EuroLLVM 2025

Bridging LLVM and SPIR-V for Heterogeneous Computing

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Current Status

- The SPIR-V backend began 2025 with two major advances
 - it has become an official target, exiting experimental status in LLVM, and
 - proved its value for heterogeneous computing by successfully passing the SYCL CTS test suite
- Focus and goals in 2025 are:
 - in the domain of compute applications
 - to harden presence in Intel deep learning workloads and extensions/backends for popular AI compiler codebases (e.g., OpenAI Triton, OpenXLA)
 - to become the default tool for LLVM IR to SPIR-V translation in the SYCL/DPC++ compiler and pave the way for integration with the AdaptiveCpp SYCL implementation
 - in general
 - to continue optimization of the internal representation of the translation process
 - to refactor the sequence and duties of a part of translation passes
 - to enhance the test suite with SYCL and Khronos LLVM/SPIR-V Translator cases

Agenda

- Scope and driving forces
- Actors and cases
- From technical details to tangible improvements
- Applications and dependencies
- Quality assurance

SPIR-V in Heterogeneous Computing

- SYCL: the compilation process is both complex and complicated
 - host and device code are to be compiled and linked into a single application binary
 - an implementation is to distribute transformation actions along the data flow, and balance compiler and runtime architecture design
- Implications of targeting multiple backends
 - reasoning in terms of unified representation of the source code
 - materialization of compute kernels across a wide range of backend APIs
 - decisions about when, how and what is to be converted on the way from backend-independent to device-specific

SPIR-V in Heterogeneous Computing

- SPIR-V and its native LLVM backend to manage the complexity
 - SPIR-V: a portable, standardized, cross-vendor unifying IR for programming heterogeneous accelerators
 - LLVM SPIR-V Backend vs. Khronos LLVM/SPIR-V Translator
 - why do we need any extra to the Khronos LLVM/SPIR-V Translator
- Adaptation of the LLVM SPIR-V Backend to the SYCL model
 - functional improvements
 - bridging the standard, environmental specifications, and LLVM concepts
- What about HLSL and Vulkan
 - improving overall maturity of the backend

SPIR-V Backend as a Crossroad: Actors and Cases

- The SPIR-V standard specification
 - computational vs. graphical flavor of SPIR-V
 - high expectations to a semantics flow from well established instructions
- Users of SPIR-V in the role of a portable IR
 - multiple frontends, run-time environments and backends (C/C++, Fortran, HLSL, SYCL, OpenMP, OpenCL, Level Zero, Vulkan, ...)
 - binding of builtins to intrinsics
 - reverse translation to LLVM IR as a part of a hardware driver
 - heterogeneous computing workflows (HPC, GPU programming for neural networks)
 - specialized types (e.g., LLM quantization)
- Concepts of LLVM IR and utilities/frameworks for code lowering
 - SPIR-V is a semantically rich language
 - LLVM concepts and utilities (IR, available passes, virtual registers and low-level types) alone are not enough to pass semantics
 - being a part of upstream closes access to some proprietary up-to-date features

Between SPIR-V and Execution Environments

- Kernel vs. Shader: overlapped domains and implicit restrictions
 - Vulkan implies Shader and the Logical addressing model, compute environments are behind Kernel and the non-Logical addressing (physical pointers)
 - SPIR-V capabilities may normatively "implicitly declare" Kernel or Shader
 - bit operations are enabled by either Shader or BitInstructions (that doesn't implicitly declare Kernel); OpImageRead/OpImageWrite
- The LLVM SPIR-V backend implementation
 - has a common for Kernel/Shader core logics of translation and overall stability
 - however, SPIRVSubtarget::isVulkanEnv()/isOpenCLEnv() are massively used to branch away Kernel and Shader-related features
 - helps to improve future versions of the SPIR-V specification, linking SPIR-V and execution environments
- A case study: the SPIR-V specification required Shader-coupled capabilities to read/write images in the OpenCL SPIR-V environment
 - https://github.com/KhronosGroup/SPIRV-Headers/issues/487

Between SPIR-V, Frontends and Runtimes

- Fragility of execution environments regarding SPIR-V pointer types
- The SPIR-V spec doesn't govern how a frontend is to resolve a problem of targeting SPIR-V instructions with LLVM instructions or intrinsics
- Typed SPIR-V instructions have (too) high expectations to a quality of semantics flow during translation
- Frontend and optimizer produce a lot of patterns influencing type inference
- Type inference is unconditionally needed and not always feasible

