







# Strategies for Building Healthy Open Source Communities

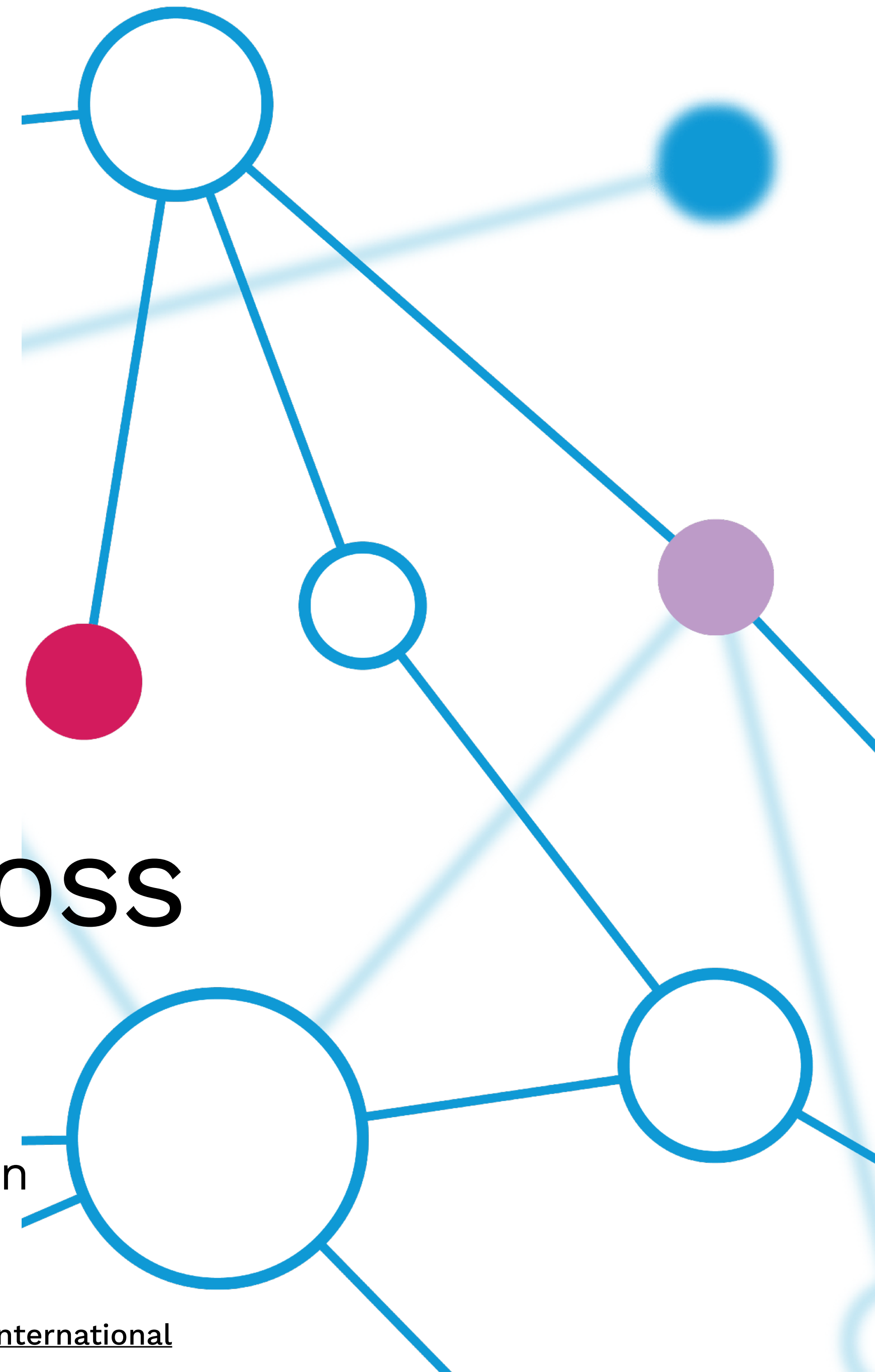
FOSDEM Community Feb 2024

Dr. Dawn M. Foster

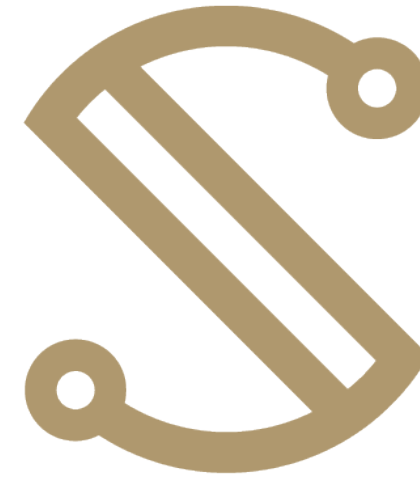
Director of Data Science for CHAOSS

 <https://chaoss.community/>  
 <https://github.com/chaoss>  
 @CHAOSSproj

 <https://fastwonderblog.com/>  
 <https://github.com/geekygirldawn>  
 @geekygirldawn



# Thank You!



**ALFRED P. SLOAN**  
**FOUNDATION**



**FORD**  
**FOUNDATION**



# Whoami



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

Photos by Mom, Josh Bancroft, Don Park



# The Problem is Hard

Humans are squishy.  
We have feelings  
and bad days.





# The Problem is Hard

**Action: Be proactive  
and encourage people  
to participate.**





# Agenda

- **Strategies for Building Healthy Communities**
- **Goals-Based, Strategic Approach to Metrics**
- **Metrics for Measuring Project Sustainability**
- **Resources and Final Thoughts**

Photo by Marco Verch - CC BY 2.0



# Strategies for Building Healthy Communities



# Motivation

**Squishy humans have  
complex motivations.  
We want to feel useful  
and appreciated.**

 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation)





# Motivation

**Action: Work in the open,  
but be proactive and ask  
specific people for help  
with individual tasks.**

 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation)





# Governance is all about the Humans

Set expectations for how people collaborate & make decisions

👉 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro)



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



# Governance is all about the Humans

Action: Clearly document project governance

👉 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro)

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





# Be Explicit

**Explicit, documented governance makes it easier for the humans to contribute.**



Photo by Andrew Watson - CC BY 2.0



# Onboarding Docs

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



[contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/)





# Onboarding Docs

**Action: Make sure to include dev env setup, running tests, and other requirements.**



[contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/)



# Roadmaps

Working in the open to  
collaborate on project  
plans, goals, and next steps.

👉 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/open-source-roadmaps](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/open-source-roadmaps)



# Roadmaps

**Action: Make sure that your roadmapping process is aligned with your other processes and set aside time to keep it up to date.**

👉 [contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/open-source-roadmaps](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/open-source-roadmaps)



# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Build a welcoming  
and  
inclusive community.

