Patterns and Practices for Open Source Project Success

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Freeloaders are Necessary

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WTFOSS*

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* Hat tip to @codepope

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Community

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USENIX

Linux

DECUS

Princeton

SHARE

We’ve shared software since we’ve written software
Writing good software is hard work

Berkeley CSRG

Free Software Fountation

MIT Athena

ASF

Apache

Eclipse Fountation

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2 Stories

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Orders

of

magnitude

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ROTOR

500K LoC
500K Lines-of-Test Harness
Ran on Windows, Mac OS X, FreeBSD
One script to set environment
One command to build everything
One command to test it all
Minimal documentation

24 hours later …
24 hours later again …

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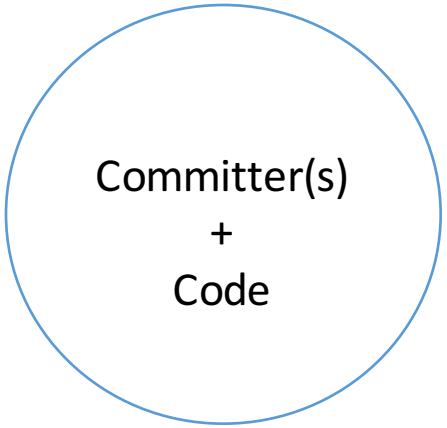

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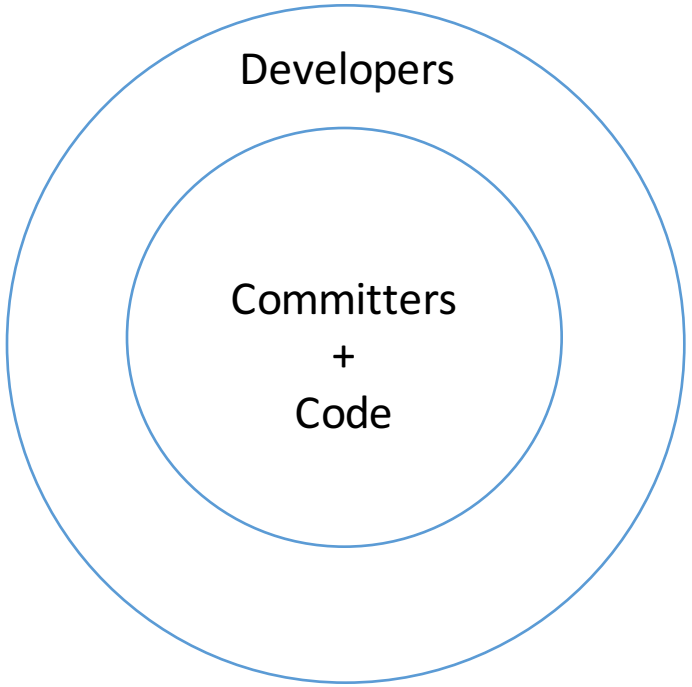

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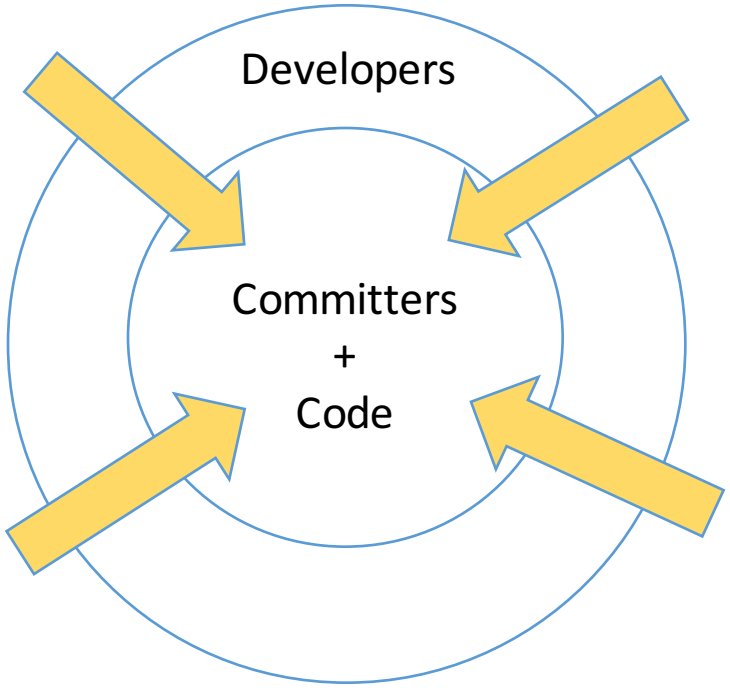

