

OpenDocument Format and the ODF Alliance – An Introduction

OpenDocument Format (ODF) is the only open standard for office applications, and it is completely vendor neutral. Developed through a transparent, multi-vendor/multi-stakeholder process at OASIS (Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards), ODF is an open, XML-based document file format for displaying, storing and editing office documents, such as spreadsheets, charts, and presentations. It is available for implementation and use free from any licensing, royalty payments, or other restrictions. In May 2006, it was approved unanimously as an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) standard (ISO/IEC 26300).

Using open standards like ODF ensures that the users' information is accessible across platforms and applications, even as technologies change. Organizations and individuals that store their data in an open format avoid being locked in to a single software vendor, leaving them free to switch software if their current vendor goes out of business, raises its prices, changes its software, or changes its licensing terms to something less favorable for the user. Adoption of open standards is particularly important for governmental applications because it can effectively ensure that a government document saved today will not be technologically locked tomorrow.

Many enlightened governments across the globe have already made policy decisions to move to ODF.¹ Over forty ODF-supporting applications are already on the market.²

The ODF Alliance, launched in March 2006, promotes and advances the use of ODF so that public administrations can have greater control over and direct management of their own records. The considerable momentum behind ODF is reflected in the surging membership of the ODF Alliance, which has grown in two years from 36 member organizations to more than 530 from 58 countries. The Alliance web site serves as an excellent resource for those wishing to know more about ODF. Please visit www.odfalliance.org today for more information. **You can join today – <http://www.odfalliance.org/join.php>.**

Key Benefits of ODF

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| Access | As a fully open standard, ODF provides governments with enhanced access by ensuring that documents are usable in the future by anyone, at any time. |
| Choice | By providing complete interoperability among office suites, ODF provides governments with greater choice due to competition among vendors, including both proprietary and open source applications. |
| Innovation | By providing the standardized basis for interoperable document formats, ODF promotes innovation in the market for office applications. |

1 <http://www.odfalliance.org/resources/Adoptions-ODF-Aug2008.pdf>

2 <http://www.odfalliance.org/resources/AppSupport20Dec2007.pdf>