

NIFO Factsheet – United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the main source for interoperability related matter is:

- UK ICT strategy resources: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ict-strategy-resources>
- The Standards Hub: <http://standards.data.gov.uk/>

Main interoperability highlights

The Government ICT Strategy of the United Kingdom was published in 2011¹. As part of the government ICT strategy the UK has published several policy papers, including:

- Government ICT strategy strategic implementation plan²;
- ICT sub strategies³;
- Information principles for the UK public sector⁴;
- Concept model for the UK public sector⁵

In addition, the government published four strategies covering G-Cloud, end-user services, ICT capability and green government ICT that together aim to "radically transform the ICT landscape to create a more productive, flexible workforce that delivers digital public services in a much more cost effective way."⁶ To enable delivery of interoperable and open ICT solutions so that they can be shared and reused, providing common language, terms and descriptions to identify common areas of business, data, application and technologies the Government has published the UK government ICT reference architecture (UKRA)⁷ containing the Business Reference Model, Information Reference Model, Application Reference Model and Technical Reference Model as well as component descriptions.

A process definition on open standards for data, the "Standards Hub"⁸ was started earlier this year. Following a public consultation⁹ the draft definition and policy are being developed. This process is described under 'other initiatives on interoperability'.

Other initiatives on interoperability

In 2015, the Cabinet Office of the UK government has published the technical architecture approach¹⁰. It is about using a logical approach and user-centred design to plan the structure of

¹ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-government-ict-strategy-resources>

² See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-ict-strategy-strategic-implementation-plan>

³ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ict-sub-strategies-minister-for-the-cabinet-office-foreword>

⁴ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-principles-for-the-uk-public-sector>

⁵ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/concept-model-for-the-uk-public-sector>

⁶ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ict-strategy-resources>

⁷ See: <http://www.ukceb.org/RWFilePub.php?&cat=195&dx=1&ob=3&rpn=catviewleafpublic195&id=105485>

⁸ See: <http://standards.data.gov.uk/>

⁹ See: <http://consultation.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/openstandards/>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/digital-and-technology-skills/technical-architecture>



technology systems. Sections include dealing with legacy systems and integration, as well as standards compliance.

The [Digital Service Standard](#) was updated and the new standard, which aims to be clearer, came into effect on 1 June 2015. The standard is to help public administrations build digital services that support the government's "digital by default" policy. All new digital services from the government must meet the Digital Service Standard.

The government is helping to unlock data from public bodies by awarding £1.5 million (about €1.8 million) to projects as part of the Release of Data fund¹¹. The Cabinet Office investment will support organisations who want to improve their data publication data as part of a government push to increase transparency. The Open Data User Group (ODUG), which acts as a bridge between the open data community and government, will collect bids for funding. Furthermore, ODUG is releasing 50 case studies on open-data-led business and applications on data.gov.uk¹², the government's flagship data portal.

To ensure that appropriate data is transparent and shared rather than duplicated, the Government will implement engagement processes for open data standards activity and crowd sourcing priority areas for data standards.

Data.gov.uk provides access to datasets from the public administration. The portal is currently making about 20000 datasets available (<http://data.gov.uk/data/search>), which are also accessible via ODIP (<http://data.opendatasupport.eu>), the pan-European single point of access to European datasets. Over 350 applications (<http://data.gov.uk/apps>) are reusing one or more datasets that are available on the portal.

The Standards Hub aims at involving stakeholders in the process for prioritising and helping to select open standards for Government IT. The Standards Hub objects to choose a small set of core standards that are to be applied consistently across the UK government to make services better for users and to keep costs down. The process aims to bring together policy priorities with existing public sector data standards groups, whilst also broadening engagement to leverage the abilities of a wider "crowd" from the data standards community.

The process is designed to be modular and scalable, and thus able to cope with both rapid adoption of "obvious" existing standards but also to support complex long-term developments where necessary. It is end-to-end, as it is essential that it has the ability to see standards through to implementation across the public sector. Finally it is driven by the issuing of "challenges" which are used to give focus and momentum to the engagement activity.

The participants in the process are:

- **Users:** Including people from businesses, academic institutions, charities, not-for-profit and government bodies. Users are involved at each phase of the selection and implementation of open standards for government IT.
- **Government technology officials:** A group of government technology officials seek user needs-based challenges that open standards might help to resolve. They agree on working on which of these challenges and making sure that there is a challenge owner in place who has the resource to lead the work through to completion.

¹¹ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/15-million-funding-to-open-up-public-data>

¹² See: <http://data.gov.uk/>



- **Challenge owners:** suggested by the group of government technology officials and appointed by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer. Challenge owners lead the work to develop proposals and standards profiles in response to challenges. They work closely with and take recommendations to and from a standards panel.
- **Open Standards Board:** A senior level board with the mandate to approve standards and drive adoption.
- **Standards Panels:** Bodies with the ability to undertake standards development work.

The steps in the process are:

- **Suggestions phase:** what challenges users of government services face that open standards can help to fix. The first stage of this is asking for suggestions on what they are. Assess your suggestions as they come in and look at the benefits that these might deliver: Where does government need to use open standards and why?
- **Challenge phase:** A challenge is created. Appointment of a senior owner to act as a champion for the challenge. They will be responsible for leading the development of proposals. The challenges are published on the site for comment, specifically to ask: Which standards or approaches would help government to address each challenge?
- **Proposal phase:** The challenge owner will use the comments from the challenge phase to create proposals for each challenge. There might be more than one proposal. These are published for further comment: Which of these proposals will work best, or is there an alternate proposal we should consider?
- **Assessment/evaluation/decision phase:** Once gone through this process, the challenge owner will select one proposal to submit to the Open Standards Board. The Board will make the final decision on proposals, which will be published on the website as adopted standards.
- **Implementation phase:** Once standards have been adopted, implementation is tracked. The Standards Hub will encourage people to report when adopted standards are not being used or when there are issues with adopted standards here on the Standards Hub.

An example of the choice of a standard is ODF as default document standard.

- See: <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/community/osor/news/uk-government-makes-open-document-format-default>
- See also: <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/news/setting-open-standards-document-formats-uk-using-camss-approach>
- In March 2015, the Cabinet Office has published an ODF Guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/open-document-format-odf-guidance>) and is supporting and monitoring the adoption of ODF in the public administrations – see an example of implementation plan at the Customs and Revenue (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrcs-plan-for-implementing-open-standards-for-documents>).

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