

Open Source Contribution Policy

How we license, attribute, and accept contributions to our open work.

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OWNER	Tech Lead
REVIEW CYCLE	Annual
STATUS	Adopted

1 Purpose & Principles

LinkScape defaults to open-source. Most of what we build — research code, models, workshop materials, and tools — is meant to be shared so students and communities with limited exposure to AI can learn from and build on it. This policy defines how contributions get approved, which licenses we use, and how we give and expect credit, both for code we publish and for outside projects we contribute to.

- Open by default — publish unless there is a specific reason not to (Section 5).
- Give credit generously — attribute every dependency, dataset, and contributor.
- Respect licenses — ours and everyone else's.
- Clear ownership — the CTO owns technical direction and approves releases.

This policy covers (a) LinkScape publishing its own repositories, and (b) LinkScape members contributing to third-party open-source projects while representing LinkScape or using LinkScape resources.

2 Contribution Approval Process

2.1 Publishing a new LinkScape repository

1. Author opens a release request in Slack/Notion describing the project, its intended license, and any data or model artifacts included.
2. Confirm IP status with PP-02 IP Assignment — work created for LinkScape is assigned to the project before public release.

3. Run the pre-release checklist (Section 4): secrets scan, license file, attribution/NOTICE, README.
4. If the repo includes a model, attach a completed Model Card (E-04); if it includes research data, confirm E-03 data provenance.
5. CTO approves the release and the repo is published under the LinkScape GitHub organization.
6. For anything with legal or financial obligations (e.g., a CLA binding the sponsor), route through Hack Club / HCB per G-06.

2.2 Contributing to external open-source projects

1. Check that the contribution does not disclose LinkScape private data, unreleased research, or fleet configuration (see S-04 Acceptable Use).
2. Verify the upstream project's license is compatible and review any Contributor License Agreement (CLA) or DCO sign-off it requires.
3. For substantial contributions made on LinkScape time or resources, get CTO acknowledgement before signing a CLA on the org's behalf.
4. Follow the upstream project's code of conduct and contribution guidelines; represent LinkScape professionally per PP-01 Code of Conduct.

Signing a Contributor License Agreement can assign or license IP. Because LinkScape is not a separate legal entity, any CLA that binds The Hack Foundation must be reviewed via G-06 HCB Fiscal Sponsorship before an individual signs on LinkScape's behalf.

3 Approved License Requirements

LinkScape uses permissive, OSI-approved licenses by default so our work is maximally reusable by students and the broader community.

Artifact type	Default license	Notes
Code / libraries / tools	MIT	Default for most repositories
Code needing patent grant	Apache-2.0	When a patent grant is beneficial
Datasets	CC BY 4.0	Attribution required; verify source rights first
Documentation / workshop materials	CC BY 4.0	Educational reuse encouraged
Model weights	[license per base-model terms]	Must respect upstream base-model license

- Copyleft licenses (e.g., GPL/AGPL) require CTO approval before adoption, because they constrain downstream reuse.

- A model or dataset may never be released under terms more permissive than its most restrictive input allows.
- Every repository includes a LICENSE file at the root; multi-license repos document terms per directory.
- Third-party code retained in our repos keeps its original license and NOTICE.

4 Pre-Release Checklist

- No secrets, API keys, tokens, or credentials in history (run a secrets scan; see S-02 Information Security).
- No personal data or participant data without E-02 clearance.
- LICENSE file present and correct for every artifact.
- NOTICE / attributions for all dependencies and datasets.
- README with purpose, install/use, and citation instructions.
- Model Card (E-04) attached if a model is included.
- No fleet configuration or access details that could aid misuse of the H100 compute (S-04).

5 When NOT to Open-Source

Open by default does not mean open always. Hold or restrict a release when:

- It contains personal or participant data that cannot be lawfully redistributed (E-02).
- Publishing would create a clear safety or dual-use risk (escalate to the Ethical Review Board, E-05, and the CFO per E-08).
- It embeds third-party material whose license forbids redistribution.
- Unreleased research is under embargo for a venue submission (E-03).
- It would expose security-sensitive infrastructure details (S-02, S-04).

Decisions to withhold a release are documented, and the constitutional authorities (Founder and Co-founders collectively) may weigh in on significant cases.

6 Attribution & Contributor Recognition

- All contributors — including student and minor members — are credited in a CONTRIBUTORS file, commit history, or paper author list as appropriate (see E-03 authorship rules).
- External contributions to LinkScape repos are welcomed under the repo's license and acknowledged.
- When we build on others' work, we cite it clearly in README and, for research, in the paper.
- Recognition of significant open-source contributions may feed into PP-09 Recognition.

7 Ownership & Review

The CTO owns this policy and the LinkScape GitHub organization, and reviews the policy at least annually. IP questions are resolved against PP-02 IP Assignment. Proposed changes affecting the org's default openness are decided with the Founder and Co-founders. Questions go to cto@linkscope.app.

Approval and Adoption

Adopted upon signature by the officers below. Pending ratification at Sprint 0 (see LS-REG-001).

Document Maintenance Log

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	July 23, 2026	LinkScape Leadership	Initial release

LinkScape operates as a fiscally sponsored project of The Hack Foundation dba Hack Club, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Hack Club holds the charitable status and every dollar moves through Hack Club Bank.

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