# Open Source United

## Common Policy Framework

*Release Candidate 1 (RC1), November 2024*

opensource.un.org

# Why Join Open Source United?

We're thrilled about your interest and invite your organization to partner with us in building an inclusive, collaborative, and open digital community. By joining the Open Source United community of practice and embracing the Common Policy Framework, your organization becomes part of a dynamic ecosystem dedicated to accelerating open source initiatives across the UN System. Here's how your organization stands to benefit:

**Accelerate Solutions with a Robust Digital Foundation:** Leverage existing open source assets and shared best practices from across the UN to deliver scalable solutions faster. Whether addressing local, regional, or global challenges, you'll gain access to resources that reduce development time, aligning digital tools quickly with your mission.

**Standardize and Secure Open Source Practices Across the UN:** The common policy framework introduces a unified, standardized approach, streamlining compliance and governance while enhancing security. With best-in-class security measures embedded, open source projects are protected from vulnerabilities, creating a resilient and consistent open source landscape across agencies.

**Mobilize Expertise and Expand Capacity:** Access a global network of UN talent and expertise, building connections that open doors for collaboration and shared learning. Through Open Source United, your team can participate in specialized training and capacity building initiatives, gaining the skills to lead and innovate effectively in open source projects.

**Transform Prototypes into Scalable Solutions:** Take your innovations from pilot to production, scaling prototypes into operational tools that can be deployed across regions. By moving successful projects to full-scale implementations, your organization enhances its impact and more effectively supports the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Achieve Strategic Alignment with UN-Wide Goals:** The framework aligns open source efforts with the UN's core mission, ensuring agencies work towards shared goals and maximizing the collective impact of digital transformation. With streamlined governance and risk management, open source contributions across the UN System become consistent, strategic, and globally relevant.

By joining Open Source United and adopting the Common Policy Framework, your organization will lead in digital innovation, shaping the future of UN-supported Digital Public Goods. Together, we can unlock the transformative potential of open source.

# Table of Contents

# 1. Introduction

The Common Policy Framework unifies open source efforts across the UN system, providing clear principles for governance, licensing, and risk management. It offers guidance for secure, compliant development and serves as the foundation for other key enablers like legal compliance, software catalog, and capacity building programs, ensuring a coordinated approach for all UN agencies. The following subsections outline the vision, mission, and objectives of the Common Policy Framework, detailing its strategic purpose and intended impact.

## 1.1 Vision

Our vision is for the United Nations system to fully embrace open source. We aspire to see a United Nations that not only champions open source principles and technologies but also fosters partnerships that harness these principles as key drivers for accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

Open Source United promotes a set of forward-thinking principles such as: developments that are open-by-default, that contribute back, are secure-by-design, promote inclusive participation and community building, are designed reusable, documented, empowering the community, to sustain and scale.

The UN open source principles highlight the importance of encouraging community contributions, prioritizing security from the beginning, and promoting inclusive participation through outreach and support. We also focus on designing projects for reusability and interoperability, ensuring they come with comprehensive documentation. Ultimately, our goal is to recognize and empower contributors to enhance engagement within the open source ecosystem.

As part of the UN 2.0 quintet of change, we envision a strategic future UN open source software factory and responsible framework, designed with seamless automation, to serve as a hub for harmonizing, developing, improving, deploying, and boosting new and existing open source solutions that enable the UN to respond more effectively to global challenges and drive sustainable development through technological innovation.

This vision includes aligning the policies and practices of all UN bodies to ensure a cohesive and unified approach to open source initiatives, creating an environment where innovation and collaboration can thrive inside the UN and with the outside ecosystem.

## 1.2 Mission

Our mission is to empower the UN system through the provision of a comprehensive open source platform comprising clear compliance guidelines, supportive policies, training programs, and a suite of development tools that respect the UN philosophy and charter, while nurturing collaborative open source software development.

These elements are designed to work in harmony, simplifying the processes of open source responsible adoption, contribution, sharing, and collaboration throughout the UN and beyond. We are committed to streamlining processes, facilitating collaboration, enhancing capacity, and advocating support of Digital Public Goods within the UN community.

With our mission, we aim to cultivate an environment where innovation flourishes, and impactful solutions are developed collaboratively. Embracing open source not only promotes inclusivity, transparency, and sustainability but also positions the UN as a leader in leveraging technology for global good.

## 1.3 Objectives

Our aim is to simplify the process of adopting, contributing to, and sharing open source solutions for UN agencies, programs and bodies, whether it is for internal developments within agencies, collaborations between organizations, or extending beyond the UN.

To support this mission, the Open Source United community of practice will pursue the following key objectives:

- **To coordinate the construction and sustainability of a comprehensive common open source platform**, liaise with and support existing UN structures, projects, policies, frameworks and guidelines.
- **To establish a foundational Common Policy Framework** that unites and guides the implementation of open source practices across the UN system, including collaboration, contribution and usage of open source.
- **To streamline the licensing process** by recommending a preferred set of licenses and collaborating with UN organizations' legal teams to ensure compatibility and suitability for UN projects.
- **To create and maintain a centralized and standardized catalog** of UN-stewarded open source software projects, facilitating discoverability, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

- **To establish and maintain a code hosting platform** that enables scalable collaboration with and among UN entities, while also securely managing access and mitigating risks associated with external contributions.
- **To foster a culture of responsible use of open source** as well as meaningful contributions and collaborations throughout the UN while understanding license compliance, best practices and governance models.

## 1.4 Scope

The Common Policy Framework follows an incremental approach to guide all entities within the UN System including specialized agencies, funds, programs, and other affiliated bodies as they advance in adopting open source practices. It begins with foundational guidelines tailored for entities at initial stages of open source engagement and progresses through increasingly advanced levels of maturity. At each stage, organizations are encouraged to deepen their commitment to best practices, enhancing alignment with the policy as their experience and capacity grow. This structured progression supports each UN System entity in responsibly integrating open source into their operations, adapting their commitments to match their operational maturity while contributing to the UN's mission of collaboration and innovation.

