

PROGRAM GUIDE

SkillHeart Open Source Labs

Verifiable experience through real open source contributions.

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Open Source Labs at a glance

ITEM	DETAILS
Format	Supervised open source contribution program
For	Emerging digital talent with sufficient technical foundations to work on real projects
Model	Limited-scope cohorts with defined objectives and supervision
Cost	Free for selected participants
Work	Open source projects with real utility and learning value
Supervision	Mentors, technical reviewers and project leads
Use of AI	Permitted, with accountability and the ability to explain the work
Evidence	Reviewed, traceable contributions and, where appropriate, public evidence
Outcome	Verifiable experience, structured feedback and a stronger foundation for progression
Employment guaranteed	No

Open Source Labs is part of the SkillHeart program ecosystem. It is designed so that a person can demonstrate how they work before taking on greater responsibility in other professional, technical or entrepreneurial settings.

1. Why it exists

Many technically capable people face a recurring barrier when trying to access a first professional opportunity: they are expected to have prior experience, yet have few opportunities to gain it in environments where their work can be observed, reviewed and assessed.

SkillHeart Open Source Labs exists to reduce that gap.

The program enables participants to work on real software within a framework of objectives, technical review, documentation and follow-up. The purpose is not to accumulate commits or complete artificial exercises, but to demonstrate how a person understands a problem, proposes a solution, implements changes, writes tests, documents decisions, receives feedback and progressively improves their work.

The experience gained does not replace an employment relationship, does not constitute an official accreditation and does not guarantee subsequent hiring.

Not just learning. Verifiable evidence of how you work.

2. Who it is for

Open Source Labs is designed for people who already have sufficient technical foundations to begin contributing to real projects, but who still need to build verifiable experience, strengthen how they work or gain exposure to professional standards.

It may be particularly suitable for:

- developers in the early stages of their careers;
- recent graduates with a technical foundation and limited practical experience;
- self-taught profiles with personal projects or demonstrable ability;
- people who have not yet worked systematically with code review;
- and talent that may benefit from a validation stage before moving into environments with greater responsibility.

It is not an introductory programming course. Each call will define the minimum expected level according to the projects available.

Places will be limited.

3. What it is – and what it is not

It is

- a supervised technical contribution environment;
- a program focused on real projects;
- a pathway to generate verifiable experience;
- a system for review, feedback and improvement;
- a space to build or improve open source tools with concrete utility;
- and a possible progression stage toward other programs or opportunities.

It is not

- a conventional bootcamp;
- a job board;
- a guarantee of employment, contracting or income;
- a mechanism for accumulating trivial contributions;
- a way to assign unpaid private or commercial work;
- a substitute for paid roles or professional engagements;
- or a system for obtaining free, indefinite maintenance for SkillHeart.

The usefulness that a contribution may generate for SkillHeart **will not, by itself, be sufficient to justify its inclusion in the program.**

Every project must offer identifiable technical and learning value to participants, allow for appropriate supervision and produce relevant evidence of their capabilities.

4. How it works

Open Source Labs is organized into **limited-duration cohorts or cycles**. The specific conditions of each edition will be published in a dedicated **Cohort Brief**.

As a general model, a cohort may move through four phases:

01 **Onboarding and preparation**

Program context, working rules, standards, access and validation of practices such as Git/GitHub, pull requests, issues, testing, documentation, code review, asynchronous communication, basic security and responsible use of AI.

02 **Guided contribution**

Initial, controlled-scope work used to observe understanding, quality, communication and response to feedback.

03 **Progressively autonomous contribution**

As participants demonstrate readiness, they may take on less-defined problems and greater responsibility for researching, proposing and implementing solutions.

04 **Review and evidence**

At the end of the cycle, SkillHeart consolidates the evidence generated and reviews the progress observed during the cohort.

5. What we build

Open Source Labs can work with projects from three sources.

A. Projects proposed by SkillHeart

SkillHeart may propose tools, integrations, libraries, automations, components or infrastructure that have real utility and are appropriate to develop openly.

These may include, for example, developer tooling, automations, integrations, utilities for nonprofit organizations, assessment tools, accessibility, observability, infrastructure or open commerce.

SkillHeart will not use Open Source Labs to replace paid professional work, cover critical production needs without an appropriate structure or place disproportionate responsibilities on participants.

B. Projects proposed by participants

Participants may also identify problems and propose tools, improvements or new projects.

A proposal may become an individual project, a team project, an initiative for a future cohort or, where there is entrepreneurial or commercial potential, a possible candidate for **SkillHeart Venture Labs**.

The ability to propose projects is part of the model: participants are not merely recipients of tasks.