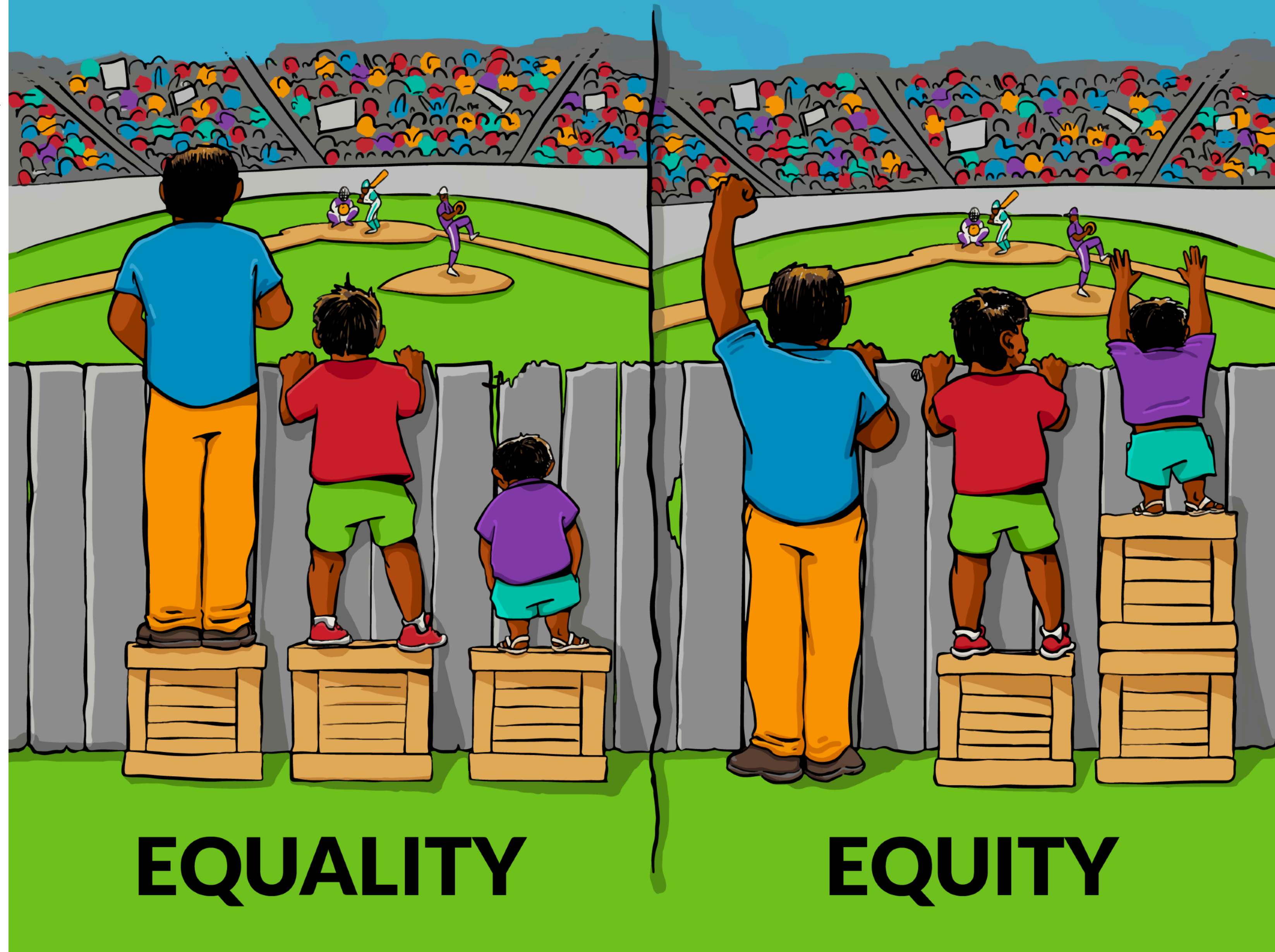


Image courtesy of the [Interaction Institute for Social Change](#) | Artist: [Angus Maguire](#).



# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Action: Be proactive about including people and moving them into leadership roles.

