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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT VOTES FOR OPEN SOURCE

*Study Identifies Open Source Security Perception Divide,
Data Center Consolidation Key Migration Opportunity*

Red Hat Government Users’ and Developers’ Conference, Washington, D.C. – November 1, 2007 – The Federal Open Source Alliance, an organization devoted to open source education, today announced the results of its “Federal Open Source Referendum” study, the first annual report designed to identify current open source adoption rates and trends in the Federal market. The study reveals Feds’ increasing appetite for open source – 71 percent of respondents note that their agency can benefit from open source. Similar to the state government market¹, Feds view data center consolidation as accelerating open source transition – 58 percent of respondents note they are more likely to consider moving to open source as they consolidate data centers. The full study is available for download at www.federalopensourcealliance.com.

Based on a survey of Department of Defense (DoD), Federal civilian, and Intelligence IT executives, the study indicates that Federal open source implementers – “haves” – and non-implementers – “have nots” – own different perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with deploying open source, most notably around security issues. “Haves” identify advanced security as the biggest benefit – 30 percent cite access to advanced and multi-leveled security capabilities as the top benefit – while those who have not implemented cite security as a top challenge – 40 percent.

“Haves” identify other key open source benefits, including data center consolidation (17 percent), ability to customize applications (17 percent), and the ability to facilitate cross-system or

¹ NASCIO “Enterprise Data Center Consolidation in the States: Strategies and Business Justification” study, August, 2007

cross-agency application/process sharing (12 percent). Interestingly, only nine percent of Feds implementing open source cite cost savings as the primary benefit.

At the Polls: Feds Express Support and Identify Top Challenges

The study underscores the fact that open source is gathering broad-based support and an impressive record for success in the Federal space. Some 55 percent of respondents note that they have been or are involved in open source implementations and 90 percent of those respondents assert that the deployment has benefited their agency. Drilling down, 97 percent of Feds – Federal civilian, DoD, and Intelligence – characterize their open source deployments as successful or partially successful – only three percent of Federal civilian and DoD respondents respectively consider their deployments failures.

Although Federal IT decision makers are upbeat about the benefits of open source, they are pragmatic about the organizational and technology obstacles to open source implementations. Open source “have nots” cite organizational reluctance to change the status quo as the leading challenge to implementation (42 percent), followed by security-related issues (40 percent), and lack of structured tech support (26 percent).

The survey also indicates that organizational culture and technology support are critical to open source migration success. Nearly twice as many “have” respondents with partially successful deployments ranked “structured tech support” and “organizational reluctance to change” as their biggest implementation challenges, when compared to those with fully successful deployments. This difference indicates that agencies can increase the success of their open source deployments in two ways. First, they should educate key stakeholders on the goals for, and benefits of, open source migration initiatives. Second, they should establish structured technical support for users prior to embarking on their open source migration, and importantly, clearly communicate the availability of these resources so users know where to go with questions.

Overwhelming Majority: More Open Source – Intelligence Leads the Charge

Overall, open source benefits outweigh the challenges. Ninety percent of open source “have” respondents assert that their agency derives value from open source. The study reveals that many “have nots” will soon follow the early adopters. Twenty-nine percent of “have not”

respondents note that they plan to implement open source in the next six to 12 months, with the Intelligence community leading the charge.

“The study shows that open source is both a mainstream issue and a polarizing factor in Federal IT,” said Nigel Ballard, government marketing manager, Intel Americas. “Agencies that have already implemented are reaping the benefits today, but it isn’t harvest time for everyone and the perception divide between open source “haves” and “have nots” means that the Federal Open Source Alliance has work to do. We plan to focus on empowering those who have implemented to connect with those who have not to share experiences, collaborate, and exchange best practices.”

“The focus on data center consolidation as an inflection point on open source migration echoes what we hear directly from Federal as well as state and local agencies,” said Paul Smith, vice president, government sales operations at Red Hat. “The study underlines the perception divide on security as well as the important role that cultural attitudes to change and robust structured technical support play in open source migration success. The Federal Open Source Alliance is committed to fostering collaboration to close the open source education divide and empower implementing agencies to obtain maximum value from their open source migrations.”

“Data center consolidation is the largest trend across the Federal IT market,” said Cathy Martin, director public sector at Hewlett-Packard. “Agencies are focused on increasing efficiency, while slashing the cost of computing. The Federal Open Source Alliance will conduct this study on an annual basis and engage in a series of other education and outreach activities to assist Federal decision makers in making the best choices in their migration decisions.”

The “Open Source Referendum” study findings are based on an online survey of 218 Federal civilian, DoD, and Intelligence agency IT decision makers. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 5.5 percent with a confidence level of 90 percent. The study is available for download at www.federalopensourcealliance.com.

About the Federal Open Source Alliance

The Federal Open Source Alliance is supported by Hewlett-Packard, Intel, and Red Hat. The organization's mission is to educate the Federal Information Technology community about open source's challenges, benefits, and current state-of-play. For more information visit www.federalopensourcealliance.com.