C. Third-party open source projects

SkillHeart may select projects maintained by third parties where there is an appropriate environment for responsible contribution.

Factors may include repository activity, documentation, contribution rules, security, quality of the review process, technical fit and learning value.

6. How we accept a project

Before adding a project to the program, SkillHeart may assess it against five principles:

Open – it can be developed or contributed to under an appropriate open source license.

Useful – it solves a real problem or produces a useful improvement.

Learnable – it enables participants to develop and demonstrate relevant skills.

Supervisable – there is real capacity to review the work and control the risks.

Sustainable – there is a reasonable expectation of what happens next: maintenance, continuation, transfer or archiving.

A project may be technically interesting and still not be suitable for Open Source Labs.

7. Contribution standards and artificial intelligence

A contribution does not become valuable simply because a commit or pull request exists.

SkillHeart may assess:

- understanding of the problem;
- quality and maintainability of the solution;
- testing and documentation;
- security;
- communication;
- ability to incorporate feedback;
- technical reasoning;
- and compliance with project standards.

The number of commits, lines of code or pull requests **does not, by itself, constitute a measure of success.**

Where useful, SkillHeart may distinguish **verified contributions** from minor or purely cosmetic changes.

Use of AI

Artificial intelligence tools are part of today's technology environment and may be used when they add value.

However:

AI-assisted work is allowed. Work the participant does not understand is not.

Each participant must be able to explain, modify and verify the work they submit, respond to reviews and take responsibility for the outcome.

Secrets, personal data, confidential information or unauthorized assets must never be entered into AI tools.

8. What SkillHeart provides – and what participants can expect

Depending on the cohort and project, SkillHeart may provide coordination, technical supervision, code review, mentoring, documentation, access to repositories and environments, follow-up, professional tools, licenses where there is a need and availability, infrastructure resources, community spaces and structured feedback.

A person's financial circumstances should not, by themselves, prevent them from using the essential tools required by the program.

SkillHeart will seek to ensure that each participant can expect:

- reasonably clear objectives and scope;
- supervision proportionate to the project;
- communicated evaluation criteria;
- appropriate attribution of contributions;
- respect for pre-existing intellectual property;
- reasonable protection of their data;
- channels for raising questions or problems;
- and meaningful feedback.

Open Source Labs will not use training as a pretext to obtain unpaid productive work that should belong under a different professional relationship.

9. What is expected from participants

Participation requires a genuine commitment to the team and to the people who dedicate time to supervising it.

Selected participants will be expected to:

- meet the agreed commitment;
- communicate regularly;
- report blockers;
- respect reasonable deadlines;
- document their progress;
- use provided resources responsibly;
- respect licenses, policies and the code of conduct;
- participate in reviews where appropriate;
- and accept technical feedback.

Serious or repeated lack of commitment may result in suspension or termination of participation.

Participation is voluntary. A person may leave the program, although they will be expected to communicate their decision and, where reasonable, facilitate an orderly close-out of tasks, documentation and access.

10. Evidence, evaluation and progression

The main outcome of Open Source Labs is not a certificate. It is a **set of traceable evidence**.

Depending on the project, this evidence may include issues, pull requests, commits, code reviews, tests, documentation, technical proposals, architecture decisions, releases, accepted contributions and progress reports.

Where appropriate, technical evidence will be public and linkable. Certain evaluations, personal data or sensitive information may remain private.

SkillHeart may consolidate participation through an **Open Source Contribution Report** or equivalent format: a structured summary of observed contributions, evidence, strengths and development areas.

Any evaluation will reflect only the evidence observed in a specific context and period. It will not constitute an official accreditation, an absolute judgment of the person or a guarantee of hiring.

Possible next steps

Depending on demonstrated capability, available places and relevant fit, a person may:

- continue contributing;
- take on more complex projects;
- progress into contributor, maintainer or mentor roles;
- be considered for **SkillHeart Industry Labs**;
- be considered for **SkillHeart Professional Immersion**;
- propose or join an initiative in **SkillHeart Venture Labs**;
- or use their evidence to pursue external opportunities.

Progression is based on demonstrated capability, not simply on having completed a cohort.

11. Selection

Open Source Labs will have limited places and not every application can be accepted.

The process may assess three dimensions:

Eligibility – whether the applicant meets the basic requirements of the call.

Readiness – whether they have a sufficient foundation to benefit from the program: technical capability, problem-solving, communication, reliability, learning ability and other relevant competencies.

Program Fit – the fit between the profile and the projects, technologies, level and objectives of the cohort.

