



# More cash for coders: GitHub's Stormy Peters on open source funding

'I'm passionate about making sure that people can have a career in open source software'



**John Leonard**

🕒 14 February 2024 • 4 min read

SHARE





**Image:** Stormy Peters, GitHub

**The issue of paying open source developers properly for their work feels like it's really coming to a head.**

Certainly it was the subject of some heated debate at OpenUK's *State of Open Con* in London last week, not least that instigated by open source veteran [Bruce Perens](#), who said the collective failure to address the problem had enabled a corporate takeover.

Stormy Peters, another open source practitioner of long standing who spoke at the event, was also keen to address the vexed issue of developer compensation.

Currently, hundreds of thousands of open source developers create popular and useful projects that big companies depend on, but compensation generally does not flow back to the original developers unless they get hired by a company to work on the software.

"One of the things I'm passionate about is making sure that people can have a career in open source software. I would love to see more of that funding flow back to them," said Peters, who is VP of communities at GitHub. "The the funding models haven't been there yet, it's still like 20 years ago."

She continued: "I think the software would be better because if I suddenly was getting paid to work on my passion project. I could dedicate more time to making it reliable and secure and helping all of those companies use it well."

## Channeling cash to coders

GitHub, used by over 100 million developers worldwide, including 3.4 million in the UK, is trying several approaches to help fund open source contributors, including [Github Sponsors](#). This lets individuals or companies donate to projects or maintainers in supported regions.

While millions of dollars have already flowed through Github Sponsors, the company wants to refine it further to target the projects that really matter. In part this will make it easier to scale, Peters said. It should also mean that "every open source software developer does not have to be a social media expert", so maintainers and developers of vital software can focus on what they are good at, rather than having to be part-time fundraisers.

"We're aiming at letting them work on their software and make a living off of it." Peters told *Computing*. "We want to tie it to dependencies or some kind of norm or usage."

In other words, the more important or widespread the software (think OpenSSL or Log4J) the more reliable its support should be. Complications remain though. For instance, how do you fairly compensate less visible project members, such as document writers and marketing folks? What about projects based in territories currently unsupported?

Seeking to lead by example as it works through these difficulties, GitHub channels money to all of the several thousand projects on which it depends - those that have signed up to accept money at least.

## The role of OSPOs

Companies most likely to follow this example, or indeed take their own initiative, are those with open source programme offices (OSPOs) to oversee their use of open source software. Peters set up "the first or maybe the second" ever OSPO at HP in 2000 and has promoted the model ever since.

"OSPOs are usually the ones that lobby within their company to get the funds to support the projects that they depend on."

Planned are tools to help companies work out which open source projects they depend on, with a simple button to allow them to contribute.

Another initiative promoted by GitHub is its Accelerator project, which aims to help successful open source projects explore monetisation models like starting a company or nonprofit organisation. GitHub Copilot and codespaces are available for free to educational projects and qualifying projects.

Peters pointed to the 65,000 public repos advancing AI on GitHub, some by developers and maintainers who are working hand to mouth.

"You shouldn't have to go get a job doing something else when you have a brilliant idea of your own that all the Fortune 500 companies are using. We should make sure that we're producing new funding models and career opportunities for people."

Asked what she thought about Perens' idea of having third-party companies to manage the channeling of funds based on contributions, and making that independent of tech giants like GitHub-owner Microsoft, Peters said, "I love that he's starting the conversation, I think that's how good ideas happen bringing them to conferences like this and getting a lot of feedback from people."

SHARE     

---

### Related Topics

[Open Source](#) | [Github](#) | [OSPO](#) | [openuk](#)

PREVIOUS ARTICLE

AI charts a course for HMS Victory

NEXT ARTICLE

Microsoft's Patch Tuesday fixes two actively exploited vulnerabilities



### Digital Technology Leaders Awards 2024

Scheduled for July 3rd in Central London, the Digital Technology Leaders Awards 2024 celebrates innovation in digital technology, highlighting achievements in project, organizational, and personal excellence. Submissions close on April 19th, with more information available on their official site.

DTLA

## You may also like



GOVERNMENT

### Labour frontbencher advocates for open source software and regulatory innovation

Regulation can promote rather than stifle innovation, says Chi Onwurah

08 February 2024 • 2 min read



OPEN SOURCE

### Open source originator: 'We have failed'

Failing to pay developers has led to corporate takeover, says Bruce Perens

07 February 2024 • 4 min read



THREATS AND RISKS

### Mercedes Benz's source code leaked online

A Mercedes Benz authentication token was leaked in a public GitHub repository

02 February 2024 • 1 min read



AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

**John Leonard**

[View profile](#)

### **More from John Leonard**

**Microsoft's Patch Tuesday fixes two actively exploited vulnerabilities**

---

**UK business: Intrigued but cautious about AI**

## Most read

### 01 Southern Water confirms customer data breach

14 February 2024 • 2 min read

### 02 Bank of America admits data breach after supply chain hack

13 February 2024 • 2 min read

### 03 Cisco: significant job cuts likely

13 February 2024 • 1 min read

### 04 Microsoft's Patch Tuesday fixes two actively exploited vulnerabilities

14 February 2024 • 2 min read

### 05 AI charts a course for HMS Victory

14 February 2024 • 4 min read

## Upcoming events

# 14 Mar

06:00PM

**AWARD**

### DevOps Excellence Awards 2024

[Register now](#)

## 02 May

08:30AM

CONFERENCE

### Cybersecurity Festival 2024

[Register now](#)

## 02 May

06:00PM

AWARD

### Security Excellence Awards 2024

[Register now](#)



### Sign up to our newsletter

The best news, stories, features and photos from the day in one perfectly formed email.

[Get the newsletter](#)

## More on Open Source



**OPEN SOURCE**

## AI charts a course for HMS Victory

Artificial intelligence is an anchor for restoration work

 **Tom Allen**

🕒 14 February 2024 • 4 min read





OPEN SOURCE

## Open source originator: 'We have failed'

Failing to pay developers has led to corporate takeover, says Bruce Perens

 **John Leonard**

🕒 07 February 2024 • 4 min read



OPEN SOURCE

## Making open source visible: Amanda Brock, CEO, OpenUK

The UK's open source workforce is invisible; it's time to change that

 **Tom Allen**

🕒 23 January 2024 • 6 min read



**Cyber, cloud and automation: UK IT leaders reveal their spending priorities**



**Microsoft Azure V Google Cloud Platform: Which is the most sustainable cloud platform?**



**DevOps tool consolidation: Where rationalisation is happening**



**AWS V Microsoft Azure: Which is the most sustainable cloud platform?**

---

Contact us

Marketing Solutions

About The Channel Company

Privacy Settings

Terms & Conditions

Policies

Careers

FOLLOW US

---

THE **CHANNEL**CO.®

© The Channel Company EMEA

180 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB. Registered in England and Wales with company registration number 14078896