Wouldn't it be good if there was a standard for public code?

Jan Ainali
@ainali@social.coop
@jan_ainali
jan@publiccode.net

https://files.publiccode.net/nextcloud/index.php/s/froscon2023
rapid technological acceleration
infrastructure?
cities turn technology into infrastructure
Cities work to transform technology into infrastructure through iterative generation of policy, or ‘civic code’.
Policy defines the possibility space of society.
Are we really still fighting for this shit? Unbelievable.
Made civic through policy
<<?php echo "Hello World!"; ?>
policy

digital society?

software
Policy

digital society?

software

uninformed and vague
Software

digital society?

policy

proprietary and closed

uninformed and vague
We believe software that runs our society can no longer be:

- hidden in **proprietary codebases**
- producing data not owned by the public
- licensed at ever-increasing cost from outside companies
governments need technological sovereignty
Public software must reflect the values of the society it serves
Forward thinking cities are already building **public digital infrastructure** for themselves.
software + policy

produced by

and for the public

= public code
software has ‘terroir’
sharing
Cities need to develop open, adaptive and reusable public codebases together as part of their core civic functions.
Open standard
16 criteria

- Code in the open
- Bundle policy and source code
- Create reusable and portable code
- Welcome contributors
- Make contributing easy
- Maintain version control
- Require review of contributions
- Document your objectives
- Document the code
- Use plain English
- Use open standards
- Use continuous integration
- Publish with an open license
- Make the codebase findable
- Use a coherent style
- Document codebase maturity
Requirements

- Software source code **MUST** be licensed under an OSI-approved or FSF Free/Libre license.
- All source code files in the codebase **SHOULD** include a copyright notice and a license header that are machine-readable.
- Having multiple licenses for different types of code and documentation is **OPTIONAL**.
- Following nomenclature in [IETF RFC 2119](http://publiccode.net)
What you need to do

- Policy makers
- Management
- Developers and designers
Buy-in from one is not enough

- Policy makers
- Management
- Developers and designers

We work with stakeholders at each level and each collaborator to gain alignment.
1. Make it theoretically possible to join you
Code in the open
Create reusable and portable code
Publish with an open license
Use open standards
Make the codebase findable
2. Tell the world how you would like to collaborate
Welcome contributors
Make contributing easy
3. Explain details about the codebase
Document your objectives
Document the code
Use plain English
Document codebase maturity
Bundle policy and source code
4. Create a process that supports collaboration
Maintain version control
Require review of contribution
Use continuous integration
Use a coherent style
Compliance and certification

- Open standard - anyone can start using it
- Review template is available
- Foundation for Public Code certify reviews
- standard-compliant.publiccode.net - contains a list of all compliant codebases and which release was reviewed (also includes a list of all codebases with a public commitment to adhere to the standard)
Continuous certification
Example of criteria evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>meets</th>
<th>links and notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All code and documentation MUST be licensed such that it may be freely reusable, changeable and redistributable.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Mozilla license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software source code MUST be licensed under an OSI-approved or FSF Free/Libre license.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>MPL-2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All code MUST be published with a license file.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>LICENSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributors MUST NOT be required to transfer copyright of their contributions to the codebase.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All source code files in the codebase SHOULD include a copyright notice and a license header that are machine-readable.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>checked with CI: signals#764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having multiple licenses for different types of code and documentation is OPTIONAL.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the Signalen assessment.
### Example of criteria evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>meets</th>
<th>links and notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The codebase MUST be developed to be reusable in different contexts.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>signalen.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The codebase MUST be independent from any secret, undisclosed, proprietary</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or non-open licensed code or services for execution and understanding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The codebase SHOULD be in use by multiple parties.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The roadmap SHOULD be influenced by the needs of multiple parties.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>product steering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Configuration SHOULD be used to make code adapt to context specific needs.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The codebase SHOULD be localizable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code and its documentation SHOULD NOT contain situation-specific information.</td>
<td>partial</td>
<td>The software is easily configurable, the default configuration is Amsterdam-specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codebase modules SHOULD be documented in such a way as to enable reuse in codebases in other contexts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quick self evaluation

- To see if you’re ready for a full assessment
- 10 yes/no questions
- https://publiccodenet.github.io/assessment-eligibility
Importance of commitment

Public commitment from participating organizations is needed to:

- build trust
- ensure sustainability
- enable governance
- set expectations for contributions
We're moving codebases towards stewardship — have looked at more than 5 packages developed by cities — moving forward with 2 active development projects.
Community implementation guide

https://publiccodenet.github.io/community-implementation-guide-standard/

- Examples
- Good practices
- Tools
- Templates
- Further reading
Community translations

https://publiccodenet.github.io/community-translations-standard/

- Spanish
- Danish in review
- Traditional Chinese almost done
- Swedish and Finnish just started
- German?
The Foundation for Public Code provides tools and processes that bring people in institutions together to collaboratively build and maintain software as public infrastructure.
What a community needs

Public sector

Vendors
Codebase stewardship
Thanks!

Image credits

All images CC0 from Unsplash except for the following:
Slide 5 J22 594 Bf Siegburg SSB, ET 9372.jpg, Falk2 / CC BY-SA 4.0
Slide 28,29,44,53 CC0 from the Foundation for Public Code
Slide 49 Die Steinmetze, Lothaire de Seebach, Public Domain

Slide text and layout: CC0

Jan Ainali - jan@publiccode.net

@ainali@social.coop  @ainali  @jan_ainali