

Day 2 - Public Sector Software Policy and guidelines

Session 1 - Software for the public sector: key characteristics and requirements

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The goals of National e-governance Programme, like all Government services accessible to the common man, transparency, reliability and affordability of software solutions and content, interoperability between heterogeneous, isolated legacy systems, uncompromising security leads us to the essentiality of using Open Source software solutions and open standards. Going with proprietary solutions and standards results in obvious limitations in achieving this goal. These include: prohibitively high costs, vendor locking, security challenges, and interoperability limitations.

But adopting open source standards and solutions is also not straightforward and poses challenges and limitations. There is lack of adequate political commitment, there already is proliferation of certain proprietary solutions which handicaps any other solution to be used, in several domains there are does not exist adequate solutions/contents in open domain, and there is not enough capacity within the country to develop such capacity. There is also lack of willingness and clear inhibition to share open content.

Some State Governments have made policy statements towards the use of open source in e-governance initiatives. Government of India has in its recent Policy on Open Standards for e-Governance taken a step in this direction. However, a closer look at this policy shows that more needs to be done, to avoid misuse of this policy to perpetuate the continuation of proprietary interests.