

# Technology code of practice

Guidelines for the approval of technology spending

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[The technology code of practice](#)

GDS will [examine and challenge all technology-related spending over a certain threshold](#) – no public commitment or expenditure should be made above these thresholds without prior approval. The thresholds are:

- £5 million – full lifetime cost of the project
- £1 million – current or new back office / administrative systems, including Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, HR systems, Finance / Accounting systems, procurement systems. The control includes implementation, licensing and support costs, as well as any extension to those services
- £100 thousand – Common Infrastructure Solutions for the Public Sector Network (PSN)
- £0 (no lower limit) – spend on digital projects including identity assurance, digital services, and the commissioning of all government digital activity

## 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](#):

1. Ensure systems, information and processes 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](#) and articulate the options considered in a full and objective appraisal.
3. All new or redesigned digital services meet the [Digital by Default Service Standard](#).
4. Ensure a level-playing field for [open source software](#). 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.
5. Use [open standards](#), and common government platforms (eg GOV.UK, identity assurance, shared services) where available.
6. Make data open by default, while minimising and securing personal data, or data restricted for national security reasons. Public data should be made available by default in both human and open machine readable formats. Users should have access to, and control over, their own personal data.
7. 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.
8. Separate commodity from niche needs. 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.
9. Ensure that any procurement is designed to encourage competition and follows published [Government Procurement Policy](#). [Competition will be encouraged with no like-for-like extensions to existing contracts. The renewal of incumbent products, services and suppliers, or the stipulation of their brands, is not permitted: there must always be an open and competitive specification and procurement process. All requirements must be expressed in terms of business outcomes and user needs – not solutions or product feature sets. Programmes will be ‘disaggregated’ for commercial purposes – broken down into components supported by the market to enable many suppliers to bid. There is a presumption that no procurement will have a lifetime cost over £100 million. Contract lengths for services should be kept to the minimum level necessary to ensure commercial flexibility.]
10. Purchase networking and telephony services through the [Public Services Network frameworks](#).
11. Objectively evaluate potential public [cloud solutions](#) first – before you consider any other option. In order to do this you will need to identify the [capabilities](#) and services that make up your technology design, and demonstrate that the solution chosen represents best value for money.
12. Follow the guidelines laid out in the [EUD strategy, design and implementation guidance](#) to ensure your solution will work for any end user device.
13. Ensure best environmental practices, whether in-house or via external suppliers, including compliance with [Greening Government ICT](#).
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. Align to the [shared services strategy](#) for HR, procurement, finance and payroll.
17. Plan on using an [agile process](#), starting with the user need. [Waterfall](#) 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.
18. 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.

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