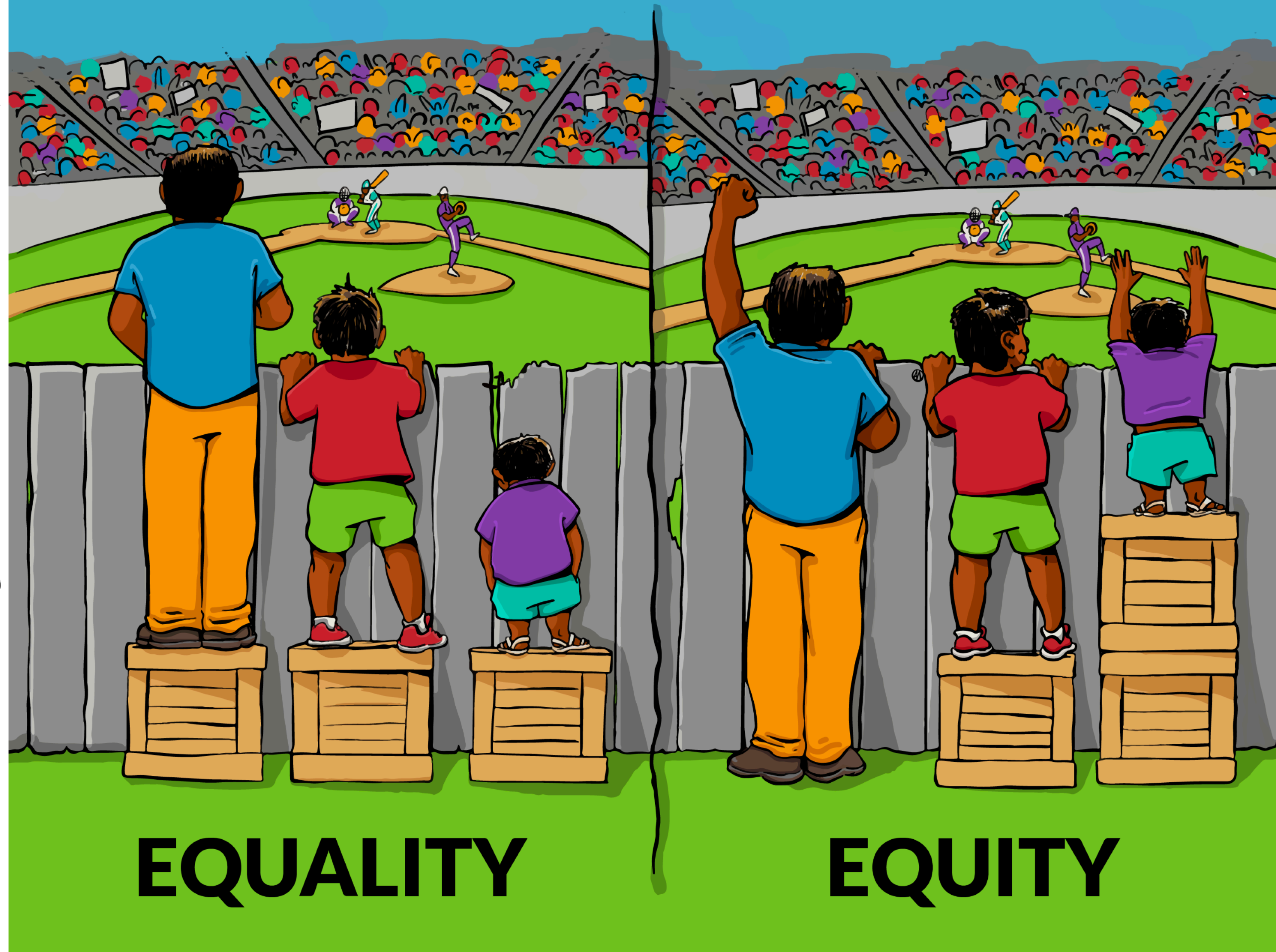


Image courtesy of the [Interaction Institute for Social Change](#) | Artist: [Angus Maguire](#).



# Contributor Ladders

Defining a ladder of leadership roles  
helps recruit new humans  
to reduce maintainer workload.

👉 [github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/CONTRIBUTOR\\_LADDER.md](https://github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/CONTRIBUTOR_LADDER.md)





# Contributor Ladders

**Action: proactively recruit new humans to move up the ladder into leadership roles.**

👉 [github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/CONTRIBUTOR\\_LADDER.md](https://github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/CONTRIBUTOR_LADDER.md)

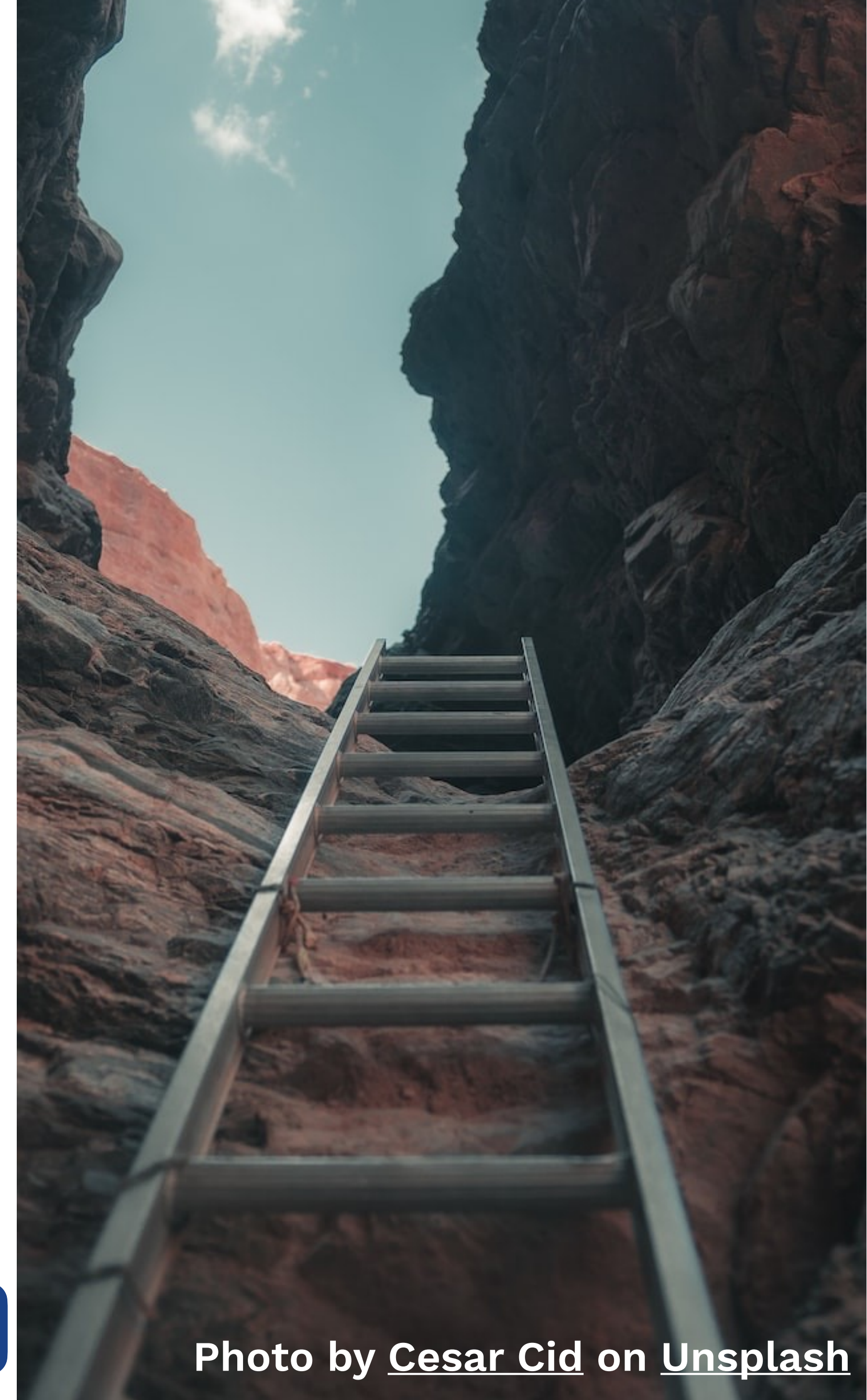


Photo by [Cesar Cid](#) on [Unsplash](#)

@geekygirldawn



# Path to Emeritus

**Set your project  
up for success after  
maintainers move on.**





# Path to Emeritus

**Action: Be proactive about promoting new humans so that maintainers can move into emeritus roles.**





# Strategic, Goals-Based Approach to Metrics



# Start with Goals

What is important for  
*your* project?





# Use the Right Metrics

Start with your goals  
and find the right metrics  
for *your* project





# Be Strategic

Think about where you can  
best spend your time to  
grow your community  
while achieving your goals.

