

Free Open Source Software (FOSS) in the South African Government

Briefing to the Institute for the Wits Senior
Executive Team

Arno Webb
May 2010

**My country, right or wrong; if right, to
be kept right; and if wrong, to be set
right.**

Carl Schurz, 1872



stateinformationtechnologyagency

Some milestones

Around 2000:

- FOSS reached levels of maturity that made it suitable for big organisations.

2002:

- Experts and politicians advise that FOSS should be investigated.

2003:

- Survey shows little knowledge of FOSS in government.
- Cabinet approves first strategy. Emphasis on disseminating knowledge.

2007:

- Cabinet approves modified strategy.
- Disseminating information now complemented by research, development and implementation drives.



SITA

stateinformationtechnologyagency

Government 2007 FOSS Policy

- Choose proprietary software only if it is significantly superior.
- Migrate current software to FOSS.
- When developing software, apply FOSS model.
- Apply open standards, open content.
- Encourage use in other sectors.



SITA

stateinformationtechnologyagency

Elements of FOSS strategy

- Launch FOSS liaison and communication actions.
- Initiate FOSS research, development and implementation.
- Create a supportive environment for implementation.



SITA

stateinformationtechnologyagency

Launch FOSS liaison and communication actions

- Develop and execute a supporting communications strategy.
 - Presentations, brochures, visits.
- Disseminate information within Government.
 - Newsletters, website.
- Consult with partners and stakeholders.
 - Workshops, questionnaires.



SITA

stateinformationtechnologyagency

Initiate FOSS research, development and implementation

- Establish and execute a supporting research programme.
 - FOSS lab in SITA supported by 2 other labs.
- Initiate trial use and development.
 - Some 20 products installed & tested.
- Include FOSS/Open Content utilization in short and medium-term plans.
 - Planning guideline published.



SITA

stateinformationtechnologyagency

Create a supportive environment for implementation

- Consolidate support capacity.
 - Internships, partnerships
- Level playing fields.
 - Procurement policy
- Establish and nurture a legislative environment that supports the development and use of FOSS/OC as envisaged in this policy.
 - Envisage starting work next year
- Establish a global position and maintain strategic partnerships.
 - IBSA, Malaysia



SITA

stateinformationtechnologyagency

Estimate of current status

- 50% of departments make significant use of FOSS
- 80% of departments use some form of FOSS
- 70% say FOSS deployment will increase over next 12 months



SITA

stateinformationtechnologyagency

Challenges

- Capacity
- Standards, policies, guidelines
- Change management



SITA

stateinformationtechnologyagency

Scale of the need for free open source software (FOSS) support

- Institutions that need to be migrated to free open source software (FOSS) include –
 - National government departments 43
 - Provincial government departments 110
 - Local government institutions 283
 - Academic institutions +/-50
 - Institutions listed under Public Finance Management Act 308
 - Thusong centres 130
- Nationally these come to almost 1000 institutions with an estimated 1 - 2 million work stations spread countrywide that need support.
- Add to this the 28 000 schools that ultimately need to be addressed.
- **A big support network will be needed.**

Competency centres

Governing partnership

e.g.
Govt depts
SITA
PALAMA
CPSI
ISSA
PNC
CSIR

Competency Centre

Provide

- R&D
- Training
- Implementation support
- Operational support

Delivery partnership

University
SMME
Science Council
ICT corporate
Foreign government
Offices of governing partnerships

Target market

National and provincial government offices
Local government
E-cooperatives
Schools
Local NGOs
Local businesses



SITA

stateinformationtechnologyagency

Thank You