Type Inference

- The SPIR-V language has a developed type system
 - Most instructions in SPIR-V have a type identifier attached
 - Types are OpTypeXXX instructions, built up hierarchically, that is parameterized by results of dependent type definition instructions
- Type Inference
 - a Module pass
 - look for known IR patterns, reveal dependencies, and use prior knowledge to deduce types
 - dispatch meaning via internal intrinsics and is unfortunately intertwined with the "emit intrinsics" pass
 - desperately try not to rely on mangling

Type Inference: Steps of the Pass

- Optional: Parse and store argument types of function declarations.
- Analyze bodies of Module's functions, keeping a worklist of uncomplete type deduction to postpone some of records until we evaluate the Module in full
 - fix GEP result types ahead of type inference
 - process parameters by the function header, checking explicit type tips and call sites
 - forward traversal of function's instructions: use operand to deduce instruction's result
 - backward traversal of function's instructions: analyze instruction's result and operand to specify, or update, or cast other instruction's operands
 - forward traversal of PHIs

Type Inference: Examples of IR Patterns

- Use operand to deduce instruction's result
 - AllocaInst: getAllocatedType()
 - LoadInst: getPointerOperand()
 - GlobalValue: getValueType()
 - and check nested types for StructType, ArrayType, and VectorType
 - AddrSpaceCastInst: getPointerOperand()
 - BitCastInst
 - AtomicCmpXchgInst: getNewValOperand()
 - AtomicRMWInst: getValOperand()
 - PHINode: by majority of getIncomingValue(i)
 - SelectInst: getTrueValue()/getFalseValue()
 - CallInst: well-known functions
 - e.g., pointer type conversions between address spaces: to_global(), to_local(), to_private()
 - and also builtins and IntrinsicInst
 - spirv.Event
 - spirv.Image

Type Inference: IR Patterns and Validation

- Analyze instruction's result and operand to specify, or update, or cast other instruction's operands
 - evaluate a known type and its completeness from the perspective of type inference, and create a list of operands to apply the type to
 - Examples:
 - PHINode: all value operands must have the same type as the result
 - ICmpInst: operands must have the same type
 - AddrSpaceCastInst, BitCastInst, LoadInst, SelectInst: known relations between result/operands
 - CallInst: well-known builtins/SPIR-V opcodes, e.g.: Src/Dest pointers in OpGroupAsyncCopy, in OpAtomicXXX the result has the same type as the value pointed to by the Pointer operand
- Modes/Options
 - process Module's functions vs. post-processing
 - insert a final type vs. mark as a temporary guess (uncomplete type)
 - build a new type definition vs. update the existing definition vs. build a pointer type cast and propagate changes further to affected operand's users
 - maybe restore original function return type for the analysis

Type Inference: Steps of the Pass

- Specify types of function parameters
 - check function's call sites to evaluate actual argument operand types and formal parameter of the outer function
- Process the worklist of uncomplete pointer types
 - try to deduce a better type having full information about the Module's IR patterns and dependencies between values.
- Optionally: Support the function pointers extension
- Continuously
 - a user instruction may require an explicit pointer type conversion to remain valid: propagate type update information where required
 - modify an LLVM type to conform with future transformations in IRTranslator: replace <1 x Type> vector type by the element type
 - <1 x Type> is not a legal vector type in LLT: IRTranslator represents it as the scalar

Type Inference: Case Study

- OpGroupAsyncCopy
 - an asynchronous group copy between pointer from Source to Destination
 - described in terms of number of elements rather than number of bytes
 - to implement this correctly we absolutely must know the pointee type
- SPIR-V builtins: established approach
 - bring a stable interface to express a meaning missing in LLVM
 - unmangled name looks like __spirv_OpCode [_OptionalPostfix]
- _spirv_GroupAsyncCopy(..., opaque dest ptr, opaque src ptr, ...)
 - doesn't provide any hint as for the pointee type: try to deduce types from other relations when possible but use mangling as a last-ditch effort