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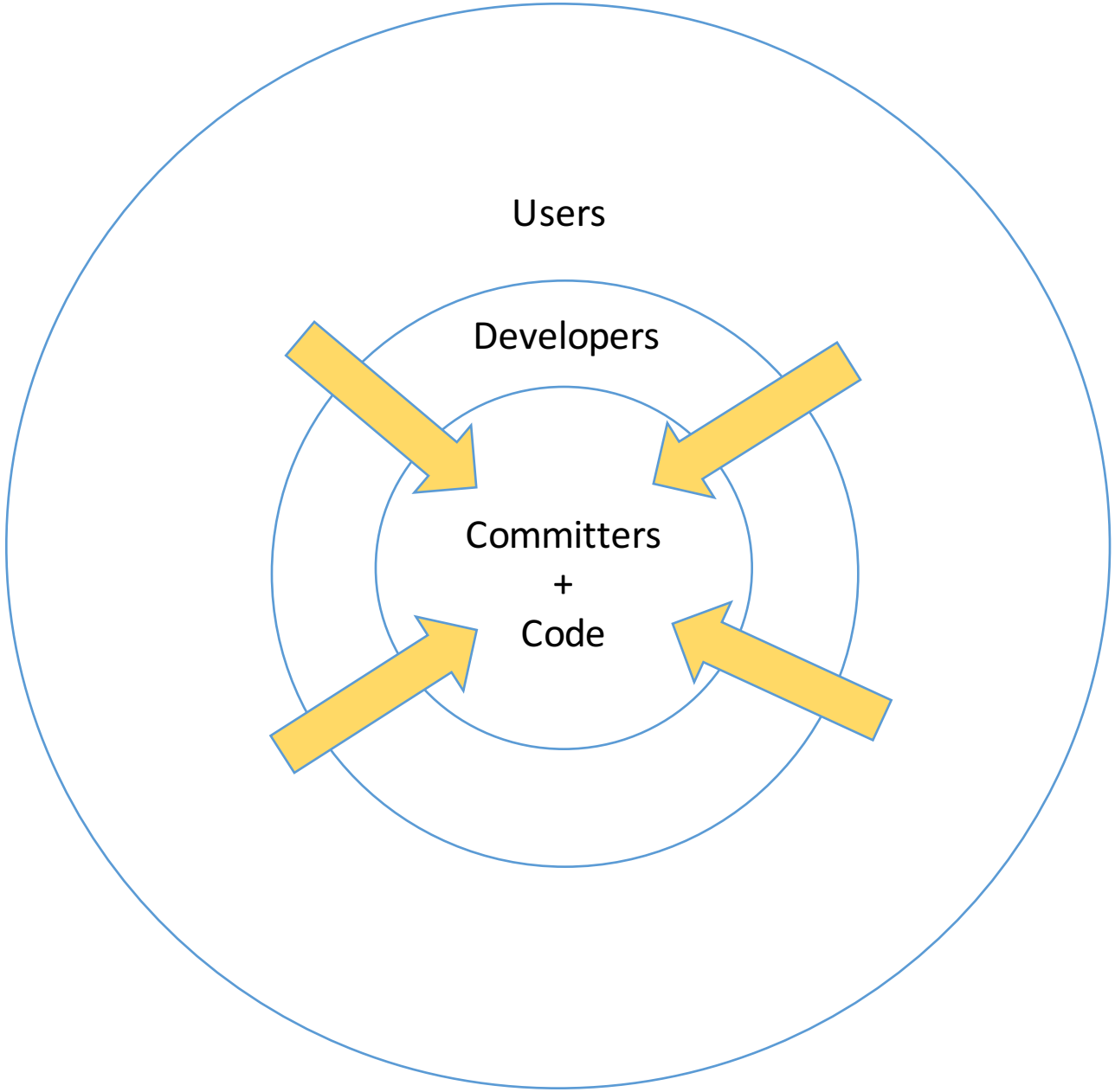

