

What is the Common License Consortium?

Xilinx world-wide IP providers have joined together to form the Common License Consortium. All consortium members have agreed to offer a set of common IP licensing terms (called the SignOnce IP License) to customers who wish to license FPGA-based IP cores. The result is a first for the IP industry - a single set of licensing terms, giving customers access to IP cores from multiple vendors for use in Xilinx programmable logic.

What is the SignOnce IP License agreement?

The SignOnce IP License represents a landmark accomplishment for the intellectual property (IP) industry. It is a set of standard terms being accepted by many of the industry's leading providers of soft IP cores for use in programmable logic. With this agreement, customers only have to review and execute one license to ease access to FPGA cores from multiple suppliers.



Who are the members of the consortium?

Consortium members include Xilinx, and IP providers located in North America, Europe, Japan and Asia. For the latest list of members, go to the Xilinx website at www.xilinx.com/ipcenter/signonce.htm.

Why are these companies doing this?

Licensing has been a major bottleneck for general FPGA customer acceptance of IP core usage. Industry research and practical experience both show that it can take over six months for a customer and an IP vendor to negotiate a license agreement. This problem gets worse when customers consider purchasing cores from multiple suppliers, which is not uncommon today as it is difficult for design groups to find a single source for all of their IP core needs. The time it would take to negotiate multiple license agreements creates a barrier that many customers are not willing to cross. Recognizing this, Xilinx and its Alliance member created this consortium to eliminate the bottleneck of multiple, differing license agreements for users of programmable logic.

How do customers know which cores can be licensed using the SignOnce IP License?

Customers can go to the Xilinx IP Center (www.xilinx.com/ipcenter/) and perform searches for IP from Xilinx and its Alliance members. The search results will indicate which cores are available under the SignOnce IP License via a graphic that appears in the SignOnce column in the HTML table. In many cases members offer additional IP that is not listed in the IP Center. Customers should contact the consortium members directly to find out what else they may offer. The latest listing of members is also on the Xilinx website at www.xilinx.com/ipcenter/signonce.htm.

Which Xilinx cores are available today for customers to select from under this program?

All LogiCORE products available today for purchase from Xilinx can be licensed under this program. Xilinx has many additional building-block cores available through the Xilinx CORE Generator™ tool that is shipped standard with Xilinx development software. These cores do not require a separate IP license to use.

How many cores are available from Xilinx Alliance program members?

Hundreds of cores are available from participating Xilinx Alliance members. These include all of their approved AllianceCORE and Candidate core products plus additional IP in their portfolios. Most members are offering this agreement as an option to license all of their IP to customers.

What business models does the SignOnce IP License support?

There are site- and project-based versions of the license that vary only in the scope of usage of the core. The site version permits unlimited use of the core within a specific company site, while the project version

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limits use to within a single project (which may include more than one site). All other terms within these licenses are identical. Some members are offering only one of these options, while others offer both. Most are licensing FPGA netlist versions of their cores under these terms. Members are required to clearly designate any modifications they might make to the terms they offer so customers already familiar with the license can see right away if anything is different. Almost all participants are offering the license unmodified.

Are customers free to request changes to the SignOnce IP License?

Yes. Customers can request changes or completely substitute their own terms for licensing IP from participating members. By doing so, however, these customers create a form of the license that is unique to that situation and will be compromising the full benefits of a common set of license terms.

Do we expect many customers to request changes to the SignOnce IP License?

The SignOnce IP license is modeled after the original LogiCORE agreement that Xilinx used for many years to license netlist versions of cores to customers. Greater than 97% of all customers licensing cores from Xilinx accepted the terms of the LogiCORE agreement without any modifications. We find that this is holding true for the SignOnce agreement as well.

How can customers take advantage of this program?

There are several ways to do this. First, over 97% of customers who license Xilinx LogiCORE products simply accept the terms of the license without changes (see above question). Recent licensees, then, will be able to license IP cores from all vendors participating in the program using the same terms. In addition, recent licensees of netlist cores from participating consortium members will gain the same benefit.

Are Xilinx Alliance program members required to join the Consortium?

No. Member participation in this program is entirely voluntary.

Must a company be a member of the Xilinx Alliance program in order to join the Consortium?

No. The consortium has a number of non-Xilinx Alliance program members and new companies are added to the program regularly. A goal of the consortium is to foster an industry standard and not one that is exclusive to the Xilinx Alliance program.

What is required to join the consortium?

There are no fees involved. IP providers must sign a simple agreement governing the use of the SignOnce IP License form. Companies wishing more information can send an email to commonlicense@xilinx.com.

Are consortium members restricted to only use this agreement for licensing cores to Xilinx customers?

No. They may use this to license cores to any customer although the agreement will need slight modification in order to do so..

What are some of the differences between the ASIC and programmable logic markets when it comes to licensing IP cores?

FPGA customers use programmable logic primarily for flexibility and time-to-market. Design cycles are short and cannot accept the delays created by lengthy ASIC license negotiations. FPGA designers also often do not have large budgets for purchasing IP cores and frequently choose to license FPGA netlist versions. These typically cost less than source code and don't require the additional license clauses required to protect the RTL. This allows netlist licenses to be much simpler. However, consortium members are free to use the agreement to license their source code too if they wish.