



THE 2026 STATE OF OSPOs AND OPEN SOURCE MANAGEMENT

Expanding Open Source Management for AI Systems, Governance, and Operations

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THE 2026 STATE OF OSPOs AND OPEN SOURCE MANAGEMENT

OSPO involvement is already producing AI governance outcomes: 82% report improved management of open source AI use and 76% improved regulatory compliance, while **49% REPORT GAINS IN DEVELOPER PRODUCTIVITY.**



79% OF OSPOs ARE INVOLVED IN AI GOVERNANCE DECISIONS, including legal review, the use and evaluation of open models and datasets, policy definitions, and risk management.



79% of OSPOs involved in AI governance go beyond ad hoc consultation: **44% PARTICIPATE IN POLICIES AND DISCUSSIONS,** while another **35% CO-LEAD OR LEAD AI GOVERNANCE.**



ASIA-PACIFIC LEADS FUTURE OSPO GROWTH, WITH 29% FORMAL ADOPTION AND 20% PLANNING AN OSPO, which is twice the planning rate in the Americas and Europe.



57% of OSPOs have remained in the **SAME ORGANIZATIONAL LOCATION FOR THE PAST 2-3 YEARS.**



OSPOs become more formal as organizations grow: **53% OF LARGE ENTERPRISES** have a formally structured OSPO, compared with **25% OF MID-SIZE AND 10% OF SMALL ORGANIZATIONS.**



AI agents are already entering OSPO work: **69%** of organizations are **PROTOTYPING OR FURTHER ALONG, INCLUDING 18% ALREADY RUNNING AGENTIC AI IN PRODUCTION.**



85% of OSPOs involved in AI decision-making participate **AT OR BEFORE TECHNOLOGY SELECTION, INCLUDING 33% ENGAGED THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE AI LIFECYCLE.**



LICENSING AND IP RISKS AND SECURITY VULNERABILITIES are the AI risks most commonly addressed by OSPOs, each at **65%,** followed by **DATA PRIVACY AT 59%.**



64% of OSPOs were created within the **LAST FIVE YEARS,** and **39%** are housed in **SOFTWARE ENGINEERING,** the most common organizational home.



The strongest reported OSPO outcome is **SOFTWARE QUALITY, SECURITY, AND COMPLIANCE, RATED VERY IMPACTFUL BY 58%,** followed by open source ecosystem participation (49%) and development speed, cost efficiency, and developer experience (47%).



The next wave of OSPOs may arrive quickly: **79%** of organizations planning an OSPO expect to launch it **WITHIN TWO YEARS,** AND **66% PLAN TO HAVE DEDICATED STAFF.**



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FOREWORD

Time and attention are our most precious resources.

As open source contributors, maintainers, and sustainers, we're often asked to reason about complex problem spaces with constrained amounts of both. Open Source Program Offices (OSPOs) and similarly-shaped open source management functions are dedicated to distilling decades of open source software engineering, security, compliance, advocacy, and engagement principles into insights, practices, and tooling that makes everyone contributing to open source more effective.

The rapid pace of today's continuous advancements in AI and security research, as well as emerging regulatory obligations, means that all of us are facing a simple truth: we must evolve our processes and tooling to meaningfully scale our time and attention.

As you enjoy this research study, you'll see a natural progression in the way that OSPO and open source management professionals are interacting with systems. As a TODO Group Steering Committee member for several years, I've observed conversations in our spaces shift from "my organization is asking me how we navigate conversations around AI" to "my organization is asking me to figure out how to integrate AI into the systems, practices, and policies that I maintain."

A core part of the answer lies in re-examining principles that I endeavor to bring to every program or project I maintain: self-service and discoverability.

With the advent of rapidly-evolving agentic AI systems, we should ask complementary questions; does a system have access to the same information (or context) that a team member might, and can

we teach these systems to scale our efforts — unattended — without diminishing the quality of work? Concretely, this can mean distilling your more esoteric processes into well-structured documentation in easy-to-find locations or transforming existing ad hoc tooling efforts to support machine-readable output.

Open source management remains a team sport; we just have a few more [non-human] members of the team now. We take deterministic tools to produce evidence/context, utilize agents to interpret the data, and let people curate the results and make decisions empowered by these new systems.

People, then process, then tools. This precept has never been more important.

Lately, we're seeing an industry and its practices shift through curiosity, experimentation, and creativity. The barrier to prototype new ideas has never been lower. The interest throughout TODO Group's Agentic AI to Empower OSPOs Working Group has been genuine and thought-provoking.

We've got some exciting ideas about what we're building next for our OSPOs.

Join the conversation and come show us what you're hacking on!

Stephen Augustus
Bloomberg

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2026 State of OSPOs and Open Source Management presents findings from Linux Foundation Research's 2026 study of how organizations are adopting, structuring, and sustaining Open Source Program Offices (OSPOs), and how the OSPO role is expanding into areas such as AI governance, security, and compliance. The findings are based on 323 survey respondents spanning organizations of different sizes, industries, and geographies.

This year's study also includes three in-depth interviews from Cloudera, Analog Devices, and Orchitech's OSPO leaders and open source managers working at the intersection of open source and AI, complementing the quantitative findings with practical insights into AI governance and agentic workflows for OSPO work.

The findings suggest that many existing OSPOs are becoming established organizational functions. Among established OSPOs, 57% have remained in the same organizational location for the past two to three years, while 73% report working at least sometimes on practices intended to sustain the OSPO over the long term. Formalization is particularly evident among large enterprises, where 53% have a formally structured OSPO. At the same time, adoption is entering a new phase: overall adoption declined from 49% in 2025 to 40% in 2026, while the share of organizations planning an OSPO rose from 9% to 15%. Among those planning one, 79% expect to launch within two years, and 66% intend to employ dedicated staff.

At the same time, 58% of OSPOs are already engaged in AI-related activities. Among those involved in AI governance, 44% participate in policies and strategic discussions and another 35% lead or co-lead governance initiatives. OSPOs also tend to engage early: 85% participate at or before technology selection. The AI risks they address also closely match traditional OSPO areas of expertise, with licensing and intellectual property risks and security vulnerabilities each addressed by 65%, followed by data privacy concerns at 59%. The interviews show that this involvement takes different forms: some OSPOs implement AI policies and governance controls, while others contribute specialized expertise in software supply chains, licensing, identity and access management, metadata, and repository health without formally leading AI governance.

AI agents are also entering OSPO work. 69% of organizations are prototyping agentic tools or have progressed beyond that stage, including 19% actively developing agentic workflows and 18% already using agentic AI in production. Organizations also report benefits from OSPO involvement in AI governance: 82% report improved management of open source AI use, 76% improved regulatory compliance, and 49% gains in developer productivity. The interviews illustrate this progression through contribution-tracking tools, agents that validate documentation, and prototypes for release-readiness reviews. They also emphasize the continued importance of human oversight and careful validation when decisions involve licensing, security, or other risks.

Beyond AI, organizations also report benefits from OSPOs. Software quality, security, and compliance are among the top perceived benefits, rated very impactful by 58% of respondents, followed by open source ecosystem participation at 49% and faster development, lower costs, or increased reuse at 47%. Yet resourcing and staffing, compliance processes, governance policies, and executive visibility remain persistent constraints. For organizations planning new OSPOs, the leading barriers are similarly organizational rather than technical, particularly building a compelling business case and securing executive sponsorship.

OSPOs are expanding beyond traditional open source functions into governance, security, compliance, developer support, and AI. The next phase will involve sustaining existing OSPOs, establishing new ones with more formal structures, and extending open source governance practices into AI.

THE STATE OF OSPO ADOPTION

This section examines OSPO adoption and organizational structure, including how established these functions have become. As shown in Figure 1, 64% of OSPOs were created within the last five years, and software engineering is their most common organizational home (39%).

While overall OSPO adoption declined from 49% in 2025 to 40% in 2026, the proportion of organizations planning an OSPO rose from 9% to 15% (see Figure 2).

OSPO adoption also varies by organization size. OSPO structures become increasingly formal as organizations grow: 53% of large enterprises and 25% of mid-size organizations have established formal departments, while smaller organizations are more likely to use informal models (19%). While 11% of enterprises are currently planning a program, planning rates are somewhat higher among smaller organizations, where 17-18% of small and mid-market firms are preparing to launch an OSPO (see Figure 3).

OSPO adoption and plans for future adoption also vary by region (see Figure 4). Asia-Pacific has the highest share of organizations planning an OSPO, at 20%, twice the planning rate in the Americas and Europe, while maintaining the lowest proportion of informal structures (13%). In the Americas, organizational structures are more evenly divided between formal (25%) and informal (24%) models. Europe contains the largest segment of organizations that have never established an OSPO (49%), notably higher than the 37% reported in the Americas and 36% in Asia-Pacific.