Type Inference: Case Study

- Concerns: OpGroupAsyncCopy and __spirv_GroupAsyncCopy
 - "number of bytes" is more on the spirit of SPIR-V than "number of elements"
 - pointee type hint: mangling is a poor way to harvest semantical information, it is dangerous to rely on mangling
- Ideas
 - the link between the SPIR-V standard and the LLVM backend implementation is bidirectional
 - a new OpUntypedGroupAsyncCopyKHR works with untyped pointers
 - SPV_KHR_untyped_pointers is required
 - the SPIR-V spec doesn't govern "SPIR-V friendly" builtins
 - a frontend chooses how to expose the binding
 - a new __builtin_spirv_... builtin may convey more information

Logical Layout of a Module

- Normative: a linear list of instructions in the prescribed order
- Doesn't match well LLVM concepts and utilities
 - no easy mapping with LLVM Module as the top-level container of objects
 - explicit module scope sub-sections (names, annotations, types, constants, etc.) referred to and reused by function scope instructions
- Uniqueness
 - two different type identifiers mean two different types
 - the same opcode and operands of a non-aggregate, non-pointer type require reusing a single type definition
- Lack of support for module scope definitions during translation
 - module vs. function scope mismatch: no good place to keep definitions
 - duplicated type definitions are to be manually constructed
 - constants are created and duplicated from IRTranslator and on

Translation Time Performance vs. Module Layout

- Reference point
 - measure only speed, ignore memory (for now)
 - take as the input a SYCL test case: ~1Mb LLVM IR binary
 - realize the difference between a sequence of actions of "Ilvm-spirv ..." and "Ilc-O0-mtriple=spirv64-unknown-unknown ..."
 - the Khronos LLVM/SPIR-V Translator: ~0.38 seconds
- Starting position (Dec 2024)
 - about 213 seconds, ~x560 worse than Khronos Translator
 - main culprit (as simple as "perf record ..." / "perf report ...")
 - deduplicating definitions and gathering module scope instructions
 - inefficient data structures and general approach of tracing dependencies SPIR-V identifiers via an explicitly built graph
- Changes in PR #120415 result in ~x5 speed up (~42s)



Translation Time Performance vs. Module Layout/gMIR

- Problem: observed compile-time performance for a reference binary LLVM IR is still ~x105 worse than Khronos Translator time
- PR #130605 overhauls definitions deduplication, passing semantic info between passes and tracking of IR values and types (March 2025)
 - improved performance: ~x5 speed up (~7.5 seconds)
 - total ~x25 speed up comparing with the starting position
 - less bloated intermediate representation of internal translation steps
 - internal intrinsics: eliminate spv_track_constant, improve spv_assign_name
 - remove gMIR GET_XXX pseudo codes
 - generate ASSIGN_TYPE pseudo code only when required by instruction selection pattern matching rules
 - implementation has actually become simpler, meaning easier maintenance

Translation Time Performance: Reflections

- Future Work
 - representative set of test cases: use SYCL CTS and OpenCL CTS
 - address memory usage
 - isolate Type Inference into a separate pass and rethink it
- "emit-intrinsics" pass
 - pack IR names and decoration to restore eventually as SPIR-V opcodes
 - starts lowering of inline asm, switch
 - preprocess the Module before IRTranslator transformations
 - interlaces Type Inference IR traversals with generation of internal intrinsics
- The intent is to separate Type Inference from general lowering to internal intrinsics and encoding other kinds of semantical info
 - make it reusable for LLVM codebase and downstream projects
 - refactor and improve; compare to the Khronos Translator implementation

Translation Time Performance: a Bonus Win

- Problem
 - correct caching of LLVM IR entities for the sake of tracing and eventual deduplication for the module scope and reuse
 - the backend has no control and is not updated on changes in IR
- Motivation: previous approach led to stale or incorrect records
 - removal of instructions from gMIR
 - modifications during instruction selection
- Reworked cache for objects deduplication

Reworked Deduplication

- Key/value descriptors parameterized by components and provide redundancy to ensure eventual consistency
 - using IRHandle = std::tuple < const void *, unsigned, unsigned>;
 - using MIHandle = std::tuple < const MachineInstr*, Register, size_t>;
- Bi-directional mappings between IR entities and SPIR-V definitions to allow for efficient add, find, erase operations with fixing
 - IRHandle x MachineFunction → MIHandle and MachineInstr → IRHandle x MachineFunction
- Custom hashing
 - size_t to_hash(const MachineInstr*MI)
 - MI->getOpcode() and MI->getNumOperands()
 - combine operands after MI->getNumDefs()
 - MachineOperand::MO_Cimmediate: getType() and getClmm()
 - MachineOperand::MO_FPImmediate: getType() and getFPImm()
 - otherwise: getType()

