

United Kingdom

The British Standards and Architecture Framework (SAF) is a technical reference document, published as a single document of about 40 pages. It is part of a large set of documents surrounding and supporting the UK Government ICT Strategy. The direct overarching architectural framework is the cross-Government Enterprise Architecture (xGEA). The SAF describes how public sector ICT systems should be built, in line with the xGEA.

The SAF is the first iteration of a major update to the existing UK e-GIF. Elements of the e-GIF version 6.1 (published 2005) are used and updated in line with the recent ICT Strategy and xGEA. Existing e-GIF assets, such as the Technical Standards Catalogue (TSC), the Government Data Standards Catalogue (GDSC) and the e-Government Metadata Standard (e-GMS) will be migrated towards the new SAF.

In October 2005, the UK Government published Transformational Government – Enabled by IT, a strategy which set the public sector IT agenda for the next five years. The strategy focused on three broad areas where improved use of information and communication technology (ICT) could enable transformed service delivery. The newly appointed Government Chief Information Officer (CIO) drove implementation of the strategy through the CIO Council (CIOC).

In January 2010, the CIO Council has developed a refreshed ICT Strategy for Government, building on previous policy announcements to deliver a high-quality ICT infrastructure. This UK ICT Strategy supports existing core public sector goals, set in Digital Britain, Building Britain's Future, Excellence and fairness, and the Operational Efficiency Programme:

- Improving public service delivery,
- Improving access to public services, and
- Increasing the efficiency of public service delivery.

The UK Government ICT Strategy, published January 2010, aims to achieve the abovementioned goals through:

- A common infrastructure,
- Common standards, and
- Common capabilities.

The SAF, which incorporates the interoperability framework, is part of objective “common standards”. It targets all public sector ICT systems. It focuses on standardising ICT infrastructure and the design and implementation of citizen and business-oriented services.

Although compliance to the Standards and Architecture Framework is not enforced, it is mandatory and this will be governed through fiscal, budgeting and business case instruments. Also, part of the ICT Strategy is skills and performance management of the people working in ICT in the UK Government. Training and knowledge sharing will be part of those activities using the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA).

The semantical level of interoperability is in scope. At present, it is covered by the Data Standards Catalogue, which was first published in 2003 as part of the UK e-GIF, and has been updated regularly since. It prescribes a number of key national information elements and contains a library of reusable XML schemas. The Information Architecture being delivered as part of the Architecture and Standards strand of the ICT Strategy will cover semantics as well.

The technical level of interoperability is in scope. At present, it is covered by the Technical Standards Catalogue, which was first published in 2003 as part of the UK e-GIF, and has been updated regularly since.

Various activities take place, such as online collaborative environments ("Shared Workspace"), the formation of domain teams with public sector experts with involvement of industry and universities. Also, part of the ICT Strategy is skills and performance management of the people working in ICT in the UK Government.