



Implementation example for the CFIT Commitment

**“We use our ICT more efficiently
(and use efficient configuration)”**



Use better

Case study

Encouraging clean-up of unnecessary data

City of Amsterdam | The Netherlands

2023

Impact
categories:



Product
categories:



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This case illustrates elements of the following CFIT Commitment:

- We use our ICT more efficiently (and use efficient configuration).

The purpose of this series of cases is to illustrate what the implementation of commitments of the CFIT framework for circular and fair procurement of ICT can look like. Please note that these case descriptions focus on one element of a tender or process which generally includes many more sustainability requirements.

Encouraging clean-up of unnecessary data

Introduction

The City of Amsterdam has ambitious goals regarding climate change mitigation and circularity. Its [Roadmap Amsterdam Climate Neutral 2050](#) has its roots in the city's vision "to be a climate-neutral city with a circular economy, where energy is used efficiently and generated sustainably, and where raw and other materials are reused in a never-ending cycle". To achieve this ambition, all stakeholders must play their part. The municipality's 20,000 employees are encouraged to allocate 10% of their time to sustainability-related activities linked to their work. One such activity is participating in sustainability gatherings organised by the municipality, where employees learn, generate, and discuss ideas about sustainability actions that can be put in place to reach municipal goals. This case focuses on an initiative that came out of these gatherings to reduce the environmental footprint of IT. It was launched in 2023 by the IT department to motivate all staff to clean up their data as a way of reducing server storage and thus lowering the municipality's IT footprint in general and its climate footprint in particular. The more data is stored, the more server capacity is needed, which increases energy consumption and the use of resources for hardware production.

What was implemented?

The initiative consisted of a communication campaign to encourage municipal staff to delete unnecessary individual files and emails, reducing the amount of data and thus reducing the storage capacity at municipal servers and cloud services.

The campaign ran during the summer of 2023, from July to August (a period when work is usually slow) and consisted of two main elements:

1) A visual aid in the form of a poster drawing attention to the digital clean-up campaign. The information on this poster included messages raising awareness, key actions and the web address of a document (see below) with tips and instructions on how to efficiently clean up data and free up storage space. The message on the poster is shown in the box.

Digital cleaning

Get rid of with unnecessary data and e-mails! Every e-mail we send and every file that we store requires energy. Did you know that the CO2 emission of 20 e-mails is equivalent to driving 3 kilometers? With a digital clean-up you contribute to a better environment.

Let's get started!

What can you do?

- Check the rules about what to keep
- Remove unnecessary e-mails and files
- Use the cloud

intranet.amsterdam.nl/opruimtips



2) A document with easy-to-understand tips and tricks, illustrated with screenshots, explaining how employees can efficiently and properly clean up their Outlook folders and drives.

The instructions for managing e-mails covered the following topics:

- Knowing what to keep and what to delete
- Knowing how much data is stored in Outlook
- Cleaning up mailing lists, newsletters, etc.
- Cleaning up the inbox and the associated subfolders
- Cleaning up e-mails that a person is copied on (cc)
- Cleaning up the "Deleted Items" folder

The instructions for managing shared and individual drives covered:

- Using (links to) shared drives to share documents instead of attaching files in emails.
- Cleaning the personal drive by deleting unnecessary documents and old versions, and by storing essential documents in the shared drives (cloud) only. This does not apply to confidential information; which should be stored in designated restricted folders, in line with the municipality's procedures.
- Managing the Downloads folder by determining which files to delete.

The information was disseminated through various channels to reach as wide an audience within the municipality as possible:

- An article in the internal newsletter received by all employees
- A launching message and reminders on the municipal Intranet
- The network of sustainability ambassadors within the municipality was contacted for further dissemination of the available information
- Posters at strategic locations such as elevators and bulletin boards, serving as reminders

How was it put in place?

