Open Source Funding

Open funding models and strategies for open research and communities

How to Get Paid for Open Source

By Neil P. Chue Hong (@npch)

Based on material from Nadia Eghbal

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The Popularity of Open Source Makes Things Harder

"Many open source projects are experiencing a difficult transition from selfless creative pursuit to critical public infrastructure." - Nadia Eghbal

Open Source has never been easier to get involved with:

- Widespread usage of common platforms (e.g. Git, GitHub, StackOverflow)
- Focus on community aspects, not just code

However, this has created new issues:

- Tension between what projects need to do versus what contributors want to do
- New class of less-experienced developers (users vs contributors)

The Issues with Open Source Funding

1. There is a misperception that this is a "solved problem"
   - Pervasive belief that open source is well-funded (see RedHat, Docker). We only see the "unicorns".
2. There is a lack of cultural understanding and awareness about the problem.
   - Outside of the open source community, nearly everybody remains unaware of infrastructure's funding issues, and the topic is perceived to be dry and technical.
3. Digital infrastructure is rooted in open source, whose volunteer culture discourages talk of money
   - This attitude makes it difficult for developers to openly discuss their needs without feeling guilty or worrying about not being perceived as a team player. Open source's highly distributed and democratic nature also makes it difficult to coordinate and sustain institutional actors who could act as advocates for their needs.
4. Digital infrastructure is highly distributed, compared to physical infrastructure
   - Unlike planning the construction of a bridge, it's not always clear which projects are useful until after they have already taken off. They cannot be planned beforehand by a centralized entity.

From "Roads and Bridges - The Unseen Labor Behind Our Digital Infrastructure" (p107-108)
by Nadia Eghbal

Support Your Local Lemonade Stand

Stage	Key funding categories	Other possibilities
Concept	Employee side project	Grants, Bounties
Prototype	Grants, Employee side project, Sponsorware	Venture capital
Community Project	Membership, Grants, Events, Crowdfunding (one-time)	Venture capital, SaaS, Consulting, Books and merchandise, Donation button
Product	Venture capital, Membership, Open core, Dual license, SaaS, Grants, Events, Paid Support, Consulting, Crowdfunding (one-time)	Advertising and sponsorships, Books and merchandise, Donation button
Maintained	Trademark licensing, Membership, Open core, Dual license, SaaS, Grants, Events, Paid Support, Advertising and sponsorships, Crowdfunding (recurrent)	Venture capital, Consulting, Books and merchandise, Donation button

https://github.com/danielskatz/sustaining-research-projects   *Roughly ordered from large to small*
https://github.com/nayafia/lemonade-stand

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Questions to ask yourself

Photo by Simone Secci on Unsplash

- Do you understand the value proposition for your software?
    - What is so valuable that people will:
        - Advocate for it?
        - Donate their time to it?
        - Pay for it?
- Do you understand the key audiences for your software? And what they contribute / care about?
- How much control do you want to give up?
- How fast do you want to grow?

Different categories of funding are not mutually exclusive. Often a trade-off of "upfront effort" to "amount".

How to Get Paid for Open Source

- Hard to transition from cool project to sustainable infrastructure
- Maintenance and support are undervalued because of structural issues
- Many funding categories but understand requirements before choosing
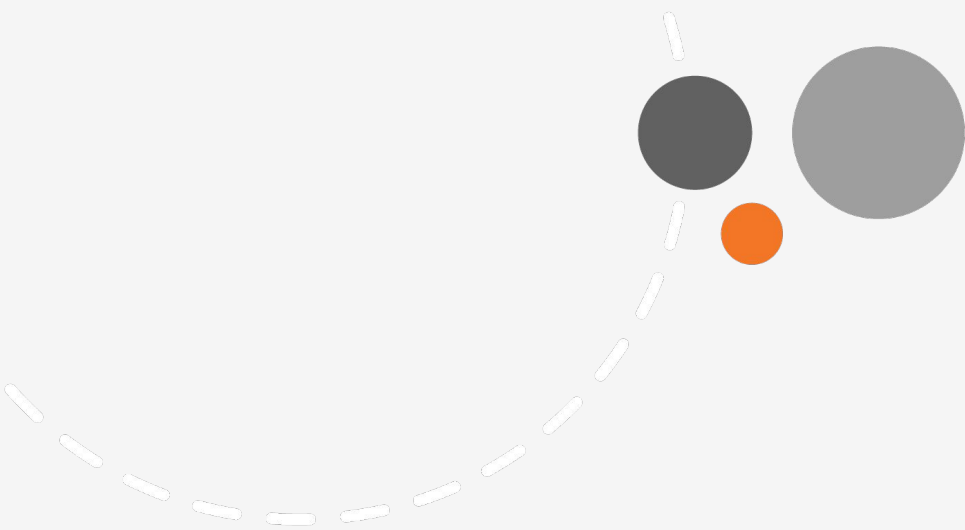
Please visit the GitHub repository for full tutorial:

github.com/jupytercon/2020-OpenSourceFunding

Thanks