THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

TECH LAUNCH ARIZONA

Choosing How to Distribute Software
To Open Source or Not to Open Source? *That* is the question.

One of the initial questions that must be answered when deciding how to distribute (or license) a software project is whether or not you want the code to be open source, simply free software (not source code), or fee-based/proprietary software. The difference can be summed up in two questions: 1), Do you or do you not want others to be able to see and share your code?, and 2) Do you or do you not want to charge for access to that code (either source or object)? The license you choose might depend on the social norms of a particular community, the goals/ambitions for the use and reuse of the code, or financial gain.

The University of Arizona, through the Arizona Board of Regents, owns most software developed by UA employees in the course and scope of their responsibilities. Given that fact, it's a good idea to discuss your options with Tech Launch Arizona in all cases, but *if the plan is for the software to generate revenue, it's necessary to work with Tech Launch Arizona*.

So, What Are the License Choices?

"Commercial," "open source" and "free" all refer to the type of license under which software might be distributed. While commercial licenses generally allow only the use of the compiled software program, open source licenses generally provide for distribution of the software source code, and allow it to be freely used, modified and shared. However, often the real desire is simply "free distribution of compiled code" and that is another valid path, sometimes incorrectly thought of as open source.

Tech Launch Arizona supports UA software developers who choose to follow a free/open source path, provided the University retains rights in the program, that it is consistent with obligations to sponsors, and that each developer's unit supports the decision.

Commercial	Free/Open Source
• Creates a revenue stream for inventor(s), the department, unit and institution • With an exclusive partner, all support responsibilities would be shifted away from UA • Often, the user impression is value – you get what you pay for – and "free" does not translate to "high-quality" • Customer support may be required, if distributing directly • If perceived value is low, cost may prohibit wide distribution • Best for large market/high value	• Usually quicker to market • Free to users • Can be valuable for research tools • Can enhance developer reputation • Possibly lower quality, as no quality assurance function • Generally, UA cannot host open source project files • Many "code forks" where different versions of product may exist • May require continued focus of developers

	• Best for small market/limited value

What Should I Do Next?

Tech Launch Arizona can help you evaluate these options and make the right decision. Contact us to discuss your project! There are many considerations prior to selecting the type of license preferable, whether free, open source or commercial. We'll help you think through variables such as size of the market, potential market impact, distribution goals, or even the value of exclusivity versus non-exclusivity; our goal is to help you create maximum impact.

Finally, there are some legal issues to be aware of before pursuing open source licensing (both using other's open source software as well as distributing software under any open source license), so developers should make it standard practice to both contact TLA and seek authorization from an appropriate department chair or dean to begin your distribution strategy.

All software developed at the University of Arizona should contain this statement in the header of the code "© 2015 Arizona Board of Regents on behalf of the University of Arizona."