This Common Policy Framework applies to all UN personnel who engage with open source software, including staff on both fixed and short-term contracts, consultants, temporary assistants, interns, cost-free experts, and any other personnel hired to provide services within the UN. It covers open source software acquired through various channels, such as donations and contributions from key stakeholders, as well as external partners collaborating with the UN. Additionally, it encompasses both packaged software licensed from vendors and custom software developed under contract.

**Out of Scope**

This Common Policy Framework specifically focuses on open source software and its applications within the UN System. It does not cover related domains such as open data, open standards, open AI models, or open content, which fall outside the scope of this community of practice. These areas, while aligned in principles, are addressed through separate initiatives and policies within the UN framework.

# 2. Guiding Principles

Open Source United is a community of open source advocates, practitioners, and stakeholders from across the UN System. We strive to be a model for the global community, demonstrating the transformative power of open source in enabling collaborative problem-solving, knowledge sharing, and capacity building across borders and sectors. We believe in the power of open source to drive innovation, transparency, and collaboration in support of the UN's mission and UN 2.0 shift in open source culture "to turbocharge support for the Sustainable Development Goals".

Our community is committed to:

| | |
|---|---|
| **1**<br>**Open by Default** | **Making Open Source the standard approach for our projects.** Reinforce our commitment to existing practices by establishing Open Source as the default approach for development within our organization. Ensure that our projects remain impartial, neutral, and independent, aligning with the common goals of the UN, while avoiding tight coupling with commercial products or the promotion of any specific commercial interests. |
| **2**<br>**Contribute Back** | **Encouraging everyone to actively participate in the Open Source ecosystem.** This principle emphasizes that contributions should not be just about using Open Source but also actively giving back to the community through code, documentation, or other forms of engagement. |
| **3**<br>**Secure by Design** | **Making security a priority in all our software projects, not just Open Source**. Security practices should be embedded from the outset, with thorough peer reviews, regular audits, and adherence to best security practices to maintain a secure codebase across all projects. |
| **4**<br>**Foster Inclusive Participation and Community Building** | **Enabling and facilitating diverse and inclusive contributions from all, while creating a supportive and collaborative environment**. Create inclusive communities by engaging in targeted outreach, mentorship programs, and providing tools that support contributors from diverse backgrounds. This includes efforts to reach underrepresented groups, ensuring language accessibility, and providing resources that lower the barriers to entry for participation. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **5**<br><br>**Design for Reusability - White Labeling** | **Designing projects with the intent to be reused by other teams and organizations, through service-agnostic architecture components, configurability, easy installation, and modularity.** Adopt a service-agnostic approach and Open Standards, our projects will be interoperable across various platforms and ecosystems. Ensure that our solutions are flexible, adaptable, and easily transferable, allowing different teams and organizations to tailor them to their needs. |
| **6**<br><br>**Provide Documentation (using, implementing, developing, managing)** | **Providing thorough documentation for end-users, integrators, and developers to ensure the value of the project**. Provide clear, comprehensive and provide step-by-step instructions, examples, tutorials, and multilingual documents where possible. Documentation should cater to different audiences, from end-users to developers, ensuring that anyone can effectively use, implement, or contribute to the project. |
| **7**<br><br>**RISE (Recognize, Incentivize, Support, and Empower)** | **Welcoming participation from all, empowering individuals and communities to actively participate, raise awareness, and acquire skills in Open Source.** Emphasize the importance of recognizing and incentivizing contributions while providing the necessary support and resources to enable meaningful participation. |
| **8**<br><br>**Sustain and Scale** | **Supporting the development of solutions that are sustainable in the long term and scalable to meet the evolving needs of the UN system and beyond**. Prioritize humanity by utilizing open source technology in ways that center human needs. This includes establishing long-term funding models, fostering partnerships, engaging with the community regularly, and building solutions with adaptable architectures. This approach will ensure that projects can evolve and scale as needed, effectively meeting future challenges and demands. |

# 3. Policy Stages and Statements

To address the **varying levels of readiness across the UN System**, the Common Policy Framework offers a **phased engagement model**. This approach enables UN agencies, programs, and specialized bodies to progressively integrate the framework, building capacity and expertise as they move through structured stages. The model outlines four distinct stages, from initial exploration to full optimization, each with tailored tools, support mechanisms, and specific objectives. This phased pathway provides clarity on expectations at each stage, guiding organizations on the resources and support available to help them implement open source practices effectively. Through this model, UN organizations can identify their current position within the framework, setting achievable goals as they advance their practices.

The following policy guidelines detail the requirements at each stage, offering the flexibility and support needed for organizations to adopt open source responsibly, strengthen compliance, and create sustainable, impactful solutions aligned with the UN's mission.

## 3.1 Stage 1: Exploration and Initial Compliance

| ID | Guidelines | Governance Structure (open source team, project, OSPO…) | Core Policy Statements | Licensing & Compliance | Software Catalog | Code Hosting Platform | Capacity Building |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | Stage 1 | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | Recommended | Recommended | Optional |

At this stage, agencies start exploring open source principles and familiarize themselves with the foundational elements of the Common Policy Framework. This includes an introduction to the governance model, compliance guidelines, and licensing schemes.

- Tools & Support Provided:
    - Capacity Building program: agencies participate in introductory training to build foundational knowledge on governance, licensing, and open source compliance.
    - Software Catalog access: agencies explore and contribute to the UN's curated catalog of open source solutions, understanding available tools and compliance requirements, while referencing theirs.
    - Initial Governance guidance: basic governance templates and guidelines are provided to help agencies set up initial governance structures, such as an open source team, project, or an Open Source Program Office (OSPO).
- Key Objectives:
    - Build foundational knowledge and familiarize with the governance model.
    - Begin applying recommended licensing schemes and compliance guidelines.