Reworked Deduplication

- Add a record (LLVM IR/gMIR entity → MachineInstr)
 - protect against rewriting (keep actual or invalidate stale records)
 - map LLVM entity to unique IR Handle (use distinctive features of the object)
 - extend MachineInstr record with its def virtual register and custom hash value
- Find a record (LLVM IR/gMIR entity, MachineFunction) → MachineInstr
 - get from the map
 - invalidate if it's a stale or incorrect record
 - record is valid if there is a definition for the v-reg, and this definition is the same as the stored instruction
 - otherwise, reuse the definition
- Erase (MachineInstr)
 - a way to keep the cache valid in cases when code manipulations are controlled by the backend

Instruction Selection and TableGen

- Motivation: encode Instruction Selection in TableGen when feasible
- Problem: SPIR-V language is not an ISA
 - semantically rich, approximately at the same level as LLVM IR
 - emitted code includes type information as references to type instructions
- Register: a match (not perfect) to the SPIR-V notion of identifier
 - no relation to physical registers, doesn't care about name, size or alignment
 - specialize to express a type
- Register Classes: fine-tuning to correspond LLT to SPIR-V types
 - 1:1 relation with registers: 6 typed identifiers, a type def, any type and any id
- TableGen pattern matching uses a pseudo-instruction to carry types
 - simplification of pseudo-instructions: from 8 to a single ASSIGN_TYPE
 - instruction semantics normally is rich, requiring coding apart from TableGen

A pragmatic approach to GloballSel and Machine Verifier

- Machine Verifier does not recognize SPIR-V's OpPhi as a PHI node
 - Recall the issue as discussed at the 2024 LLVM Dev Mtg

```
bb.1.entry:
  successors: %bb.2, %bb.3
  OpBranchConditional %5:iid, %bb.2, %bb.3
bb.2.true label:
; predecessors: %bb.1
  successors: %bb.4(0x80000000); %bb.4(100.00%)
 %12:iid = OpFunctionCall %2:type @foo
  OpBranch %bb.4
bb.3.false label:
; predecessors: %bb.1
  successors: %bb.4(0x80000000); %bb.4(100.00%)
 %8:iid = OpFunctionCall %2:type @bar
  [\ldots]
  OpBranch %bb.4
bb.4.merge label:
; predecessors: %bb.3, %bb.2
 %15:id = OpPhi %2:type, %12:iid, %bb.2, %8:iid, %bb.3
*** Bad machine code: Virtual register defs don't dominate all
uses. ***
- v. register: %8
- v. register: %12
```

Initial observations:

- OpPhi is indeed a PHI node
 - starts a basic block
 - has pairs of incoming value and labels
- GenCode hardcodes what is PHI
- Option A: change GenCode to allow overriding the check whether the instruction opcode represents a PHI
- Option B: change the SPIR-V backend to postpone generation of OpPhi rather than to patch CodeGen

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 %12:iid = OpFunctionCall %2:type @foo
 OpBranch %bb.4
bb.3.false label:
; predecessors: %bb.1
  successors: %bb.4(0x80000000); %bb.4(100.00%)
 %8:iid = OpFunctionCall %2:type @bar
  [...]
  OpBranch %bb.4
bb.4.merge label:
; predecessors: %bb.3, %bb.2
 %15:id = G PHI %12:iid, %bb.2, %8:iid, %bb.3
```

More observations:

- ~300 references to MI.isPHI(), including opt.
 passes, may break SPIR-V CFG in a lot of ways
- E.g.: MachineSink opt. pass:

- We apply non-elegant but pragmatic <u>solution</u>
 - Generate TargetOpcode::PHI instead of SPIRV::OpPhi after Instruction Selection
 - Patch opcodes on finalizing the Module's logical layout

A pragmatic approach to GloballSel and Machine Verifier

 Consistent pointer types requires bitcasts, but G_BITCAST must change the type, and there are no typed pointer types

