

# BEAR-ing Fruit: How OpenSSF's Working Group Is Diversifying Open Source Security

Marcela Melara, Intel  
Yesenia Yser, Microsoft

# Agenda

- Why BEAR?
- What the BEAR WG Does
- OpenSSF African Chapter
- DevRel SIG
- Important Lessons Learned
- Get Involved!



# Raise your hand if...

 OPEN SOURCE SUMMIT

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Embedded Linux  
Conference

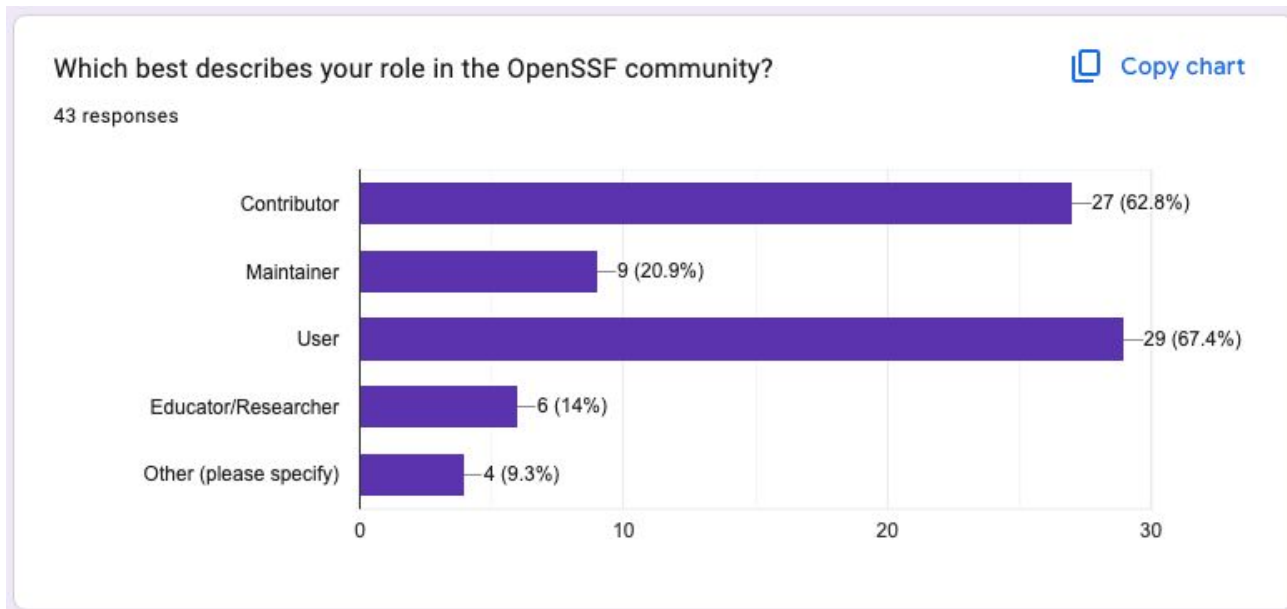


# 61% of unpaid maintainers report maintaining their projects entirely alone.

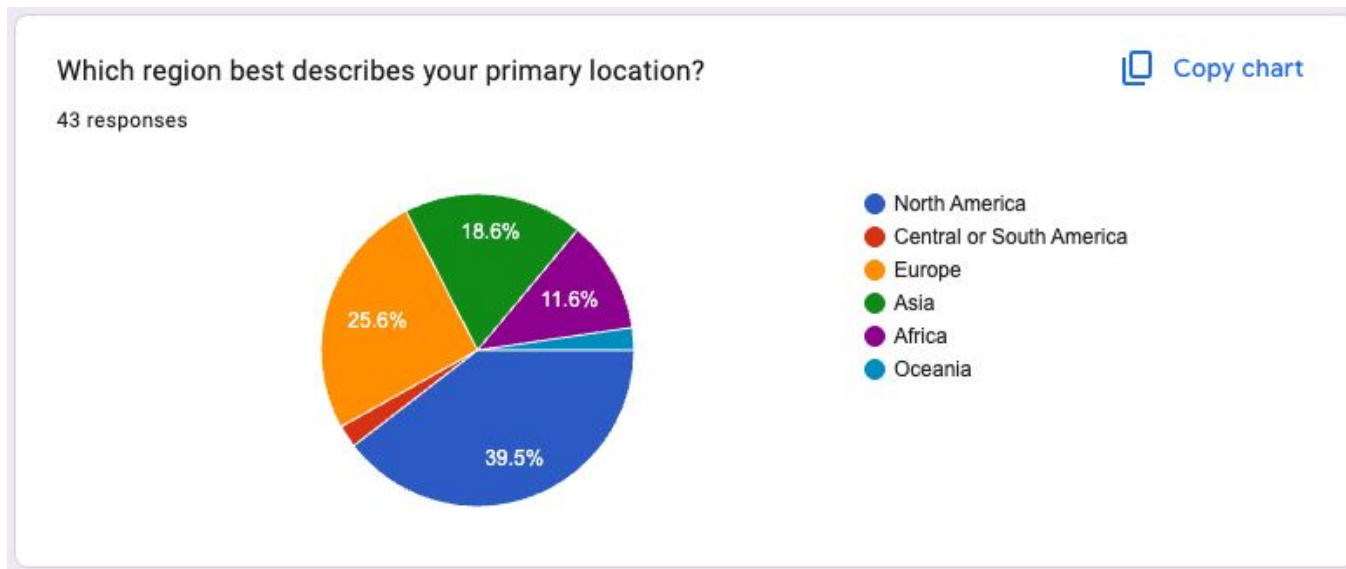
Source: Tidelift 2024 State of the Open  
Source Maintainer Report



# OpenSSF 2026 Geolocation Survey



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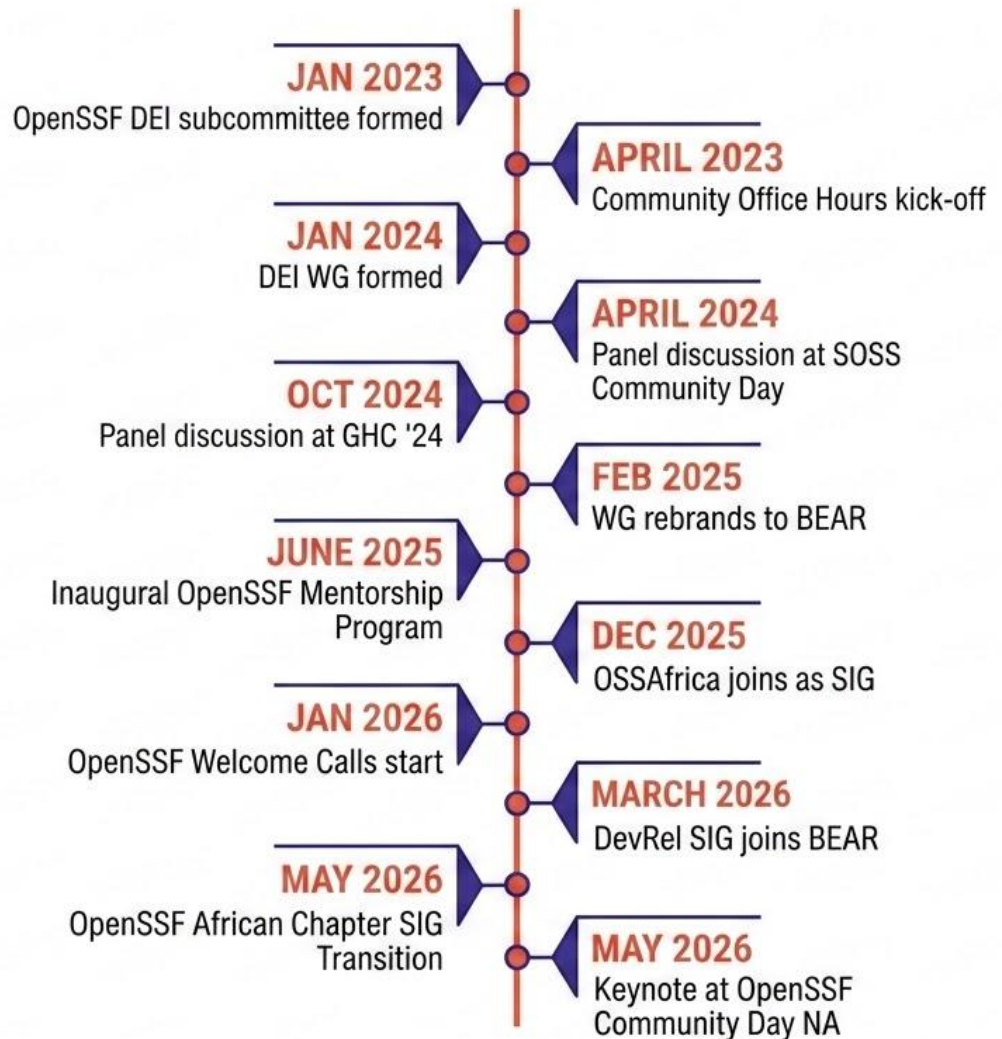