## 3.2 Stage 2: Development and Compliance Implementation

| ID | Guidelines | Governance Structure (open source team, project, OSPO…) | Core Policy Statements | Licensing & Compliance | Software Catalog | Code Hosting Platform | Capacity Building |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S2 | Stage 2 | Recommended | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | Recommended |

Agencies at this level begin to implement open source practices, establishing formal governance structures and aligning with recommended guidelines, including those for licensing and compliance.

- Tools & Support Provided:
    - Governance model setup: identify open source champions contributing to the Open Source United community of practice, and assistance in creating an open source project team.
    - Code Hosting Platform access: agencies gain access to the code hosting platform for managing open source projects, with guidance on applying UN-approved licensing schemes.
    - Licensing and Compliance guidance: tailored support is provided to implement recommended licensing and ensure alignment with compliance measures during project development.
- Key Objectives:
    - Establish formal governance and implement open source practices.
    - Ensure compliance with licensing schemes and align projects with the Common Policy Framework.

## 3.3 Stage 3: Scaling and Advanced Compliance

| ID | Guidelines | Governance Structure (open source team, project, OSPO…) | Core Policy Statements | Licensing & Compliance | Software Catalog | Code Hosting Platform | Capacity Building |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S3 | Stage 3 | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | Recommended |

Agencies at this level actively scale their open source initiatives while fully aligning with the Common Policy Framework's advanced guidelines, ensuring comprehensive compliance.

- Tools & Support Provided:
    - Governance model setup: assistance in creating a dedicated Open Source Program Office (OSPO) and implementing governance practices in line with the Common Policy Framework.
    - Advanced Capacity Building programs: training on scaling projects and deepening compliance, including licensing audits and risk mitigation strategies.

    - Collaboration tools: support for collaborating with other agencies and managing joint projects is provided in line with the Common Policy Framework.
    - Licensing and Compliance audits: regular reviews to verify adherence to guidelines and ensure that scaling projects remain compliant with UN standards.
- Key Objectives:
    - Scale open source projects while maintaining full compliance with guidelines and recommended licensing schemes.
    - Collaborate with other agencies to drive innovation and share best practices.

## 3.4 Stage 4: Optimization and Strategic Leadership

| ID | Guidelines | Governance Structure (open source team, project, OSPO…) | Core Policy Statements | Licensing & Compliance | Software Catalog | Code Hosting Platform | Capacity Building |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S4 | Stage 4 | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** |

Agencies at this highest level optimize open source practices, fully integrate the Common Policy Framework guidelines, and lead within the UN system, setting examples of compliance and strategic implementation.

- Tools & Support Provided:
    - Governance optimization: assistance in refining governance models to maximize efficiency and compliance.
    - Custom Code Hosting solutions: agencies can tailor their environments within the code hosting platform for optimized integration and compliance.
    - Innovation and knowledge sharing programs: opportunities for agencies to lead workshops and mentor others in implementing best practices in alignment with the Common Policy Framework.
- Key Objectives:
    - Optimize governance and open source practices for compliance and efficiency.
    - Lead collaborative efforts and knowledge sharing to set standards across the UN system.

## 3.5 Stage Readiness Self-Assessment

The Stage readiness assessment process enables UN entities to self-evaluate their current stage in open source adoption using synthesis tables that clearly outline stages, associated readiness indicators, and levels of commitment. This structured self-assessment is rooted in the policy's key statements, helping organizations pinpoint where they stand in the Common Policy Framework and identify actionable steps for growth.

UN organizations begin by reviewing synthesis tables that categorize each stage, from Exploration and Initial Compliance (Stage 1), to Development and Compliance Implementation (Stage 2), to Scaling and Advanced Compliance (Stage 3), and Optimization and Strategic Leadership (Stage 4).

Each stage includes readiness indicators and requirements aligned with the framework's core policy statements, covering areas like governance structures, licensing and compliance, use of tools, capacity building efforts, and monitoring. For each stage, the provided table outlines specific levels of commitment expected, helping agencies understand both current achievements and areas needing development. For instance:

- Stage 1 readiness indicators focus on initial familiarity with governance models, basic compliance, and optional engagement with the UN's open source resources. The commitment level here is introductory, encouraging organizations to begin exploring foundational aspects.
- Stage 2 includes intermediate readiness indicators such as establishing formal governance structures and implementing required licensing and compliance practices. At this stage, the level of commitment increases to include adherence to UN-approved licensing schemes and participation in community capacity-building.
- Stage 3 and Stage 4 readiness indicators emphasize scaling and optimizing open source practices.

Each organization reviews its alignment with these indicators, marking areas of full, partial, or minimal alignment based on current practices. A summary table then helps entities identify their overall stage by tallying readiness across indicators, showing clear next steps and guiding them in setting practical goals to achieve higher levels of commitment and integration.

| ID | Guidelines | Governance Structure (open source team, project, OSPO…) | Core Policy Statements | Licensing & Compliance | Software Catalog | Code Hosting Platform | Capacity Building |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | Stage 1 | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | Recommended | Recommended | Optional |
| S2 | Stage 2 | Recommended | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | Recommended |
| S3 | Stage 3 | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | Recommended |
| S4 | Stage 4 | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** |

By using these synthesis tables, UN entities can conduct a thorough self-assessment, gauge their progress, and access a structured pathway to strengthen their open source capabilities, ensuring compliance and alignment with the Common Policy Framework from the core statements to implementation strategy and associated pillars.

## 3.6 Core Policy Statements

This section outlines the **fundamental requirements and expectations (baseline)** for UN specialized agencies, funds, programs, and other affiliated bodies adopting open source practices as part of the Common Policy Framework. These statements provide the foundational and guiding principles before implementing detailed strategies and using accompanying tools and resources.

1. **Open Source Adoption and Prioritization**

- UN specialized agencies, funds, programs, and other affiliated bodies are to prioritize open source solutions for software procurement, development, and upgrades. Open source should be the default choice when it meets functional, security, and operational criteria.