FIGURE 1
A snapshot of the organizations with established OSPOs in the 2026 survey

2026 OSPO Survey, Q10 per Q11, Q10 per Q12, N=90. For a complete dataset, see Appendix A1 and A2.

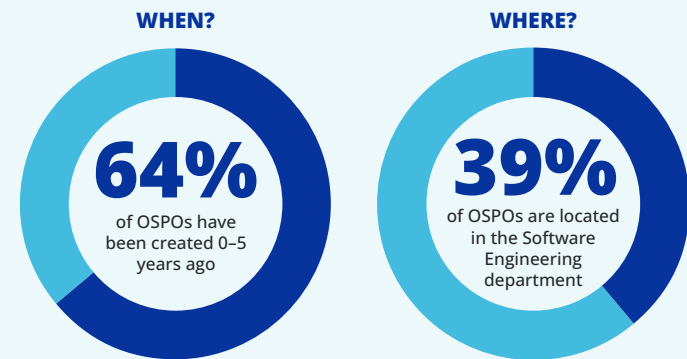


FIGURE 2
The evolution of OSPO adoption over the past 5 years

2026 OSPO Survey, Q10, Sample Size = 323; 2025 OSPO Survey, Q10, Sample Size = 285; 2024 OSPO Survey, Q12, Sample Size = 222; 2023 OSPO Survey, Q9, Sample Size = 472; 2022 OSPO Survey, Q6, Sample Size = 950, excluding DKNS responses

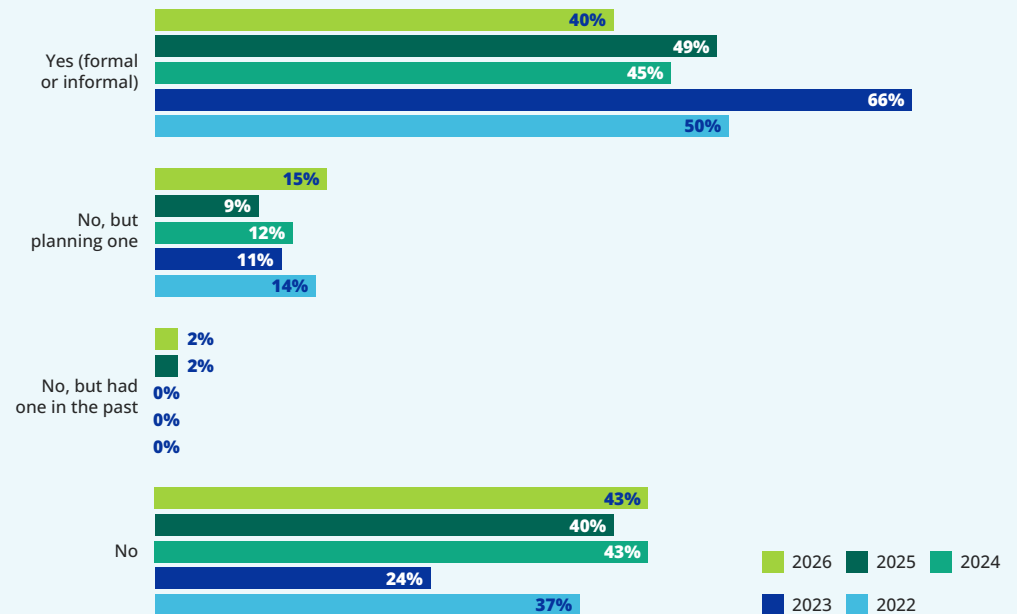


FIGURE 3: WHO ADOPTS OSPOS

Does your organization currently have, or has it ever had, an OSPO or a similar open source initiative (select one)

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q10, Q5, Sample size = 323

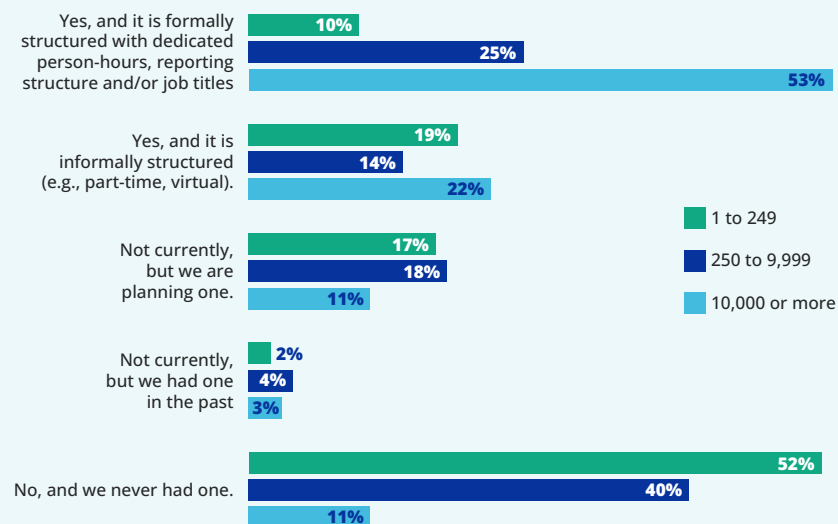


FIGURE 4: WHERE ARE OSPOS GROWING

Does your organization currently have, or has it ever had, an OSPO or a similar open source initiative? (select one) per region

OSPO 2026, Q10/Q6, Sample size = 323

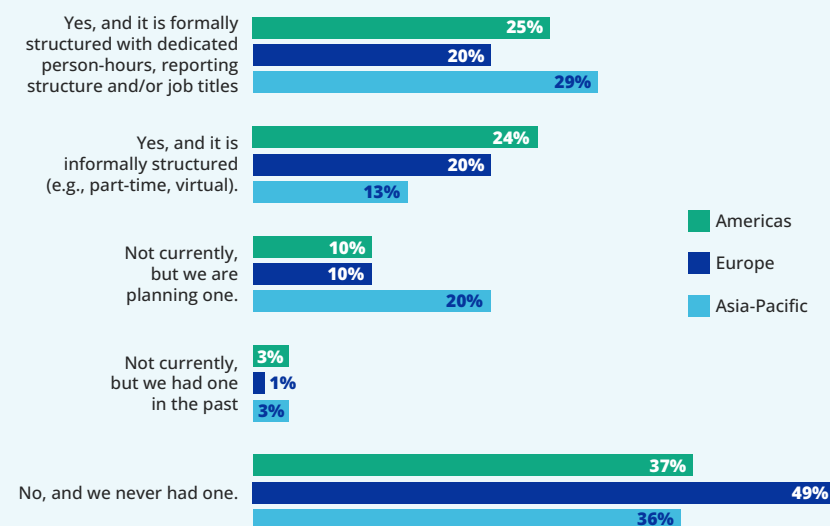
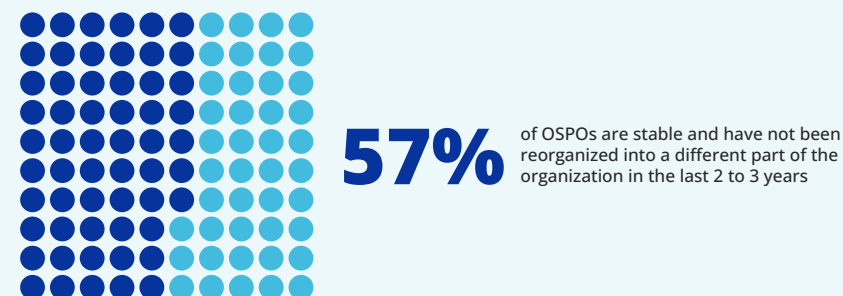


Figure 5 provides another indication of organizational stability: 57% of OSPOs have remained in the same organizational location for the past two to three years. This stability suggests that many OSPOs are becoming established organizational functions. At the same time, their responsibilities are expanding into new areas, including AI governance..

FIGURE 5

OSPOs have matured. What's next?

OSPO 2026, Q18, Sample size = 90. For a complete dataset see Appendix A3



OSPOS IN AI GOVERNANCE

AI governance is becoming an important area of OSPO activity. This section examines how OSPOs contribute to AI security, compliance, and risk management.

OSPOs already have established responsibilities for open source security. Figure 6 shows that 46% of OSPOs make decisions about how employees identify open source security risks and how organizations can build more secure software through guidance, policies, and best practices.

OSPOs are taking a more direct role in open source security over the years. More OSPOs are moving beyond an advisory role and taking direct responsibility for security decisions. The share of OSPOs making decisions about how employees identify security risks and build more secure software increased from 37% in 2024 to 40% in 2025 and 46% in 2026. At the same time, the share mainly advising another team dropped from 51% to 39% (Figure 7).

Given this existing role in open source security, OSPO compliance practices also help organizations manage emerging risks from generative AI. Across OSPOs, whether or not they are directly engaged in AI-related activities, 57% rated their open source compliance as effective or better at proactively managing generative AI risks (Figure 8).

FIGURE 6
OSPOs already have a role in governing open source security

OSPO 2026, Q13, Sample size = 90. For a complete dataset see Appendix A5.



FIGURE 7: OSPOS' INVOLVEMENT IN OPEN SOURCE SECURITY ISSUES OVER THE YEARS
Does your OSPO directly address open source security issues? (select one)

OSPO 2026, Q13, Sample size = 90, 2025 OSPO Survey, Q13, Sample Size = 116, 2024 OSPO Survey, Q16, Sample Size = 100, organizations who have an OSPO (formal or informal)

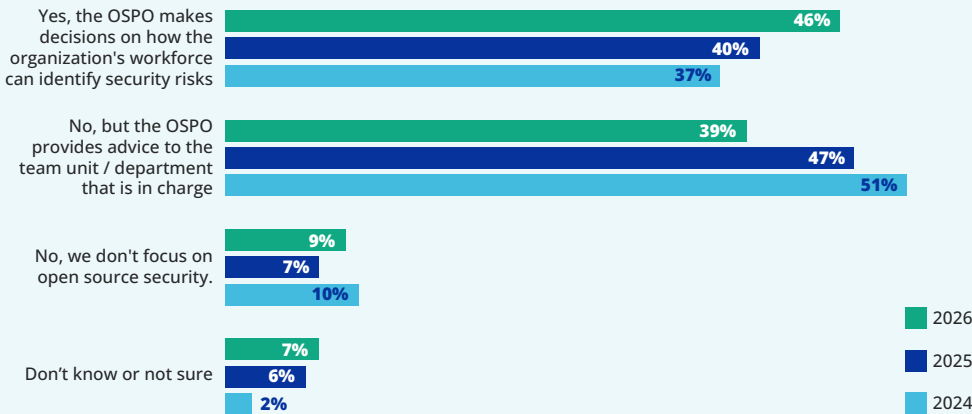
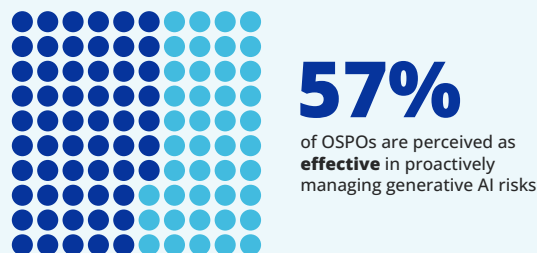


FIGURE 8
The perceived effectiveness of OSPOs in managing GenAI risks

OSPO 2026, Q14, Sample size = 90, Considering extremely effective, very effective, and effective responses. For a complete dataset see Appendix A4.

