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Government Service Design Manual

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Technology code of practice

Guidelines for the approval of technology spending

Contents

GDS will examine and challenge all technology-related spending over a certain threshold (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-controls) – no public commitment or expenditure should be made above these thresholds without prior approval. The thresholds are:

- £5 million – for technology expenditure including all sub components in a request, eg a website and service supported by a series of contracts such as hosting, data centres, voice & video, security, securing third party support. Includes expenditure related to networks.
- £1 million – for expenditure on services also delivered by Independent Shared Service Centres (current or new back office/administrative systems, including ERP systems, HR systems, finance/accounting systems, procurement systems).
- £100 thousand – for digital expenditure.
- £0 (no lower limit) – for any digital projects using ID assurance for the general public, domain registration, and any external facing digital transaction, website or mobile apps.

The technology code of practice

For your project to proceed, you must demonstrate that you have met all applicable elements of this code – this will be verified through the controls process (https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/technology/spending-controls):

1. Ensure systems, information, processes and networks are designed around the needs of the service user, providing as simple and as integrated an experience as possible. Be very clear who the users are and how to engage with them and ensure their needs are met.

2. Demonstrate value for money in your business case (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-governent/agile-systems-projects-a-clarification-of-business-case-guidance) and articulate the options considered in a full and objective appraisal.

3. All new or redesigned digital services, both public facing and for internal use meet the Digital by Default Service Standard (https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/digital-by-default).

4. All new or redesigned networks adopt the Network Principles (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/network-principles)

5. Ensure a level-playing field for open source software (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-source-procurement-toolkit) when you choose technology (https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/making-software/choosing-technology). Demonstrate an active and fair consideration of using open source software – taking account of the total lifetime cost of ownership of the solution, including exit and transition costs.

6. Use open standards (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-standards-principles/open-standards-principles), complying with any that are compulsory for use in government (http://standards.data.gov.uk/challenges/adopted), unless you've been granted an exemption (https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/making-software/open-standards-and-licensing#exemptions).

7. Use common government platforms (eg GOV.UK, Performance Platform (https://www.gov.uk/performance), GOV.UK Verify (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introducing-govuk-verify/introducing-govuk-verify) (identity assurance), Digital Marketplace (https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/), shared services) where available.

8. Make data open by default, while minimising and securing personal data, or data restricted for national security reasons. Public data should be proactively published in a manner consistent with the Open Data principles (https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/technology/open-data): structured, machine-readable, and discoverable through data.gov.uk. Users should have access to, and control over, their own personal data.

9. Establish the sensitivity of information held in accordance with the Security Classification Policy, establish legal responsibilities, develop user friendly, proportionate and justifiable security controls according to the Security Policy Framework.

10. Separate commodity from niche needs and purchase accordingly. Use cost-effective commodity services for infrastructure and utility business activities like office productivity (word processing, spreadsheets and presentation software, email, scheduling and collaboration). Identify and acquire capabilities rather than infrastructure where services required are bespoke/innovative.

11. Ensure that any procurement is designed to encourage competition and follows published Government Procurement Policy (https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/buying-and-managing-government-goods-and-services-more-efficiently-and-effectively). Programmes will be 'disaggregated' to meet business and operational needs – broken down into components supported by the market to enable many

suppliers to bid. Contract lengths for services should be kept to the minimum level necessary to ensure commercial flexibility.

12. Objectively evaluate potential public cloud solutions (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-adopts-cloud-first-policy-for-public-sector-it) first – before you consider any other option. In order to do this you will need to identify the capabilities (https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/making-software/choosing-technology#start-with-capabilities-not-implementations) and services that make up your technology design, and demonstrate that the solution chosen represents best value for money.

13. Purchase networking and telephony services through the soon to be announced Network Services framework or its predecessors PSN Connectivity framework (http://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/contracts/rm860) and PSN Services framework (http://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/contracts/rm1498). Purchase Data Centre capacity through Crown Hosting Service (https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/crown-hosting).

14. Applications should be accessible through a browser to ensure your solution will work for any end user device.

15. Ensure best environmental practices, whether in-house or via external suppliers, including compliance with Greening Government ICT (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greening-government-ict-strategy).

16. Any software licence agreements must evidence actual user needs – there should be no default continuation of enterprise licence deals or specification of products or brands.

17. Share resources: services, information, data and software components must be shared in order to encourage reuse, avoid duplication and prevent redundant investments. Reuse includes the use of existing services and capabilities that already exist outside of government where they provide best value for money, eg identity verification, fraud and debt management, cloud-based commodity services.

18. Align to the shared services strategy (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/next-generation-shared-services-to-save-millions-for-taxpayers) for HR, procurement, finance and payroll.

19. Plan on using an agile process (https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/agile), starting with the user need. Waterfall (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waterfall_model) should only be used by exception and where it can be shown to better meet user need. Projects may need the best of both formal and agile methods, playing to their respective strengths: producing successful IT services is about knowing when to use the right tool at the right time.

20. Demonstrate that adequate capability is available in your organisation – you shouldn't outsource strategic decision-making or service accountability. If the necessary capability does not exist in-house, then you need to evidence a plan for developing or recruiting people with the right skills and experience.

21. Implement effective procedures for the use and management of information (both structured and unstructured) through its entire lifecycle. Adhere to The National Archives (TNA) expert guidance on information management (http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/manage-information/).

Using the Technology Code of Practice

There are a number of aspects, which indicate that a project or programme is significantly far away from meeting the Technology Code of Practice and being run in the wrong way. These are known as the 'red lines'

[(https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-draws-the-line-on-bloated-and-wasteful-it-contracts)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-draws-the-line-on-bloated-and-wasteful-it-contracts) and they are:

- no IT contract will be allowed over £100 million in value – unless there is an exceptional reason to do so, smaller contracts mean competition from the widest possible range of suppliers
- companies with a contract for service provision will not be allowed to provide system integration in the same part of government
- there will be no automatic contract extensions; the government won't extend existing contracts unless there is a compelling case
- new [cloud] hosting contracts will not last for more than 2 years

Further information can be found in our blog post about red lines [(https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2014/02/26/red-lines-for-it-procurement/)](https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2014/02/26/red-lines-for-it-procurement/).

However, there will always be exceptions to these red lines and we are pragmatic, where there is genuine need. If you have any doubt please contact GDS on gdsapprovals@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk.

1. Page history [(https://github.com/alphagov/government-service-design-manual/commits/master/service-manual/technology/code-of-practice.md)](https://github.com/alphagov/government-service-design-manual/commits/master/service-manual/technology/code-of-practice.md)
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