2. **Open Source development and production**

- Organizations shall require vendors to follow collaborative development practices that mirror open source principles (inner source) in their internal development processes, including a focus on reusability, modularity, code sharing, peer review, security compliance, and transparent documentation.
- Organizations' IT departments and their associated IT vendors shall prioritize the use of open source technologies when designing and developing systems. This preference should be explicitly stated in all relevant procurement documents and contracts.
- Public engagement / feedback loop is encouraged throughout the development lifecycle.

3. **Establishment of Governance Structures**

- Organizations are to establish an Open Source Program Office (OSPO) or a similar governance structure in line with the OSU governance model to manage open source activities.
- Governance structures should define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes to ensure transparency, accountability, and collaboration in open source projects.

4. **Compliance with Licensing and Intellectual Property Standards**

- Organizations are required to use licenses recommended by the Common Policy Framework, ensuring clarity and freedom to modify, distribute, and reuse software.
- Organizations should maintain records of contributions and adhere to intellectual property rights to ensure legal compliance and participant understanding of terms.

- Agencies are required to implement a Contributor License Agreement (CLA), which contributors must acknowledge and accept during account creation on the Code Hosting Platform (GitLab) when using the recommended UNICC-hosted platform. This "acknowledgment and acceptance" process acquires the CLA without needing a formal signature. However, if contributors are using platforms outside of the recommended UNICC hosting, a signed CLA will be required.

5. **Security and Risk Management**

- Open source projects (whether created or modified) must adhere to the security review protocols established in the organization's Information Security policies and software development guidelines.
- Organizations must implement risk mitigation strategies (when applicable with the tools and guidance provided by the Common Policy Framework) to safeguard data and maintain software integrity.

6. **Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing**

- Organizations shall implement an open source training program to ensure staff competency in governance, compliance, and project management.
- Organizations are encouraged to participate in Open Source United and collaborate with other entities to share best practices, enhancing collective expertise and building a strong open source community within the UN system.

7. **Use of the UN Open Source Tools and Platforms**

- Organizations must use the recommended tools and platforms, including the code hosting platform, software catalog, and compliance resources, to facilitate collaboration and ensure project compliance.
- All open source projects must be registered in the software catalog, with regular updates to maintain transparency and support collaboration.
- Unmaintained projects shall be archived or retired according to established sunset procedures.

8. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement**

- Organizations are required to monitor the progress of open source projects using the Common Policy Framework tools and perform regular evaluations to ensure alignment with UN standards.
- Organizations should have processes for continuous improvement to adapt practices and governance models in response to emerging technologies, security threats, and global challenges.

| Core Policy Self-Assessment & Expected Stages Commitments | | | Commitment“ “x”: partial “X”:full | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ID** | **Core Policy Statement** | **Description** | **S1** | **S2** | **S3** | **S4** |
| P1 | Open Source Adoption and Prioritization | Open source prioritized for procurement, as default choice. | x | x | X | X |
| P2 | Open Source Development and Production | Vendors are required to follow collaborative development practices, based on open source principles. | | x | X | X |
| | | IT departments and vendors to prioritize open source when designing and developing systems. | | x | X | X |
| | | New custom-developed code to be made open source under recommended license scheme(s) by Open Source United. | | x | X | X |
| | | Public engagement / feedback loop encouraged during the development lifecycle. | x | X | X | X |
| P3 | Establishment of Governance Structures | Establish an Open Source Program Office (OSPO) or similar governance structure. | | x | X | X |
| | | Define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes to ensure transparency, accountability, and collaboration. | x | x | X | X |
| P4 | Compliance with Licensing and Intellectual Property | Use licenses recommended by the Common Policy Framework. | | x | X | X |
| | | Maintain records of contributions and adhere to intellectual property rights. | x | x | X | X |
| | | Implement CLA, signed by contributors, before accepting any contributions. | x | x | X | X |
| P5 | Security and Risk Management | Adhere to the security review protocols established in the organization’s Information Security policies. | | x | X | X |
| | | Implement risk mitigation strategies (when possible) using the tools and guidance provided by Open Source United. | x | x | X | X |
| P6 | Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing | Engage in open source training programs to ensure staff competency. | x | x | X | X |
| | | Participate in the Open Source United community of practice and collaborate with other entities. | | x | X | X |
| P7 | Use of UN Open Source Tools and Platforms | Utilize Open Source United recommended tools, platforms, and register projects for compliance and collaboration. | | x | X | X |
| | | Register open source projects / initiatives in the software catalog, with regular updates. | | x | X | X |
| | | Unmaintained projects to be archived or retired according to established sunset procedures. | | | x | X |
| P8 | Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement | Monitor the progress of open source projects using the Common Policy Framework tools and perform regular evaluations. | | | x | X |
| | | Setup processes for continuous improvement to adapt practices and governance models. | | | x | X |

# 4. Implementation Strategy

## 4.1. Governance Structure and Oversight

Proper governance of the Open Source United initiative and its Common Policy Framework is essential to ensure effective, consistent, and collaborative implementation across the UN System. To this end, the Open Source United community of practice will establish the **UN Open Source Strategic Implementation Board (OSSIB)**, a participatory governance body responsible for overseeing policy adherence and strategic execution. OSSIB will include representatives from any UN Secretariat Offices, Principal Organs, Specialized Agencies, Funds, Programs, and other entities prioritizing open source as a strategic focus, with each entity appointing one representative to the Board. Initially, OSSIB membership will be extended to entities that actively participated in the DTN Open Source United community, and future members can join through a petition process, subject to Board approval.