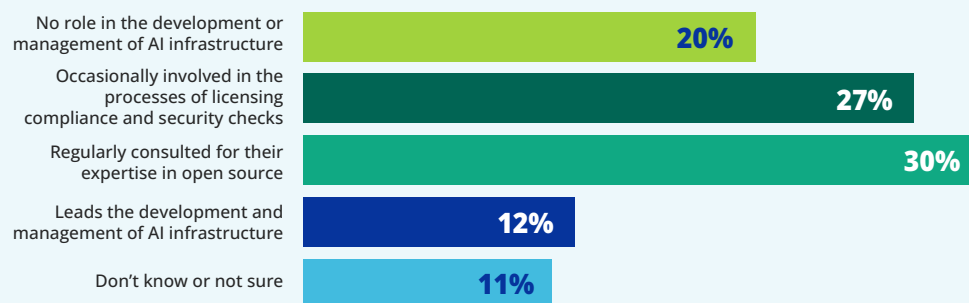


But managing AI-related risks is only one part of the picture. Figure 9 looks more closely at how OSPOs help develop and manage AI infrastructure. Their role is most often advisory: 30% are regularly consulted for their open source expertise, and 27% are occasionally involved in licensing compliance and security checks.

At Orchitech, open source identity and access-management work is contributing to the control layer around agentic systems.

FIGURE 9: OSPOs ARE CONSULTED IN AI INFRASTRUCTURE EFFORTS
To what extent is your OSPO involved in developing and managing AI infrastructure within your organization? (select one)

OSPO 2026, Q15, Sample size = 90



“We are building foundations for effective governance of access for AI agents, and for people’s access to those agents.”

— Ondřej Urbánek, Solution Architect and Product Manager, Orchitech

AI governance is only one part of the OSPO’s expanding mission. Figure 10 shows that 58% of OSPOs are already engaged in AI-related activities, while 27% are not and 16% are unsure.

As AI becomes a bigger part of OSPO work, OSPOs are also taking a more active role in how organizations govern it. Among OSPOs involved in AI-related decisions, Figure 11 shows that most do more than provide occasional advice. Forty-four percent take part in governance discussions and policy development, while another 35% either co-lead or lead AI governance. Only 21% are involved mainly through ad hoc consultation.

FIGURE 10
AI is becoming part of OSPO work

OSPO 2026, Q19, Sample size = 90. For a complete dataset see Appendix A6.

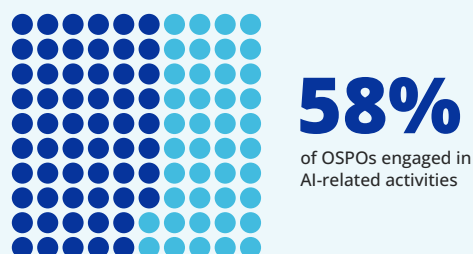
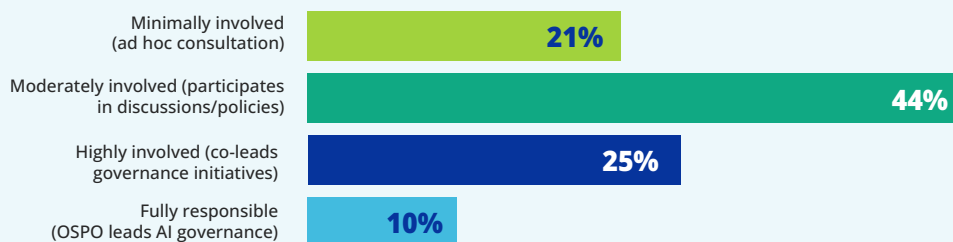


FIGURE 11: OSPO INVOLVEMENT IN AI GOVERNANCE

What is the level of your OSPO's involvement in AI governance within your organization? (select one)

OSPO 2026, Q20, Sample size = 51, OSPOs involved in AI decisions such as governance, compliance, security, or standards development



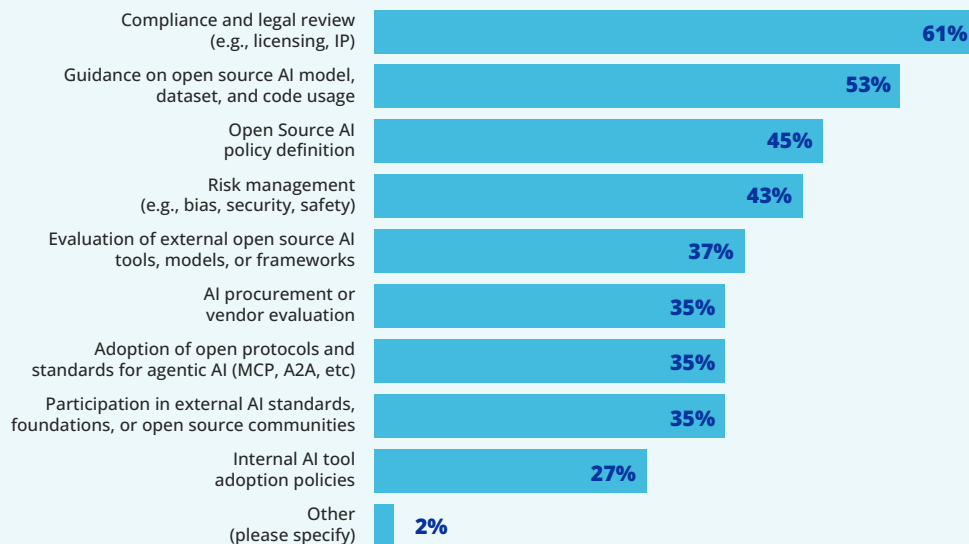
OSPO involvement also spans several parts of AI governance.

As Figure 12 shows, compliance and legal review is the most common area of contribution, reported by 61% of OSPOs, followed by guidance on the use of open source AI models, datasets, and code at 53%. Nearly half also contribute to open source AI policy definition (45%) and risk management (43%). OSPOs are also involved in evaluating external open source AI tools and frameworks (37%), AI procurement and vendor evaluation (35%), adoption of open protocols and standards for agentic AI (35%), and participation in external AI standards, foundations, or open source communities (35%). Internal AI tool adoption policies were less mentioned, at 27%.

FIGURE 12: WHERE OSPOs CONTRIBUTE TO AI GOVERNANCE

In which areas does your OSPO contribute to AI governance? (select all that apply)

OSPO 2026, Q21, Sample size = 51, OSPOs involved in AI Decisions such as governance, compliance, security, or standards development.



These contributions also tend to happen early in the AI decision process. As Figure 13 shows, 85% of OSPOs are involved at or before technology selection, while only 6% are brought in after decisions have already been made. Within that 85%, 33% are involved throughout the entire lifecycle, 23% during strategy and planning, and 29% during evaluation and selection.

Being involved early also gives OSPOs a chance to shape how AI governance develops across the organization. Respondents reported several benefits from that involvement. As Figure 14 shows, 82% saw a moderate or transformative impact on the management of open source AI use, while 76% reported similar benefits for regulatory compliance and risk reduction. Seventy percent also reported a positive impact on trust in AI systems. Developer productivity stood out, with 49% describing the impact as transformative.

FIGURE 13: OSPOS SHAPE AI DECISIONS FROM STRATEGY TO DEPLOYMENT

At what stage is your OSPO typically involved in AI-related decisions? (select one)

OSPO 2026, Q22, Sample size = 51, OSPOs involved in AI Decisions such as governance, compliance, security, or standards development

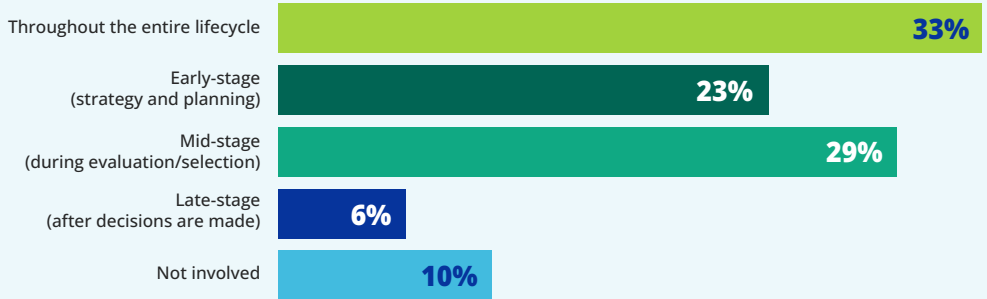
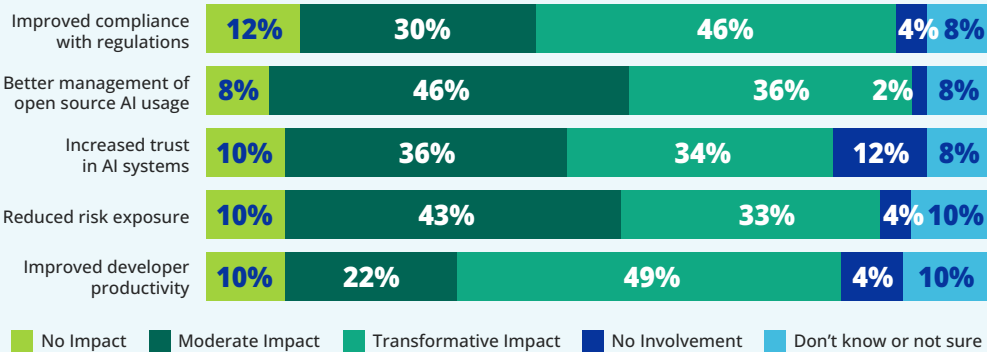


