

SFSCON 2024

Building the Public Interest Desktop

Organizing the GNOME Sovereign
Tech Fund project

Tobias Bernard

About Me

Alto Adige native

GNOME design team member

Community organizer

Coordinator on the STF project



What is Public Interest Technology?



**Everyone uses it, but it's hard
to build a product around**



Who uses GNOME?

City of Barcelona

Most of the VFX industry

Journalists and activists

French Police

Who pays for GNOME?

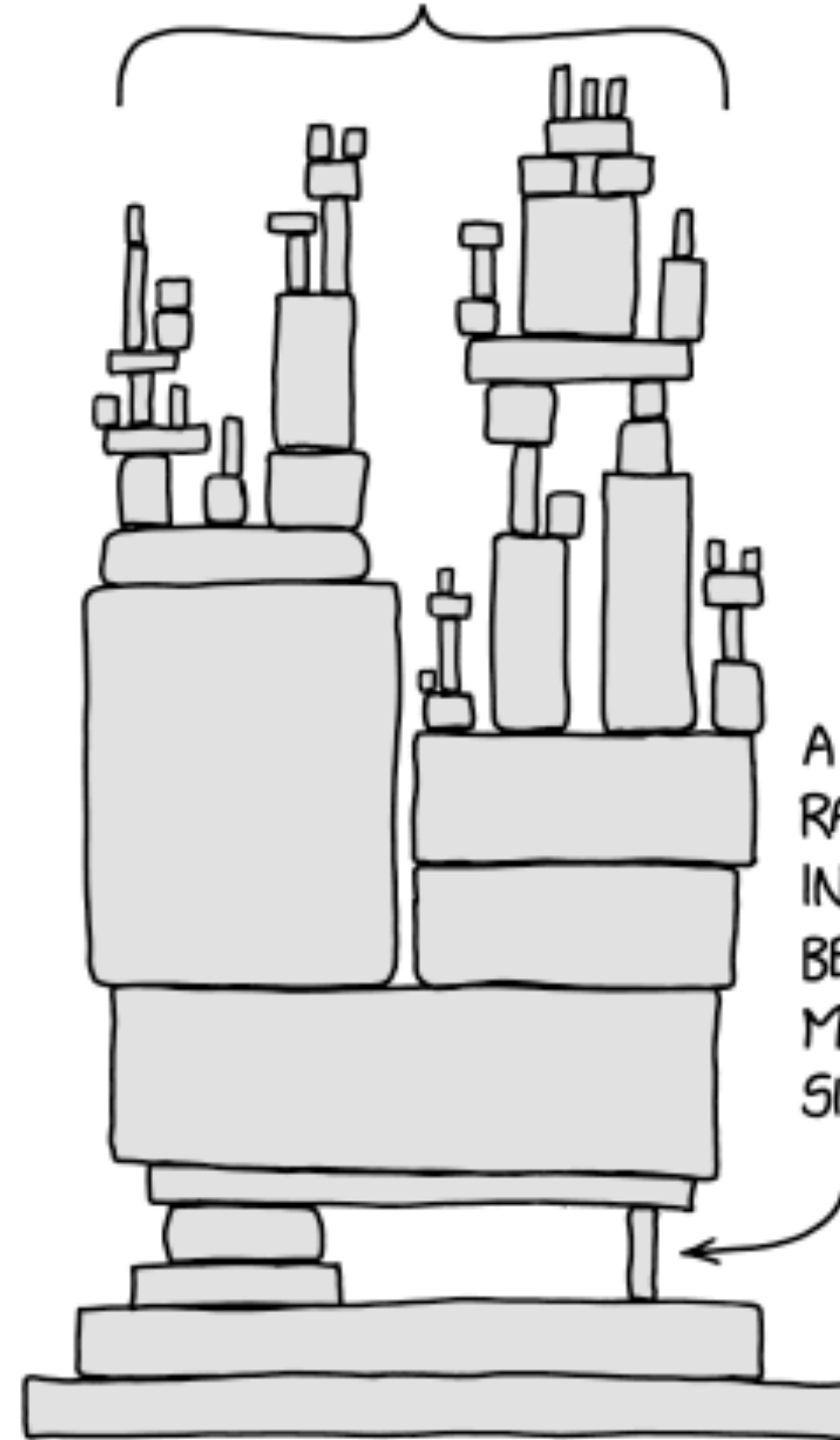
Corporate employers

Individual grants

Infrastructure sponsors

Volunteers!

