

## **OSCAR BC - Open Source and Freedom - Why OSCAR is free as in freedom not as in free beer**

An open source license means that OSCAR users have freedom and OSCAR belongs to its users. The source code is freely available and any developer can make improvements. The open source license also requires that developers share their enhancements back to the OSCAR “trunk” to keep making OSCAR better for everyone.

An open source approach to development ensures transparency, collaboration, sustainability and with more eyes on the code it helps to ensure high quality. Part of the quality assurance process is ISO certification. OSCAR has been ISO certified since 2011.

Sharing back code and ensuring all source code is freely available precludes someone else taking ownership and locking-in the product. If a product is locked – in, users no longer have freedom.

OSCAR BC is working to uphold the key principles of open source on behalf of OSCAR users.

There is good evidence that open source licensing in health IT leads to more functional products at lower cost.

OSCAR BC has a longstanding open invitation for all OSCAR support providers to join in support of these principles.

- Commitment to the OSCAR community
- Support collaboration & future development of OSCAR in BC through a central coordinated infrastructure
- Commitment to OSCAR Quality & ongoing OSCAR ISO certification (ISO certified since 2011)
- Commitment to the principles of open source and the OSCAR GPL license by contributing all new code developed back to OSCAR trunk to ensure user freedom and no user “lock-in”
- Distribution of a standard version of OSCAR to ensure interoperability

The principle of open development ensures user freedom and low cost. Sustaining these principles and supporting OSCAR’s ISO certification and guiding a community driven collaborative development process are not free, but they are essential to user freedom

### **What you are paying for when you pay your OSCAR Service Provider (OSP)**

You pay your OSP for service.

Your OSP installs OSCAR, does updates, monitoring and support. The software is free, but installing, supporting and maintaining is not. However, the competitive market in OSCAR support means that costs stay very low for users in comparison to other EMRs, as long as the core principles of open source are upheld.

### **What you are not paying your OSP for**

You are not paying your OSP to maintain the heart of OSCAR, the central infrastructure needed to keep that heart beating. The central infrastructure keeps OSCAR running, liaises with external stakeholders like Doctors technology office and Ministry, leads new development, writes updates, adds functionality required by governments/Health Authorities/Physician organisations etc.

### **Who pays for that then?!**

We all can, and it is in the best interests of all OSCAR users that we all do. In BC the work of maintaining the heart of OSCAR is done through OSCAR BC, a not-for-profit society whose volunteer board members are from a wide spectrum of OSCAR users and include many of the folks who brought OSCAR to BC.

Your OSP/service costs do not cover this work. It is through separate contributions that the work of the non-profit OSCAR BC Society is funded. It would be contradictory to the principles of open source to force users to pay, and yet without these contributions we cannot work to ensure user freedom and strengthen OSCAR for its users. We depend on your support.

## So....what do I get for contributing to OSCAR BC?

Being part of sustaining the mechanism that:

- Brings new versions of OSCAR
- Builds in the functionality required by government/HAs/Doctors of BC and making new features available
- Sustains a central body that liaises in the milieu of the market place, government, Health Authorities, Docs of BC etc.
- Supports the 'by us, for us' approach and the 'pay it forward' mantra of the 'sharing economy'.
- Ensures Freedom of choice in support and community transparency that puts market pressure on support providers to be responsive. Join the OSCAR listserv to get extra help & note the pressure it puts on OSPs to be accountable and responsive when there is transparency. To join the OSCAR listserv go to the source forge Oscar McMaster mailing list at: <https://sourceforge.net/projects/oscardmcmaster/lists/oscardmcmaster-bc-users>
- Strengthens the community force that keeps OSCAR open and protects your price point by preventing vendor lock-in and loss of the market forces that keep prices down.
- OSCAR Cons and information to learn about how to use OSCAR more effectively
- Be part of a community that can support you way beyond what any single OSP can do.

Support OSCAR BC and sustain the freedom and choice of all OSCAR users . . . including you!