OpenMRS Fellowship Program

Introduction

OpenMRS is committed to building a diverse, vibrant, and robust community where knowledge and experience are expanded through practical opportunities for anyone and everyone. Many developers and technical writers come to our community via Google mentorship programs like Google Summer of Code. By the end, many have grown as OpenMRS community members and developers - and what then? Our Fellowship Program complements GSoC and similar mentorship programs by providing opportunities for mid-level technical project managers, developers, and quality assurance specialists to become general OpenMRS Jedis and Gurus in their specific technical areas by expanding their OpenMRS skills and gaining experience through real work that is in demand by implementers.

How does it work?

OpenMRS Fellowship Program aims to expand our community’s capacity by providing practical opportunities to develop advanced skill sets using one or more of our OpenMRS stages (development, community, terminology, quality assurance, etc). To make the experience more meaningful, we aim to pair each fellow with a Fellow Mentor, Organization Rotation, and an active squad or project. Most fellowship opportunities are 9 months long.

Who is involved?

Fellows

Fellows can be any mid-to-senior-level technical project/product manager, developer, quality assurance specialist, or program manager who is interested in expanding their knowledge and skills.

Each year, OpenMRS offers fellowships for 2-3 talented individuals interested in serving the OpenMRS Community in the following areas:

- Product Management | UX Design
- Development (Frontend, Backend/Tooling, QA)
- Community Management & Operations

2023 OpenMRS Fellows are expected to dedicate ~680 to 960 hours over 9-12 months, starting o/a January 9. See below for more information on how to apply.

See OpenMRS Fellows to get to know our current and past Fellows.

What qualifications do candidates have?

In 2023, we’re specifically interested in candidates who have the following qualifications (depending on their focus area):

- 4-5 years of experience (or Stage 3 or higher)
- Experience with processes, tools, and technologies used by the OpenMRS community (Jira, GitHub, React, FHIR, Bamboo/Travis, Cypress/Selenium, WordPress)
- Demonstrates initiative to identify different problems and proposes thoughtful solutions for those problems in a team setting
- Dedication to the OpenMRS mission, vision, and values
- Open to exploring and applying open-source principles
- Able to work independently and as a part of a team
- Good communication skills with team members and with guests on team calls

What Fellows Do

Successful OpenMRS Fellows learn quickly, show initiative, follow through, and manage relationships with their mentors and advisors. They model and promote community values, our Code of Conduct, and a culture of mentorship.

All Fellows are expected to:

- Develop and follow an individual fellowship plan with guidance from their mentor & fellowship program administrators.
- Share fellowship highlights, knowledge, and observations twice a month via a fellowship blog.
- Complete a fellowship project in collaboration with one or more community squads.
- Complete quarterly and final fellowship evaluations.
- Follow through on agreed upon tasks and commitments with a designated fellow mentor.
- Effectively communicate with community members openly and transparently using community communication tools.
- Present project progress via community forums and showcases.

What Product Management Fellows Do

Product Management Fellows are skilled coders who are on their way to becoming expert OpenMRS developers. They have experience with the OpenMRS tech stack and can handle moderate to complex issues.

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What Community Management Fellows Do

Community Managers often wear multiple hats. Through this fellowship, Community Management Fellows will expand their current skills and experience by providing program and operational support to a variety of OpenMRS community initiatives; assisting with Fellowship Program and grant administration; assisting with community recognition efforts; telling our story via social media, blogs, our website, and reports.
Product Managers are responsible for choosing the right problems to go after, and then guiding their team to successful outcomes. They help their team understand users' pressing problems and work together to deliver a solution. Through this fellowship, Fellows will go beyond Project Management and will learn how to apply the critical product foundations of Discovery, Development, Delivery, and Communication. They will meet with end-users to understand their needs (Discovery) and will become proficient in conducting user research. They will represent the voice of users by Communicating needs and problems to the whole team, and ensure that Development moves forward smoothly by supporting Sprint and Roadmap planning. Finally, they will launch solutions with real users and monitor their impact (Delivery).