The primary purpose of the Board is to develop guidelines and procedures to support policy execution. The Board's mandate includes developing guidelines, managing shared resources and tools, and facilitating collaboration among UN entities and external partners. The Open Source United community of practice may also create specialized working groups to drive policy initiatives and address specific implementation needs, promoting a unified and sustainable approach to open source within the UN. The Board shall assume a coordination role on shared content and online tools that are intended to be used for collaboration between its member entities as well as with certain external partners whose members may see fit for the success of their open source activities. Additional responsibilities of the Board include:

### 4.1.1. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Establish mechanisms for monitoring the adoption and impact of open source initiatives across UN entities.
- Apply best practices to assess the health and sustainability of open source communities where the UN has leadership or co-leadership roles.
- Explore and, if feasible, implement an online "dashboard" with real-time or regularly-updated metrics on open source activities within UN entities.
- Conduct regular reviews and updates of the Common Policy Framework to incorporate technological advancements and address evolving organizational needs.

### 4.1.2. Education & Capacity Development

- Aggregate and share existing educational resources on open source methodologies, strategies, and practices with Board members and extend access to the UN community.
- Collaboratively develop new training materials, workshops, and events in partnership with members, expanding outreach to the wider UN community.
- Organize an annual international gathering for open source practitioners, policymakers, and experts to discuss current trends, challenges, and opportunities in open source.
- Assess the feasibility of, and implement if practicable, mentorship programs for open source projects led by UN entities or strategically valuable to the UN. These programs aim to provide learning experiences for students and others, encourage new contributions, and foster digital cooperation beyond the UN.

### 4.1.3. Collaboration and Partnerships

- Strengthen partnerships with external entities, including international bodies, governments, civil society, and private sector organizations, to enhance open source initiatives.
- Develop a vetted roster of international open source experts available for consultation or volunteering to assist UN projects or initiatives.
- Promote joint projects and collaborative efforts for creating, maintaining, and supporting open source software, and advocate for open source both within the UN and in external platforms.

This mandate equips OSU to oversee, support, and drive the effective integration of open source practices across the UN, fostering a culture of transparency, collaboration, and innovation. To participate effectively in the OSSIB Board, UN organizations need to establish a basic governance structure (i.e., open source team, project, OSPO etc), even if minimal, that aligns with open source practices and OSSIB's collaborative goals. At a minimum, each organization should designate an open source liaison or representative who will serve as the main point of contact and advocate for open source initiatives within their entity. This representative should have an understanding of the organization's digital and technical priorities and be prepared to collaborate with OSSIB members on policy adherence and strategic planning. Additionally, each organization should define preliminary roles and responsibilities related to open source, ensuring transparency and accountability for open source activities. This minimal governance foundation allows

organizations to engage meaningfully in OSU/OSSIB, contribute to joint initiatives, and gradually develop their internal open source capabilities.

### 4.1.4. Implementation Guidelines Overview

| ID | Guidelines | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G1 | Designate an open source representative (liaison) | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| G2 | Establish a basic open source governance structure | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| G3 | Develop minimal governance documentation | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| G4 | Participate in OSSIB governance reviews | Optional | Optional | Recommended | **Required** |
| G5 | Monitor open source adoption and impact within the organization | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| G6 | Implement a dashboard for open source metrics | Optional | Optional | Recommended | **Required** |
| G7 | Engage in educational and capacity building on open source | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| G8 | Collaborate on training materials and workshops with OSU members | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| G9 | Organize or participate in an annual gathering for open source knowledge exchange | Optional | Recommended | Recommended | **Required** |
| G10 | Build partnerships and identify external experts for open source support | Optional | Optional | Recommended | **Required** |

## 4.2. Licensing and Compliance

The Open Source United initiative emphasizes the importance of **using licenses approved by the Open Source Initiative (OSI) to ensure compliance and suitability** for UN projects. OSI-approved licenses are those that comply with the Open Source Definition and have been reviewed and approved by the OSI. These licenses facilitate the free use, modification, and distribution of software, promoting a collaborative and transparent development model.

The Common Policy Framework outlines the need for a unified approach to open source licensing across the UN system. The Open Source Licensing Working Group is currently working on a preferred set of licenses and collaborating with legal teams to ensure compatibility. In the interim, until such a set of preferred licenses are available, stakeholders are encouraged to utilize the offerings outlined in the “Capacity Building for Open Source Software Licensing” below to receive more targeted open source software licensing guidance for their projects if required.

### 4.2.1. Open Source Software Requirements Across UN Projects

To identify the most common open source software licenses for projects within the UN family, a requirements survey has been launched within the Open Source United community. The results of this survey will be used to create packages of open source software licenses, which will then be reviewed by UN legal teams.

### 4.2.2. Capacity Building for Open Source Software Licensing

A comprehensive list of learning resources and guidance will be prepared and hosted on the Open Source United website. These resources will include reading materials, webinars, and a use case matrix to assist in selecting an appropriate license from the recommended open source software licenses for UN organizations. Additionally, open source software licensing experts within UN organizations will be available for consultation and guidance during OSS License Virtual Office Hours, starting from October 2024.

### 4.2.3. Legal Review of Recommended Open Source Licenses

Prior to the legal review, research on privileges and immunities, as well as indemnity, will be conducted. A legal team from a UN organization will be requested to provide a legal opinion on the selected open source software licenses for use in UN open source projects. Until a formal review is available, the open source software license package will be made accessible to the Open Source United community, allowing open source software project owners to seek legal clearance with their respective legal teams within their agencies.

### 4.2.4. Implementation Guidelines Overview

| ID | Guidelines | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | Apply basic compliance measures | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** |
| C2 | Adopt recommended licensing schemes | Optional | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** |
| C3 | Conduct regular compliance audits | Optional | Optional | Recommended | Recommended |
| C4 | Implement risk mitigation strategies | Optional | Optional | Recommended | Recommended |

## 4.3. Software Catalog and Registration Process

Open Source United, hosted on opensource.un.org, aims to establish a centralized and standardized catalog of open source software projects across UN agencies, promoting collaboration, knowledge sharing, and transparency. This platform is the designated hub for registering, maintaining, and discovering open source initiatives within the UN System, ensuring a streamlined process for agencies to contribute and engage with the global open

source community. Each project registered undergoes a rigorous review process, and focal points are appointed to maintain accuracy, oversee repository management, and facilitate community interactions. By mandating registration and quality control, opensource.un.org not only enhances discoverability but also sets a foundation for secure, collaborative development aligned with UN standards. This initiative represents a critical step toward building a cohesive open source ecosystem across the UN, fostering innovation and accessibility in support of the UN's mission and values.