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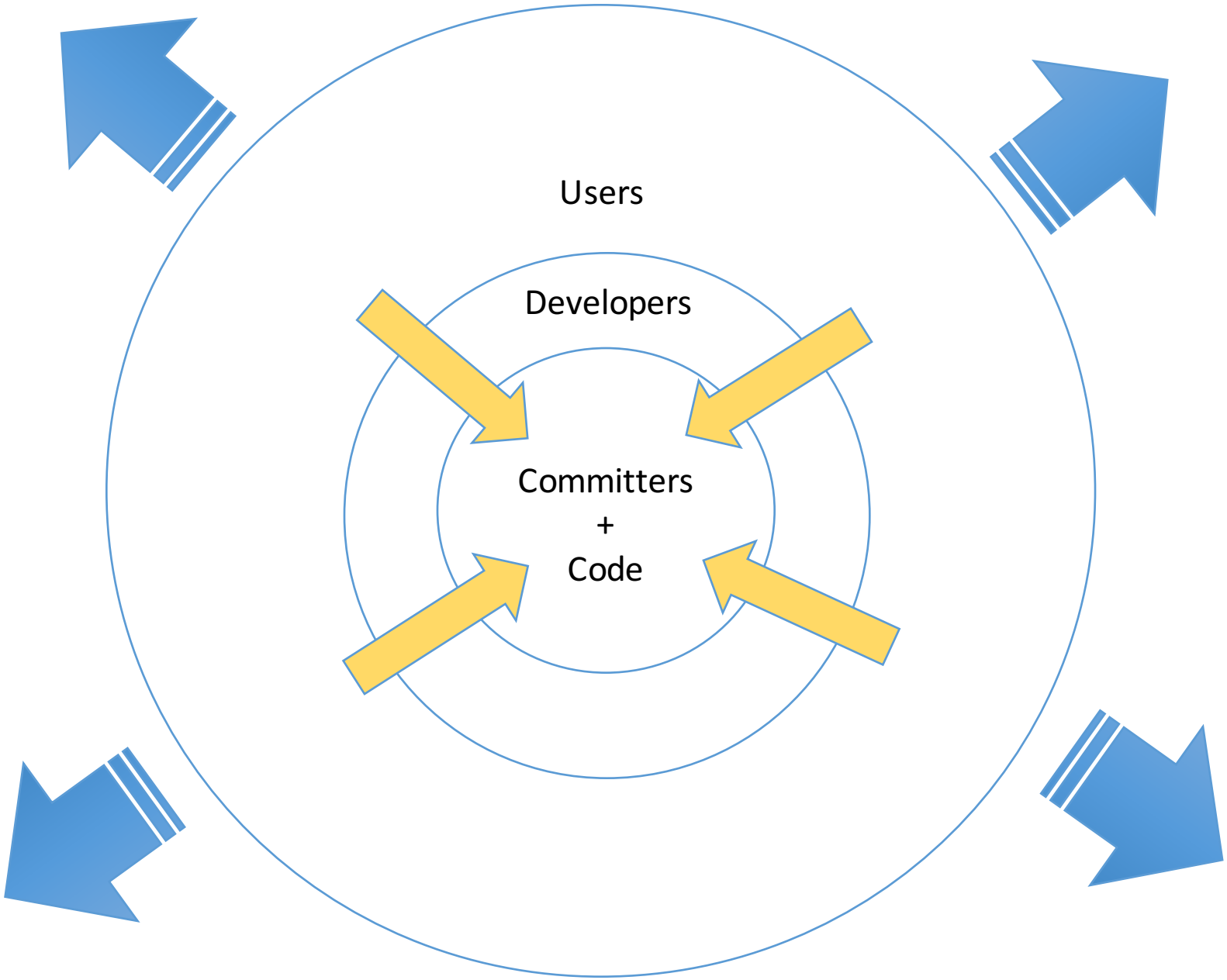

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How do you increase your user base?

(How do you make it easy to install/configure/use the software?)

How do you encourage developers?

(How do you make it easy to build/test/experiment?)

How do you make it easy to contribute?

(What do you communicate to your community)

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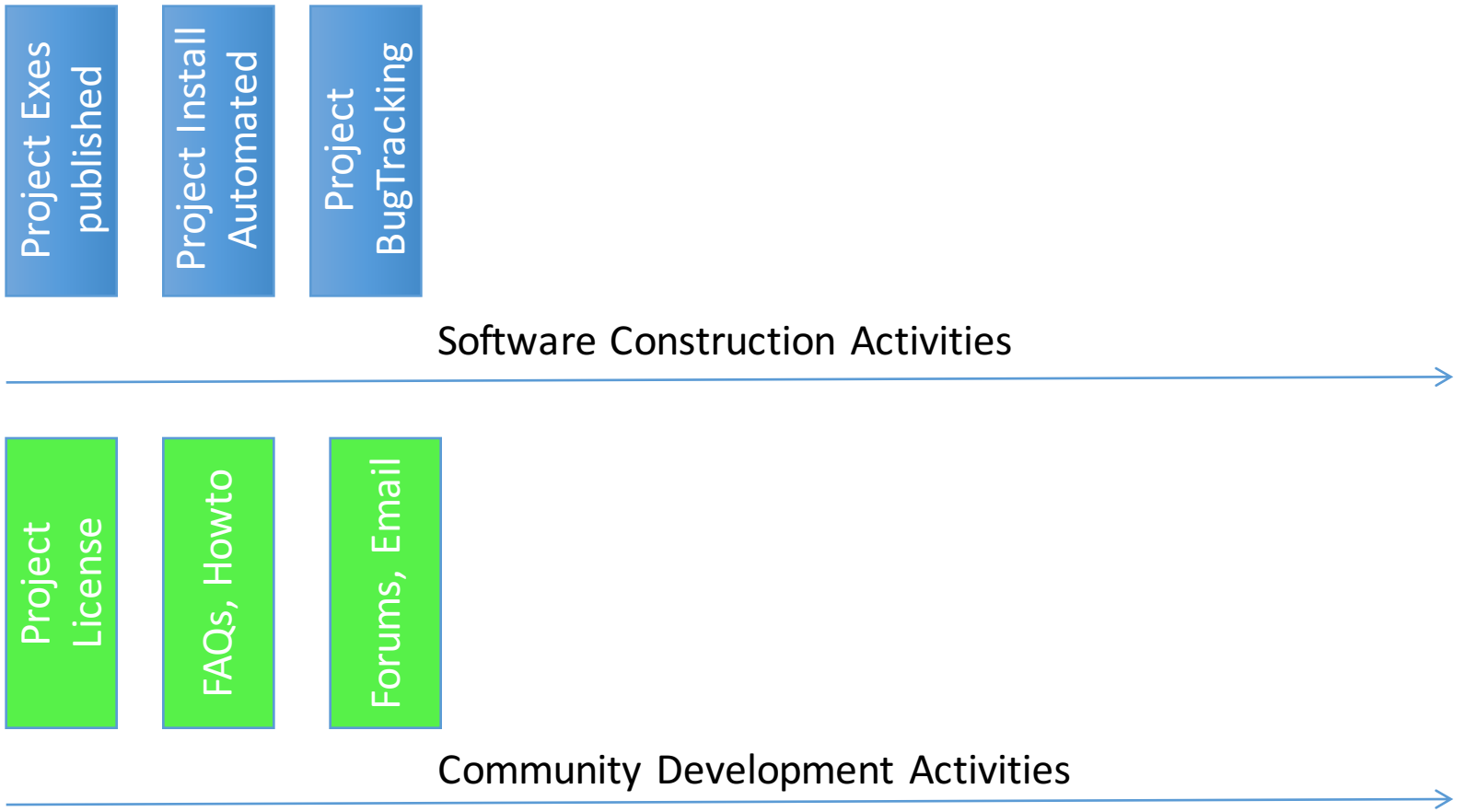