Possible specialization: UX Design

Fellow Mentors

Fellow Mentors are experienced and knowledgeable. They have already acquired knowledge and experience in one or more areas of expertise, such as: project/product management, development, quality assurance, business analysis, etc. Fellow Mentors accompany OpenMRS Fellows as they work towards their fellowship goals. They may also mentor any community member seeking to advance their skills.

In addition, Fellow Mentors have experience with:

- Collaborating with the OpenMRS community (or other open-source projects)
- Identifying learning opportunities
- Transferring knowledge and skills to a less experienced person
- Assessing learning or professional growth

See OpenMRS Fellows to get to know our current and past Fellow Mentors. For more information about how you can apply to be a Fellow Mentor, please contact Jennifer Antilla and Nikesh Balami.

Organizations: Hosting Fellows, Mentors, and Rotations

There are several ways for organizations to engage with the OpenMRS Fellowship Program. Through organization rotations, an organization can choose to:

- **Host a Fellow or Rotation.** Do you have a project that might align with a Fellow's area of focus and fellowship plan? Are you open to having a Fellow engage with your team for a few months? Consider proposing a capstone project or a rotation and host a fellow.
- **Support a Mentor or Fellow.** Is someone in your organization interested in becoming an OpenMRS Fellow? Do you have a talented, experienced staff member who is willing to mentor an OpenMRS Fellow? Consider supporting their participation as a Mentor or a Fellow.

Organization rotations aim to give fellows an opportunity to a) gain experience collaborating with other OpenMRS developers in community settings and b) apply knowledge & skills gained during their fellowship to real-life OpenMRS development and deployment situations. It exposes organizations to community products, frameworks, processes, and/or practices that they might extend and adapt.

Organizational rotations can be 5 - 6 months long and may overlap with the final months of a fellow’s core fellowship period.

See Organization Rotation and Fellowship Program Rules for more information.

What skills can you expect to gain as a Fellow?

We want to ensure that Fellows have a clear pathway to advanced OpenMRS stages. To assist with this, we work with each fellow to align their professional goals with current OpenMRS Developer and Community Stages as well as specific skills that their fellowship project will build. In the coming months, we hope to include PM and QA stages as well.

About Stipends

We are committed to the success of our Fellows and Fellow Mentors. This success relies on our ability to provide sufficient mentorship and guidance - and the ability of mentors and fellows alike to access and use the necessary tools (ie: internet, computers, airtime, etc) as well as dedicate sufficient time to their projects. **Stipends** may be offered to Fellows or Fellow Mentors on a case-by-case basis to ensure that they are able to fully honor their fellowship commitments. Stipends will only be paid to Fellows who satisfactorily reach milestones set out in a Fellowship Plan. Fellows may choose to waive any offered stipend. Unused stipends will go towards our community’s infrastructure and operations.

See Fellowship Program Rules for more information about Stipends.
How to apply

As a Fellow

Fellowship opportunities are announced as funding allows and openings become available on our OpenMRS Job Board on Talk. Fellowship candidates are asked to complete the Fellowship Program Application and submit three key documents (CV, Cover Letter, and proposed Fellowship Plan).

The cover letter should include:

- type of fellowship you are applying for (Development, PM, QA, CM, etc),
- project(s) that you are interested in,
- experience working on open-source projects,
- your technical experience, including links to code and writing samples,
- professional development goals, and
- any other information that you believe is relevant.

The fellowship plan should include:

- personal information including the links to the Talk/Slack ID, Fellowship Journey, GitHub profile,
- area and learning goals,
- skills required and expectations form the learning goals, and
- the skill-building status.

Fellowship candidates can use the available Template to create their Fellowship Plan.

To help potential fellowship candidates prepare their Fellowship Program Application, we will host a series of Fellowship Program Orientation Sessions.

Info!

Get ready to submit a winning application! Click here to learn more, register and join our Fellowship Program Orientation sessions from November 17 - December 15.

As an Organization

Organizations can participate in the Fellowship Program by supporting a fellow candidate from their organization, supporting a mentor, or hosting a fellowship organization rotation. See Fellowship Organization Rotations for more information about rotations.

Organizations are asked to complete the Organization Application form if they are interested in supporting any of the above-mentioned activities.

For more information about how you or your organization can get involved with the OpenMRS Fellowship Program, please contact Jennifer Antilla and Nikesh Balami.