### 4.3.1. The Centralized Platform for Open Source Projects

opensource.un.org serves as the centralized platform for all UN agencies to register and catalog their open source software projects. The platform facilitates discovery, evaluation, and collaboration on open source initiatives across the UN System.

### 4.3.2. Project Registration Requirements

All UN agencies developing open source software are required to register their projects via opensource.un.org. This process involves submitting comprehensive project details, including its purpose, functionality, dependencies, licenses, development status, documentations, and designated focal points.

### 4.3.3. Focal Point Responsibilities

Each registered project must assign a designated focal point who will maintain the project and serve as the primary contact. The focal point's responsibilities include ensuring that:

- Project information is accurate and regularly updated.
- The project repository on opensource.unicc.org is maintained, addressing issues, merging contributions, and managing releases,
- Active engagement with the UN open source community is upheld, responding to feedback as needed.

### 4.3.4. Managing External and Internal Repositories

Successful clearance for an open source software product will automatically result in the creation of a repository on opensource.unicc.org during the registration process, utilizing the information provided.

- **External public repositories**: If the project is hosted on an external public repository, the registration requires providing a link to that repository. Projects hosted externally may not have access to specific features such as legal and security audits or ranking information, which are available for projects hosted directly on opensource.unicc.org.

- **Internal agencies' repositories:** For internally hosted projects, agencies must download the source code and upload it as part of the registration process on opensource.un.org.

### 4.3.5. Evaluation and Approval Process

Registered projects are evaluated by a Project Review Committee (PRC) to ensure alignment with UN standards, minimum security requirements, and open source best practices. The PRC team may request clarification from focal points or provide feedback. Once approved, a repository is created on opensource.unicc.org, and the designated focal point receives maintainer access.

### 4.3.6. Code Quality and Security

All code submitted undergoes automated scanning for vulnerabilities, security risks, and license compliance. Scan results are published on the project's opensource.un.org page, with focal points responsible for addressing any issues identified.

### 4.3.7. Microservices Architecture Considerations

For projects utilizing microservices architecture, there is flexibility in hosting options. Microservices can either be hosted independently or consolidated into a single repository with distinct branches, depending on the project's structure. For that class of applications the repositories will be manually provisioned.

### 4.3.8. Public Access and Community Engagement

Registered projects are publicly accessible on opensource.un.org, fostering transparency and collaboration within the UN System. The platform provides mechanisms for public feedback, and focal points are expected to manage and respond to input from the community.

### 4.3.9. Implementation Guidelines Overview

| ID | Guidelines | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SC1 | Designate a focal point per project | Optional | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** |
| SC2 | Explore the UN software catalog | Optional | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** |
| SC3 | Register developed software solutions | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| SC4 | Maintain and update catalog entries | Optional | Optional | **Required** | **Required** |
| SC5 | Collaborate with other agencies using the catalog | Optional | Optional | **Required** | **Required** |

## 4.4. Code Hosting Platform

The Open Source United Code Hosting Platform offers a secure and scalable environment for collaborative open source projects within the UN System. Built on GitLab at UNICC, the platform ensures robust data security, and automated processes, allowing UN staff to create and manage projects, with options for external developers to contribute. Public users can view and download open projects, while authenticated users gain additional features based on their roles, including private repository access and the ability to participate in discussions. With strong security measures integrated seamlessly, the platform fosters effective collaboration across the UN community while protecting the integrity of its projects.

### 4.4.1. GitLab Ultimate Environment Setup at UNICC

UNICC has established an on premises robust multi-tier high-availability infrastructure to host the Open Source United GitLab. These environments are equipped with backup and disaster recovery systems to ensure data security and availability.

### 4.4.2. Repository Management and Access Control

Repositories are managed using role-based access control (RBAC) to ensure that only authorized personnel can manage and control projects. Specific rules are as follows:

- **Project creation/maintenance** is restricted to UN personnel who have:
    - Completed a form on opensource.un.org .
    - Gained approval from the designated authority.
- **Private project staging**: In some cases, projects may remain private for a period before being made public. A committee will review and determine when these private projects can be made public.
- **External contributors (non-UN users)** can:
    - Send merge requests to contribute to projects.
    - However, only the designated UN project responsible can review and approve these merge requests.

### 4.4.3. External User Access and Authentication

All external users (non-UN) must sign up, accept the terms and conditions, adhere to the use policy, and the Contributor License Agreement (CLA) before being granted contributor access. After successful completion of this process, external contributors can participate in

projects by submitting merge requests and collaborating within the boundaries of their assigned roles.

### 4.4.4. Public Access (Non-Authenticated Users)

Non-authenticated users (public access) have limited access to public projects:

- **View public projects**: Public users can browse public repositories, view files, documentation, commits, issues, and merge requests.
- **Access project pages**: Users can view project-level pages such as README files, descriptions, and other project information.
- **Clone or download public repositories**: GitLab allows non-authenticated users to clone public repositories via HTTPS or download them as ZIP files.
- **Access GitLab Explore page**: Public users can browse publicly available projects or groups on GitLab's Explore page.