The process may include an application, review of previous work, a practical assessment, Program Fit evaluation and, where useful, a short interview.

SkillHeart will use predefined criteria and observable evidence to reduce arbitrariness. Selection will not be based exclusively on academic qualifications, years of experience or financial means.

An application may result in:

- **Accepted**
- **Waitlisted**
- **Development Required**
- **Not Selected / Not Eligible**

Detailed weightings and thresholds form part of SkillHeart's internal assessment methodology and may vary by cohort.

12. Intellectual property, licenses, security and privacy

Intellectual property and attribution

Submitting a proposal as a participant **does not transfer the participant's idea, code, documentation or other pre-existing assets to SkillHeart.**

Before a project begins, where necessary, the license, repository, contribution rules, attribution, governance, treatment of pre-existing intellectual property and maintenance responsibilities will be defined.

No project will move from an open source and learning context into commercial exploitation without first defining, through a separate framework where necessary, the rights and responsibilities of the people involved.

Where an initiative may evolve into a product or company, SkillHeart may recommend its transition into **Venture Labs** or another appropriate structure.

Security and privacy

As a general principle:

- production access will not be provided by default;
- least privilege will apply;
- development, staging or sandbox environments will be prioritized;
- secrets must remain outside repositories;
- real personal data will be avoided where suitable alternatives exist;
- and access may be revoked when it is no longer necessary.

Participants must respect applicable security policies and handle any non-public information to which they have access appropriately.

SkillHeart will seek to collect only the personal data necessary for selection, participation, follow-up and protection of the program.

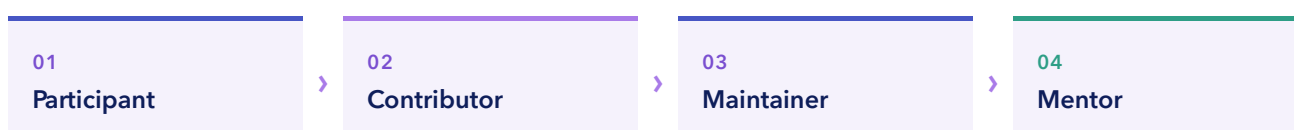
13. Community, mentoring and project lifecycle

Open Source Labs may use the **SkillHeart Community** as a space to share resources, ideas, technical questions, learning, opportunities, feedback and proposals for new projects.

The community complements the program, but does not replace repositories, management systems, documentation or official records.

Where possible, mentoring of general interest will take place in shared spaces so that the same explanation can benefit multiple people.

A possible progression within the ecosystem may be:



Projects, in turn, may move through states such as:



At the end of a cohort, a project may continue, move into the hands of maintainers, evolve into another program or be transparently archived.

Proposing an initiative

A proposal should explain what problem it aims to solve, who it is useful for, why it makes sense to develop it as open source, what a reasonable initial scope would be, what resources it would need and what could happen to the project after the cohort.

SkillHeart may accept a proposal, request changes, reduce its scope, reserve it for a future cohort, move it to another program or reject it.

14. Cost, open calls and how to apply

Cost

Participation in Open Source Labs is free for selected participants.

SkillHeart may provide specific resources, licenses or tools where they are necessary for appropriate participation and sufficient availability exists.

Open calls

Each cohort will publish a **Cohort Brief** containing the information that varies for that edition: places, schedule, duration, estimated commitment, priority technologies or areas, projects, specific requirements, selection process and deadlines.

This allows the general program model to remain stable while each cohort adapts to real needs.

How to apply

Applications will open only through SkillHeart's official channels.

Submitting an application does not guarantee admission.

Information and calls

skillheart.org

Contact

admin@skillheart.org

About SkillHeart

SkillHeart is the public-facing name of the *Asociación para el Desarrollo del Talento Tecnológico y la Empleabilidad Digital*, a nonprofit association registered in Spain.

Its mission is to help emerging digital talent develop relevant capabilities, gain verifiable experience and access professional, educational and entrepreneurial opportunities responsibly.

Its initial focus gives particular attention to collaboration between African and European technology ecosystems, guided by principles of dignity, autonomy, transparency, reciprocity, quality, privacy and realism.

SkillHeart develops its programs progressively: start with controlled scope, measure results, learn from execution and scale only what proves to work.

Document status and updates

This document describes the general model of **SkillHeart Open Source Labs**.

The specific conditions of each call will be published before it opens and will prevail where they differ from this general guide.

SkillHeart may update this document as the program evolves.

ITEM	DETAILS
Version	1.0
Last updated	September 27, 2026
Document status	Final public guide
Program status	Open for applications



SkillHeart

Skills open doors. We build the bridges.

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