# \$Whoami

- 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



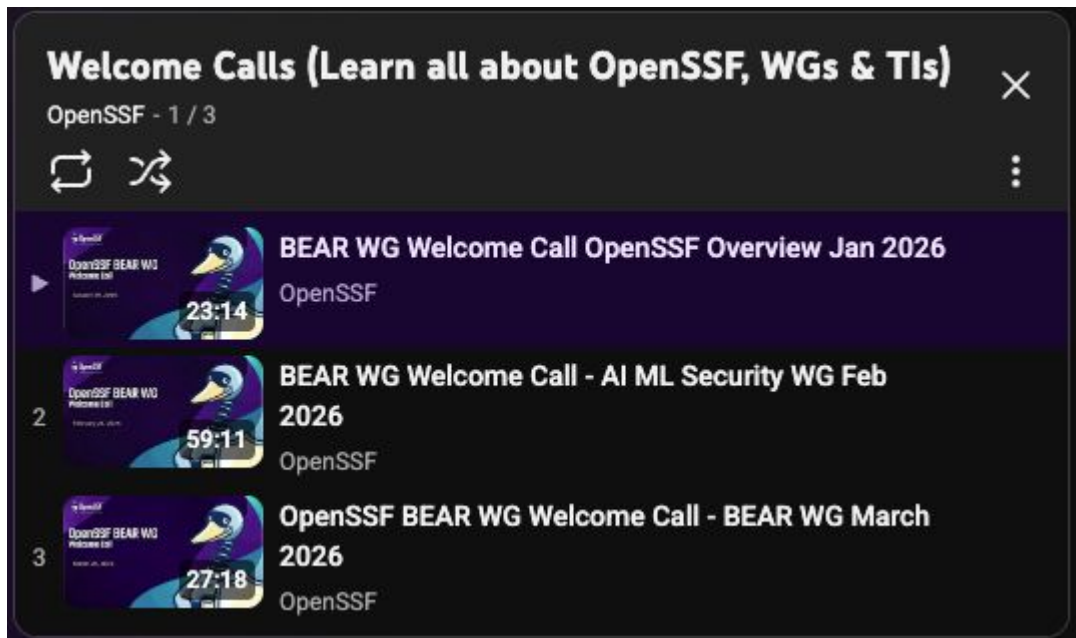
# BEAR WG Timeline



# 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**



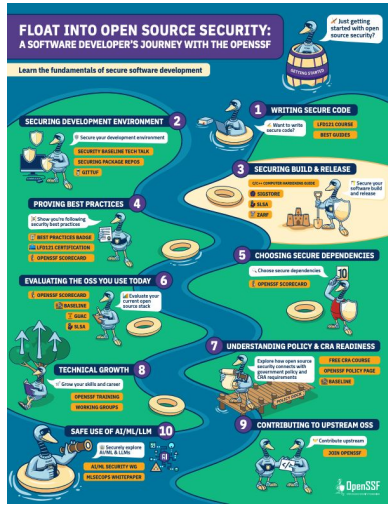
From Beginner to Builder:

**Free OpenSSF & Linux  
Foundation Education Courses**

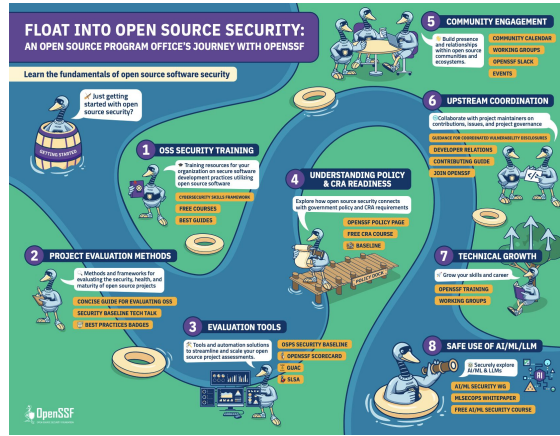


Access these on  
[openssf.org/groups/bear](https://openssf.org/groups/bear)  
Or  
[openssf.org/getinvolved](https://openssf.org/getinvolved)

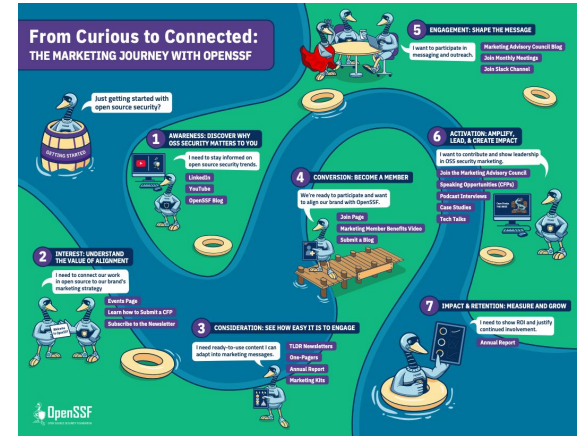
# User Journey Maps (openssf.org/getinvolved)



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:



# 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*



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

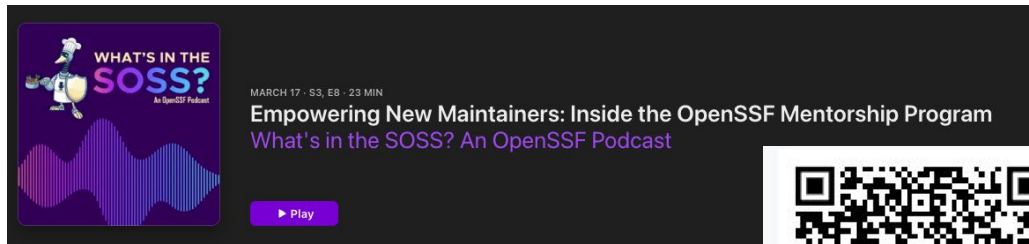
“The main thing I learned with this experience was to not fear contributing to open source. Even though it was a goal of mine for a long time, one of the reasons why I took so long to start was because I felt like I didn’t know where to start, having a mentor to guide me, answer my questions and help 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 Mentorship  
Lightning Talks



Podcast episode

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



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# OpenSSF African Chapter



# We welcomed DevRel as a SIG!

## Mission:

 Make developers' lives easier, reduce perceived workload of OpenSSF

 Increase community engagement

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## 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!

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

# Lessons Learned

Management of a fast-growing new group

Community speaking for themselves *authentically*

Making way for the next wave of contributor and leaders

Mentorship is more than code-writing, but leadership

Supporting new contributors in an age of AI

Listening and adapting to community feedback

Expanding on various voices to share insight

People come and go. How to do you keep going?

# What has worked?

Making way for the next wave of contributor and leaders

Mentorship is more than code-writing, but leadership

Listening and adapting to community feedback

Expanding on various voices to share insight

# What are we still learning?

Management of  
a fast-growing  
new group

Community  
speaking for  
themselves  
*authentically*

Supporting new  
contributors in  
an age of AI

People come  
and go. How  
to do you  
keep going?