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IANAL

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A small (2 minute) diversion on licensing ….

- Software is protected by copyright law
- Whoever wrote the software, owns the copyright
- People often give up copyright ownership in employment agreements
- There are a few well [understood|accepted] licenses: pick one
- These licenses define the most successful collaborations in history
- If you care about making money: educate yourself* & hire a lawyer
- If you [care|worry] about patents: hire a lawyer
- If you publish your project on Github: create the *%$ing LICENSE file

Writers|Artists|Engineers|Architects do it. So should you.

*Van Lindberg's *Intellectual Property and Open Source*

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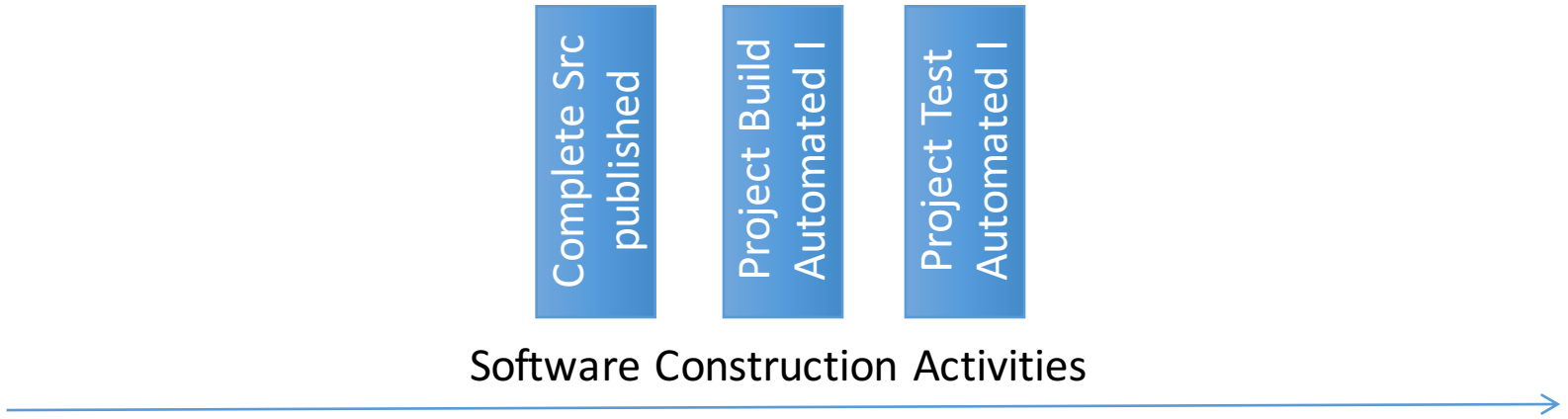

