

Building a Sustainable CNCF Project Contributor Base

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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.



Vicious Cycle

No time to onboard

Fewer contributors

More maintainer
burnout



[Photo by Tine Ivanič on Unsplash](#)

Motivation

Squishy humans have complex motivations.

We want to feel useful and appreciated.



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



[Photo by Prateek Katyal on Unsplash](#)



Motivation

Action: Be proactive
and ask specific people
for help on
individual tasks.



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



[Photo by Prateek Katyal on Unsplash](#)



Governance Is All About The Humans



Set expectations for how people collaborate and make decisions.



contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro



Governance Is All About The Humans



Action: Use our templates to clearly document your governance.



contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro



Onboarding Docs

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



contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/



Photo by Olga Tutunaru on Unsplash

Onboarding Docs



Action: Use our template and make sure to include dev env setup, running tests, and other requirements.



contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/



Photo by Olga Tutunaru on Unsplash

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Building a welcoming
and
inclusive community.

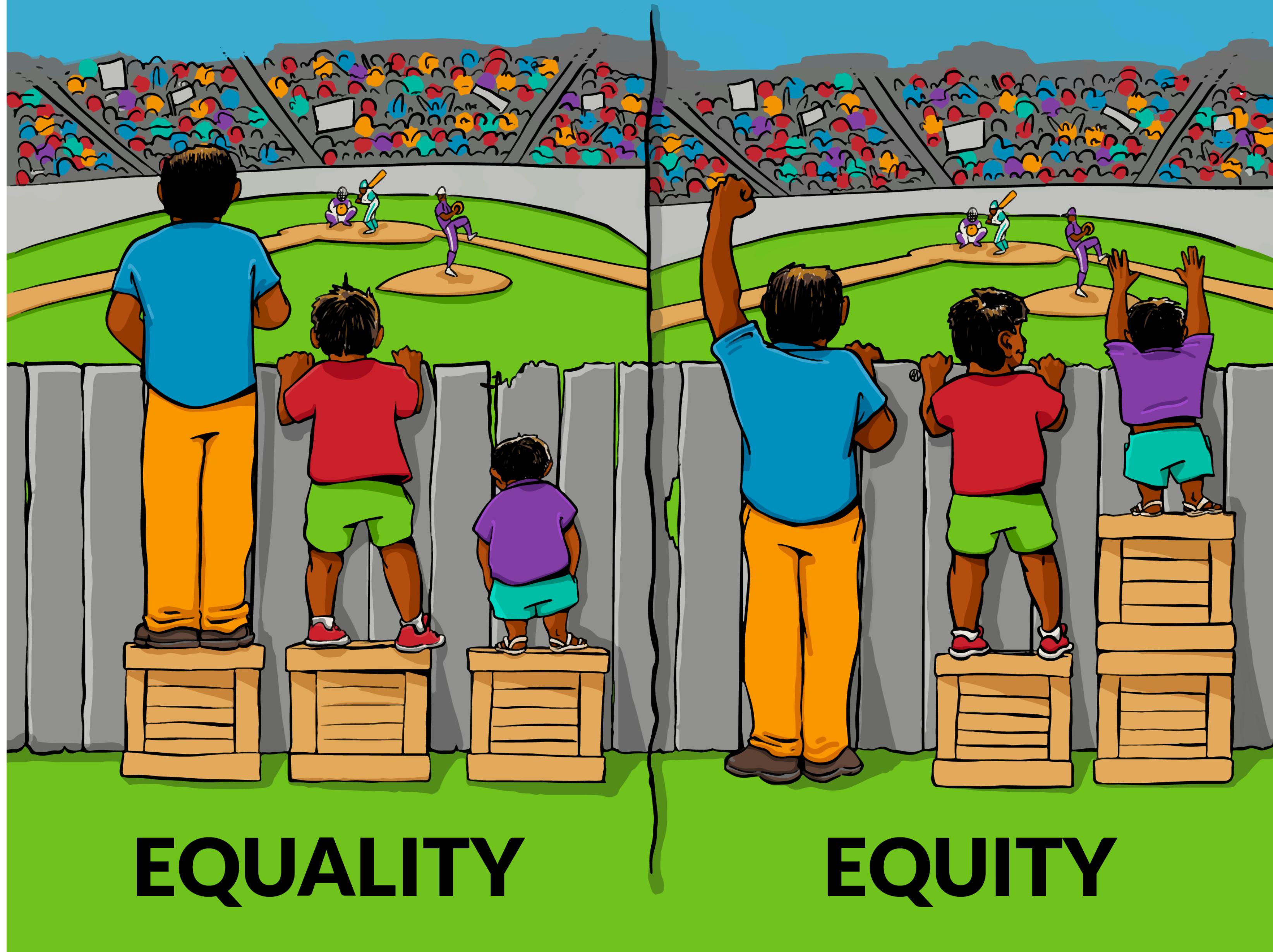


Image courtesy of the Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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