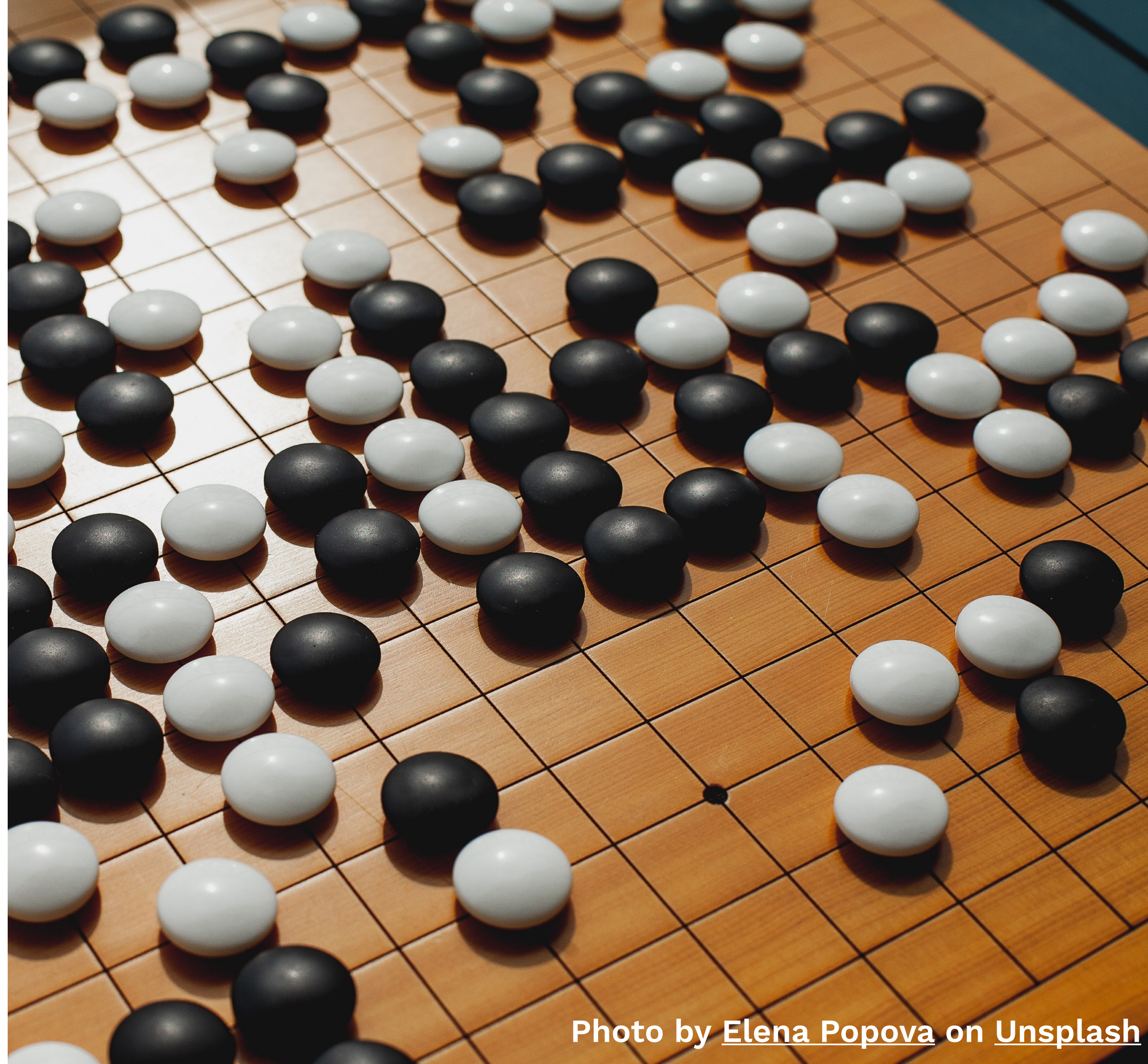


Photo by [Elena Popova](#) on [Unsplash](#)



# Be Strategic

**Action: Find people to help  
with documentation,  
marketing, community,  
and similar activities.**

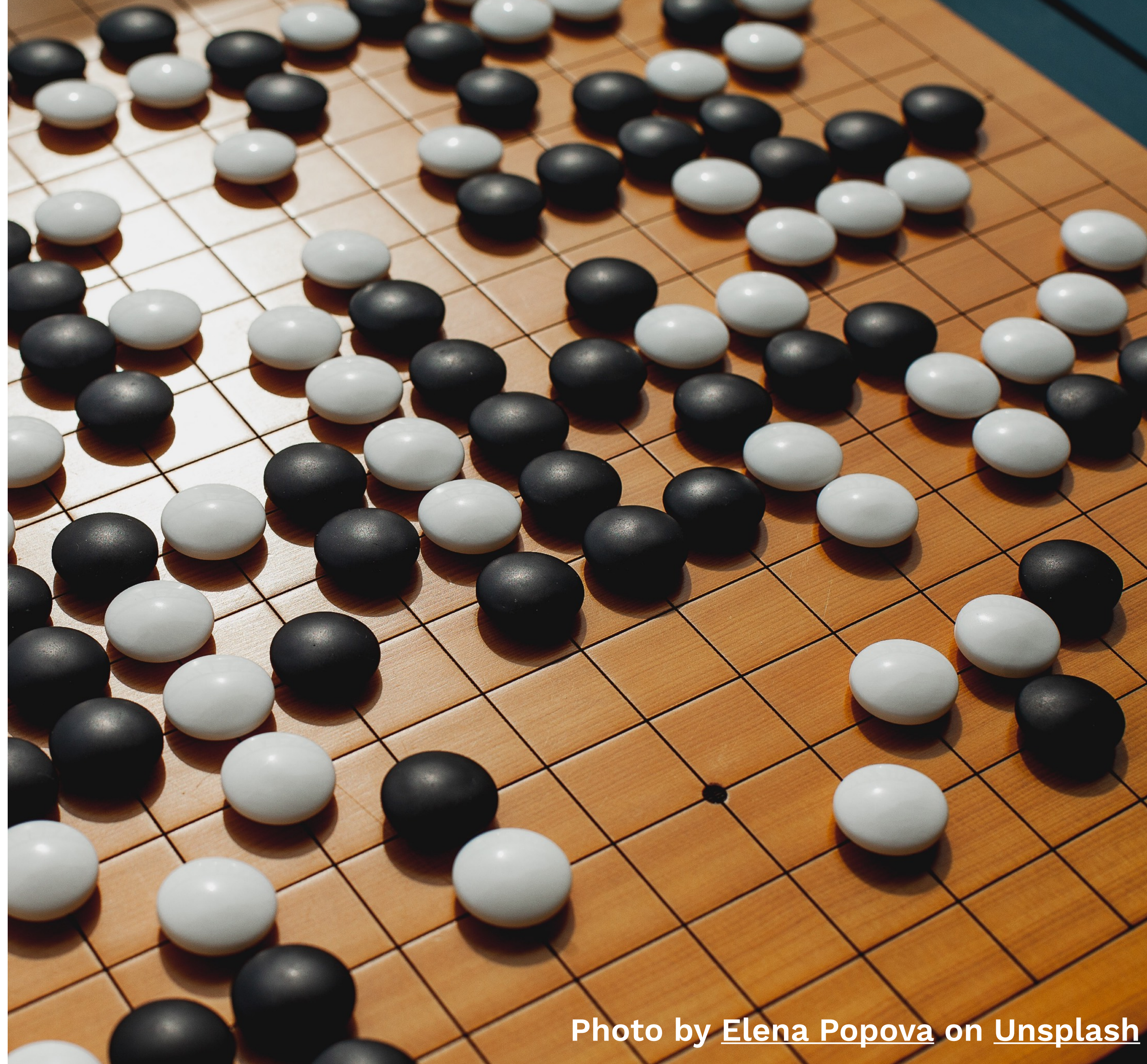
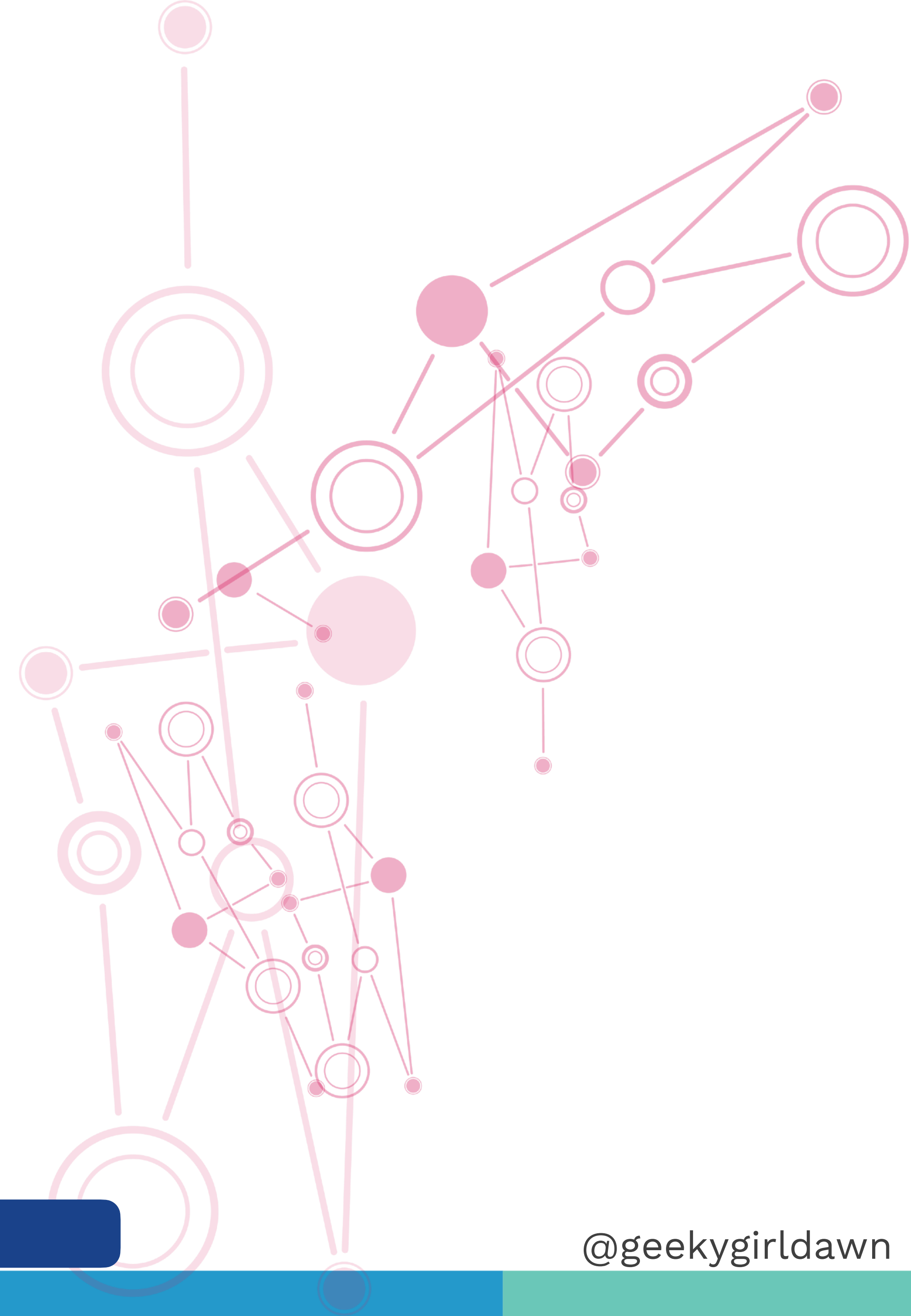


Photo by [Elena Popova](#) on [Unsplash](#)