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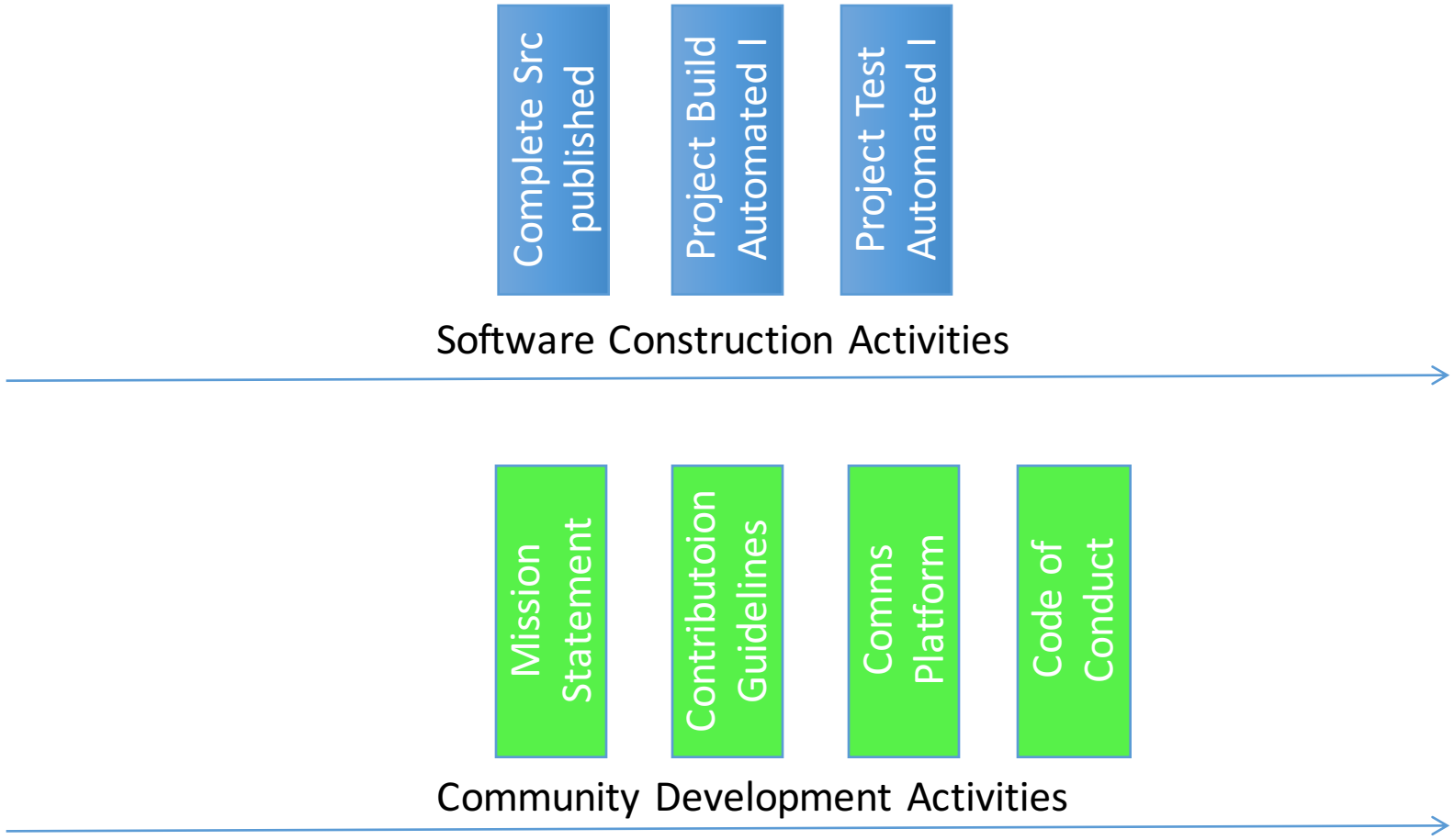

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A small diversion on software engineering …

- 2 ratios define software development
- All advances in programming languages and software engineering is attempting to beat these two ratios
- [Community|Product] scale depends on reliably delivering the known executable environment every time
- Linus's Law is about REVIEWS not BUG FIXING

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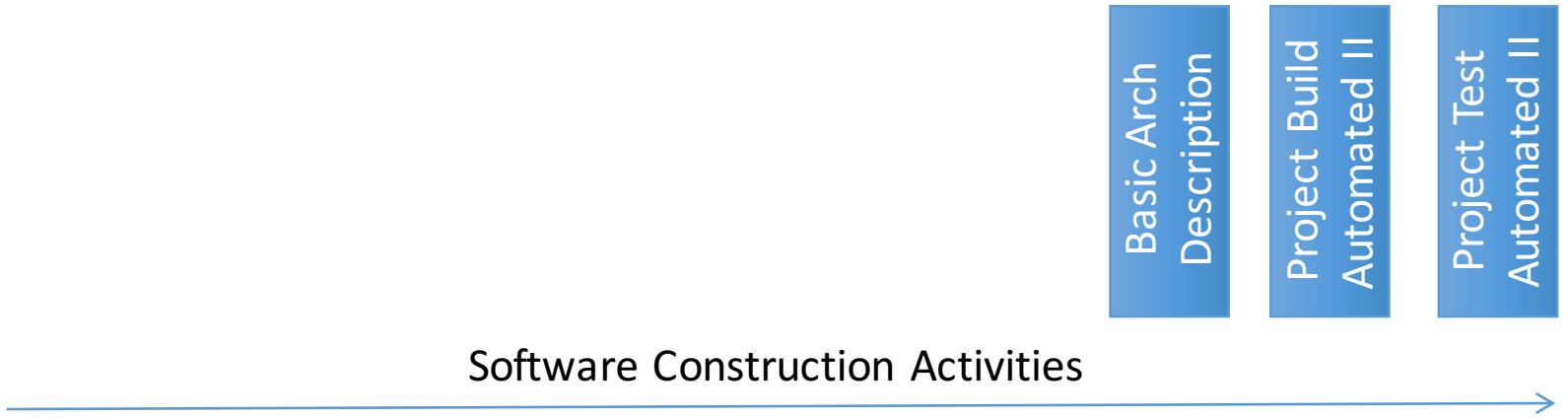