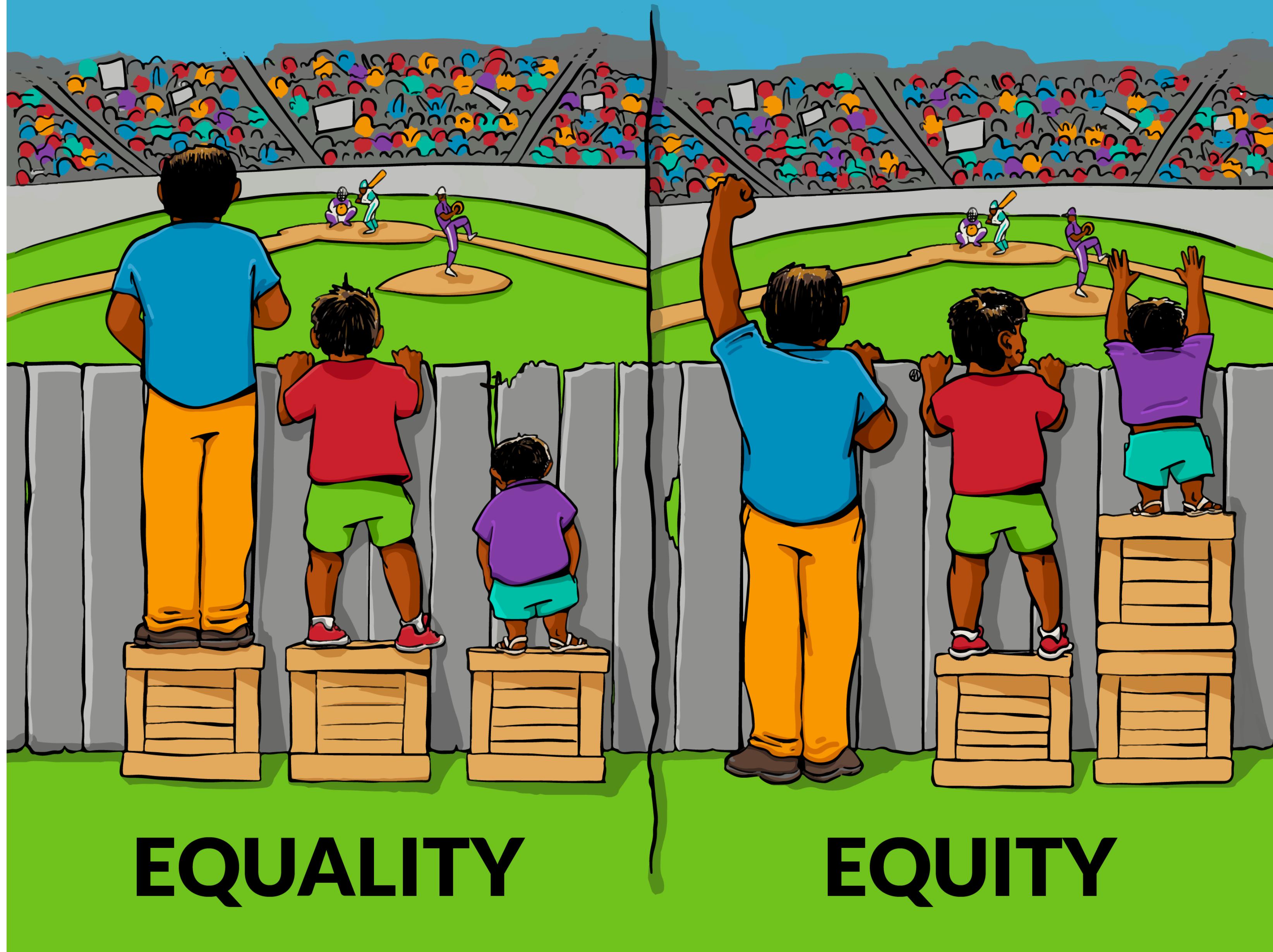


Image courtesy of the Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire.