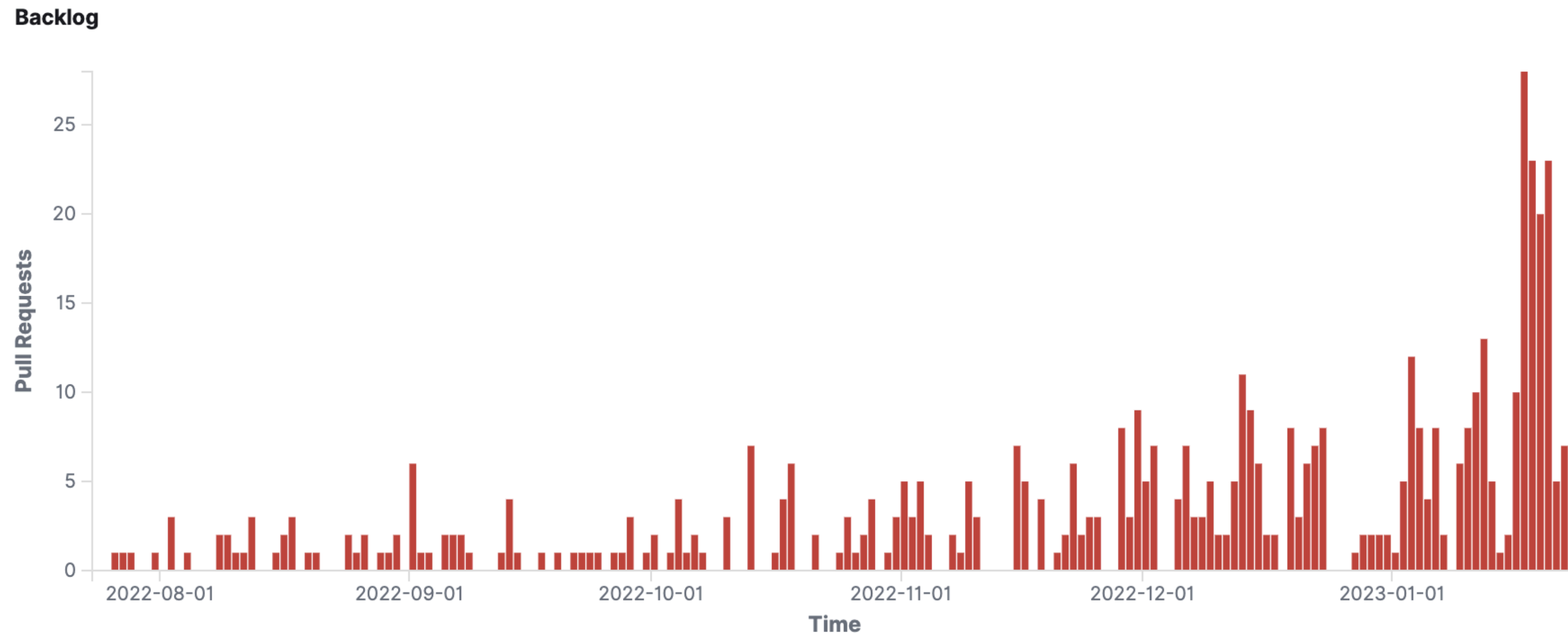
# Measuring Project Sustainability





# Responsiveness

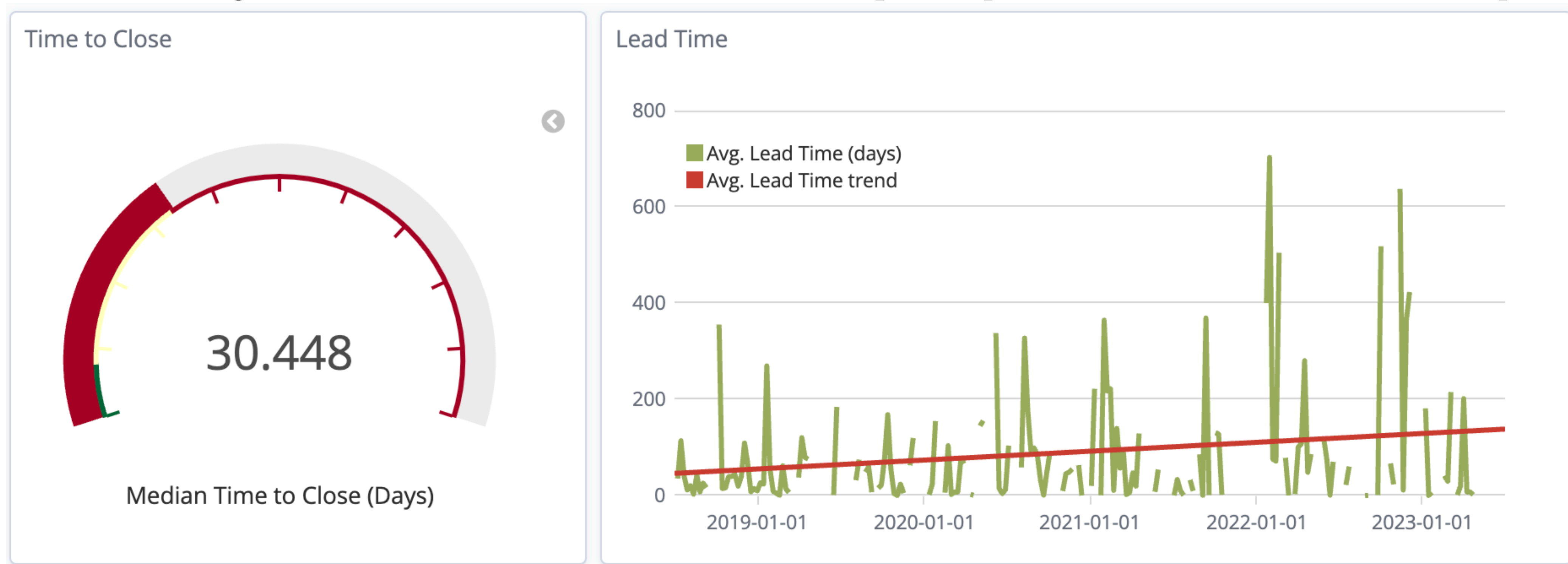
Contributors submitting PRs with no one to resolve / close them  
-> may need to move more people into leadership.





# Responsiveness

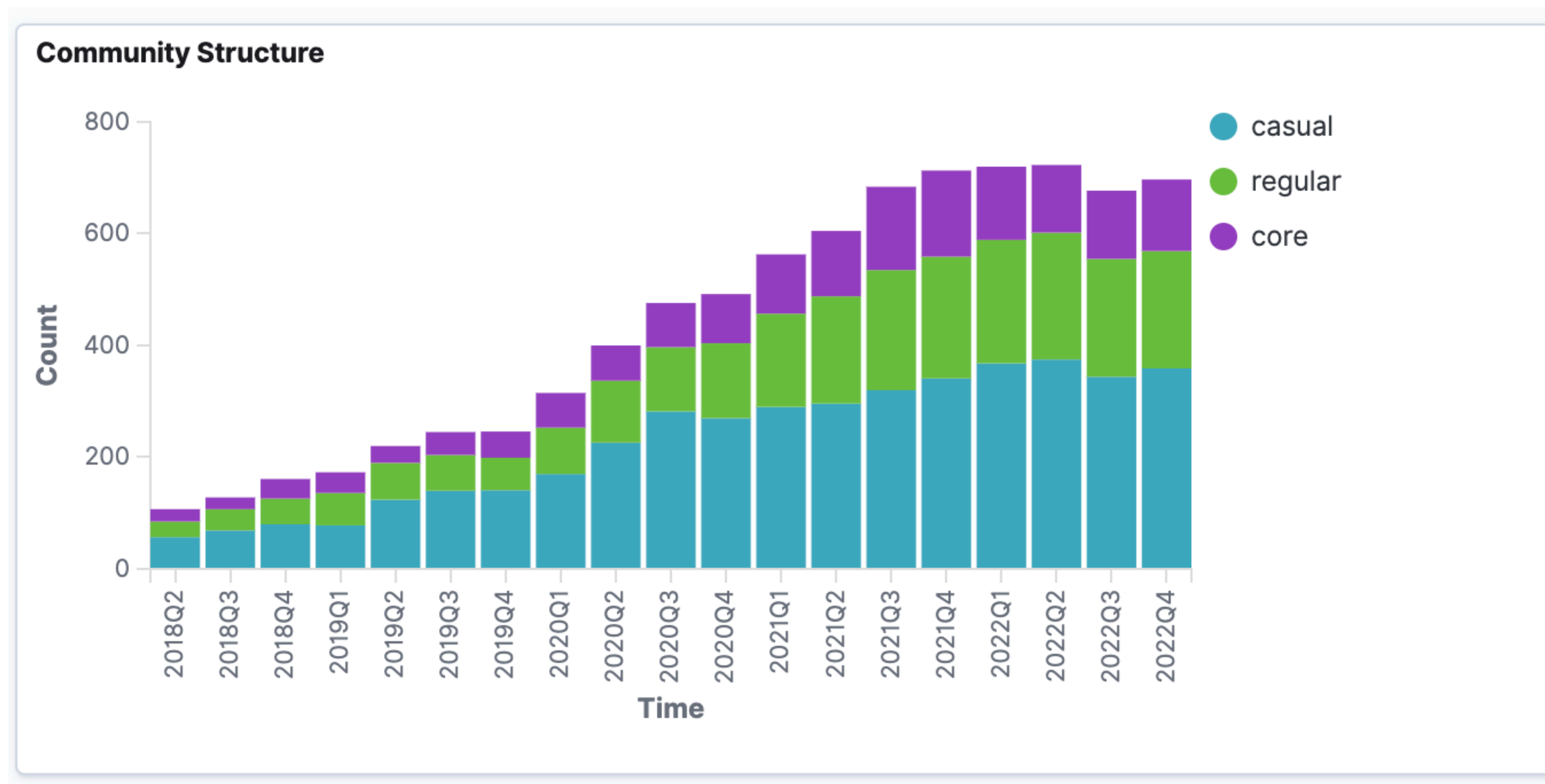
Time it takes for maintainers to close PRs / issues is increasing  
-> may need to move more people into leadership.





