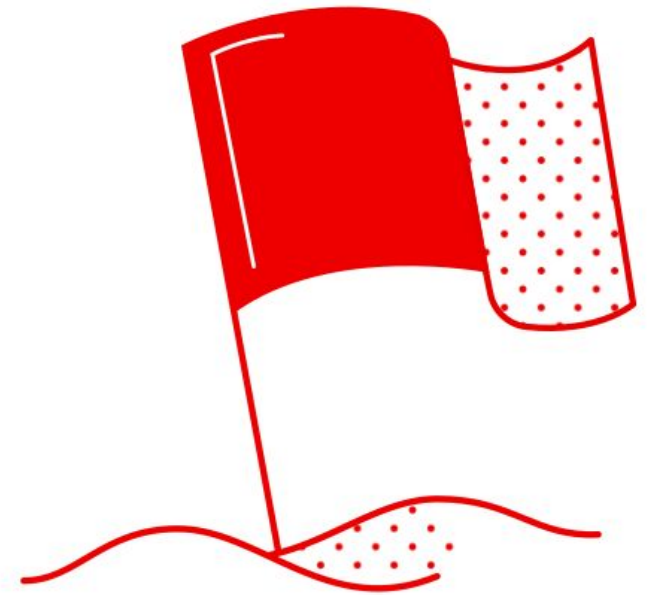


# How to participate in an open source community

Presented by the Open Source Program Office  
Red Hat  
<https://red.ht/OSPO>

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How do I get started in an open  
source community?



# Our goals today

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- ▶ **Review** basic open source community concepts
- ▶ **Explore** factors that determine whether to participate in a project
- ▶ **Identify** common ways to get started in an open source community
- ▶ **Discuss** the kinds of contributions open source projects need



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# Reviewing the basics

# What's an open source software community?



An open source software community is a group of people united by the shared purpose of **developing, maintaining, extending, and promoting** a specific body of open source software.

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### Globally distributed

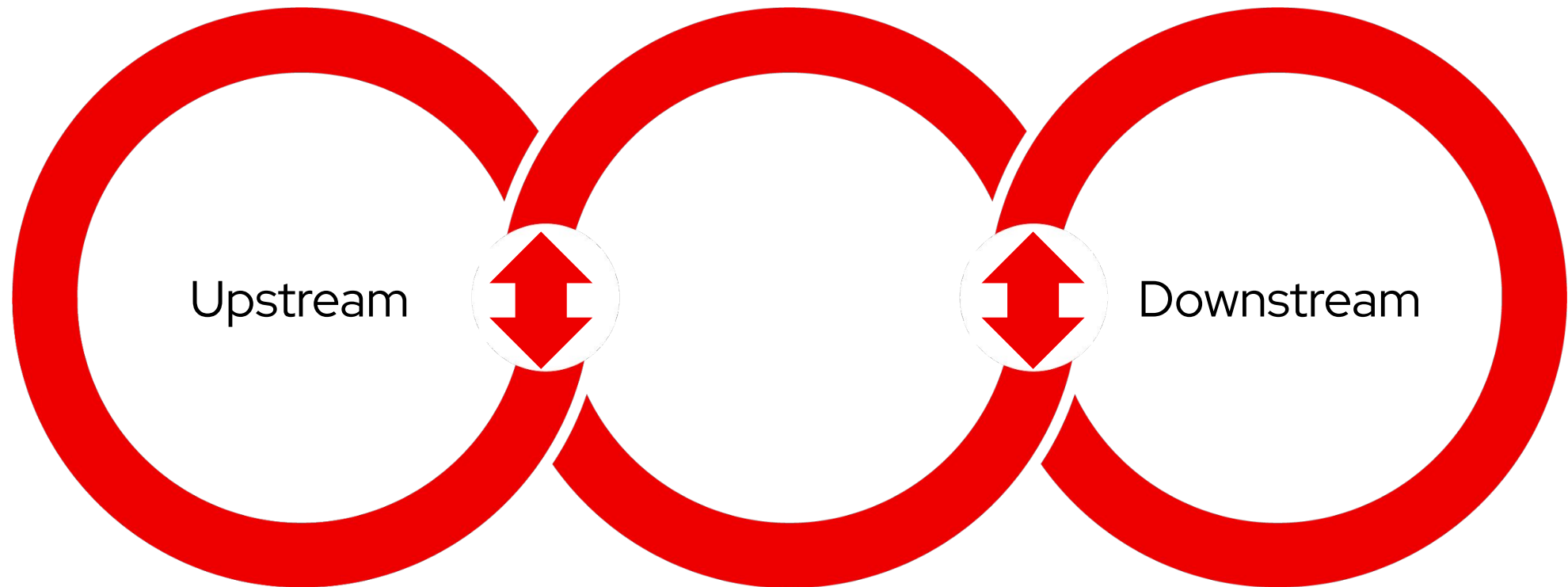
Members occupy different geographic regions and work across numerous industries.



