All software developed by government organizations or paid by taxpayers' money shall be freely available under one of the open source licenses.

The Government of Mauritius shall, whenever it is economically or financially justified, request from the supplier full ownership and the right to use and distribute the source code of the procured software.

5. Technology and Standards

The Government of Mauritius considers the technologically neutral and open standard based ICT development as a key prerequisite for the development of eGovernment and other ICTs, new services and solutions.

The Government of Mauritius shall ensure that all technologies, development tools, application platforms and other ICT modules will be technologically neutral and in accordance to open standards.

6. Knowledge sharing, education, research and innovation

An unrestricted and free knowledge sharing, including sharing software code as a

knowledge container, is the basis for growth of a knowledge-based society and creation and spreading of new visions, ideas and opportunities.

The Government of Mauritius considers OSS as an opportunity to foster knowledge sharing and exchange and to enable open innovation and the open education process.

The Government of Mauritius shall foster and enable the growth of a knowledge sharing culture and processes in the educational system, non-government organization sector, and the private sector as a base for knowledge-based society.

The knowledge sharing and open innovation-based research shall be fostered in the academic and research sector as well.

7. Community building and management

The Government of Mauritius recognizes the added value of different communities based on open source collaboration and development model and considers them as an important part of ecosystem of knowledge-forming and management. The Government of Mauritius shall support community building, by supporting such communities, either as non-profit or within educational or other organizations, to the greatest extent possible.

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