# Types of Contributors

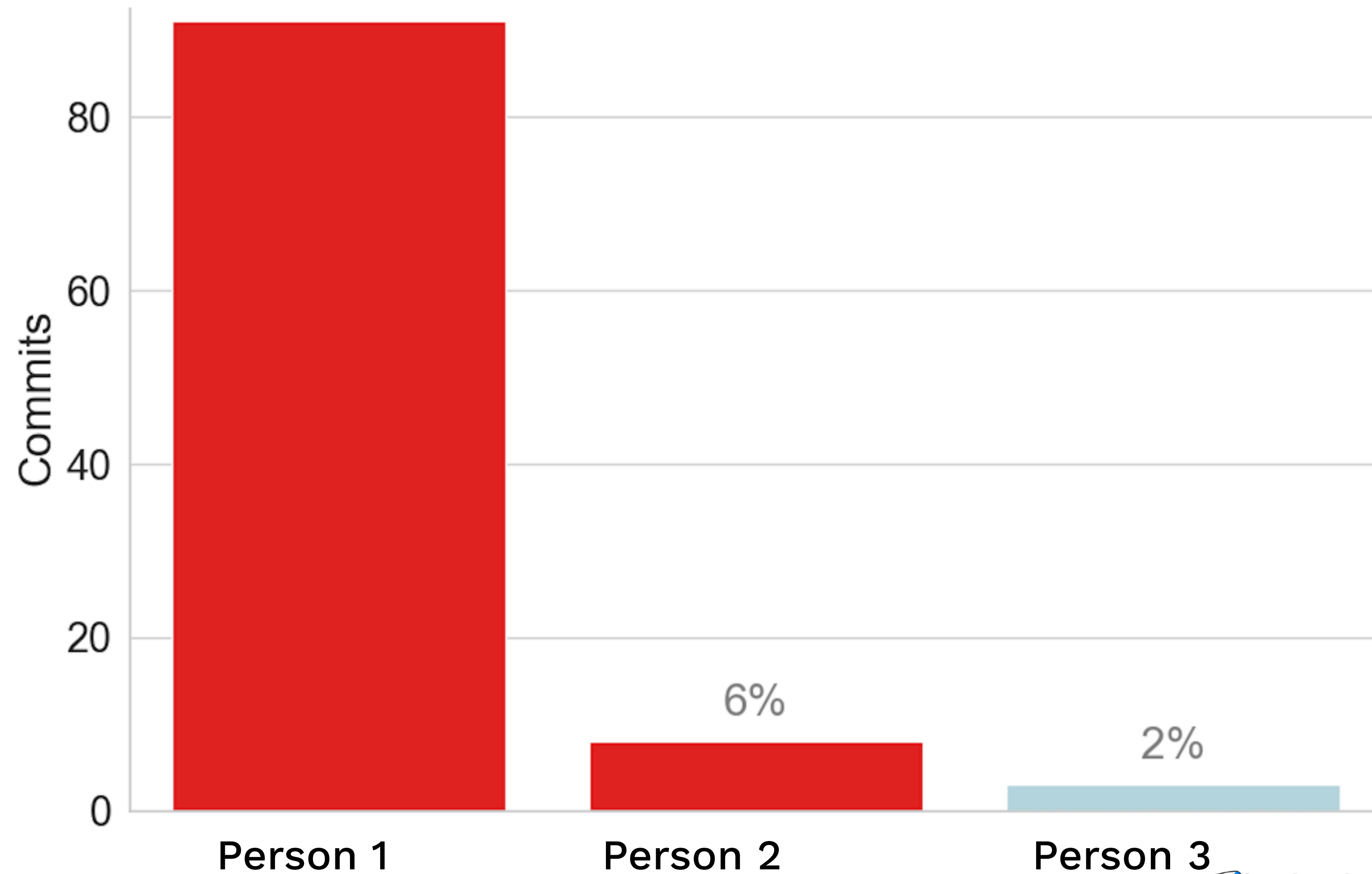
Few casual /regular contributors -> improve onboarding docs.