FIGURE 14: OSPOS DELIVER MEASURABLE IMPACT ON AI GOVERNANCE

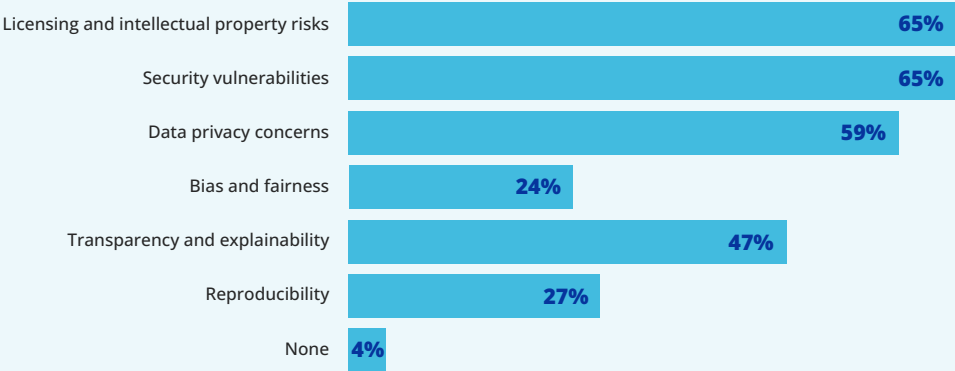
To what extent has OSPO involvement improved the following AI-related governance practices in your organization? (select one response per row)

OSPO 2026, Q24, Sample size = 51, OSPOs involved in AI Decisions such as governance, compliance, security, or standards development



These benefits are closely connected to the areas where OSPOs are most active. The gains in compliance and risk reduction, for example, reflect the fact that licensing and intellectual property risks and security vulnerabilities are the two areas OSPOs address most often, both at 65%, followed by data privacy at 59% (Figure 15). These are also areas that are already familiar territory for many OSPOs. By comparison, newer AI-specific concerns receive less attention, including transparency and explainability (47%), reproducibility (27%), and bias and fairness (24%).

FIGURE 15: HOW OSPOs MANAGE AI RISKS
Which AI-related risks does your OSPO actively address? (select all that apply)
OSPO 2026, Q23, Sample size = 51, OSPOs involved in AI Decisions such as governance, compliance, security, or standards development



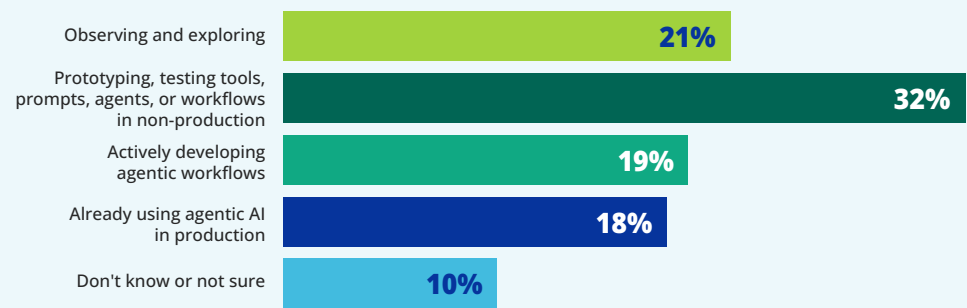
OSPOS USING OR BUILDING WITH AI AGENTS

While OSPOs most often play an advisory role in AI infrastructure, AI is also becoming part of OSPO work itself. As Figure 16 shows, 32% of organizations are prototyping or testing agentic tools and workflows for OSPO work, 19% are actively developing them, and 18% are already using agentic AI in production.

The interviews show that movement along this adoption curve is gradual. Cloudera is using AI-assisted development to build a contribution knowledge graph and prototype automated data refreshes, while Analog Devices has an alpha-stage “OSPO Agent” for release-readiness review that has not yet reached the OSPO for testing. These cases illustrate why agentic adoption is better understood as a continuum than as a binary distinction between experimentation and production.

FIGURE 16: WHERE ORGANIZATIONS STAND ON AI AGENTS FOR OSPO WORK
Where is your organization currently in exploring or using AI agents for OSPO / open source management work? (select one)

OSPO 2026, Q16, Sample size = 90



“AI and agentic AI workflows continue to be means to an end. Identifying the problem is more important.”

— Diego Mastroianni, PhD, Director of the Open Source Program Office, Cloudera

FOUR OSPO USE CASES BEING APPLIED TO AI

We interviewed OSPO leaders and open source managers from government and private-sector organizations. The cases show four distinct ways OSPO capabilities are being applied to AI governance and agentic workflows.

Organization	Category	Context	Resources
Cloudera	Contribution and decision support	The OSPO is building an AI-assisted internal portal and knowledge graph connecting projects, contributors, GitHub activity, Apache information, events, and internal records to make participation visible and support contribution strategy, recognition, and incentives.	
Orchitech	Agent validation and identity controls	The OSS team is applying identity and access-management expertise to agent permissions and users' access to agents. It also uses coordinated agents to generate and validate technical documentation against source code, configuration, and supporting evidence.	Wren Security AI-Driven Documentation Engine
Analog Devices	AI-aware release readiness	AI-related software, models, and training datasets are being incorporated into the existing release-management process alongside licensing, security, trade-compliance, and quality information. The release-tool team is prototyping an OSPO Agent for first and follow-up release reviews.	

The interviews suggest that OSPOs value comes from applying established open source governance capabilities to AI systems, development practices, and organizational decision-making

Translating policy into implementation: OSPOs can convert legal and governance requirements into development guidance, templates, repository controls, reference implementations, and repeatable workflows.

Building visibility into AI components: Experience identifying software, dependencies, and provenance can be extended to AI models, training datasets, and other components needed to understand how an AI system was assembled.

Applying software supply-chain practices: Existing expertise in licensing, repository health, vulnerabilities, contribution quality, and release readiness provides a foundation for evaluating open source AI systems and AI-generated code.

Governing identity and access: OSPO knowledge of identity management and permissions can help organizations control which systems agents may access, what actions they may perform, and who is authorized to use them.

Making governance information machine-consumable: Structured metadata, standardized documentation, policies, and historical decisions can provide authoritative context for AI tools and agents.

Connecting organizational functions: OSPOs traditionally have worked across legal, security, engineering, product, procurement, and quality teams. This cross-functional position can help translate requirements between policy owners and technical implementers.

Defining human-review boundaries: OSPO governance experience can help determine which outputs require human approval, what evidence must be preserved, when uncertain results should be escalated, and who remains accountable for the final decision.

These capabilities can position OSPOs as a practical bridge between AI policy and technical implementation, even where another function such as legal or a dedicated AI governance body, retains formal ownership.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

The latest **TODO Group's Agentic AI to Empower OSPOs Working Group** meetings reinforce these findings. Meeting discussions emphasize starting with the OSPO problem, using agents as a decision-support layer, protecting maintainer attention, keeping humans accountable, and treating reusable agent skills as governed organizational assets.

“Every commit, even when it is generated by AI, is still the developer’s responsibility. There is always a second round of code review and human approval.”

– Ondřej Urbánek, Solution Architect and Product Manager, Orchitech

BEYOND GOVERNANCE: THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF OSPOS

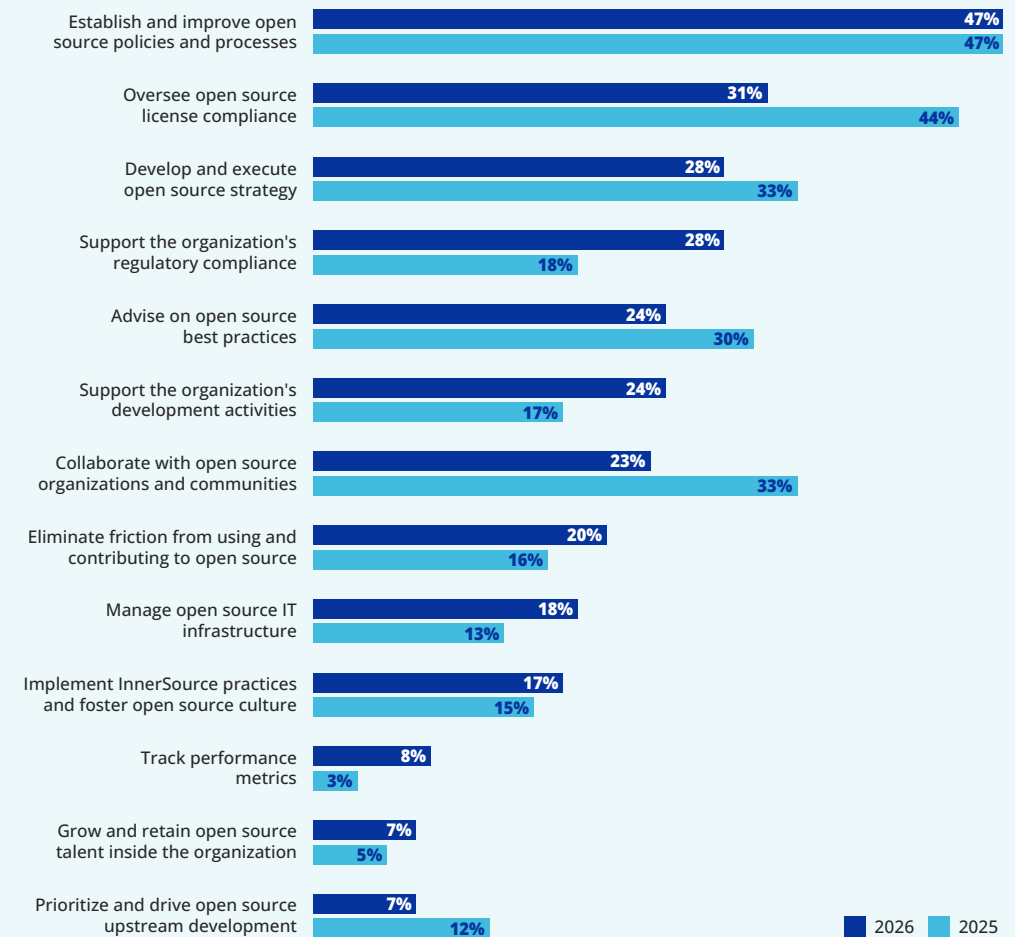
The AI findings show that OSPOs are applying their experience in licensing, security, and compliance to AI. But AI is only one part of their work. OSPOs still have their traditional open source responsibilities, while also taking on a wide range of roles across the organization.