ALL MODERN DIGITAL
INFRASTRUCTURE



A PROJECT SOME
RANDOM PERSON
IN NEBRASKA HAS
BEEN THANKLESSLY
MAINTAINING
SINCE 2003

**The public pays for physical
infrastructure.**

**Why do we expect digital
infrastructure just magically
fund itself?**

Sovereign Tech Fund

Initiative by German government

Supports public interest tech

Focus on infrastructure & maintenance

Started in 2023

GNOME STF Project

1 Million Euro budget

October 2023 – December 2024

Organized by Sonny Piers and myself

Critical, underfunded areas

Areas of Focus

Accessibility

Quality Assurance

Flatpak & Portals

Security

Hardware Support

Platform APIs

Contractors

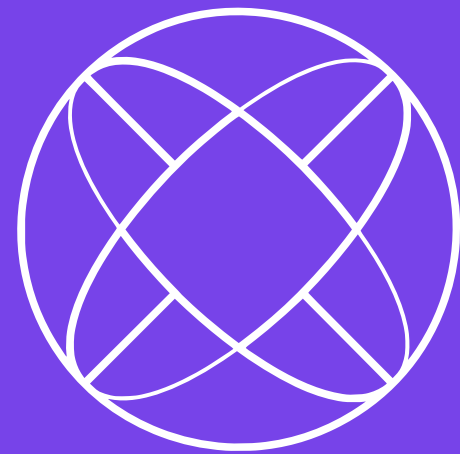
28 contractors overall

Focus on community members/maintainers

Match important tasks with people available

2 consultancy partnerships

Partnerships



igalia

CodeThink

Partnerships

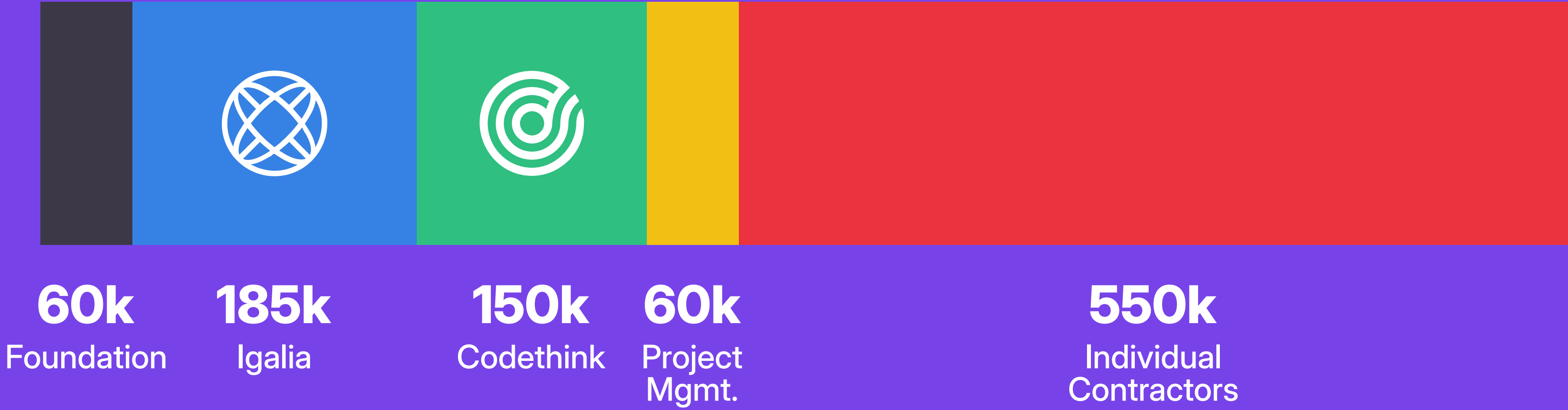
Only way to get projects done

They employ community members

We pay for about half the work

Igalia and Codethink sponsor the rest

Budget



*Approximate values

Current Status

Time/budget matching our projections

Most major items done and merged

Some ongoing work until end of year

In the process of applying for 2025

The Work

(a very small selection)