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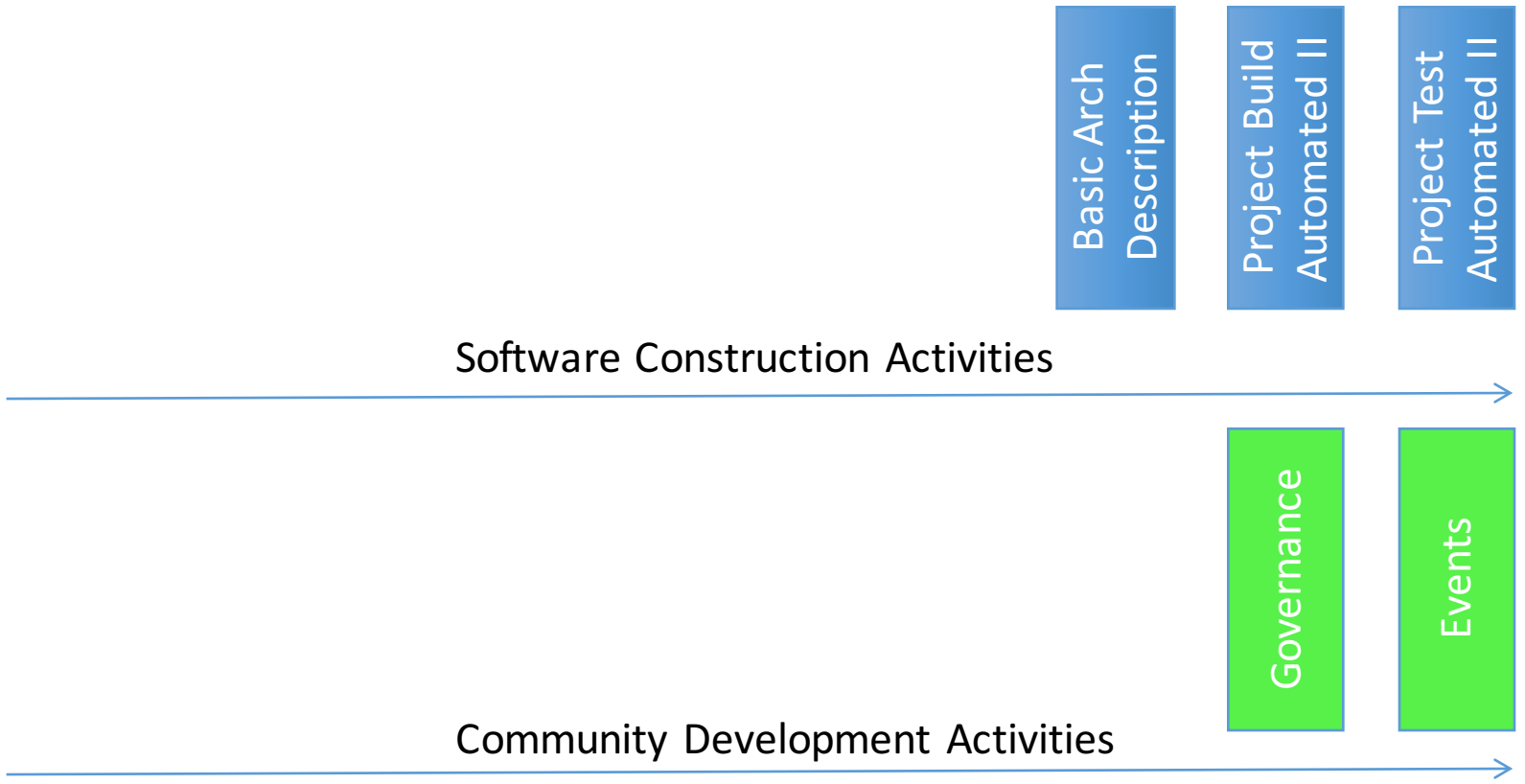