Looking at respondents whose organizations currently have an OSPO, Figure 17 shows this wide mix of responsibilities. Establishing and improving open source policies and processes remains the most commonly reported responsibility, at 47%. Compared with 2025, regulatory compliance was mentioned more often in 2026, increasing from 18% to 28%, as was support for development activities, from 17% to 24%. At the same time, license compliance was mentioned less often, dropping from 44% to 31%, along with collaboration with open source organizations and communities (33% to 23%) and advising on open source best practices (30% to 24%).

This broad role is also reflected in the value organizations perceive from their OSPOs. As Figure 18 shows, the strongest benefit is that the OSPO improved software quality, security, and compliance, rated very impactful by 58% of respondents. Greater influence and participation in open source ecosystems follows at 49%, while 47% see a strong impact on faster development, lower costs, or increased reuse. The same share reports a strong impact on culture and developer experience. OSPOs are also seen as helping organizations prepare for strategic technologies such as cloud-native architecture and generative AI, with 40% rating this outcome as very impactful.

FIGURE 17: OSPOS ARE BALANCING GOVERNANCE WITH ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT
What are the top three responsibilities of your OSPO? (select up to three responses)

OSPO 2026, Q17, Sample size 2026 = 90, Sample size 2025 = 116



The value organizations see in their OSPOs does not mean these programs are easy to sustain. As Figure 19 shows, resourcing and staffing are the most common challenges, reported at least occasionally by 83% of respondents and frequently by 46%. These pressures also come at a time when organizations are dealing with broader talent challenges. The [2026 State of Tech Talent report](#) shows that many organizations are still struggling to build the skills they need to adopt new technologies, a challenge that is growing as AI changes what those skills look like.

OSPOs also face challenges in the day-to-day work of governance. Legal and security compliance processes are challenges experienced sometimes or frequently by 82% of respondents, and process, policy, and governance challenges by 80%. The challenge of maintaining visibility, influence, or executive support is also common, affecting 76%. Difficulties in recruiting and onboarding contributors are reported less often than the other challenges, but still affects 57% of OSPOs.

With many OSPOs facing limits on staffing, budgets, and executive support, sustaining the program over time is an important concern. As Figure 20 shows, 73% of OSPOs report taking steps at least sometimes to support their long-term sustainability.

Organizations use several approaches to support the long-term sustainability of their OSPOs. Figure 21 shows that the most common approach is regular communication and cross-departmental collaboration, reported by 45% of organizations. Formal governance practices are also common: 34% establish internal procedures for license compliance, while 29% maintain close coordination with legal departments to manage intellectual property risks.

FIGURE 18: THE ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE OF OSPOs

How impactful are the following outcomes of having an OSPO?

(select one response per row)

OSPO 2026, Q26, Sample size = 90

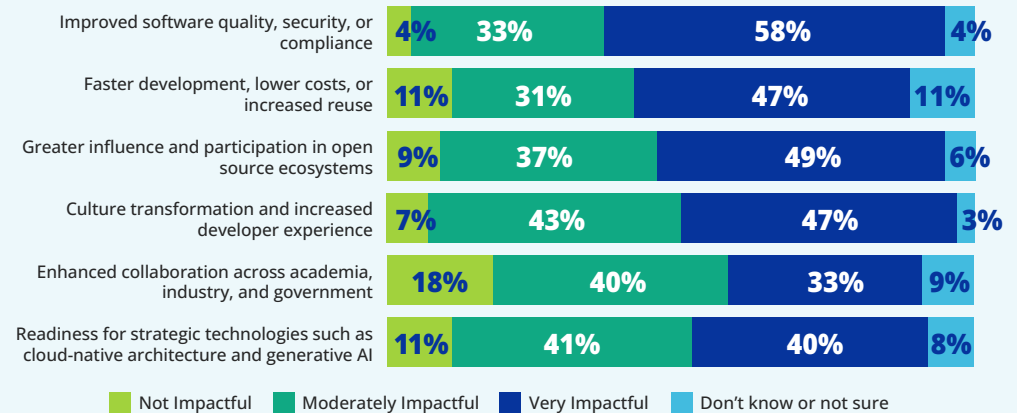


FIGURE 19: THE CHALLENGES LIMITING OSPO IMPACT

How often does your OSPO face the following challenges? (select one response per row)

OSPO 2026, Q27, Sample size = 90

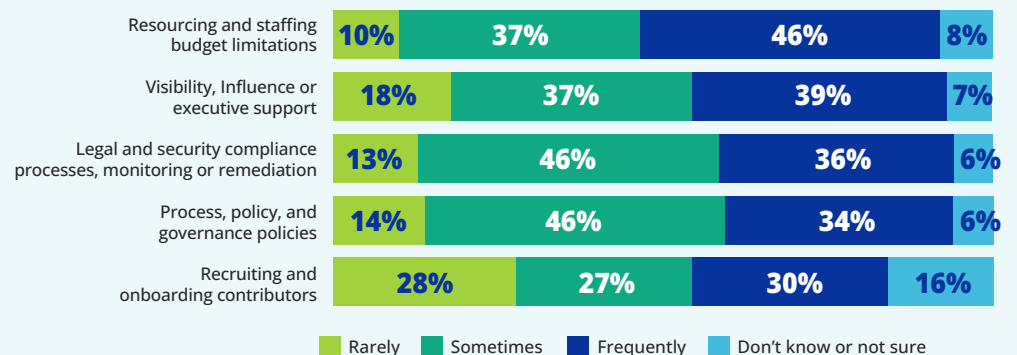
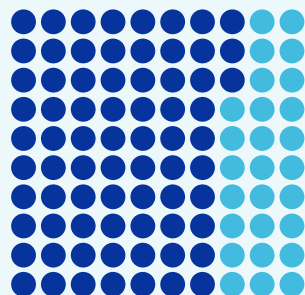


FIGURE 20: OSPOS ARE INVESTING IN LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

How often does your OSPO work on practices to sustain itself (maintaining the initiative in the long term)? (select one)

OSPO 2026, Q31, Sample size = 102, considering the frequency responses of Always, Frequently, and Sometimes. For a complete dataset see Appendix A7.



73%

of OSPOs take practices to sustain itself (maintaining the initiative in the long term)

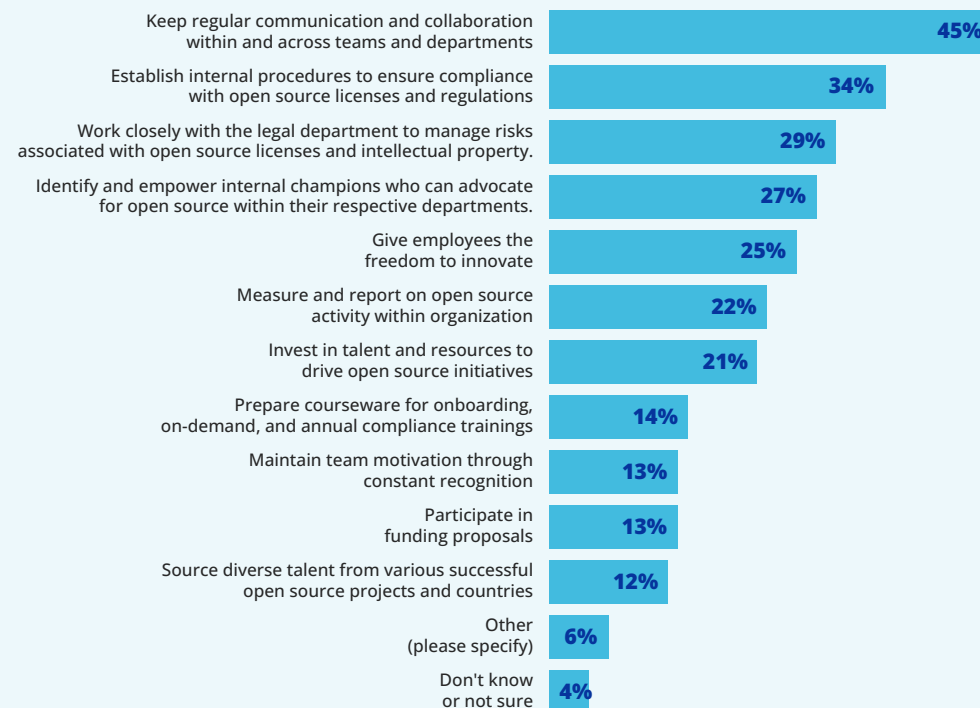
Some organizations also focus on internal advocacy. Another 27% focus on identifying and supporting open source champions, while 25% aim to encourage employee innovation. Activities requiring dedicated funding or staffing are less common: 14% prioritize onboarding and training, 13% participate in funding proposals, and 12% focus on recruiting diverse talent.