Contributor Ladders and Leadership

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



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

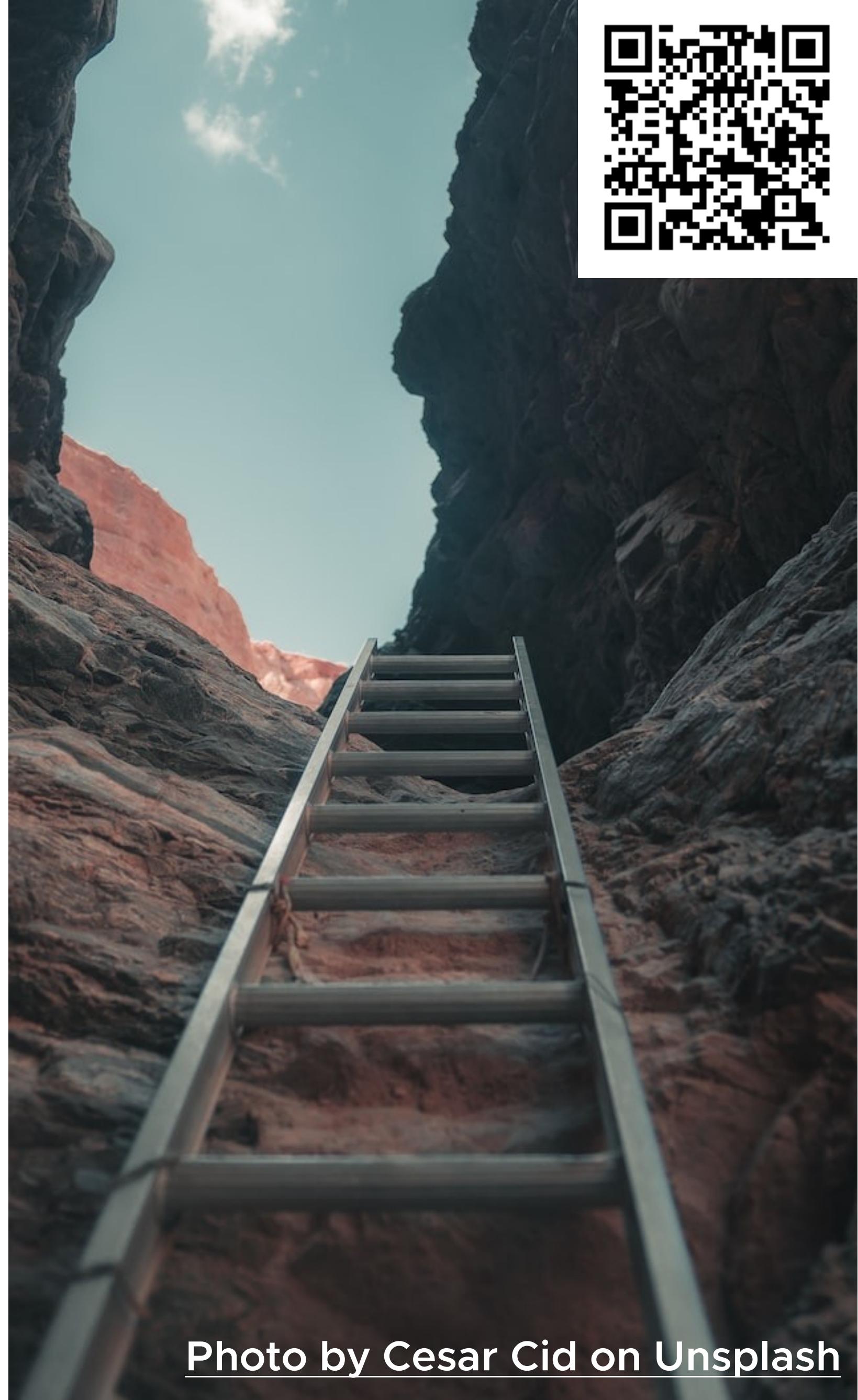


Photo by Cesar Cid on Unsplash

Contributor Ladders and Leadership

Action: Use our template and proactively recruit new humans to move up the ladder into leadership roles.



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



Photo by Cesar Cid on Unsplash

Mentoring

Help the humans
become more
productive
contributors.

👉 github.com/cncf/mentoring



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Mentoring

Action: Carve out some time for mentoring, shadowing or 1:1 time with another human.

👉 github.com/cncf/mentoring



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Emeritus as a Goal

Set your project
up for success after
maintainers move on.



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Emeritus as a Goal

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



[Photo by Matthew Brodeur on Unsplash](#)

Be Strategic

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



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



CNCF TAG Contributor Strategy Needs More Humans!

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!



Learn about the TAG and how to participate: cncf.io/contributor-strategy.

Final Thoughts

Humans can be difficult,
and growing your
contributor base is hard.

It takes time now,
but it is worth it later.



Action Item

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



Thank You and Resource Links

CNCF Contributor Strategy TAG Docs / Templates

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/

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

github.com/cncf/project-template

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