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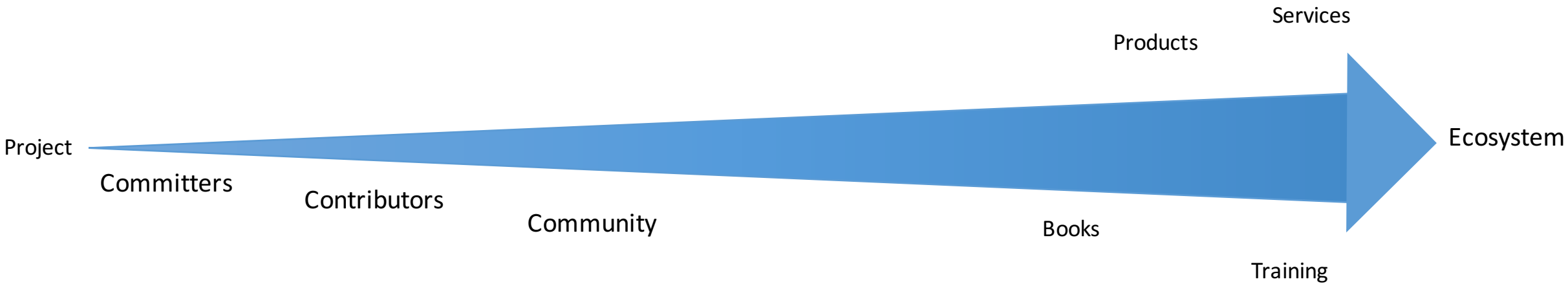

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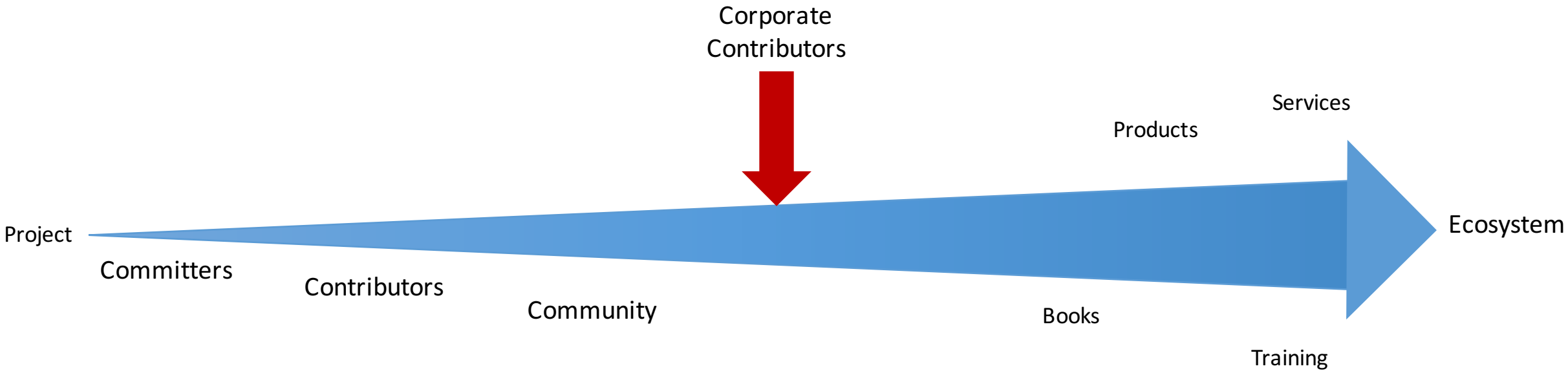

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How do you make it easy to contribute?

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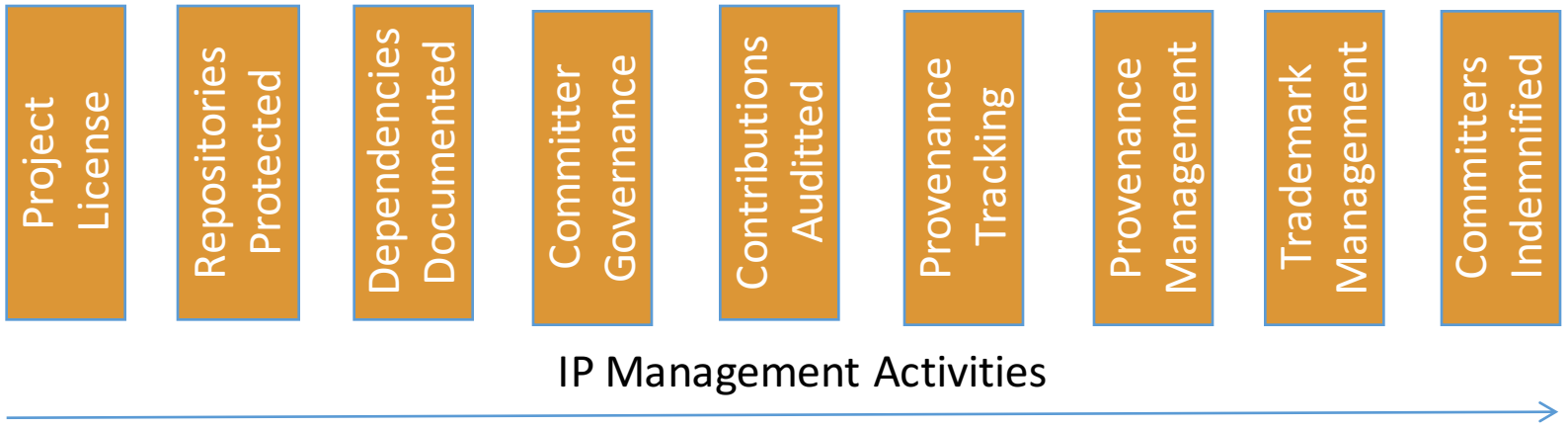

