Title: **What's the catch?**

Subtitle: Funding open source with money from corporations and governments

Speaker: **nat**

Short: *Increasingly, there is money available to fund free software projects; however it often comes from large organizations, governments, and corporations, who all have their own goals and missions. The question becomes, if you decide to work with these groups, is it possible for your project to maintain a set of goals and ethics that are its own? Members of the Open Technology Institute will draw on our experiences in partnering with large interested funders (US Government, Google), and facilitate an audience discussion of how this funding model can work, the challenges that can arise and the complicated ethics around it.*

Long: Creating complicated multi-layered open source projects requires development, maintenance and ongoing commitments. Often, to do these things you need money. Paying developers and hackers can be a way for a project to work towards quality and sustainability, assuring that people have time to fix to bugs, handle support and work with others. There is increasingly money available; however it often comes from source like governments, major tech companies, universities, and large foundations. Each have their own missions and goals that are likely distinct from those of your project. The question becomes, if you decide to work with these funders, is it possible for your project to create and maintain a set of goals that are its own? To be sure, this is not the only way to fund a project, and it is not a good fit for all projects. However, it is a choice that many have made. We want to have a discussion about that choice. Drawing on our experiences in partnerships with USAID (for Commotion Wireless), as well as Google (for the Measurement Lab), members of the Open Technology Institute want to share what we've learned, and facilitate a discussion on what it means to make the choice to pursue these types of funding. We want this to be a broad discussion, with people who have made similar choices (or as importantly the opposite ones), and not a sales pitch for the choices our organization has made. We've discussed this at length amongst ourselves, and are curious to hear what CCC has to say. Some questions that we would like to see frame the discussion are:

- Is taking funding from governments and/or giant corporations to fund free software ethical at all?
- If so, how do you decide your project's limits?
- How do you figure out where your goals align or overlap with a funder's goals in ways that are helpful to your project?
- How do you respond to allegations that your are doing your funder's dirty work? (ie: the assumption that you are putting backdoors in your code because you are taking money from a government)