

# Open Source for America Report Card

Gunnar Hellekson

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11 January 2011

# We Won.



CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
6000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-6000

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

OCT 16 2009

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20503

July 1, 2004



M-04-16

MEMORANDUM FOR:

FROM:

SENIOR PROCUREMENT EXECUTIVES  
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS

Karen S. Evans  
Administrator, IT and E-Gov

Robert A. Burton  
Associate Administrator,  
Office of Federal Procurement Policy

Software Acquisition

SUBJECT:

This memorandum reminds agencies of policies and procedures covering acquisition of software to support agency operations.

Budget (OMB) Circulars A-11 and A-130 and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 101-11.6. These policies are intended to ensure that investment decisions, to the extent practicable, agency investment decisions, and investment decisions, are made in a consistent and coordinated manner.

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
OFFICE OF DEFENSE  
MANAGEMENT OFFICER  
COMBATANT COMMANDS  
OFFICE OF DEFENSE

TEST AND EVALUATION  
THE DEPARTMENT OF

RY OF DEFENSE  
AND MANAGEMENT  
AND PROGRAM

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E MILITARY

# Why We Did It

How much open source is being used in our agency?

How's the government doing with adoption?

Why aren't there more government open source projects?

How do I open source my own project?

How well are the OMB and DOD policies working?

When are you done?

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# How We Did It

We want to look at the **budget**, to see where the software money is being spent.

We want **transparency** in an organization's operations, so we can ensure a level playing field.

We want to see **open standards** preferred, since that's how we'll be able to work together.

We know that they'll need a sensible **online communications** strategy, 'cause that's how they'll be able to talk with developers.

They'll need a sensible **FOIA** policy, because that remains the primary vehicle for the open data that developers feed on.

They should reiterate the **technology neutrality** policies of OMB and DOD.

They should have a **policy for participating** in open source communities.

# How We Did

| <b>DEPARTMENT</b>                           | <b>TOTAL SCORE</b> |     |
|---|--------------------|-----|
| Department of Defense                       | 23                 | 82% |
| Department of Energy                        | 20                 | 72% |
| Department of Health and Human Services     | 16                 | 55% |
| Department of Homeland Security             | 16                 | 55% |
| Department of Transportation                | 15                 | 53% |
| Department of Veterans Affairs              | 14                 | 49% |
| Department of Agriculture                   | 13                 | 47% |
| Department of Housing and Urban Development | 13                 | 45% |
| Department of State                         | 12                 | 44% |
| Department of the Treasury                  | 12                 | 44% |
| Department of Labor                         | 12                 | 44% |
| Department of Justice                       | 12                 | 43% |
| Department of Commerce                      | 11                 | 40% |
| Department of Education                     | 11                 | 40% |

<http://opensourceforamerica.org/>

# Good News

The largest, most complex departments **take open source very seriously**.

There is **broad agreement** that open source is on equal footing with proprietary software – no holdouts!

# Bad News

**Results are “lumpy,”** despite some clear guidance and precedent.

There's **still a lot of work** before agencies start participating and releasing code of their own.

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**YOU ARE HERE**

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"Democracy is the enemy of useful work"

So how does this corps of volunteers work together? Instinct tells us that democracy is the best organizational tool here; we have many people, all of which have different opinions about how something should be done. If they want to get all the best ideas, they take a vote and proceed by the majority's opinion.

It turns out, this is the opposite of what happens. There is no better way to stall progress than voting. If you operate a project by plebiscite, you distract your contributors from the problem, and have them instead focusing on the internal politics of the project. Clay Johnson of Sunlight Labs famously declared at the start of a CrisisCamp developer event for Haiti, "Democracy is the enemy of useful work." He exaggerated for comic effect, but his point is sound: the more time you spend deciding, the less time you

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