# Bus / Lottery Factor

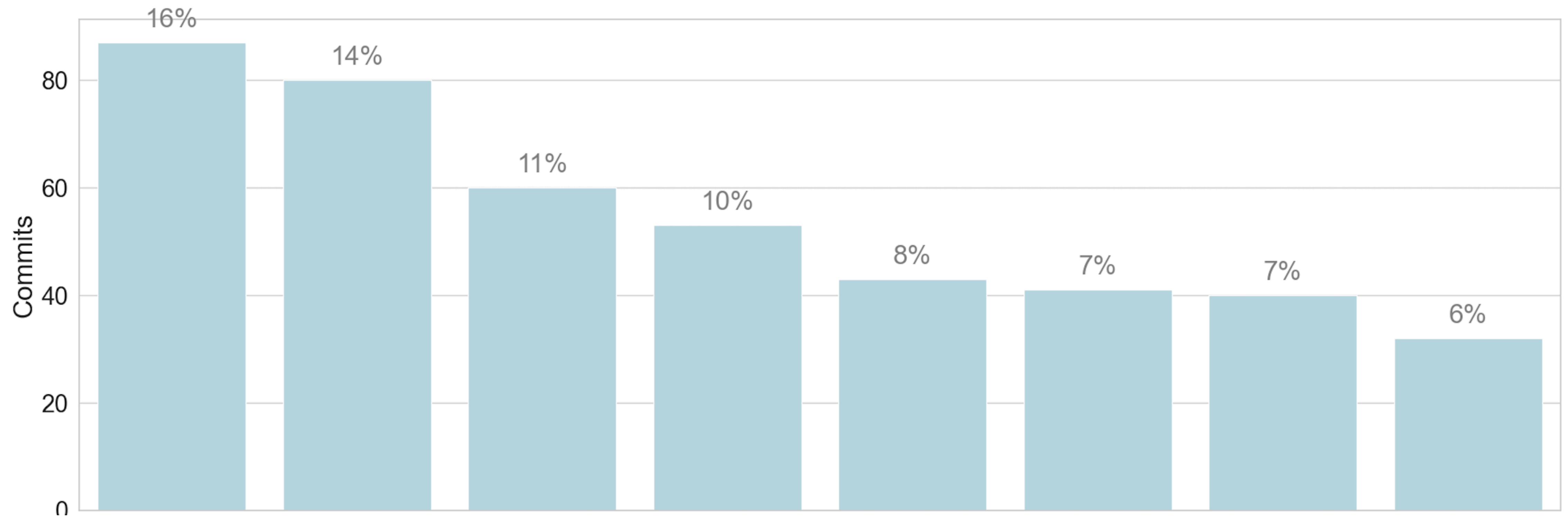
How big of an  
issue is it?





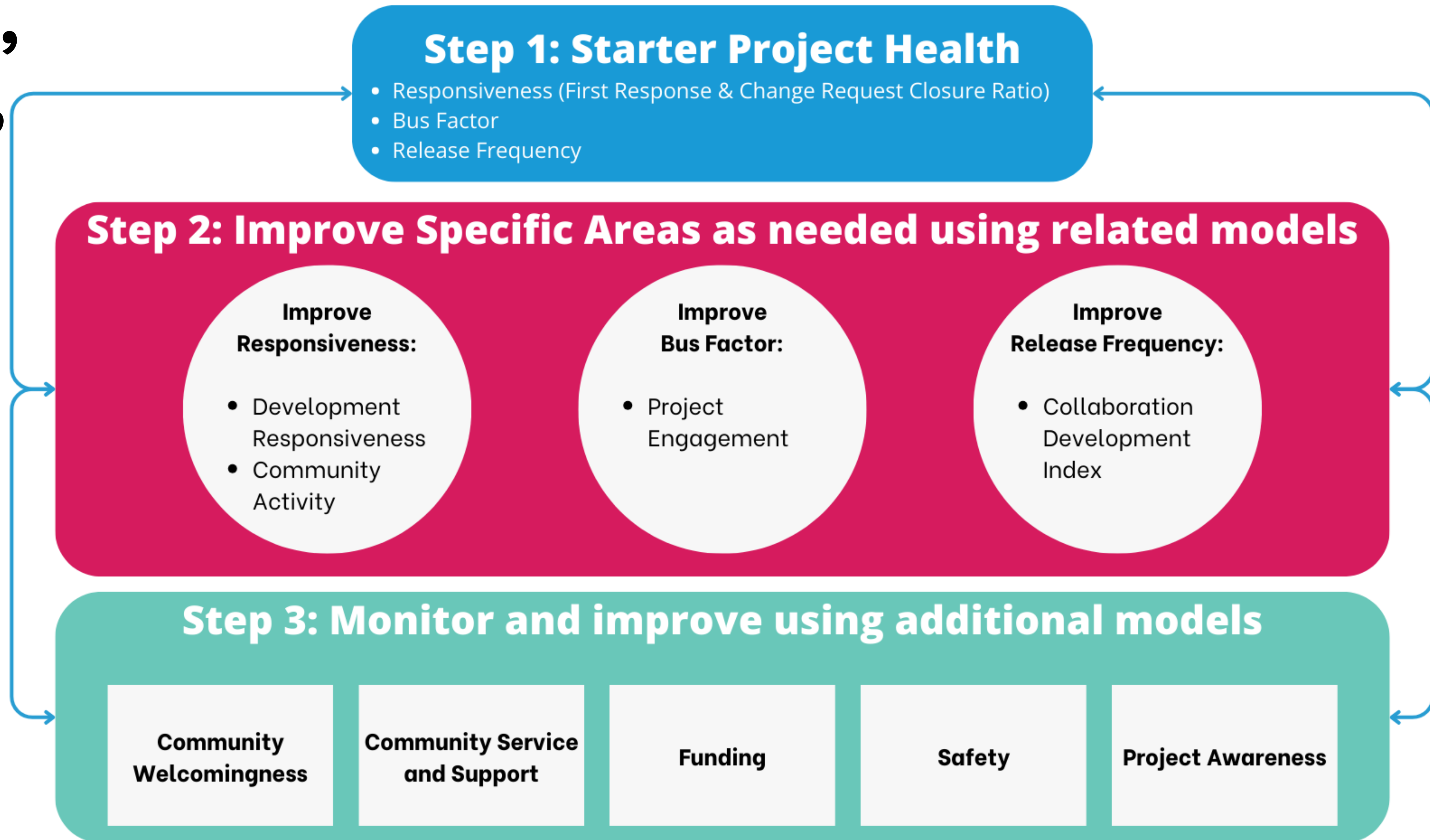
# Bus / Lottery Factor

Who might be ready to move into a leadership position?





# Measure, Improve, Monitor





# Resources

## **CNCF Contributor Strategy TAG Docs & Templates**

[contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/)

[contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/](https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/)

[github.com/cncf/project-template](https://github.com/cncf/project-template)

## **The Open Source Way Guidebook**

[github.com/theopensourceway/guidebook/](https://github.com/theopensourceway/guidebook/)

## **CHAOSS Metrics**

<https://chaoss.community/>



# Final Thoughts

**Building a sustainable community is hard, but thinking about your goals and using metrics can help you find ways to improve your community.**





# Action Item




**Carve out 1 hour a week to  
improve contributor  
documentation or help  
someone learn something new.**








# THANK YOU!

## Any Questions?

 <https://chaoss.community/>  
 <https://github.com/chaoss>  
 @CHAOSSproj

 <https://fastwonderblog.com/>  
 <https://github.com/geekygirldawn>  
 @geekygirldawn

