**General Questions**

**What is OpenChain?**

The OpenChain Project helps to identify and share the core components of a high quality Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) compliance program. OpenChain builds trust in Open Source by making things simpler, more efficient and more consistent. It is the industry-standard for managing Open Source compliance across the supply chain.

**What are the components of OpenChain?**

Our Specification creates trust between organizations. Our Conformance allows new organizations to join the circle of trust. Our Curriculum supports implementation by entities of any size. The result is that Open Source becomes predictable, understandable and optimized for internal and external supply chains of any type.

**How do I know who conforms to OpenChain?**

We maintain a list of [OpenChain Conformant Organizations](https://www.openchainproject.org/openchain-conformant).

**How does OpenChain work?**

The OpenChain Project has three working groups open for anyone to contribute to:

1. Specification Working Group – identifies and publishes a set of core requirements a quality FOSS compliance program should satisfy.
2. Curriculum Working Group – provides training material to help companies meeting the Specification education requirements.
3. Conformance Working Group – helps companies check that they are adhering to the Specification requirements.

There are also three committees with paid membership:

1. Governing Board – Manage policies or rules and procedures for the Project, fund raising, budgeting and so forth.
2. Steering Committee – Development, management and updating of the OpenChain Compliance Specification.
3. Outreach Committee – Designing, developing and executing efforts to build an OpenChain compliance ecosystem throughout relevant supply chains in collaboration with the Governing Board.

**What is the relationship between OpenChain and the CII Best Practices?**

OpenChain and the CII Best Practices are both Linux Foundation initiatives that identify FOSS process quality criteria. OpenChain focuses on i) improving compliance programs within organizations that use FOSS from different projects in their solutions and ii) the process for contributing back. In contrast, the CII best practices badge focuses on criteria for well-run FOSS projects themselves. See the [CII Best Practices website](https://bestpractices.coreinfrastructure.org/) if you are interested in getting a CII Best Practices badge.

**Where can I learn more about each aspect of OpenChain?**

You can start below!

**OpenChain Specification**

**What is the OpenChain specification for?**

To define a core set of requirements a FOSS compliance program should satisfy to achieve: a level of trust that an organization provides the artifacts required to achieve FOSS license compliance for software it shares with others. Compliance artifacts consist of: source code, build scripts, license copies, attribution notices, modification notices and other materials open source licenses governing a software deliverable may require.

**Where can I get the current version of the specification?**

The [OpenChain Specification 1.1](https://wiki.linuxfoundation.org/_media/openchain/openchainspec-1.1.pdf) is our latest industry-standard.

**Does a FOSS program need to satisfy all the requirements of the specification to be considered OpenChain Conforming?**

Yes. The specification was designed to provide a core set of requirements to ensure a certain level of program quality has been achieved. In order to ensure there are no significant gaps in an OpenChain conforming program that could lead to poor quality output, a program must satisfy all the requirements to be considered OpenChain conforming.

**What does it mean that a software offering is OpenChain Conforming?**

Supplied software itself is not identified as being OpenChain Conforming. A FOSS compliance program which the software is prepared under is a candidate for OpenChain conformance. When a software supplier states they are OpenChain conforming it means they have a program that satisfies all the requirements of the OpenChain specification. A software supplier may declare the software offered was prepared under an OpenChain conforming program. Similarly, a software recipient may ask the supplier if the software they received was prepared under an OpenChain conforming program.

**Does all software in an organization need to be covered by an OpenChain Conforming program to achieve program conformance?**

No. Organizations are sometimes composed of different groups and/or departments which may have different programs and release procedures (e.g., engineering vs professional services). One FOSS program within an organization can be classified as OpenChain conforming if it satisfies the specification requirements while another program may not. One should not associate software with OpenChain conformance if it has not been reviewed under a program that has been assessed to be OpenChain conforming.

**Does the specification serve as a best practice guide?**

No. The main objective of the specification provides a set of requirements that would help one evaluate whether an existing FOSS compliance program is sufficient. It focuses on the “what and why” aspects of a program and not the how or when. There are many different ways to construct a FOSS compliance program (how and when) such that each way would satisfy the specification. The specification provides a method of measuring whether a program has obtained a base line level of quality and consistency. This allows a software supplier to represent to their users that the compliance artifacts they deliver were prepared under a FOSS program that met a standard level of quality.

**How was the specification developed?**

The OpenChain Project accepted input from dozens of individuals, companies and organizations that have experience preparing for and/or exchanging software in the software supply chain. There were and are no specific requirements for participating. The OpenChain Project has identified 6 main categories of a compliance program and important tasks and deliverables for each category.

1. Know Your FOSS Responsibilities [i.e., “Policy and Training”]
2. Assign Responsibility for Achieving Compliance
3. Deliver FOSS Content Documentation and Artifacts
4. Review and approve FOSS content
5. Understand FOSS Community Engagement
6. Certify Adherence to OpenChain Requirements

**Is a third party audit required to declare a FOSS program to be OpenChain Conforming?**

No. The OpenChain Specification is simply structured to provide a list of requirements where each requirement maintains a set of acceptance criteria (Verification Artifacts). Each requirement is a description of an important quality a FOSS program must maintain. The Verification Artifacts for a requirement represent a list of tangible artifacts that must exist in order for one to determine the specific requirement has been met. Although artifacts must exist, one is not required to make them public. The key goal of the specification is to foster trust around FOSS compliance between two parties exchanging software. Although currently an audit by a third party is not a requirement of the OpenChain specification, a partner or customer may ask for evidence of the Verification Artifacts as a condition for doing business (e.g., under an Non-Disclosure agreement). That is, the obligation to provide evidence of the existence of the artifacts, and the willingness to do so, is determined by the relationship entered into by two parties. It has been discussed that a future version of the specification may provide more specific guidelines on how to obtain third party certification.

