Department for Business Innovation & Skills

Interoperability Charter for the Public Sector

1. Why this Charter?

1.1. Information technology drives business processes within and between organisations.

1.2. Interoperability of services and systems is necessary in order to make business processes more efficient, effective and environmentally friendly. For example, by automating the delivery of electronic orders (e-orders) and electronic invoices (e-invoices), and thereby reducing processing times and payment delays.

1.3. An Interoperable Ecosystem is therefore essential in order to provide the necessary links and electronic transaction flows between, and within, the public and private sectors.

1.4. Organisations seeking to create an Interoperable Ecosystem should be able to prove their capability and willingness to deliver interoperable business processes.

1.5. Those working in the public sector who are procuring IT systems are increasingly looking for reassurance that these different systems will interoperate – within their own organisations as well as with others in the UK and the EU as well as internationally.

2. Who should support this Charter?

2.1. All organisations capable of supporting the delivery of an Interoperable Ecosystem.

2.2. These include:

2.2.1. Service and solution providers

2.2.2. The software industry

2.2.3. Network providers

2.2.4. Industry associations

2.2.5. Public Sector bodies and associations

2.2.6. Professional advisers

2.2.7. Consultants

2.2.8. Procurement professionals, especially within the wider public sector

2.2.9. And any business, organisation or individual that feels able to contribute to establishing an Interoperable Ecosystem within and between the public and private sectors.

3.   What is Interoperability?

3.1.   Definitions:

- 'Interoperability provides organisations with the ability to transfer and use information across multiple technologies and systems by creating commonality in the way that business systems share information and processes across organisational boundaries, irrespective of the individual organisation's systems architecture, software platform and operating model, and in a way that requires no special effort on the part of the customer or end-user'.

- 'An Interoperable Ecosystem is a functional information environment in which Interoperability has been fully and successfully adopted to support effective business information exchange between all organisations'.

3.2.   Interoperability involves human, process and technical inputs to be fully realised. For example:

Human requirements involve political cooperation, legal compatibility and organisational alignment. Process and Technical interoperability involves the structured activities and standards for business meanings (semantics), data structure (syntax), and the operation of networks and transmission methods. Adoption of such interoperable practices will create, over time, an Interoperable Ecosystem.

3.3.   Many private sector organisations have taken steps to realise the benefits of automation and interoperability to improve the efficiency of critical business processes.   Such steps are now being embraced by public sector organisations not least because European legislation is increasingly requiring interoperable systems in the public sector.

3.4.   There is therefore a need to align the activities of the private sector and those of contracting public authorities, their agents and those organisations set out in para. 2.2 above.

4.   Charter Principles

4.1.   Signatories to the Interoperability Charter agree to work in accordance with the following principles:

4.1.1.   To take pro-active steps to support the interoperability of relevant services and/or systems so as to contribute to the Interoperable Ecosystem.

4.1.2.   To respond to and help to guide the requirements of the public sector as it adopts working practices and solutions that require access to an Interoperable Ecosystem.

4.1.3.   To work to improve education and awareness of interoperability and actively promote the use of interoperable systems within the public and private sectors.

4.1.4.   To support the achievement of compliance with the appropriate legal and regulatory provisions, standards, industry best practices and agreements that promote establishing an Interoperable Ecosystem.

5.   By signing the Charter, we agree to:

     5.1.   adopt the principles listed above.

     5.2.   display the official Charter Mark on our website or relevant publicity material.

     5.3.   actively publicise and confirm our support of the Charter, including issuing a public statement, such as a blog or press release.

6.   Liability:

The signing of this Charter constitutes a declaration of intent in good faith and is not intended to be legally binding.

Signed:

Name:

Position:

On behalf of Company:

Date: