

Contributor Growth Strategies for OSS Projects

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Agenda

- Factors that Impact Contributor Growth
- Contributor Growth Strategies
- Contributor Ladders and Leadership
- Metrics for Measuring Project Sustainability
- Resources and Final Thoughts

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whoami



- Geek, traveler, reader
- 20+ yr tech career focused on community & open source (Intel, Puppet, Scale Factory, ...)
- OpenUK Board, CHAOSS Board and Maintainer
- CNCF TAG Contrib Strategy co-chair
- PhD from the University of Greenwich focused on Linux kernel collaboration

Photos by Mom, [Josh Bancroft](#), [Don Park](#)



Factors that Impact Contributor Growth

The Problem is Hard

OSS projects are
made by squishy,
unpredictable humans



Vicious Cycle

No time to onboard
new contributors
leads to fewer contributors
and more burnout





Developing and Executing on Contributor Growth Strategies

Motivation

Be specific about where you
need help with
“Good First Issues” or
“Help Wanted” labels

A photograph of a desk setup. In the foreground, a laptop is open. Behind it, a lightbox sign displays the text 'YOU GOT THIS' in three rows. The background is slightly blurred, showing a teal patterned curtain and a person's arm in a blue patterned shirt.

Photo by [Prateek Katyal](#) on [Unsplash](#)

<https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation>

Governance is about People

Sets expectations for how people collaborate & make decisions

<https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/github/templates/required/governance-intro>



Kubernetes CNCF CC BY 4.0

Be Explicit

Explicit, documented
governance makes it
easier for people
to contribute



Photo by Andrew Watson - CC BY 2.0

Onboarding Docs

Good docs for onboarding new contributors is step #1 toward scaling maintainers



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Building a welcoming
and
inclusive community

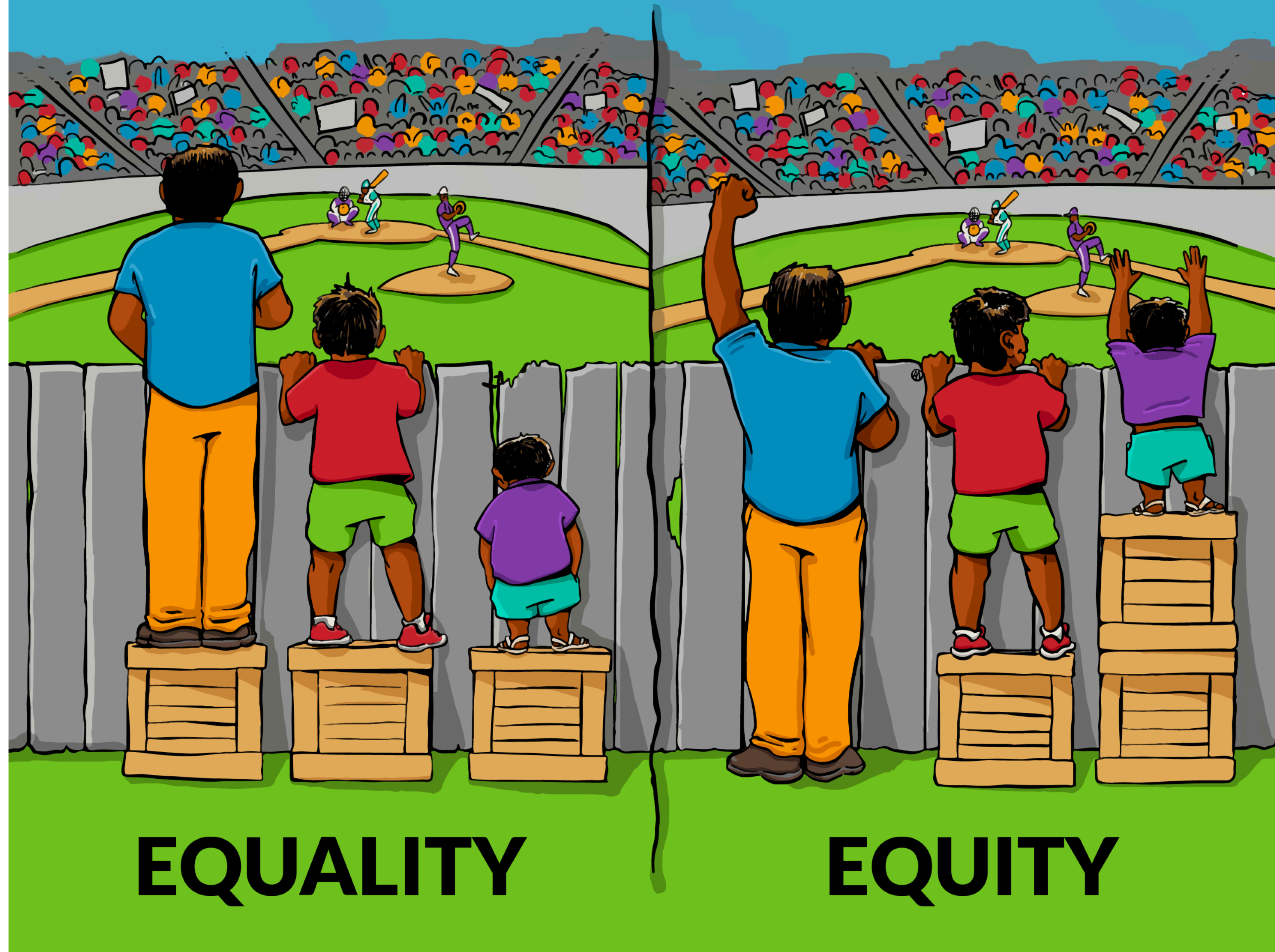


Image courtesy of the [Interaction Institute for Social Change](#) | Artist: [Angus Maguire](#).

Contributor Ladders and Leadership

Contributor Ladders

Move contributors up the
ladder and into leadership roles

https://github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/CONTRIBUTOR_LADDER.md

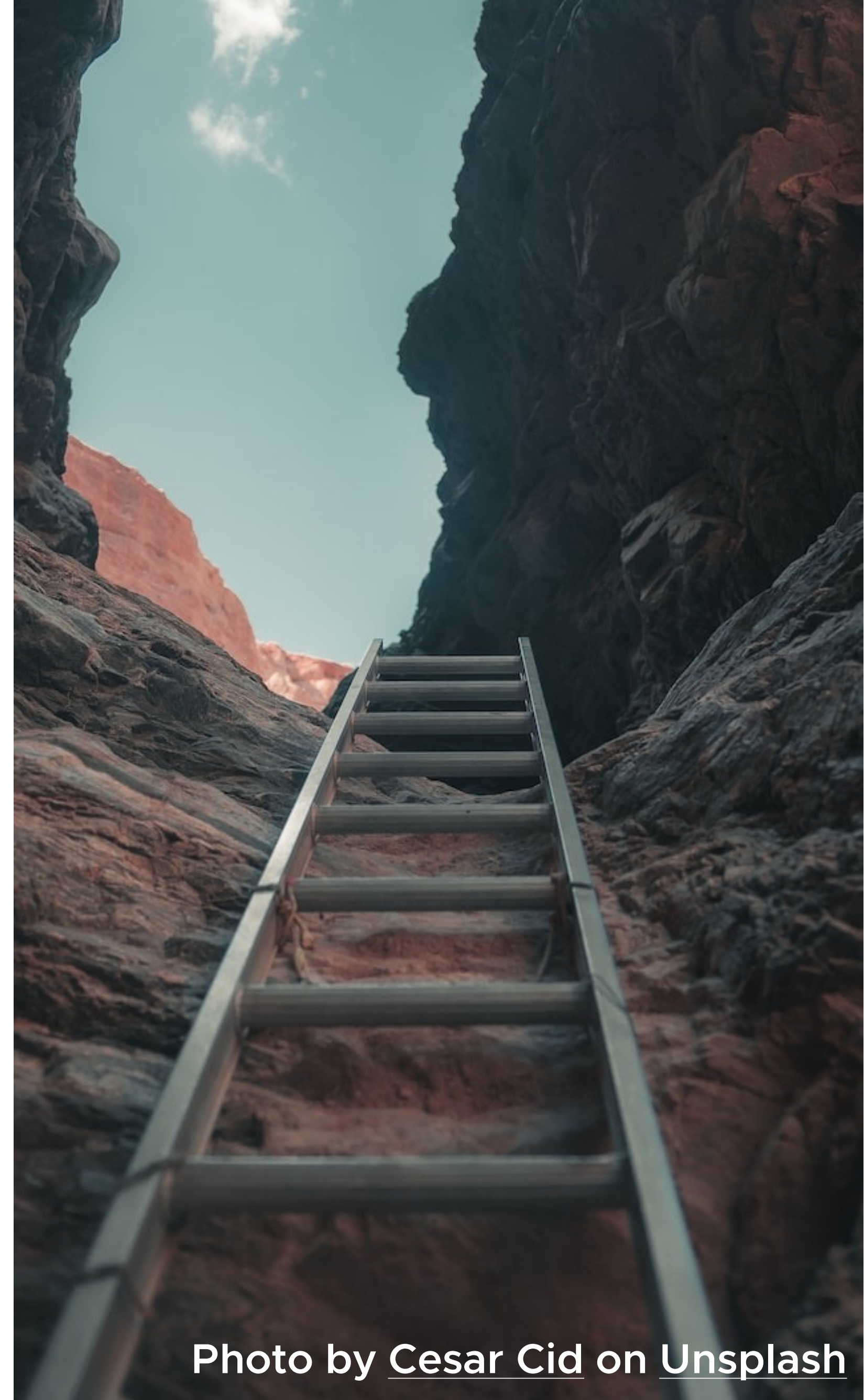


Photo by [Cesar Cid](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Leadership

Contributors can climb the ladder into leadership to reduce maintainer burden



Image by the CNCF CC BY-NC 2.0

Mentoring

Help contributors
become better



Image by the [CNCf](#) CC BY-NC 2.0

Be Strategic

Think about where you can
best spend your time to
grow your contributor base

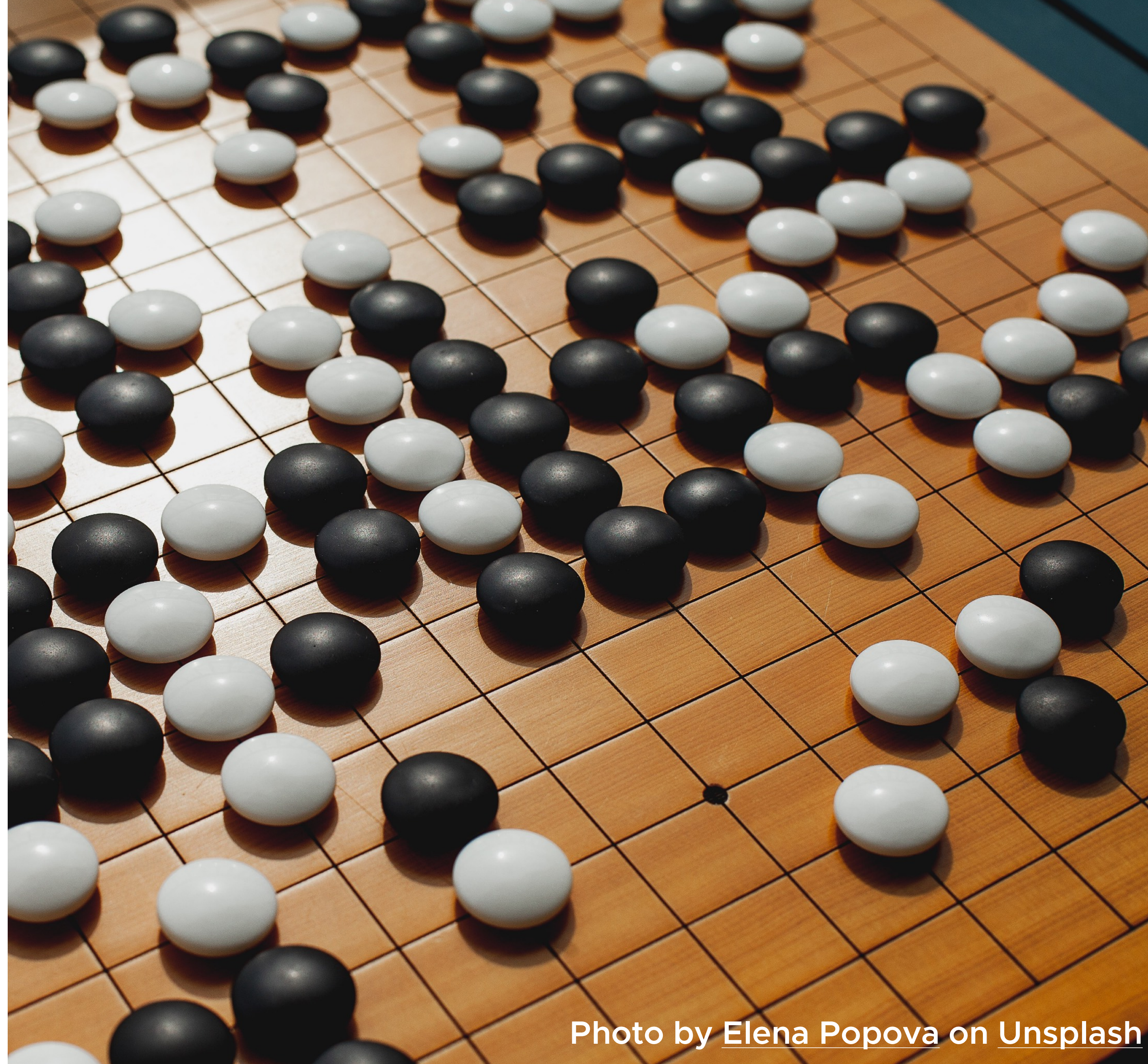
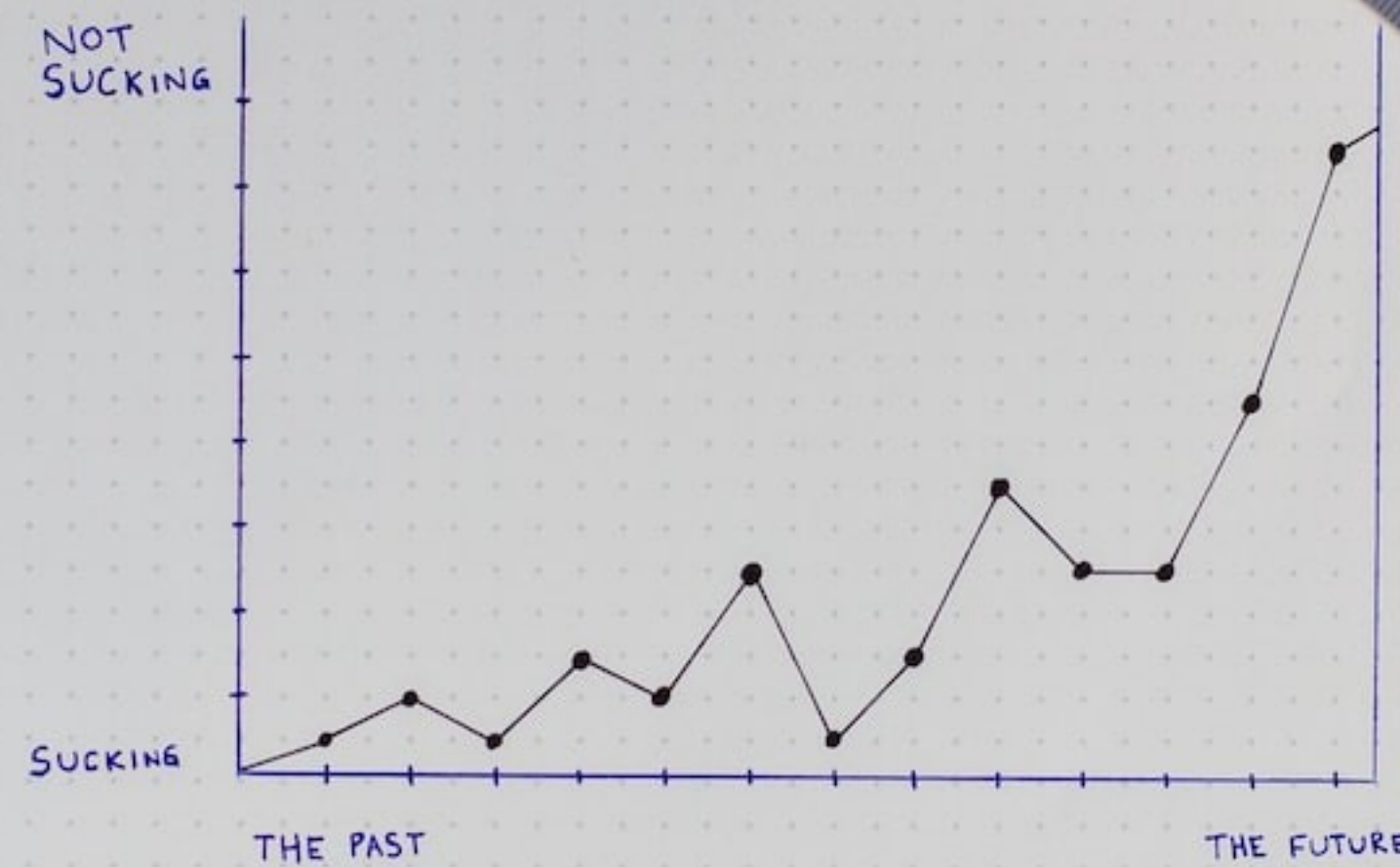


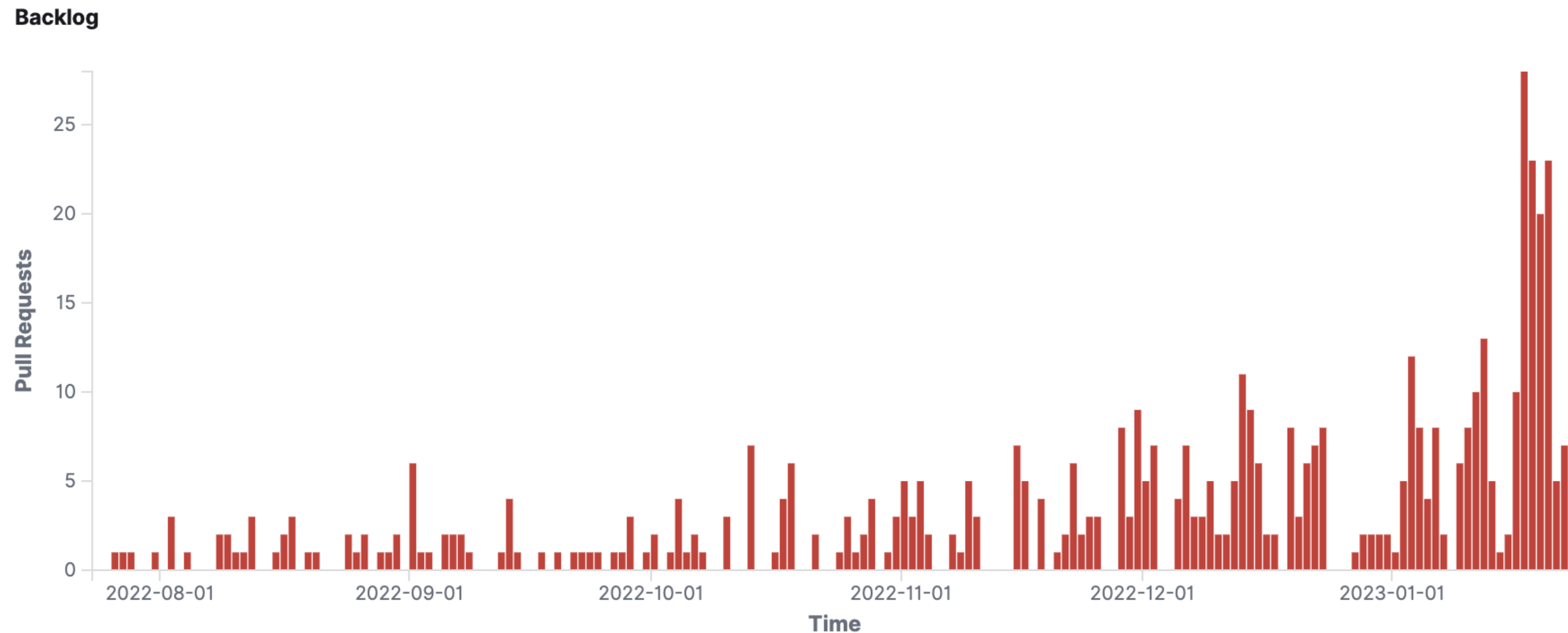
Photo by [Elena Popova](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Measuring Project Sustainability

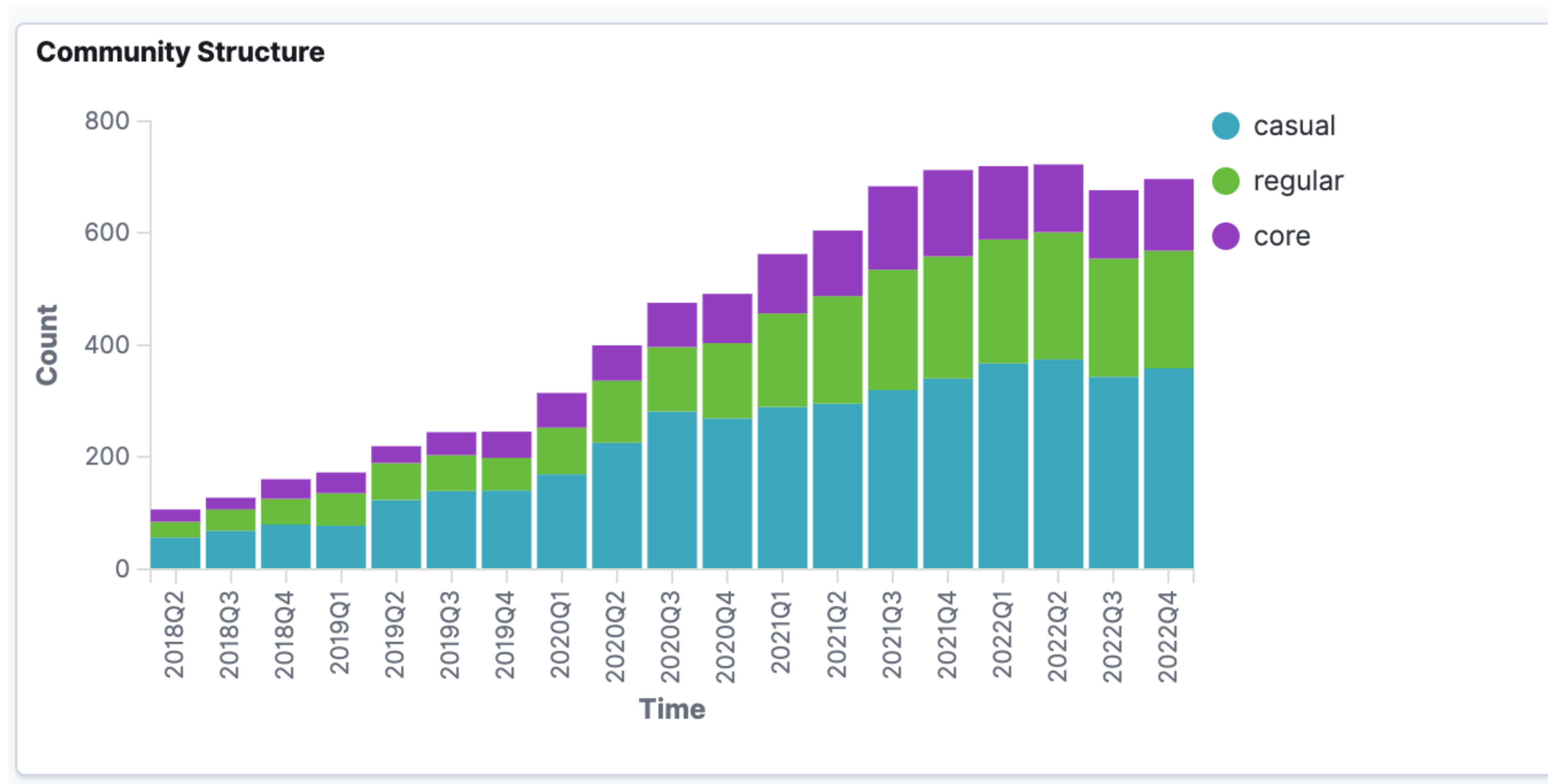
Responsiveness

Contributors submitting PRs with no one to resolve / close them - may need to move more people into leadership



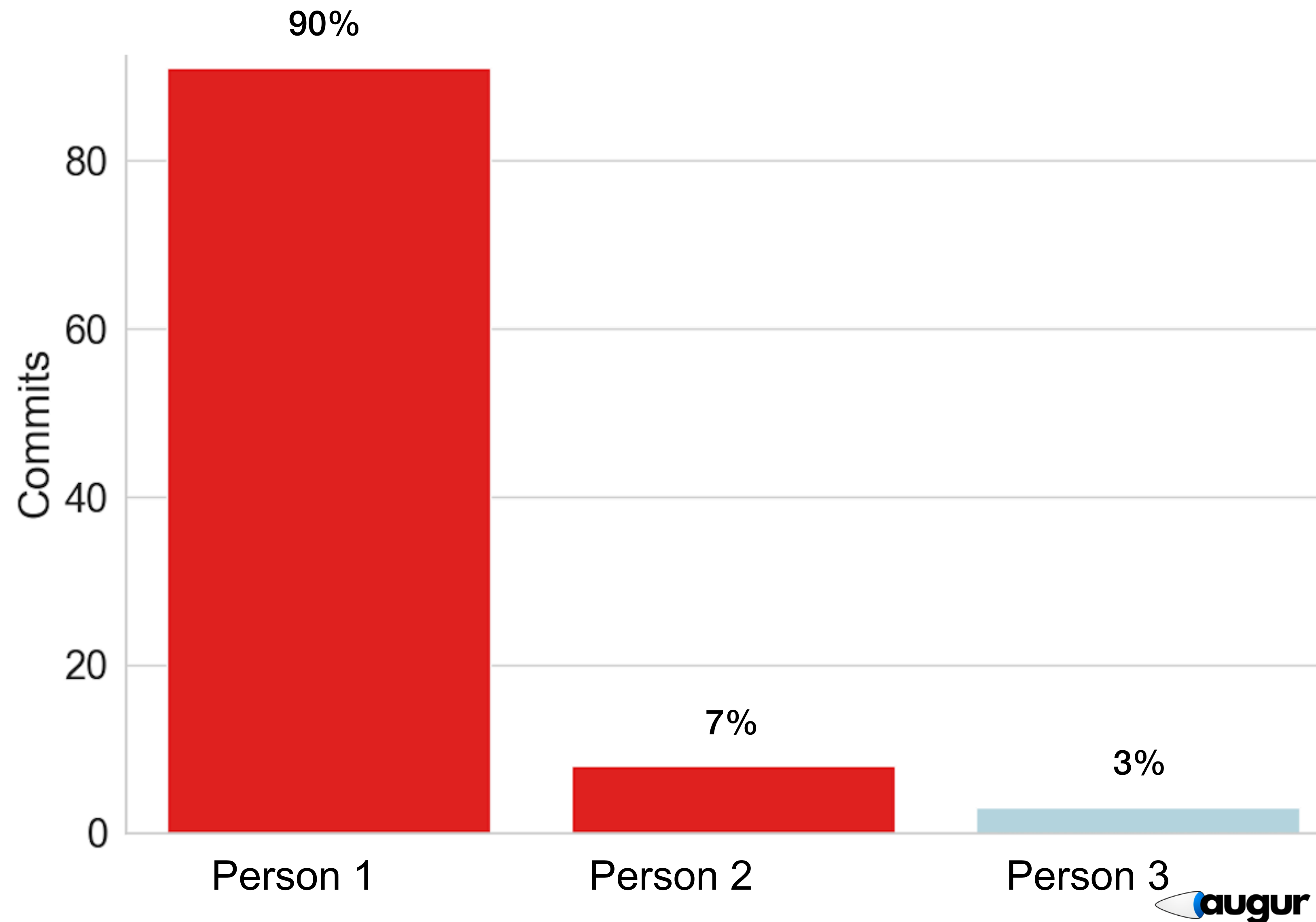
Types of Contributors

Few casual /regular contributors -> improve onboarding docs



Lottery Factor

How big of an issue is it
and
who can you promote?



Resources

CNCF Contributor Strategy TAG Docs & Templates

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/

github.com/cncf/project-template

The Open Source Way Guidebook

github.com/theopensourceway/guidebook/

CHAOSS Metrics

<https://chaoss.community/>

Join TAG Contributor Strategy

Join our **Slack Channel**

#tag-contributor-strategy (CNCF Slack)

Sign up for our **mailing list**

lists.cncf.io/g/cncf-tag-contributor-strategy

Drop in to our **meetings**

Go to cncf.io/calendar/ and search for contributor strategy!



Final Thoughts

Growing your contributor base is hard and takes time, but time spent now is worth it later





Thank You!

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Open Source at VMware

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