**Does the specification describe how to comply with the most popular FOSS licenses?**

No. The specification does not provide legal guidance. It does require an organization to designate a legal expert who can assist with legal guidance. Furthermore the specification requires that a process exists that ensures the appropriate attention is given to license obligation analysis and and fulfillment.

**Does OpenChain program conformance guarantee license compliance?**

No, but it significantly increases the probability that license compliance will be achieved for software releases prepared under a OpenChain conforming program.

**Do resources exist to assist my organization in achieving OpenChain Conformance?**

The OpenChain Curriculum working group has developed training reference materials that greatly facilitate the creation (or enhancement) of a FOSS compliance training program. The OpenChain Conformance working group has developed a questionnaire to guide an organization in self-certifying a program to be OpenChain conforming. The Linux Foundation sponsors various open source projects and initiatives that provide useful tools and compliance program resources that can help implement an OpenChain FOSS compliance program (e.g., [SPDX](https://spdx.org/), [FOSSology](https://www.fossology.org/" \o "https://www.fossology.org/), …). These resources can be found in the [Linux Foundation Open Compliance Program](https://www.linuxfoundation.org/offerings/open-source-compliance).

**What is the license of the OpenChain Specification?**

The specification is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (CC-BY-4.0). A copy of the license can be obtained here: [CC-BY-4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode)

**OpenChain Conformance**

**What is the objective of OpenChain Conformance Self-Certification?**

OpenChain Self-Certification is designed to assess the status of OpenChain Conformance in relation to a specific version of the [OpenChain Specification](https://www.openchainproject.org/spec" \o "https://www.openchainproject.org/spec). Organizations of any size can accomplish Self-Certification through the OpenChain Project Online Self-Certification Web App. A company that completes the Online Self-Certification confirms they meet the OpenChain Specification requirements.

**Where can I access the OpenChain Online Self-Certification?**

It can be found at <https://certification.openchainproject.org/>.

**Where can I find out more about Getting Started with OpenChain Self-Certification?**

Follow the Getting Started instructions on the [OpenChain Conformance page](https://www.openchainproject.org/conformance" \o "https://www.openchainproject.org/conformance).

**What if I want to change my submission?**

You will see an Unsubmit button at the bottom of the page after signing in to the [Online Self-Certification](https://certification.openchainproject.org/) site. Clicking this button will cancel your previous OpenChain Self-Certification submission. You can then re-submit the conformance check.

**What is meant by Artifacts?**

Artifacts are a tangible by-product of implementing OpenChain conformance policies. These can include digital documents, websites or paper documents public or private. All Artifacts should be verified internally by the organization using them.

**What if I don’t agree with a submission made by another organization?**

Email [openchain-conformance@linux-foundation.com](mailto:openchain-conformance@linux-foundation.com) with the name of the organization you are concerned about and the reason you disagree with their submission. You should expect a response within 4 weeks.

**What response time should I expect to a submittal request?**

If all information is correct, the submittal will automatically be approved by the system. Any omissions or incorrect answers will be reported by the user.

**How do I report issues with the Online Self-Certification Web App?**

Email [openchain-conformance@linux-foundation.com](mailto:openchain-conformance@linux-foundation.com) with any issues. Please include specific information on the issue you have encountered.

**How can I contribute?**

Visit the [OpenChain Community website](https://www.openchainproject.org/community" \o "https://www.openchainproject.org/community) for information on how to join and contribute.

**OpenChain Curriculum**

**What is the OpenChain Curriculum used for?**

The OpenChain Curriculum slide deck provides reference material to meet OpenChain specification 1.0, requirement 1.2.

**Who is the OpenChain Curriculum intended for?**

The OpenChain Curriculum is intended to help companies shipping Open Source Software and the companies receiving such software through the supply chain.

**What is the projected length of the OpenChain Curriculum slide training session?**

The reference slides are designed to be delivered in a half day training session. They are split into chapters to allow flexible delivery across different timescales and – given the CC-0 licensing – to allow companies to “pick and choose” the sections they need to expand on any existing in-house training materials.

**What jurisdiction does the IP law section cover?**

The OpenChain Curriculum reference slides are focused on US law. Companies need to take this into account when considering the use of the reference slides for in-house training. Different legal jurisdictions have different legal requirements.

**Are these slides everything you need to be compliant with licenses?**

No, this is a reference deck. It is intended to help companies either get started with an OpenChain conformant compliance training program or to expand on existing training programs to help conform with the OpenChain Specification.

**How can companies or individuals contribute to the OpenChain Curriculum?**

You can join the [OpenChain Curriculum Mailing List](https://lists.linuxfoundation.org/mailman/listinfo/openchain-curriculum" \o "https://lists.linuxfoundation.org/mailman/listinfo/openchain-curriculum). Everyone is invited to participate, contribute material and to assist expanding existing material.