### 4.4.5. Authenticated Users

Once logged in, authenticated users (including UN staff and external contributors who have accepted the terms and conditions, use policy, and the Contributor License Agreement) have access to additional functionalities based on their assigned role(s). This includes:

- **Private repository access**: Authenticated users can view and contribute to private repositories they have permission for.
- **Project creation**: Only UN employees can request to create a new project submitting a new request using the form available at opensource.un.org.
- **Contribute to projects**: Authenticated users can push code, create merge requests, open issues, or contribute to repositories based on their assigned roles.
- **CI/CD Pipelines**:
    - **CI runners** will be available for all projects (e.g., for dependency and security scans).
    - **CD pipelines** will be restricted to specific internal projects.
- **Access personal settings**: Authenticated users can manage their GitLab profile, personal access tokens, SSH keys, preferences, and security settings. Two-factor authentication will be enforced whenever possible. If two-factor authentication is not feasible, an exception must be approved.
- **Collaborate on projects**: Authenticated users can engage in discussions, comment on issues and merge requests, and assign tasks to other members.

- **Advanced features**: Depending on their roles, authenticated users can access features like wikis, code reviews, and milestones.

### 4.4.6. User Roles and Permissions

The GitLab platform distinguishes between various levels of authenticated users, each with specific permissions:

- **Owner (UNICC responsible only)**: Has full control over the project, including repository settings, member management, and project deletion.
- **Maintainer (UN employees only)**: Has the authority to manage merge requests, run pipelines, and handle project settings.
- **Developer/Contributor**: Can push code to branches, manage issues, and view CI/CD pipelines.
- **Guest**: Can view project content, create issues, and leave comments.

### 4.4.7. External Contributor Access Workflow

External contributors (non-UN users) can participate in public or private projects by submitting merge requests, but these requests can only be reviewed and accepted by the UN project responsible. External contributors must also:

- Complete the vetting process (through sign-up, acceptance of terms and conditions, and approval).
- Agree to policies and the Contributor License Agreement (CLA) before contributing to any project.

### 4.4.8. Private Project Reviews and Public Access

Projects created by UN employees may initially be set to private to allow for internal development and testing. These projects will only be made public after a committee review approves their release. This ensures that sensitive or incomplete projects are not prematurely accessible to the public.

### 4.4.9. Merge Requests and Project Responsibility

For all projects, especially those involving external contributors, only the designated UN project responsible can review and accept merge requests. This ensures that all contributions are properly vetted and aligned with the project's objectives and requirements.

### 4.4.10. Implementation Guidelines Overview

| ID | Guidelines | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CH1 | Access the code hosting platform | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| CH2 | Host projects following basic requirements | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| CH3 | Implement automated CI pipelines | Optional | Optional | Recommended | **Required** |
| CH4 | Conduct security scans for hosted code | Optional | Optional | Recommended | **Required** |
| CH5 | Enable role-based access control (RBAC) | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| CH6 | Enforce open source License scheme as recommended by Open Source United | Optional | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** |
| CH7 | Enforce Contributor License Agreement (CLA) for external users | Optional | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** |
| CH8 | Perform regular compliance audits | Optional | Recommended | Recommended | **Required** |
| CH9 | Enable disaster recovery and backup | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| CH10 | Manage merge request approvals by designated UN project leads | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| CH11 | Establish user role distinctions (Owner, Maintainer, Developer, Guest) | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| CH12 | Enable collaborative tools (discussions, issues, milestones) | Optional | Recommended | Recommended | Recommended |

## 4.5. Capacity Building Program

The capacity building section of the Open Source United Common Policy Framework is dedicated to fostering a collaborative and knowledgeable environment within the UN System for open source engagement. By leveraging existing resources, hosting training sessions, and establishing a community of practice, this initiative aims to build the skills and confidence of UN personnel to effectively contribute to and lead open source projects. Through programs like interactive workshops, symposiums, and hackathons, participants gain hands-on experience with open source technologies and develop an understanding of their potential in addressing complex, global challenges. The framework includes accessible learning pathways, from introductory modules to advanced training, and emphasizes a "Train the Trainer" approach, empowering individuals to cascade their expertise within their teams. In addition, a centralized platform will provide a repository of resources, events, and project showcases, while social media channels and dedicated online communities offer UN personnel and partners a space to share insights, collaborate, and engage with the wider open source ecosystem. These combined efforts are designed to bridge knowledge gaps, cultivate a culture of innovation, and enhance the UN’s capability to harness open source solutions for meaningful global impact.

### 4.5.1. Mind the Open Source Gap

Now in its seventh series, *Mind the Open Source Gap* has become a key initiative for building open source capacity within the UN, with the sixth session achieving a record high of 636 registrations. This comprehensive program is designed to empower UN personnel with the skills and knowledge needed to engage effectively with open source technologies. Through interactive workshops and presentations, participants delve into the principles, practices, and benefits of open source, including an exploration of various licenses and their implications. The program also provides hands-on opportunities to engage with open source projects, allowing participants to contribute meaningfully to the open source community. To support ongoing learning, presentations and workshop recordings are made available in a dedicated Teams space, enabling participants to explore and adopt open source tools in their work at their own pace.

### 4.5.2. Open Source Programme Office for Good (OSPOs for Good)

In 2023, UN OICT and UN OSET, along with key partners, launched the inaugural OSPOs for Good action symposium, a groundbreaking event designed to unlock the potential of open source collaboration across government, academia, and industry. The goal was to foster positive societal outcomes by connecting Open Source Program Offices (OSPOs) focused on social, environmental, and humanitarian challenges. The symposium brought together a dynamic mix of panel discussions, talks, workshops, and networking sessions to promote the OSPOs for Good model and explore infrastructure solutions. Participants engaged in valuable exchanges with the open source community and gained practical experience in building and designing OSPOs through case studies and sample organizations. A whitepaper was published following the event to capture insights and discussions from each panel. Following its success, the second OSPOs for Good symposium took place on July 9-10, 2024, attracting over 400 participants globally. This year's conference featured an impressive lineup of open source leaders and set ambitious goals to position OSPOs as a network for social good. With a focus on scale and impact, the event served as a premier showcase for open source within the UN, presenting thematic tracks that addressed critical open source policy areas and highlighted emerging examples of "open source for good." The symposium underscored the essential role of open source networks in enabling global cooperation. A white paper for the 2024 edition is forthcoming, encapsulating the key insights and discussions from this landmark event.

