

OMB moves to make all federal code open source

[Aaron Boyd](#), Federal Times 11:44 a.m. EST March 10, 2016



(Photo: Bob Lennox/Staff)

The administration has been looking to embrace the best practices in software development, using innovation shops like 18F and the U.S. Digital Service to test and promote methods like agile development and making use of open source code.

Now, the entire federal government will be getting on board with the latter. The Office of Management and Budget released the first draft of the Federal Source Code policy, a mandate to make federally-developed code available to everyone.

Read: [Draft Source Code Policy](#)

The full vision — free code for all — is a few steps away.

According to the draft policy released March 10, agencies will initially be required to share all their internally developed code with other federal agencies, creating a repository to reduce duplication. Having multiple eyes on the code will also reduce the number of bugs and security flaws.

“Through this policy and pilot program, we can save taxpayer dollars by avoiding duplicative custom software purchases and promote innovation and collaboration across federal agencies,” Federal CIO Tony Scott wrote in a blog post announcing the policy.

OMB will also be managing a pilot program releasing some government code to the public.

Every agency covered under the new policy will be required to release at least 20 percent of its internally developed code to the public each year, with a priority on software that can be of the most use.

OMB will reevaluate this program in two years to determine if it has been effective.

For agencies, the new policy will mean more access to free code, which, when applicable, will help keep costs down.

For the general public, this will just be more code added on top of the huge reservoir already out there on the Internet. But it will also enable private developers — from kids to companies — to create their own apps and APIs that can interface with federal programs to provide new utility others might not have considered.

“We will also enable the brightest minds inside and outside of government to review and improve our code and work together to ensure that the code is secure, reliable and effective in furthering our national objectives,” Scott said.

The draft policy is open for public comment until April 11.