

AFRL/RVBX White Paper on NASA Open Code Policy

We have discussed the policy in RVBX and concluded that there would be no dramatic impact on us if NASA-funded science code were required to be open source, simply because relatively little of our code development is funded by NASA. If NASA-funded research codes are required to be open source, we will carefully consider our involvement in any new proposal. Code development funded by DoD, our first responsibility, will generally be restricted to operational use, not basic research. That said, we can see benefit to making certain codes not funded by NASA available to the broader community, provided permission is granted and security is not affected.

There is a related issue which the call does not address, namely support for models. Even if we were to release codes, we do not have the resources to document or trouble-shoot codes, nor can we assist with inquiries from potential users in the scientific community. These activities are time-consuming and costly. Sophisticated models can be difficult to implement correctly for a new user. This problem becomes more difficult as models or machines are upgraded. If NASA implements an open code policy, who will bear the costs of making the codes user friendly and providing user support?

We have a more serious issue with open data policies. Much of the data we use as input or output is restricted to DoD applications. We do not anticipate this changing any time soon. Further, even when data from USAF missions (DMSP, C/NOFS) are useful to the scientific community and publicly available, we do not allow open access to our computer networks. We have encountered a conflict with AGU's data policy which currently requires that all data used in papers submitted for publication be openly accessible. Statements of availability by contacting a responsible person have been rejected. This is a large problem for DoD laboratories.



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