```
define void @foo(i1 %arg) {
 %r1 = tail call ptr @f1()
 %r2 = tail call ptr @f2()
 %ret = phi ptr [ %r1, %l1 ], [ %r2, %l2 ]
 ret void
define ptr @f1() {
 %p = alloca i8
  store i8 8, ptr %p
 ret ptr %p
define ptr @f2() {
 %p = alloca i32
 store i32 32, ptr %p
 ret ptr %p
```

Patching GloballSel vs. overheads of early instruction selection

- the notion of typed pointers is important for SPIR-V: we need bitcasts between pointers with different pointee types
- low level types of source and destination hold no details to improve validation of G_BITCAST
- the solution is to run instruction selection for G_BITCAST immediately after IR Translation, lowering to OpBitcast
- the only noticed consequence is that CombinerHelper cannot transform known patterns around G_BUILD_VECTOR

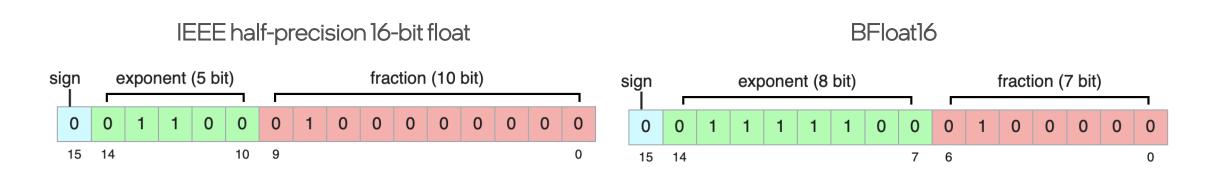
Widening Application Areas in Compute

- The SPIR-V Backend is in <u>SYCL/DPC++</u> CI workflows
- OpenAl Triton backend for Intel GPUs uses the SPIR-V backend API

- Intel MLIR-based Graph Compiler
 - proper support of GPUToLLVMSPV requires sync in terms of OpenCL builtins
 - MLIR lowering emits assembly and binary code via general LLVM's interface
 - SPIRVTargetMachine is to be in sync with the SPIR-V backend API
- Intel Extension for OpenXLA
 - In XLA CPU/GPU backends use LLVM for code generation, and the SPIR-V backend is a way to emit "native code" for Intel hardware
- Good news: more use cases and dependencies are expected
 - e.g.: BFloat16 and XLA support

BFloat16 (mis)representation in GloballSel

- SPIR-V backend and many other targets require correct and efficient handling of non-standard floating-point types like BFloat16.
- GloballSel has limited ability to represent non-IEEE floating-point types. The current LLT model in GloballSel primarily encodes bit widths but not the semantic differences among various FP types (BF16, FP16, etc.).
- Floating-point vs. integer distinctions are often inferred from the instruction opcode (e.g. G_FMUL implies a float), but 16-bit BF16 vs. 16-bit IEEE half is ambiguous.



Current solutions and problems

- Many projects introduce custom handling by encoding BF16 as "16-bit float" or "int16" + special intrinsics. Targets with separate int/float register banks attempt to deduce float usage from the surrounding operations. Some backends rely on extra metadata, flags, or frequent bitcasts instructions to signal "this is BF16!".
- All these solutions are hacky, lead to fragmentation in the LLVM world, and are error-prone!

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Solutions proposed by the community

- a) Extend LLT with extra bits
 - Add a small number of bits (2-4) to indicate whether a 16-bit scalar is BF16, IEEE-16, or another "variant float."
 - Straightforward for new types like BF16 but requires updating legalization/regbank code to respect the new type info.
- b) Redefine LLT Kinds (Integer, Float, Pointer, Vector, etc.)
 - Introduce richer Kind enumerations (e.g., FLOAT vs. INTEGER), plus a small "FPInfo" field for BF16 / IEEE16 / etc.
 - Makes float vs. integer explicit, removing guesswork. Larger refactorings in GloballSel passes needed, helps future expansions (FP8, TF32, etc.).
- c) Attach FP-Type Operand or Metadata
 - Keep LLT as is, but store a type-enum operand in FP operations (e.g. "BF16 operand" for G_FMUL).
 - Requires minimal changes to the LLT structure, but MIR becomes more verbose; passes that interpret types must now read an additional operand.
- d) Use Metadata / Analysis

https://discourse.llvm.org/t/rfc-globalisel-representing-fp-types-in-llt https://discourse.llvm.org/t/rfc-globalisel-adding-fp-type-information-to-llt

Quality Assurance

- The SPIR-V Backend test suite is constantly growing
 - 609 LIT tests as of March 2025
- Reflects necessity, priority and what's important to develop in the not quite well-established domain
- Instrumented not only with FileCheck, but with SPIR-V tools, most notably spirv-val