Accessibility

Orca maintenance

Wayland improvements

WebkitGTK a11y

Newton architecture



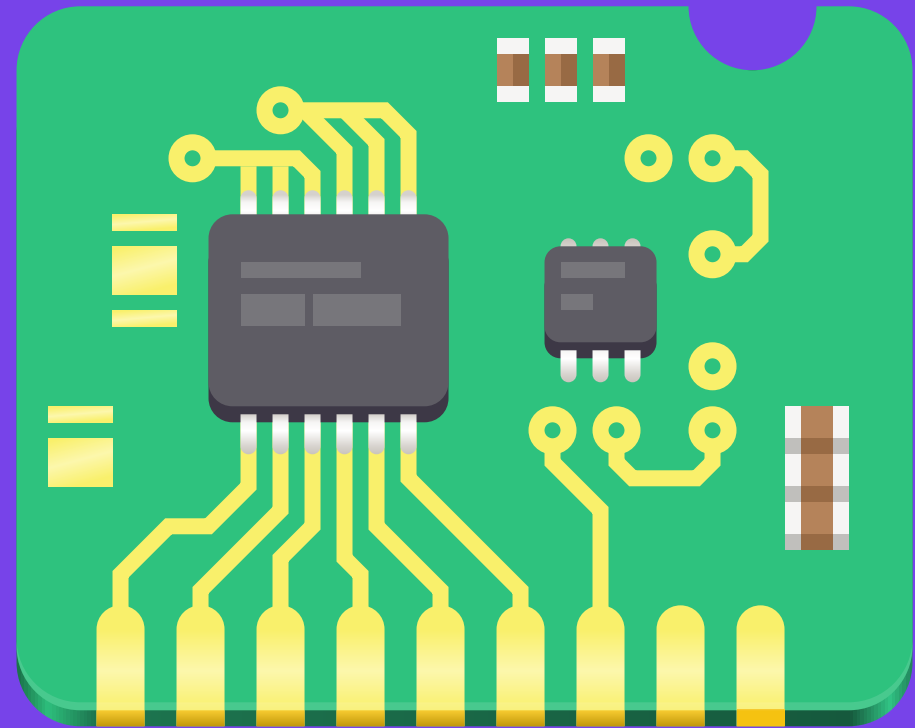
Security

Keyring Rust rewrite

Encrypt disk on suspend

Automated CVE tracking

Bug bounty program



Hardware Support

Support smaller displays

Variable refresh rate

Fractional scaling

Accelerated screencasting



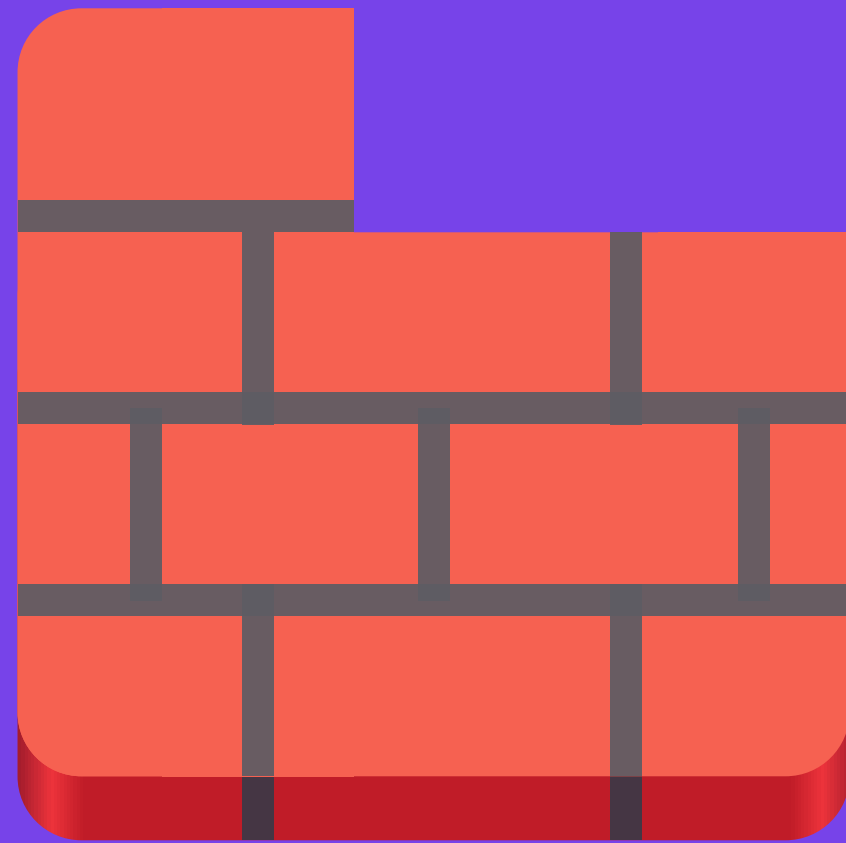
Flatpak & Portals

Nautilus file picker

USB Portal

WebkitGTK Flatpak fixes

Global shortcuts



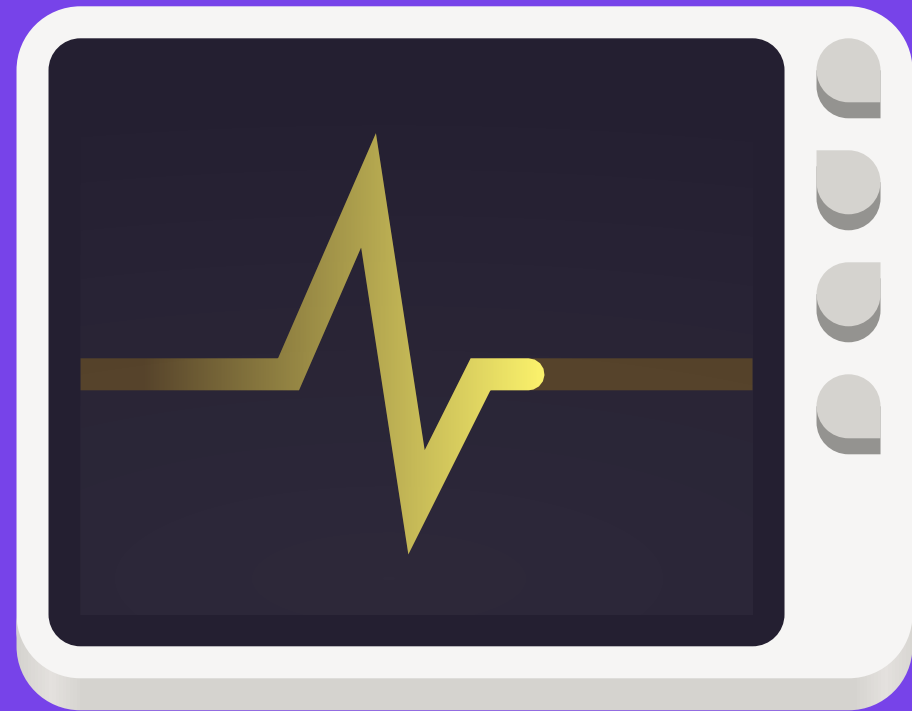
Platform

WebDAV support

Notifications

GTK CSS variables

GLib maintenance



QA & GNOME OS

GNOME OS sysupdate

New installer using repart

Testable merge requests

OpenQA improvements

Takeaways

Things STF gets right

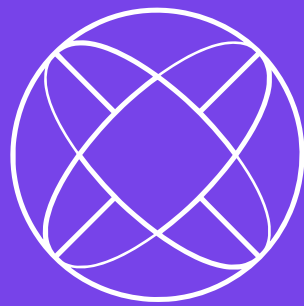
- Focus on maintenance and maintainers
- Larger investments, flexible funding period
 - No geographic limitations
 - Allows for subcontracting

**An incredibly effective use
of public money**

**What if every country, region,
and city had its own STF?**

Thanks