The 6% of respondents who selected “Other” and provided open-text responses offer additional context on how OSPOs pursue sustainability in practice. These responses described approaches such as establishing dedicated foundations, continuously improving policies and processes, and developing organizational policies for open source and vulnerability management.

FIGURE 21: PREPARING OSPOS FOR THE FUTURE

What are the top three practices you follow to ensure the sustainability of your OSPO? (select up to three responses)

OSPO 2026, Q32, Sample size = 102



PLANNING FOR A FUTURE OSPO

Sustaining existing OSPOs is one side of the picture. Another is whether organizations without an OSPO see enough value in having one. Even among organizations that do not currently have an OSPO and are not planning to establish one, respondents still recognize several potential benefits.

As Figure 22 shows, the most commonly identified benefit is improved software quality, security, or compliance (35%), followed by greater influence and participation in open source ecosystems (33%) and faster development, lower costs, or increased reuse (32%). Readiness for strategic technologies such as cloud-native

architecture and generative AI, and culture transformation and increased developer experience, were each selected by 28%.

A few respondents used the “Other” option to explain why their organization does not see a need for an OSPO. Two said that open source is already deeply embedded in how their organization works. As one respondent put it, “We are FOSS by nature; it’s in our DNA. No need for an OSPO.” Other responses pointed to the organization being too small, relying on informal governance, limited management interest, or constraints related to the business model.

The picture is different for organizations that are already planning to establish an OSPO. For this group, the potential benefits are not just hypothetical, they are part of the decision to move forward. As Figure 23 shows, improved software quality, security, and compliance is one of the strongest drivers, with 63% rating it as very impactful. Culture transformation and developer experience is also rated very impactful by 63%, followed by faster development, lower costs, or increased reuse at 54%. The sample size of organizations that are planning an OSPO was small, so conclusions should be interpreted with caution.

FIGURE 22: WHY ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT AN OSPO MAY WANT ONE
What are the top three ways your organization would benefit from an OSPO? (select up to three responses)

OSPO 2026, Q43, Sample size = 106

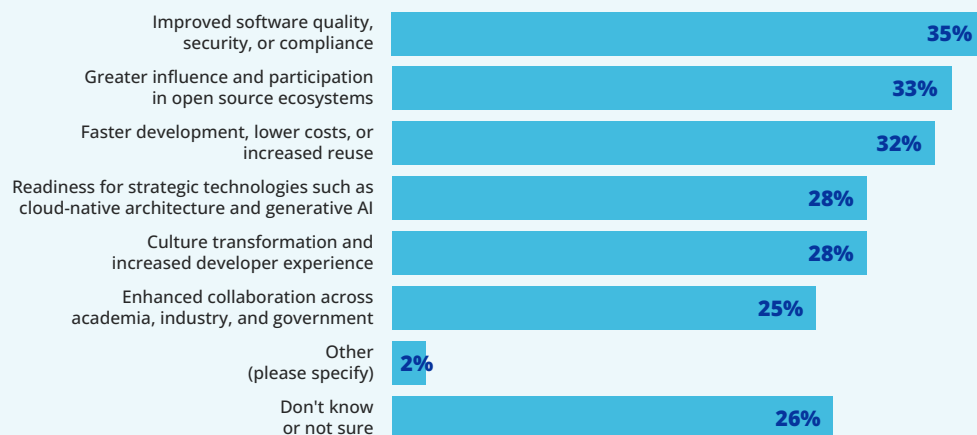


FIGURE 23: WHAT DRIVES ORGANIZATIONS TO PLAN FOR AN OSPO?

How impactful are the following benefits on your organization's decision to establish an OSPO? (select one response per row)

OSPO 2026, Q37, Sample size = 35

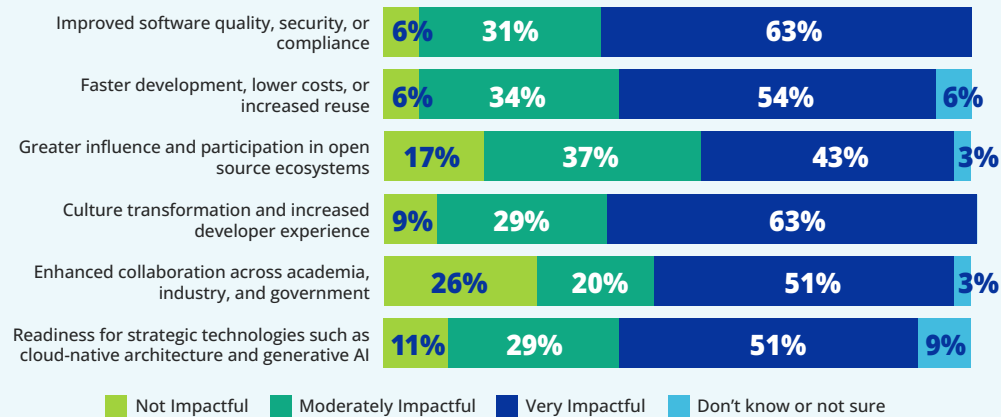


FIGURE 25: MOST PLANNED OSPOs WILL LAUNCH WITHIN TWO YEARS

When does your organization plan to start an OSPO? (select one)

OSPO 2026, Q34, Sample size = 35

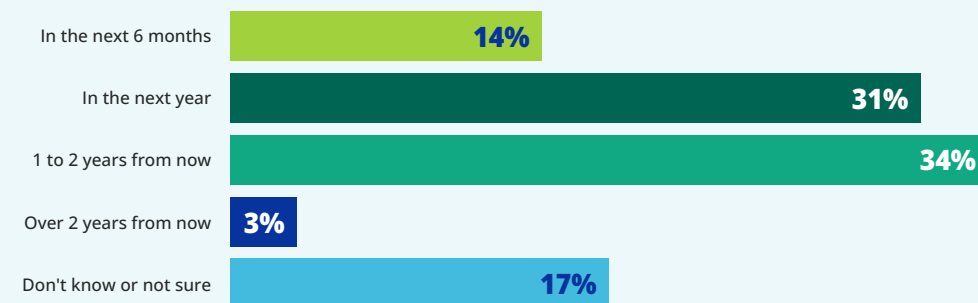
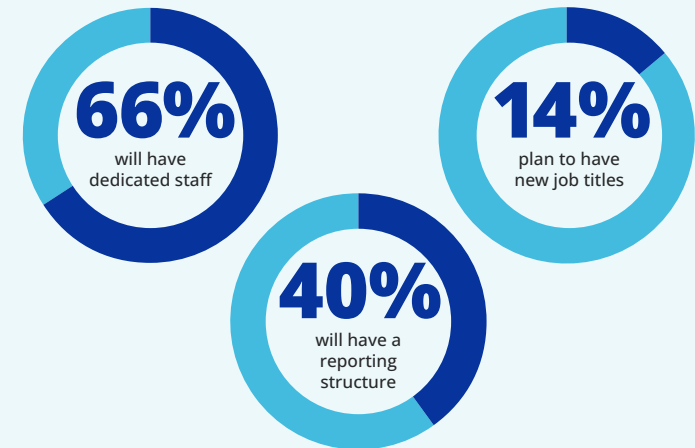


FIGURE 24: ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANNING FORMAL, DEDICATED OSPOs

How will the OSPO be formally structured? (select all that apply)

OSPO 2026, Q35, Sample size = 35. Respondents could select more than one. For a complete dataset see Appendix A9.



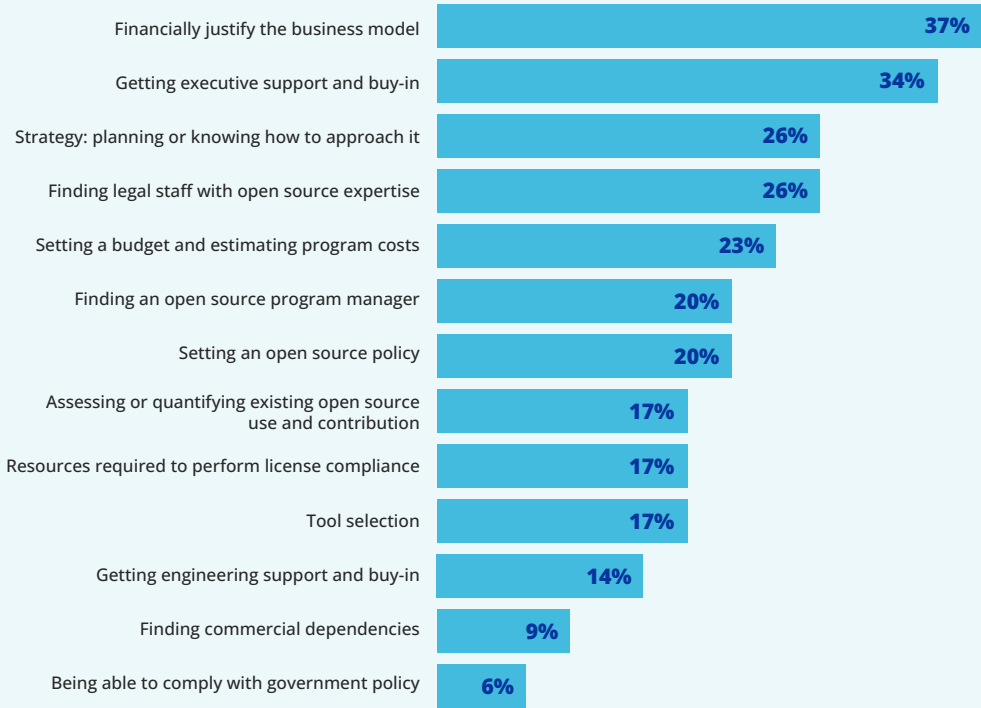
For organizations already planning an OSPO, the plans are fairly concrete: 66% expect to have dedicated staff, 40% plan to establish a reporting structure, and 14% expect to create new job titles (Figure 24). This is encouraging given the staffing and budget challenges reported by existing OSPOs in Figure 19. In particular, the fact that two-thirds of planned OSPOs expect dedicated staff suggests that resourcing is already being considered as part of how these new programs will be set up.