 - automatically run using Github Actions
- Mainly focused on
 - features, including 37 SPIR-V extensions
 - regression testing
 - general SPIR-V validity, including fragments from much bigger Conformance Test Suites
- Future Work
 - more compatibility testing in terms of the SPIR-V specification version?
 - identify weakly tested sub-systems/passes (a structured fuzzer? code coverage analysis)
 - automation of non-functional testing

The Roadblocks After Going Official/Non-experimental

- More buildbots and environments helped to reveal weak points
 - some quick post-promotion problem solving efforts were required to support the move
- Mainly minor issues
 - improve portability of the code (kind of a missing #include or select another library call)
 - address sanitizer complaints (an uninitialized variable to pick up a proper InstructionSet in the emit-intrinsics pass)
 - interaction with LLVM unit tests (move unit tests resources, a Module pointer, from the class-scope to a local scope of the class member function to be sure that before the test env is teared down the pointer is released)
- Buildbots testing SPIR-V backend revealed issues in our implementation of user-facing options parsing
 - different concurrency conditions in running unit tests
 - API and usage of the extensions list is reworked to remove writes to the global cl::opt variable; no calling cl::ParseCommandLineOptions() in multi-threaded context

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QA for Applications in Heterogeneous Computing

- The LLVM SPIR-V backend is OpenCL 3.0 and SYCL conformant
- OpenCL CTS
 - flaky tests are addressed by recent rework of caching of LLVM IR entities for tracing, deduplication and reuse
- SYCL CTS
 - as of March 2025 all known issues are addressed, including backports to LLVM 14-19 branches of Khronos Translator and type of GEP results in type inference
- Intel XPU backend for Triton: high pass rates in unit tests: 96-98%
 - a way to extend use cases and add a perspective (e.g., support of <1 x Type> vector type)
- SYCL end-to-end test suite: stable high pass rates: 94-99%
 - unsupported features
 - by intent as deprioritized, e.g.: FPGA
 - temporarily, e.g.: AddressSanitizer
 - features in progress, e.g.: recently added extensions, like SPV_INTEL_joint_matrix

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QA for Applications in Heterogeneous Computing

- Complicated workflow: downstream intel/llvm, upstream LLVM/SPIR-V Backend, the Khronos LLVM/SPIR-V Translator, CPU/GPU OpenCL and Level Zero run-times and drivers
 - a time lag is always present
 - it's hard to achieve actual pass rates due to mismatch between components version
- Continuous testing out of LLVM
 - scheduled SYCL CTS runs as one of https://github.com/intel/llvm CI workflows
 - precommit CI workflow in https://github.com/intel/IIvm running the SYCL end-to-end test suite
 - Intel XPU backend for Triton: a CI workflow in https://github.com/intel/intel-xpu-backendfor-triton

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Non-functional Testing: Run-Time Performance

- On the stage of initial probes: a thorough/automated approach is to do
- GROMACS benchmark set
 - No OpenMP: a statistically significant but really small difference between means
 - SPIR-V Backend: time elapsed: ~1342s, perf (ns/day): 1.288
 - Khronos Translator: time elapsed: ~1378s, perf (ns/day): 1.254
 - t-Test, α = 0.05: p-value = 0.03 for both time and performance
 - With OpenMP: no statistically significant difference between means
 - SPIR-V Backend: time elapsed: ~835s, perf (ns/day): 2.069
 - Khronos Translator: time elapsed: ~835s, perf (ns/day): 2.069
 - t-Test, $\alpha = 0.05$: p-value = 0.98/0.99
 - Run-time performance of the SPIR-V Backend's code is on-par with Khronos Translator's
- Future Work
 - part of planned developments of non-functional testing procedures
 - enhance along axes of benchmarks, options, environments and automation

Thank you! Questions?