# Get Involved!

## Speak



Share your story or  
working group

First-time speakers  
welcome

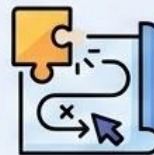
## Contribute



Build the programs

All Skills needed

## Join



Shape the strategy

Next meeting:  
[Placeholder]

# Say hi at OSS NA & OpenSSF Community Day 2026



- May 20: OpenSSF booth
- May 21, 9:55am CDT: Keynote: BEAR-ing Fruit: A Year of Learning, Mentorship, and Community Building in Open Source Security ([link](#))

# 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

# Thank You!



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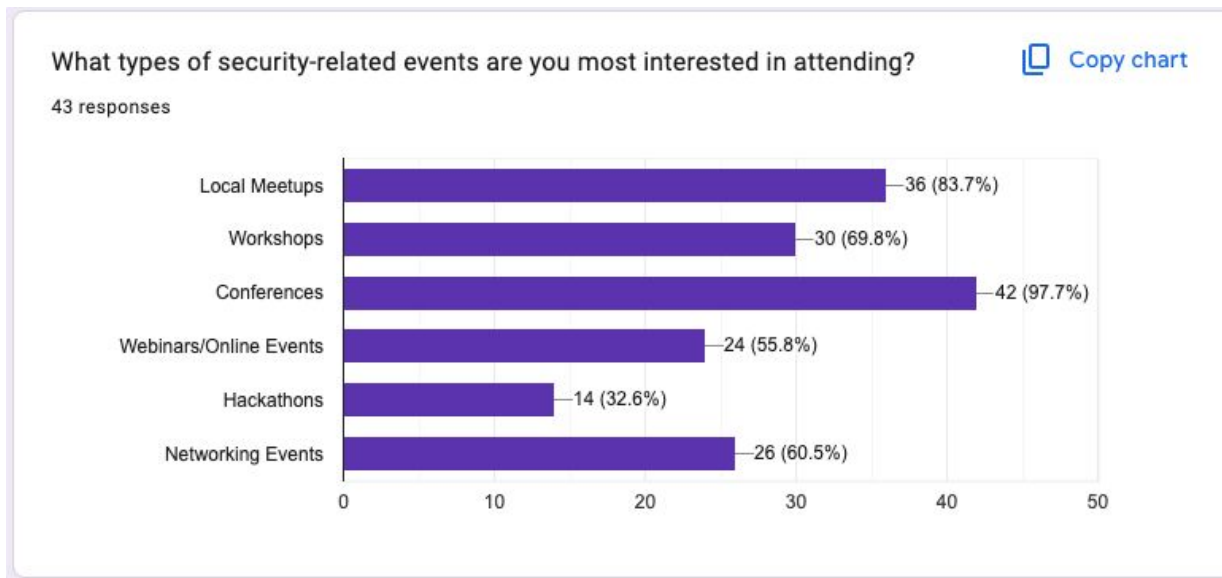
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# OpenSSF 2026 Geolocation Survey



# Timeline

- Group formed in 2023, as DEI
- Community office hours April 2023
- Rebranded to BEAR in Feb 2025
- Started mentorship Summer of 2025 with 4 mentees
- From Beginner to Builder blogs started August 2025
- OpenSSF African Chapter as a SIG in Dec 2025
- Switch to welcome calls in Jan 2026
- DevRel joins BEAR in March 2026
- Rebranded to OpenSSF Africa May 2026

# Timeline

DEI Group Formed  
2023



Community Office Hours  
- April 2023



Mentorship  
- Summer 2025



Beginner to Builder Blogs  
- August 2025



BEAR Rebrand  
Feb 2025



- B** Belonging: Everyone who shows up should feel they were expected
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\*Reference to Slide 8's "Vision & Mission"

Switch to Welcome Calls  
Jan 2026



March 2026

OSSAfrica



DevRel Joins

OSSAfrica as a SIG

Dec 2025

OPENSSE  
AFRICA  
REBRAND

May 2026

# Mission

The mission of the BEAR Working Group (WG) is to foster a more diverse and inclusive cybersecurity workforce by implementing strategies to increase representation and enhance effectiveness through advocacy, collaboration, and tailored initiatives.

# Vision

Our vision is to make sure that everyone has a fair chance to be part of the cybersecurity team. Our goal is to support a strong and diverse group of people who can keep our digital world safe.