OSPOs for Good is set to become an annual event, providing an ongoing platform to strengthen the open source community within the UN and beyond. Each year, it will bring

together leaders, practitioners, and innovators to collaborate on pressing global issues, share knowledge, and reinforce the role of open source as a catalyst for positive societal change. Through this yearly gathering, the UN aims to sustain momentum, deepen connections, and empower a growing network of OSPOs committed to global cooperation and impact.

### 4.5.3. Open Source Software 4 Sustainable Development Goals

The Open Source Software 4 Sustainable Development Goals (OSS4SDG) hackathon series is a collaborative initiative designed to tackle SDGs through open source software solutions. Launched by the United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) in partnership with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Informatics (DIGIT). This hackathon series presents innovation challenges that bring together global participants to co-create impactful solutions aligned with the SDGs. The first edition, *Get Plugged into Education!*, focused on SDG #4: Quality Education, addressing the widespread learning disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. With over 600 million students forced to study from home, particularly in under-resourced regions, the hackathon leveraged Moodle, a widely adopted learning management system, to develop solutions for digital learning infrastructure. The second hackathon addressed SDG #11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, using OpenStreetMap (OSM) to track and manage urban challenges like waste, a tool highly valuable for both the UN and EU. The third edition, focusing on SDG #5, aimed to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In partnership with the International Telecommunication Union and Equals, this event united developers to create open source tools promoting gender equality. Building on its success, the OSS4SDG initiative is now collaborating with UNICEF to take on another SDG challenge, reinforcing the UN's commitment to leveraging open source innovation to drive progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

Looking ahead, OSS4SDG is set to become a sustained, recurring initiative, aligning with Open Source United's commitment to addressing global challenges through collaborative, open source solutions. By continuing to host these hackathons annually, the UN aims to provide an ongoing platform for innovation that empowers communities, engages diverse talent, and directly contributes to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. This enduring effort reinforces Open Source United's mission to create impactful, scalable solutions that harness open source as a force for positive global change.

### 4.5.4. UN Open Source United Branding and Portal

The UN open source team is excited to announce the upcoming launch of the UN Open Source United portal, hosted by the DTN Open Source Community of Practice (CoP). Designed as a comprehensive hub for open source activity across the UN system, this portal will host a wide range of projects, events, and initiatives, creating a go-to resource for both UN personnel and the global open source community. Set to operate under the domain name opensource.un.org, the portal will centralize and showcase UN open source contributions, promoting greater visibility, collaboration, and engagement.

With a newly developed branding identity for the DTN Open Source CoP, the portal will embody a unified, recognizable presence for open source within the UN. The logo and branding, which will debut at the portal's launch, reflect a commitment to transparency, innovation, and the power of open source collaboration. Looking ahead, the UN Open Source UNited portal is poised to become a cornerstone, offering an enduring platform where the global community can connect with UN-led projects and initiatives. This central hub reinforces the UN's dedication to open source as a transformative tool for tackling global challenges.

### 4.5.5. Social Media for Outreach and Engagement

OICT is establishing a Twitter handle, @UNOPENSOURCE, and a LinkedIn page titled "UN Open Source". The Twitter account will showcase developments in open source, highlight initiatives from various UN agencies, and share news and events related to open source. Meanwhile, the LinkedIn page will serve as a platform for discussing the initiatives of different agencies, including job postings and collaborative opportunities.

### 4.5.6. Training Programmes

To build open source expertise across the UN, the team is developing two self-paced online training modules, one at a basic level and the other advanced, designed to equip UN staff with essential knowledge and skills in open source practices. These modules will be hosted on an accessible platform, providing UN personnel with the flexibility to enhance their understanding at their own pace. Additionally, a "Train the Trainer" program will empower selected individuals with the expertise to further disseminate open source knowledge within their teams and departments, fostering a ripple effect of capacity building across the organization.

Collaborations with established training programs, such as those offered by UNICEF and external partners like the Linux Foundation and Linux Professional Institute, will enrich the learning experience and ensure comprehensive, up-to-date content. Together, these efforts form a robust training initiative, positioning the UN to harness open source technology effectively and fostering a community of skilled advocates for open source within the organization.

### 4.5.7. Implementation Guidelines Overview

| ID | Guidelines | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CB1 | Participate in foundational training programs | Optional | **Required** | **Required** | **Required** |
| CB2 | Develop internal capacity-building plans | Optional | Recommended | **Required** | **Required** |
| CB3 | Engage in mentorship programs | Optional | Optional | Recommended | **Required** |
| CB4 | Lead capacity-building initiatives | Optional | Optional | Optional | **Required** |

# 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this Common Policy Framework reflects a united, collaborative effort among all UN entities, embodying the principles of open source by welcoming diverse perspectives, practices, and contributions from across the system. Recognizing that our UN entities operate at varying stages of digital maturity, this framework is designed to be adaptable and inclusive, supporting each organization in its unique journey toward open source excellence. This is not a static document but a dynamic, evolving policy that will continue to grow in alignment with emerging best practices, technological advancements, and collective insights from the UN community. By embracing this forward-thinking approach, the UN is paving the way for sustainable digital transformation, fostering a culture of shared knowledge, and setting a standard for collaborative problem-solving in the pursuit of a more inclusive, resilient, and technologically empowered world.

This Common Policy Framework aligns closely with the UN2.0 quintet of change, supporting the UN's commitment to becoming a more innovative, data-driven, and inclusive organization. By establishing clear guidelines for open source collaboration, it exemplifies a practical step toward achieving these transformation goals, fostering digital solidarity and advancing the Global Digital Compact's vision for universal access to Digital Public Goods. Through the consistent application of this framework, UN agencies can illustrate the power of open source as a tool for greater transparency, efficiency, and impact, reinforcing the UN's dedication to equitable digital development and shared technological progress.