These plans also appear likely to move forward relatively soon. As Figure 25 shows, 79% of organizations planning an OSPO expect to establish it within the next two years, including 14% within six months and 31% within the next year. Only 3% expect to wait more than two years, while 17% are still unsure about the timing.

Most planned OSPOs may launch soon, but getting them off the ground still depends on overcoming organizational barriers. As Figure 26 shows, the most common challenges are financially justifying the business model (37%) and securing executive support and buy-in (34%). Strategic planning and finding legal staff with open source expertise follow, both at 26%. This echoes an earlier finding from Figure 19, where existing OSPOs also reported challenges with executive support and with staffing and budgets. The results suggest that some of the same organizational pressures matter both when an OSPO is being created and after it is established.

FIGURE 26: WHAT'S HOLDING BACK NEW OSPOs?
What have been the top three biggest challenges in establishing an OSPO? (select up to three responses)

OSPO 2026, Q38, Sample size = 35



THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC OSPOS

Academic OSPOs operate in a different environment and often have priorities that reflect the needs of universities and research institutions. Their work can include not only open source governance, but also education, research support, community building, and helping people across the institution develop open source skills. Figure 27 highlights how central this capacity-building role is: 92% of academic OSPOs are responsible for education and training in their organization. The sample size of respondents who mentioned having academic OSPOs was small, so conclusions should be interpreted with caution.

That focus on education and training is also reflected in the perceived benefits of having an OSPO in academic organizations. Figure 28 shows a clear connection to skills: 83% report a moderate or very strong impact on OSS skills and open source competency.

Beyond skills, academic OSPOs are linked to broader open source participation. Seventy-five percent report an impact on the number of OSS projects. Open source research translation is another important outcome, with 66% reporting a moderate or very strong impact.

FIGURE 27

Academic OSPOs build open source capacity

OSPO 2026, Q29, Sample size = 12. For a complete dataset see Appendix A8.

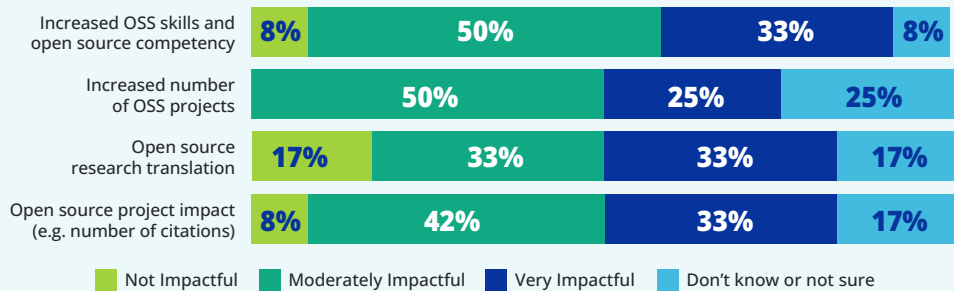


FIGURE 28: THE OUTCOMES OF HAVING AN ACADEMIC OSPO

How impactful are the following outcomes of having an OSPO?

(select one response per row)

OSPO 2026, Q30, Sample size = 12



CONCLUSIONS

The findings suggest that having an OSPO is no longer just about creating a program. What matters is whether the OSPO has the authority, resources, and place in the organization to do its job as its responsibilities grow. Existing OSPOs continue to face challenges with staffing, budgets, governance, and executive support. At the same time, many organizations planning new OSPOs are already considering dedicated staff and reporting structures. New programs therefore have an opportunity to think about these issues from the start. Organizations establishing an OSPO should be clear about where it sits, who it reports to, which decisions it can influence, and what resources are available to support its work.

AI gives OSPOs an opportunity to build on work they already know well. Experience with licensing, security, compliance, and open source policy provides a strong starting point for AI governance. But the findings also show where more work is needed. OSPOs pay more attention to familiar risks such as intellectual property and security than to new and growing concerns, such as transparency, reproducibility, bias, and fairness. As AI becomes more common in software development, OSPOs will need to expand their expertise and work closely with legal, security, data, responsible AI, procurement, and engineering teams. Open source governance alone will not cover all of the risks that come with AI.

When OSPOs become involved may matter as much as what they do. OSPOs involved in AI decisions are usually brought in before technology selection, and that involvement is associated with better management of open source AI, compliance, risk reduction, trust, and developer productivity. Organizations should therefore involve OSPOs while technologies, vendors, models, and policies are still being considered, rather than waiting until licensing or

compliance problems appear. This role could extend beyond AI to other technologies that depend heavily on open source.

The report also shows a gap between the value OSPOs can provide and the difficulty of making the case for one. Organizations with OSPOs report benefits in software quality, security, compliance, development efficiency, and developer experience. Yet organizations planning an OSPO still struggle to justify the investment and secure executive support. OSPO leaders may need to explain their value in terms that connect directly to organizational priorities: reducing compliance risk, avoiding duplicated work, improving developer workflows, or helping teams adopt new technologies more safely.

Long-term sustainability remains another challenge. Many OSPOs rely on communication, collaboration, internal champions, and established procedures to sustain their work, while fewer invest in activities that require dedicated funding, training, or recruitment. This matters because staffing and budget limitations are already the most common challenge reported by existing OSPOs. Sustaining an OSPO over time may therefore require moving beyond informal advocacy and making open source work a more explicit part of organizational roles, budgets, and planning.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a web survey conducted by Linux Foundation Research in 2026. The survey examined the prevalence, structure, sustainability, and outcomes of Open Source Program Offices (OSPOs) and similar open source management functions worldwide. It also examined the evolving role of OSPOs in AI governance, including their involvement in AI infrastructure, compliance, security, risk management, and the adoption of emerging technologies such as generative and agentic AI.

To support data quality and ensure that respondents had relevant professional and organizational experience, the survey included screening questions covering organizations' involvement in open source, respondent authenticity, employment status, professional role, organization size, headquarters region, and organization type. The questionnaire also used branching based on whether an organization currently had a formal or informal OSPO, was planning one, had previously had one, or had never established one, so respondents received questions relevant to their organization's circumstances.

The survey was designed to capture perspectives across a range of organizational settings. Respondents reported organization size, geography, and type, including end-user organizations, technology vendors and suppliers, IT consulting and service providers, nonprofit organizations and foundations, academic and research institutions, and government entities. The survey also included a dedicated path for academic and research OSPOs, reflecting differences in their organizational structures, responsibilities, and outcomes.

The questionnaire comprised 46 numbered questions, with respondents seeing different subsets depending on their answers. Topics included respondent and organizational characteristics,

open source use and policies, OSPO adoption and organizational structure, responsibilities and challenges, open source security and compliance, AI infrastructure and governance, OSPO outcomes and impact, OSPO and open source project sustainability, plans for establishing an OSPO, and the experiences of organizations whose OSPOs had been dissolved or that had no plans to establish one. The final three questions were optional and collected contact information separately for respondents interested in follow-up interviews or participation in the Linux Foundation Research Forum. The survey was designed to take approximately 5–10 minutes and was available in English, Chinese, and Japanese.

The survey was fielded in June 2026. A total of 323 respondents completed the web survey.

To complement the quantitative survey findings, we conducted three interviews with OSPO leaders and open source practitioners from Cloudera, Orchitech, and Analog Devices. Participants were selected based on their direct engagement applying open source management practices to AI governance or using AI and agentic workflows in OSPO-related work. The interviews explored how OSPO capabilities are being applied in these areas, including governance and policy implementation, software supply-chain and release processes, identity and access management, and AI-assisted workflows.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Figure 29 presents the respondent demographics and organizational profile.

Respondents represented a broad range of professional roles and organizational settings. Developers and software engineers made up the largest professional group (35%), followed by other IT roles (19%) and IT management (11%). Organizations also varied considerably in size, geography, and type, with respondents ranging from organizations with 1–10 employees to enterprises with 20,000 or more employees. The largest regional groups were the United States or Canada (31%), Europe (24%), and Asia-Pacific (23%), while end-user organizations represented the largest organization type (21%).

Organizations represented in the survey were also active across different parts of the open source journey. Most respondents (85%) reported using open source code in products or services, while 39% contributed to upstream projects, 37% initiated or released open source projects, 36% collaborated across open source projects or foundations, and 29% influenced projects through leadership or maintainer roles.

Formal policies are most established around the use of open source in products. Sixty-one percent of respondents reported that their organizations frequently follow a formal policy governing this use. Formal policies were followed less frequently for contribution-related activities, including employees contributing to non-work-related projects, releasing open source projects, contributing upstream, sponsoring open source projects or foundations, and contributing to third-party projects not intended for upstream submission.

DATA ACCESS

The raw survey data underlying this report is publicly available on Zenodo via the Linux Foundation Research community repository at <https://zenodo.org/communities/linux-foundation-research>. The dataset includes all anonymized survey responses and can be freely accessed, downloaded, and reused under the applicable open license. Researchers and practitioners who wish to conduct independent analysis or build upon this work are encouraged to consult the repository directly.

