MERGE FORWARD

Open Source Has a Human Deficit. Here's How We Fix It.

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CLOUD NATIVE COMPUTING FOUNDATION

March 2022

"etcd has only one active and two occasionally-reviewing maintainers. The project is effectively unmaintained."

A post to the Kubernetes Steering Committee

etcd is where every Kubernetes cluster keeps its state. Tens of thousands of production clusters, resting on 1 to 3 individuals?



November 2025

"For years, ingress-nginx has had only one or two people doing development work, on their own time, after work hours and on weekends."

Kubernetes Contributor blog, November 12, 2025

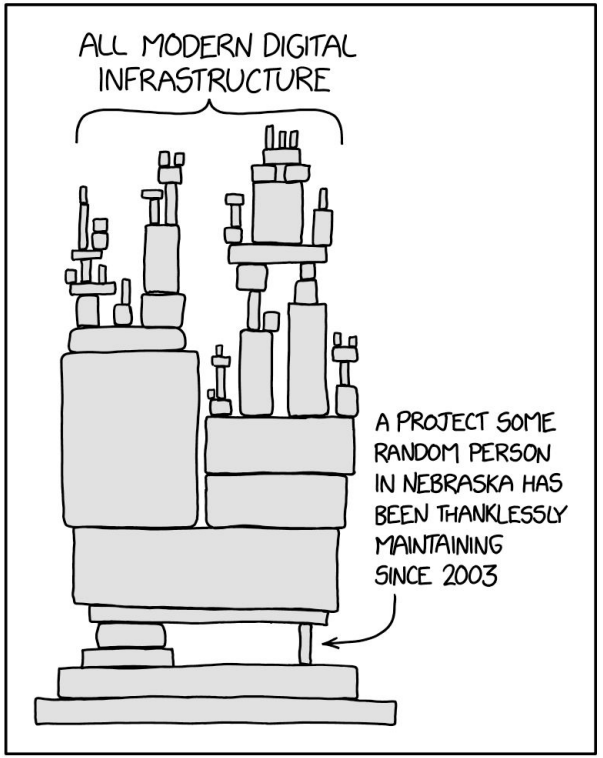
Kubernetes retired it. No security fixes after March 2026.



A recurring pattern

- ➔ Companies build profitable products on top OSS
- ➔ Maintainers burn out & the project stops getting patched
- ➔ Resulting in a supply chain security problem

Your code is only as sustainable as the people who maintain it.



xkcd comic (#2347)

Out of scope for this talk...

Companies need to start **funding** what they **run in production**.

Most don't.



The talent pool we keep overlooking

1. We need more maintainers
2. Many people don't see themselves represented in open source, and consequently don't see a clear path into it.

2 + 2 = ... 

You got it!

Welcoming members from underrepresented groups will ultimately make open source more **sustainable**



Most existential threat to OSS: Lack of maintainers

Everyone who cares about open source,
should care about inclusion.

Sustainability is a side effect of a diverse group of people participating in open source.



We need a deliberate effort

- Mentorship
- Role models
- A welcoming environment
- New ways to participate



Inclusion makes better software

When the same assumptions go unchallenged, teams:

- ➔ miss edge cases
- ➔ ship defects
- ➔ pay more to fix them

Homogeneous communities create predictable product risk.





Catherine 🇺🇸



Emily 🇺🇸



Stéphane 🇱🇺

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Jay 🇦🇺 Ashwin 🇳🇱

Deep Roots









Nancy 🇺🇸 Bhavani 🇮🇳 Sonali 🇮🇳 Pronomita 🇮🇳

Women in Cloud Native





Or 🇮🇱 Logan 🇺🇸

Friends of Dorothy



Stéphane 🇱🇺

Blind & Visually Impaired





James 🇬🇧 Remco 🇳🇱

Moving Together



Onyedikachi 🇳🇬

Stuttering & Speech Diversity





Sandeep 🇮🇳 Rob 🇺🇸

Deaf & Hard of Hearing





Diana 🇪🇸 Ryan 🇺🇸

Neurodiversity

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community.cncf.io/merge-forward

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Learn more & apply
to be a mentee

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Questions or follow-ups?

I'll be at the  LINKERD kiosk in the **project pavilion**

(Ask for Catherine if I'm not around)