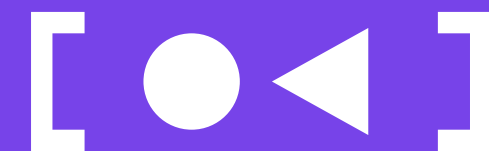
**Sovereign
Tech Fund**



igalia



Red Hat



systemd

Community

Alfie Fresta

Allan Day

Bilal Elmoussaoui

Carlos Garnacho

Christopher Davis

Corey Berla

Daiki Ueno

Eitan Isaacson

Emmanuele Bassi

Federico Mena Quintero

Felipe Borges

Florian Müllner

James Westman

Javier Jardón

Jonas Ådahl

Jordan Petridis

Khalid Abu Shwarib

Lennart Poettering

Luca Boccassi

Matthias Clasen

Michael Catanzaro

Mike Gorse

Niels De Graef

Peter Eisenmann

Ray Strode

Robert Mader

Sebastian Wick

Valentin David

Will Thompson

Team

Aberrahim Kitouni

Adrian Vovk

Adrien Plazas

Alice Mikhailenko

Andy Holmes

Antonio Fernandes

Dhanuka Warusadura

Dor Askayo

Dorota Czaplewicz

Evan Welsh

Felix Häcker

Georges Stavrakas

Jude Onyenegecha

Hubert Figuière

Ivan Molodetskikh

Jerry Wu

Joanmarie Diggs

Jonas Dreßler

Julian Sparber

Martin Abente Lahaye

Matt Campbell

Philip Withnall

Neill Whillans

Sam Hewitt

Sam Thursfield

Sonny Piers

Sophie Herold

Tait Hoyem

Tobias Bernard

Tom Coldrick

Sonny Piers



Thanks