

BEAR-ing Fruit: A Year of Learning, Mentorship, and Community Building in Open Source Security

Marcela Melara, Intel
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OpenSSF Community Day
NORTH AMERICA 2026

**61% of unpaid maintainers
report maintaining their
projects entirely alone.**

Source: Tidelift 2024 State of the Open Source Maintainer Report



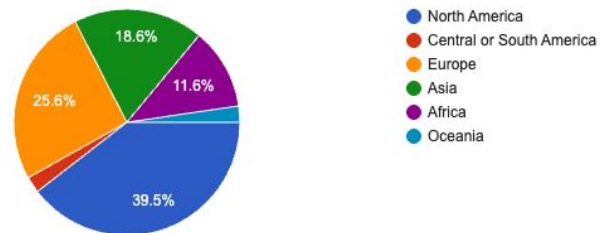
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OpenSSF Geolocation Survey 2026

Which region best describes your primary location?

43 responses

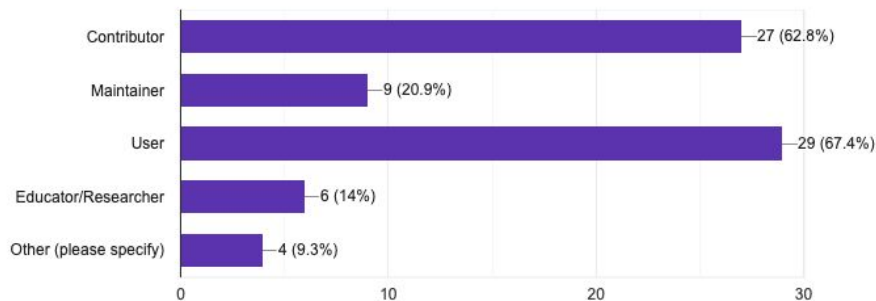
[Copy chart](#)



Which best describes your role in the OpenSSF community?

43 responses

[Copy chart](#)



BEAR WG Timeline



\$ whoami

B **Belonging** Everyone who shows up should feel like they were expected

E **Empowerment** Amplifying voices that have been quieted or overlooked

A **Allyship** Showing up for others, not just alongside them

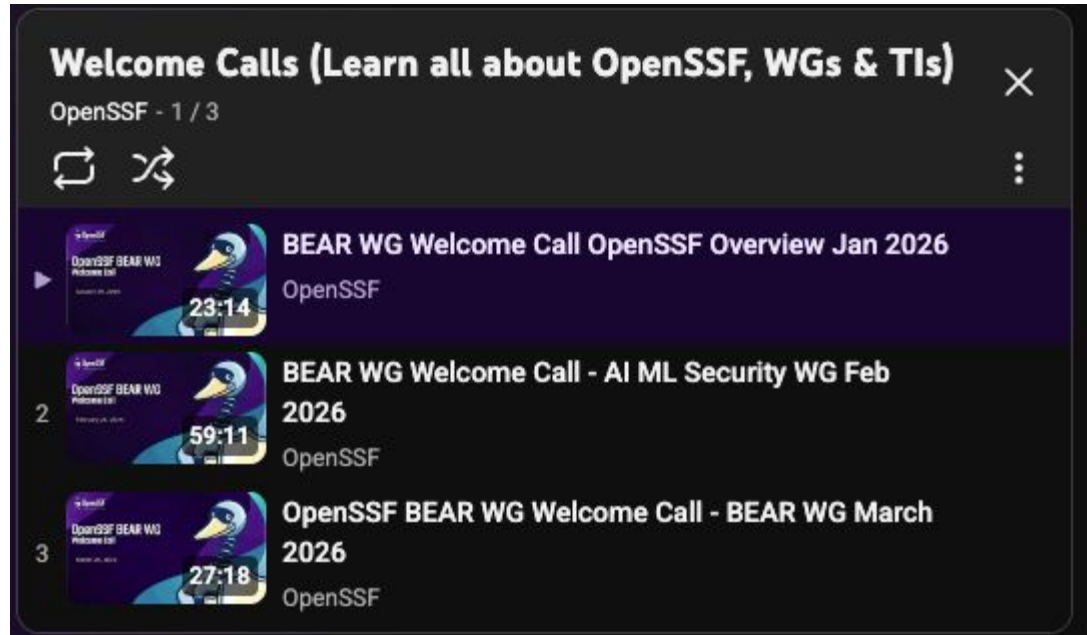
R **Representation** Building lasting, visible paths — not one-time appearances



A monthly open door that became our heartbeat...



OpenSSF Welcome
Calls on YouTube



Turning hard-won lessons into tools anyone can use



From Beginner to Builder:

**Understanding OpenSSF
Community and Working Groups**



From Beginner to Builder:

Your First Code Contribution



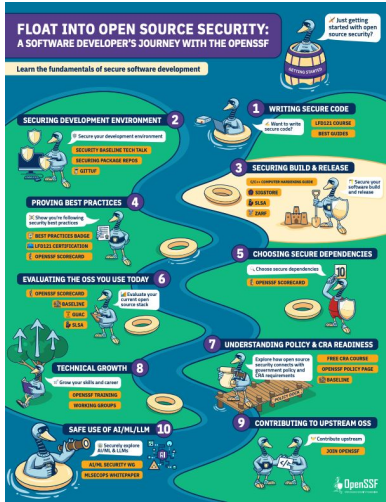
From Beginner to Builder:

**Free OpenSSF & Linux
Foundation Education Courses**

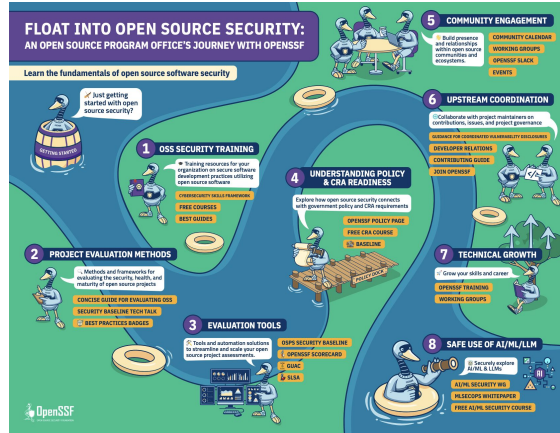


Access these on
openssf.org/groups/bear
Or
openssf.org/getinvolved

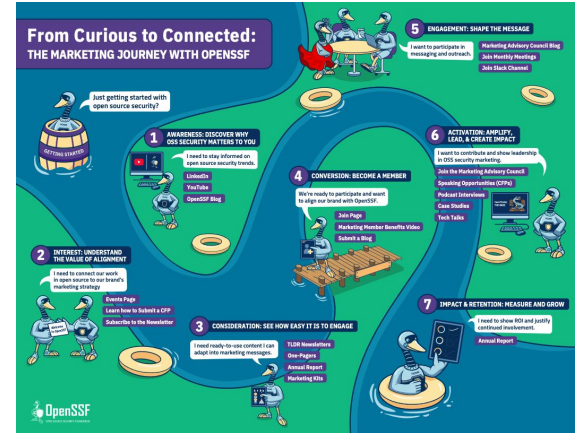
User Journey Maps (openssf.org/getinvolved)



A Software Developer's Journey with the OpenSSF



An Open Source Program Office's Journey with OpenSSF



The Marketing Journey with OpenSSF

OpenSSF Mentorship Program: the on-ramp we wished had existed...

Back for its second iteration in 2026 with four projects and eight mentees:



That's twice as many projects and mentees as last year!

OpenSSF Mentorship Program: the on-ramp we wished had existed...

“The OpenSSF mentorship program has been a great way for both the gittuf project and the mentees we work with to grow. We've gotten new perspectives on the work that we do, and helping mentees find their path in the world of FOSS is a rewarding experience. It's an excellent program for people and projects that want to help both the world of FOSS and those new to it.” — *Patrick Zielinski, gittuf maintainer, two-time mentor*



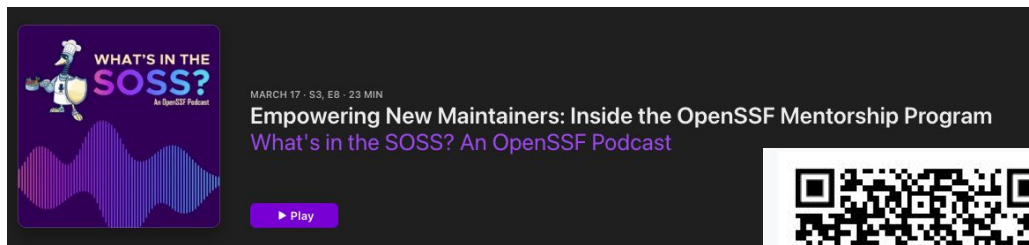
“The main thing I learned with this experience was to not fear contributing to open source. Even though it was a goal of mine for a long time, one of the reasons why I took so long to start was because I felt like I didn't know where to start, having a mentor to guide me, answer my questions and help me in the open source world gave me the confidence I needed. Now as a mentor I want to do the same for other people and help make their journey easier.” — *Camila Vilarihno, RSTUF maintainer and mentor, graduated mentee*



Celebrating the success of the inaugural Mentorship Program



2025 Mentee
Lightning Talks



Podcast episode

**And then we did something
we hadn't done before...**



OpenSSF African Chapter



We welcomed DevRel as a SIG

Mission:



Make developers' lives easier, reduce perceived workload of OpenSSF



Increase community engagement

Latest events @ cdCon 2026:



May 19: Bring Your Lunch, We'll Bring Our Notebooks: Securing Software Workflows



May 19: Security Things: How OpenSSF's Technical Initiatives Keep You Safe From the Upside Down!



Next Monthly Community Meeting: June 11 at 11:30am ET !



Lessons Learned

Making way for the next wave of contributor and leaders

Mentorship is more than code-writing, but leadership

Community speaking for themselves *authentically*

Listening to various voices for their insights

Management of a fast-growing new group

Listening and adapting to community feedback

Supporting new contributors in an age of AI

People come and go. How do you keep going?

Get Involved!

Speak



Share your story or
working group

First-time speakers
welcome

Contribute



Build the programs

All Skills needed

Join



Shape the strategy

Join a meeting

Join the BEAR WG!

- Bi-weekly WG meetings: every other Wednesday at 11am ET
 - Anyone is welcome to participate and propose new initiatives
 - No prior OSS experience required!
- Join our SIGs:
 - OpenSSF African Chapter
 - DevRel
- Find us on the OpenSSF Slack: [#wg-bear](#)
- All past meetings, Welcome Calls and Community Office Hours [on YouTube](#)
- See [OpenSSF public calendar](#) for all WG and SIG meetings





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Thank You!