### Shared vision

Members unite around a common vision, a spirit of camaraderie, and a collective identity.

# The open source ecosystem





Open source software communities form when people **agree to work together** to build and improve software.

### Why?

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- ▶ It's their job.
- ▶ They (or their organization) rely on the community's software for critical operations.
- ▶ They want to collaborate on a solution to a problem they're having.
- ▶ They want to sharpen their skills.
- ▶ They believe in the importance of contributing to a common set of resources.
- ▶ They want to socialize, feel a sense of identity, or be affiliated with a group.



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# Finding a project

## Selecting the right project

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- ▶ Begin with something you use regularly
- ▶ Consider software your organization relies on
- ▶ Explore pre-existing community connections
- ▶ Assess values and read the code of conduct



# Assessing open source project health



A healthy open source project is one that demonstrates open **practices**, uses open **infrastructure**, and cultivates an open **culture** with the goal of becoming more sustainable.

- ▶ Project life cycle
- ▶ Target audience
- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Project leaders
- ▶ Release manager and process
- ▶ Infrastructure
- ▶ Goals and roadmap
- ▶ Onboarding processes
- ▶ Internal communication
- ▶ Outreach
- ▶ Awareness
- ▶ Ecosystem

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# Getting started

# Join a communication channel

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Which tools help the community collaborate? Mailing lists, Internet Relay Chat, Discourse, Slack? Find them. Join them.



## Why is it important?

Passively experiencing how a community operates can teach you how its project functions, who its leaders are, how it makes decisions, and what it needs most.



## How do I start?

Find public-facing communication channels on the project's home page. Introduce yourself in a channel. Let others know how you're using the project, and how you've benefitted. Thank existing contributors.

# Use an issue tracker

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This is where work gets done. Read and file error reports, track bugs, and suggest changes.



## Why is it important?

By reporting issues using a project's issue tracker, you help maintainers maintainers become aware of issues—and increase the likelihood that developers will address them. You demonstrate your willingness to pitch in.



## How do I start?

Include any information that may be useful for diagnosing a problem. Be as detailed and specific as possible.

# Attend a community call

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Most useful when synchronous communication is key. Dial in, interact, meet the team.



## Why is it important?

Community calls let you chat with project leaders and contributors in real-time. You can gauge the project's culture, observe its workflow and decision-making processes, and experience the community's personality.



## How do I start?

You'll find meeting schedules and times posted on the project website or community forum. If the meeting notice is public, then anyone is likely permitted to attend.

# Contribute something

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Fix a doc, update the website, propose some code. It's time to start giving back.



## Why is it important?

Most open source communities value contributions and solutions above all else. By contributing—even if your initial attempts aren't successful—you demonstrate that you're invested in moving the project forward.



## How do I start?

Start with what you know. Contribute a patch you or your organization developed. Update the project documentation your team uses every week. Propose a usability enhancement for the project website.



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Some words of advice



## What projects need most

- ▶ Help organizing events (like meetups, conferences, etc.)
- ▶ Documentation improvements
- ▶ Artwork and other marketing collateral
- ▶ Additional testing and quality assurance work
- ▶ Expertise translating, localizing, and internationalizing project resources
- ▶ Evangelists (speaking at conferences or other events, blogging, etc.)



# Making your first contribution

- ▶ Look for contribution guidelines in project repositories
- ▶ If something is unclear, raise a question in a communication channel
- ▶ Get familiar with the project's release timeline and versioning conventions
- ▶ Find issues labeled "starter," "good first bug," "low-hanging fruit," or "beginner"
- ▶ Use a guided tool (like [What Can I Do for Fedora?](#) or [What Can I Do for Mozilla?](#))
- ▶ Review tutorials like those at [Your First Pull Request](#) or [First Timers Only](#)



## Parting advice

- ▶ Stay calm and take one step at a time.
- ▶ When starting, focus on making small contributions.
- ▶ Don't take on too much at once.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to shift projects.
- ▶ Express yourself, but be respectful.
- ▶ Remember that even the tiniest of contributions are valuable.



## Additional resources

- ▶ [Getting started with an issue tracker](#) (Red Hat)
- ▶ [Browse good first issues to start contributing to open source](#) (GitHub)
- ▶ [Participating in open source communities](#) (The Linux Foundation)

# In summary

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- ▶ Understanding how open source communities operate can make your first contribution seem less intimidating.
- ▶ When selecting a project to contribute to, assess the community's health and consider whether your personal goals (or organizational mission and values) are aligned with the community's.
- ▶ To get started with a project, join one of its communication channels, use its issue tracker, attend a community call, and/or contribute something small.
- ▶ You can participate in many ways; writers, designers, editors, event planners, and testers are all valuable to a project.



# Thanks.

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