

Openforum europe

accelerate, broaden and strengthen the use of OSS in business

NEWS RELEASE

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COUNCILS GIVEN ONLINE ADVICE ON SOFTWARE CHOICE

A new online resource for local authorities has been launched by Open Source Academy. The comprehensive website, including a free 'ask an expert' service, will provide answers to council members and officers about the choice available in software procurement.

Open Source Academy (OSA), which is funded under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) e-Innovations programme, was established to encourage local authorities to make more use of open source software (OSS) systems, such as Linux, StarOffice and OpenOffice, as well as for locally developed applications

The ODPM wants to see greater competition in the software market, and has tasked OSA to provide answers to local authorities on the use of OSS and its interoperability and integration with the omnipresent proprietary systems currently dominant in the sector. Software distributed under an OSS licence* safeguards the rights of "anyone, anywhere, for any purpose whatsoever, to use, copy, modify and distribute the software, and to have the source code that makes those things possible". Typically the software will have been developed by community effort and a version will be available for free download.

The live website (www.opensourceacademy.gov.uk) being launched this week will increasingly provide a growing resource of information and guidance to local authorities. This includes case studies of councils which have migrated to OSS, technical papers giving guidance to those considering using OSS, and a database of systems to provide a quick guide to integration between existing system, and a news service. Uniquely there is also an 'ask an expert' service enabling councils to get additional advice on business and legal issues.

OSA is a consortium led by Birmingham City Council, and includes Cheshire, Bristol and Shepway councils, the University of Kent, OpenForum Europe, National Computing Centre, Society of IT Management and the Institute of IT Training.

Bob Blatchford, director at OpenForum Europe, who has been managing the development of the portal said: "OSA aims to encourage local authorities to adopt procurement policies which involve making balanced 'strategic IT choices' between traditional proprietary and open source software solutions.

"OSS systems are viable and credible alternatives to proprietary software that can bring cost savings as well as security, organisational and community benefits when implemented in local government organisations.

"The services delivered by the portal are a first step to furnishing local authorities with the comparative information they need when considering software procurement decisions."

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Notes to editors:

- ***The most popular free software licence in the GNU General Public License (GNU GPL or simply GPL). Originally written by [Richard Stallman](#) for the [GNU project](#), the latest version of the license, version 2, was released in 1991.**
- **Open Source Academy is a partnership of local authorities and organisations with experience in the open source world, funded under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's e-Innovations programme. Members of the consortium include Birmingham City Council, Cheshire County Council, Bristol City Council, Shepway District Council, University of Kent, OpenForum Europe (OFE), National Computing Centre (NCC), Society of IT Management (SOCITM) and the Institute of IT Training (IITT).**
- **Open Forum Europe (OFE) was launched in March 2002 at the Financial Times London to accelerate, broaden and strengthen the use of OSS in business and government. OFE pursues the vision of an open, competitive European IT market by 2010 in line with the European Commission i2010 Strategy with the mission of facilitating open competitive choice in the IT Market Place.**
- **OFE is supported by major IT suppliers and works closely with the European Commission and National Governments via its National Associates. It undertakes contracts designed to strengthen the development and use of OSS in Europe and has built a comprehensive portal focused on UK Local Government and SME's in Denmark, Ireland and London.**

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