- In conversations with various employees at the municipality's sustainability gatherings, the IT Sustainability Advisor identified the IT users' desire to contribute to the reduction of the municipality's environmental footprint. One of the ideas that was put forward, was to lower the IT footprint by cleaning up unnecessary and duplicate files and emails to reduce data storage needs and their associated impacts.
- The IT Sustainability Advisor set up a team of five people from different departments. They met for half an hour every week from June to September to develop and implement the actions and materials for the digital clean-up campaign.
- Once the main elements had been defined, the IT Sustainability Advisor presented the initiative to the IT Director for approval.
- The team was aware that not every employee would know how to carry out the digital cleaning. They developed a document with tips and tricks to raise awareness and help employees clean up their files. The text was drafted and revised by non-IT staff to make sure that it was written in language that everyone could understand.
- Dutch legislation on information access (the Wet Open Overheid or Open Government Act) prescribes a specific retention time for various types of documents. To ensure that the recommendations were in line with all relevant legislation, the team worked closely with the municipality's Department of Open Information Access.

- Besides informing the employees with online messages, the team decided to increase awareness by creating posters and display them at strategic locations to ensure that everybody noticed them.
- To assess the impact of the campaign, the team wanted to measure the resulting storage space reduction. However, due to a migration of IT systems during the project period, this could not be achieved for the entire municipality. However, as the Health Department has its own IT system, they were able to assess the total data storage needs before and after the campaign.
- After their management endorsed the campaign, the Health Department decided to implement additional measures. Their IT department identified and reached out to the top 100 storage space users to inform them of their storage usage and encourage them to reduce it. They also set up a friendly competition between departments to see which one managed to free up most space during the campaign.
- The campaign took place during the summer months, as the workload is usually lower in this period, which gave staff more time for cleaning up emails and folders and learning how to do it on a regular basis.
- When the campaign was completed in September 2023, the IT Sustainability Advisor presented the results in a report. This included the results from the Health Department as well as interviews with staff at all levels of the organization (including directors). The results will be shared with the municipal staff.

Who was involved?

- The IT Sustainability Advisor from the Digital Facilities Department led the initiative.
- A team of five people developed the initiative into a campaign. The team consisted of two people from the Communication Department, the Sustainability focal point within the Finance Department, the Sustainability Advisor from the Health Department and the IT Sustainability Advisor from the Digital Facilities Department.
- The IT Director and the Director Data approved the initiative and informed the other departments' directors of the campaign.
- All municipal staff were encouraged to participate in the digital summer clean-up.

What were the outcomes and lessons learned?

Outcomes

- The initiative was well received, and several participants asked for more tips on how to reduce data needs.
- The Health Department's employees managed to reduce the storage needs for emails by 10% and for data (files) by 20%. This resulted in an overall reduction of 15%.
- Overall data reduction reduces the environmental footprint and costs associated with data storage on servers and cloud services.
- The national regulation on information access is being changed to lower several requirements, which will facilitate additional data leanness in the future.

- The IT Sustainability Advisor is currently developing a sustainable IT strategy, which will contain 'Use Better' actions, including digital data cleaning. Some ideas are:
 - Repeat the digital cleaning campaign next summer.
 - Send monthly messages encouraging people to clean their data regularly.
 - Conduct a 'before and after' analysis once the IT migration has been finalised and communicate the amount of storage space that has been saved as well as the reduction of CO2 emissions achieved.

Lessons

- Do not involve IT specialists only, but people with different levels of IT skills from various departments. This generates a much wider perspective and ensures that actions and messages are easy for all employees to understand, and also comply with all applicable regulations.
- Setting clear guidelines is essential to ensure participants manage their data correctly.
- Using different communication media is key if you want to reach all employees.
- Obtaining management endorsement, as the Health Department did, facilitates deployment and implementation.
- Having access to usage data and 'before and after' data helps to assess the impact of the campaign and plan future actions.

Disclaimer:

This case has been described to provide inspiration. If, after careful reflection, this example offers added value to your procurement practises, adapt it to fit your organisation and make sure it is compliant with the applicable rules and regulations for procurement.