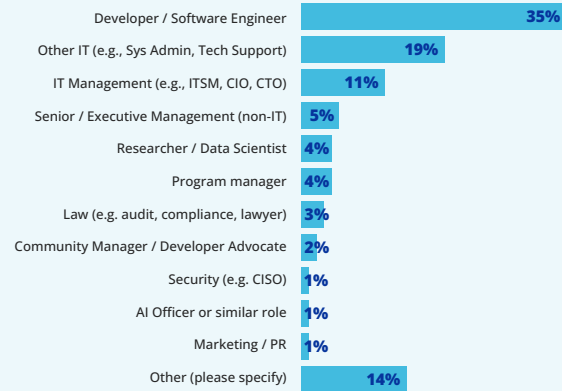
DISCLAIMER

LF Research uses generative AI tools to varying degrees for research-related tasks, including aggregating secondary sources, analyzing data, supporting report drafting, copyediting, and translation. All AI-generated content is reviewed and revised as needed.

FIGURE 29: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

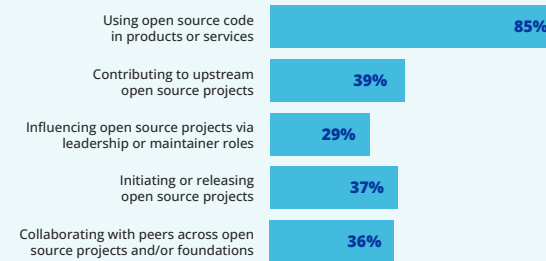
Professionally, which of the following best describes your role? (select one)

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q4, Sample size = 323



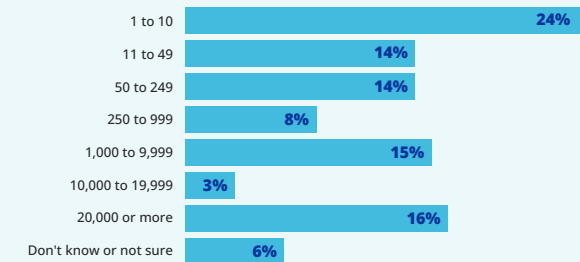
Where is your organization on its open source journey? (select all that apply)

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q1, Sample size = 323



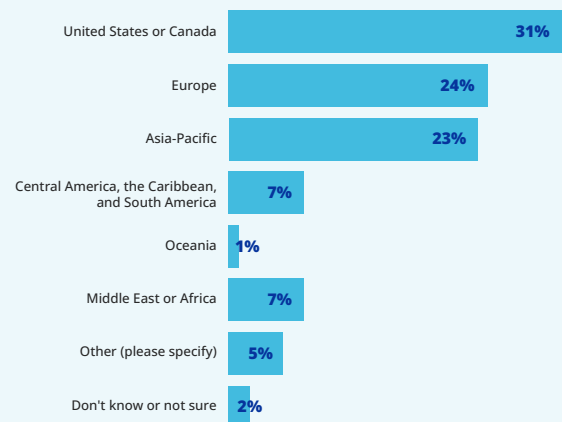
How many people work for your organization? If you are employed by a software integrator or consulting firm, or self employed, answer on behalf of the most current client you are primarily working for. (select one)

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q5, Sample size = 323



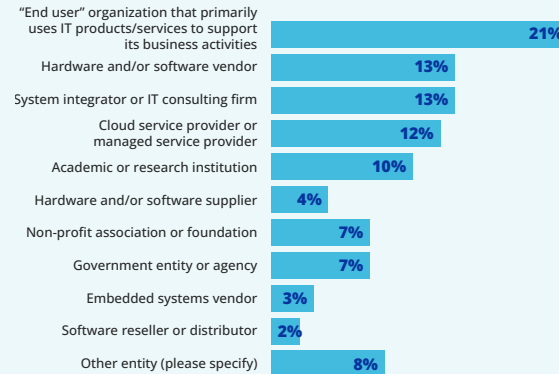
In which region does your organization have its headquarters? (select one)

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q6, Sample size = 323



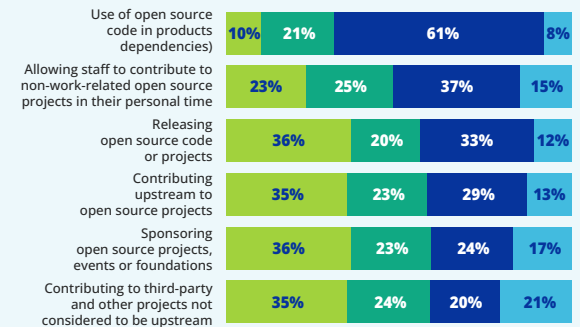
Which response best describes the organization you work for? (select one)

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q7, Sample size = 323



How often does your organization follow a formal policy governing use and/or contribution to open source projects in the following areas? (select one response per row)

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q8, Sample size = 323



APPENDIX

APPENDIX A1: OSPO ADOPTION BY OSPO LOCATION IN THE ORGANIZATION

Does your organization currently have, or has it ever had, an OSPO or a similar open source initiative?

Where is the OSPO located within the organization? If the effort is informal, answer based on who the primary organizers report to. (select one)	Yes, formal or Informal
Software engineering	39%
Office of the CTO or CIO	22%
IT or computing services	16%
DevRel, marketing or communications	6%
Security, compliance or risk management	6%
Technology transfer/licensing office	5%
Legal	3%
AI Center of Excellence/ Responsible AI	2%
Data Science / Analytics	1%

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q10/Q11, Sample size=90

APPENDIX A2: OSPO ADOPTION BY OSPO AGE BY YEARS SINCE ESTABLISHMENT

Does your organization currently have, or has it ever had, an OSPO or a similar open source initiative?

How long ago was the OSPO established? (select one)	Yes, formal or Informal
0 to 2 years	39%
3 to 5 years	25%
6 to 10 years	17%
More than 10 years	19%

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q10/Q12, Sample size=90

APPENDIX A3: OSPOS' STABILITY

Has the OSPO been reorganized into a different part of the organization in the last 2 to 3 years? (select one)

No	57%
Yes	26%
DKNS	18%

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q18, Sample size = 90

APPENDIX A4: OSPO EFFECTIVENESS IN MANAGING AI RISKS

How effective is your OSPO's open source compliance in proactively managing generative AI risks today? (select one)

Extremely ineffective	1%
Very ineffective	17%
Effective	43%
Very Effective	8%
Extremely Effective	6%
DKNS	26%

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q14, Sample size = 90

APPENDIX A5: OSPO ADDRESSING OPEN SOURCE SECURITY ISSUES

Does your OSPO directly address open source security issues? (select one)

Yes, the OSPO makes decisions on how the organization's workforce can identify security risks in open source projects and how to help build more secure software in those projects (internal education, guidelines, best practices, policies, etc.)	46%
No, but the OSPO provides advice to the team unit/department that is in charge	39%
No, we don't focus on open source security.	9%
DKNS	7%

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q13, Sample size = 90

APPENDIX A6: OSPO ENGAGEMENT IN AI-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Is your OSPO engaged in any AI-related activities — such as governance, compliance, security, or standards development?
(select one)

Yes	58%
No	27%
DKNS	16%

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q19, Sample size = 90

APPENDIX A7: OSPOS' FREQUENCY OF PRACTICES TO SUSTAIN ITSELF

How often does your OSPO work on practices to sustain itself (maintaining the initiative in the long term)? (select one)

Never	7%
Rarely	12%
Sometimes	33%
Frequently	26%
Always	14%
DKNS	9%

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q31, Sample size = 102

APPENDIX A8: ACADEMIC OSPOS' RESPONSIBILITIES

What are the top three responsibilities of the OSPO?
(select up to three responses)

Education and training within the organization	92%
Oversee open source license compliance	33%
Community building	33%
Working with external partners and open source communities and foundations	25%
Open source policy within the organization	25%
Open source advocacy within the organization	17%
Working with other departments	8%
Tools and infrastructure to support OSS adoption within the organization	0%
Direct support arm of OSS project teams	0%
Other (please specify)	8%
DKNS	0%

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q29, Sample size = 12

APPENDIX A9: HOW WILL NEW OSPOS BE STRUCTURED

How will the OSPO be formally structured? (select all that apply)

Dedicated staff	66%
Reporting structure	40%
New job titles	14%
Other (please specify)	3%
DKNS	17%

Footnote: OSPO 2026, Q35, Sample size = 35

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

BIANCA TRINKENREICH is an assistant professor of Computer Science at Colorado State University and a research analyst at LF Research. Her research on software engineering and open source software has resulted in several awards in top-tier venues. She serves on the program committees of renowned conferences and as both a reviewer and editor for several journals. Dr. Trinkenreich has a Ph.D., two master's and a BS in Computer Science. She also has more than 20 years of IT industry experience. For more information, visit <http://biancatrink.github.io>.

ADRIENN LAWSON serves as Director of Quantitative Research at the Linux Foundation, where she leads data-driven initiatives to understand open source ecosystems. With expertise in social data science from the University of Oxford and a background spanning academic and governmental research, she brings methodological rigor to analyzing distributed collaboration networks. At the Linux Foundation, Adrienn leads a team conducting cross-sectional research across industry verticals and geographic regions to provide comprehensive insights into open source dynamics. Her work encompasses empirical investigations into regulatory compliance, the implications of AI, and sustainable funding models. She produces evidence-based recommendations that inform strategic decision-making within the open source community.

ANA JIMENEZ is an open source community leader and data scientist with 5+ years of experience at the Linux Foundation, supporting global, multi-stakeholder developer ecosystems. She is an Agentic AI Foundation Ambassador, helping developers and OSPO teams understand agentic AI projects and open standards such as MCP, Goose, and Agents.md

Ana is currently actively involved in TODO Group's Agentic AI to Empower OSPOs Working Group and co-chairs the PyTorch Academic Outreach Working Group. Before joining the Linux Foundation, she worked at Bitergia on software development analytics. Ana holds a master's in Data Science at Rey Juan Carlos University with a thesis in measuring the health of open source developer ecosystems.

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