About us

Our services

OSS Watch is an independent, non-advocacy service. We are experts on free and open source software, but we do not insist on it as the solution to every problem, nor are we tied to any particular solutions or providers.

For organisations using, or wanting to use, free or open source software we can provide consultancy, training and support on selection and evaluation of software, engaging with open source communities, licensing and intellectual property issues.

For organisations creating free or open source software we can provide consultancy, training and support in software licensing and intellectual property, sustainability, commercialisation and business models, and building communities

For the public sector we offer consultancy services through the G-Cloud iii procurement framework for specialist advice related to procurement of solutions relating to cloud services. For more information, see OSS Watch on G-Cloud.

If you are a UK SME you can also use our services through the Technology Strategy Board's Innovation Vouchers scheme, as our host organisation (the University of Oxford) is a registered Knowledge Supplier.

For the University of Oxford, we offer advice and support to researchers, projects and services across the University on all aspects of free and open source software. For more information, view our service information page for the University of Oxford.

For project consortia we support building new open source communities or supporting engagement with existing communities, and to work on areas including IP management, exploitation and sustainability. We are able to join project consortia as a partner via the University of Oxford, or to contribute to the development of project proposals on a consultancy basis.

Not sure if we can help? Then please just mail us!

Our content

In addition to tailored one-on-one consultations OSS watch's advice and guidance can come via our many and varied publications. The bulk of our published content consists of general material such as briefing notes conference reports opinion pieces and book reviews. We also publish

research studies and slideshow presentations. All of this content is published here on our website under a Creative Commons licence.

We take our written outputs seriously and strive very hard to ensure that our documents are both accurate and of a consistently high quality. The extensive research we perform for these documents ensures that our other outputs such as consultations presentations workshops and conferences are of a similarly high standard. Each document is governed by our document life cycle policy which is described in The life of an OSS Watch document. As a result of this policy every document produced by OSS Watch is reviewed every 6 months throughtout its life in order to ensure consistency quality and integrity. You can be assured that everything we write is revisited regularly and so represents our current thinking.

Policies and Practices

Periodically an OSS Watch practice becomes sufficiently coherent to constitute a policy. We will add policies to this page as they arise. However we do not make a policy of creating policies for their own sake. So the list of policies on this page may be short.

Non-advocacy

OSS Watch is not an advocacy group. Our goal is to provide unbiased advice and guidance. What this means in practice is that *we do not claim that open source will be the best solution in every instance*. Rather we want to help organisations (and individuals) think through their engagement with open source whether that is in a procurement process or a development process or even just a 'thinking about' process.

If you spot us moving beyond our non-advocacy role let us know and we will have a rethink.

Recommending Specific Open Source Solutions

OSS Watch does not recommend specific open source packages. All *examples* of open source or proprietary software mentioned on our site are for illustrative purposes only. We simply do not have the resources and sometimes not the skill set to make a comprehensive and exhaustive evaluation of individual software packages. Nor do we provide comparative evaluations. We recognise that the needs of individuals and institutions vary. And although we can provide useful tips for how to evaluate software that might meet your needs and also sometimes pointers to useful evaluative tools and instruments we do not undertake these evaluations ourselves.

If you spot an instance on our site where we appear to have gone beyond the above policy and seem to be recommending specific software do let us know and we will revise our documentation.

Our services for University of Oxford staff

OSS Watch is a service offered by Oxford IT Services, offering support, training, and consultancy in a range of areas, incuding:

- Creating a "level playing field" for open source options in the selection and procurement of new systems

- Working with developers to release software developed within the University under free and open source software licenses

- Improving the sustainability of software by adopting open development practices and/or identifying appropriate business models

- Helping with the development of project proposals that involve elements of software development, particularly in areas such as software intellectual property management, open development, and sustainability

- Assisting with software licensing and intellectual property issues

We work in partnership with other units including ISIS Innovation, Legal Services and Research Services.

For more information, contact us.

OSS Watch values your input and questions. If you have feedback on this document, or any OSS Watch activity, please send it to: info@oss-watch.ac.uk.