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Foundations

- Henrik Ingo’s numbers
- Foundations provide neutral ownership and a level playing field
- Bright lines for projects versus products

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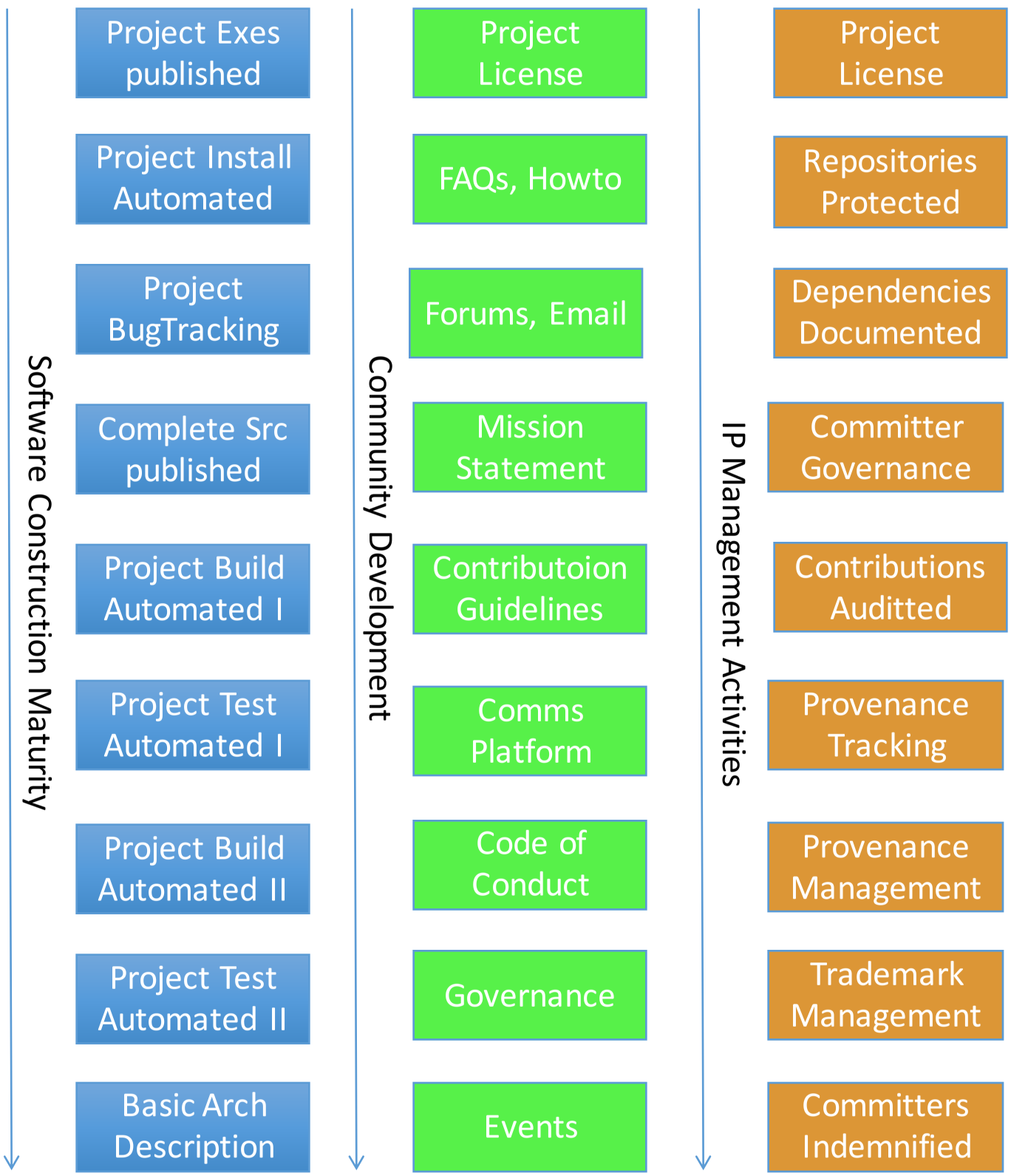
Open Source Community Practices



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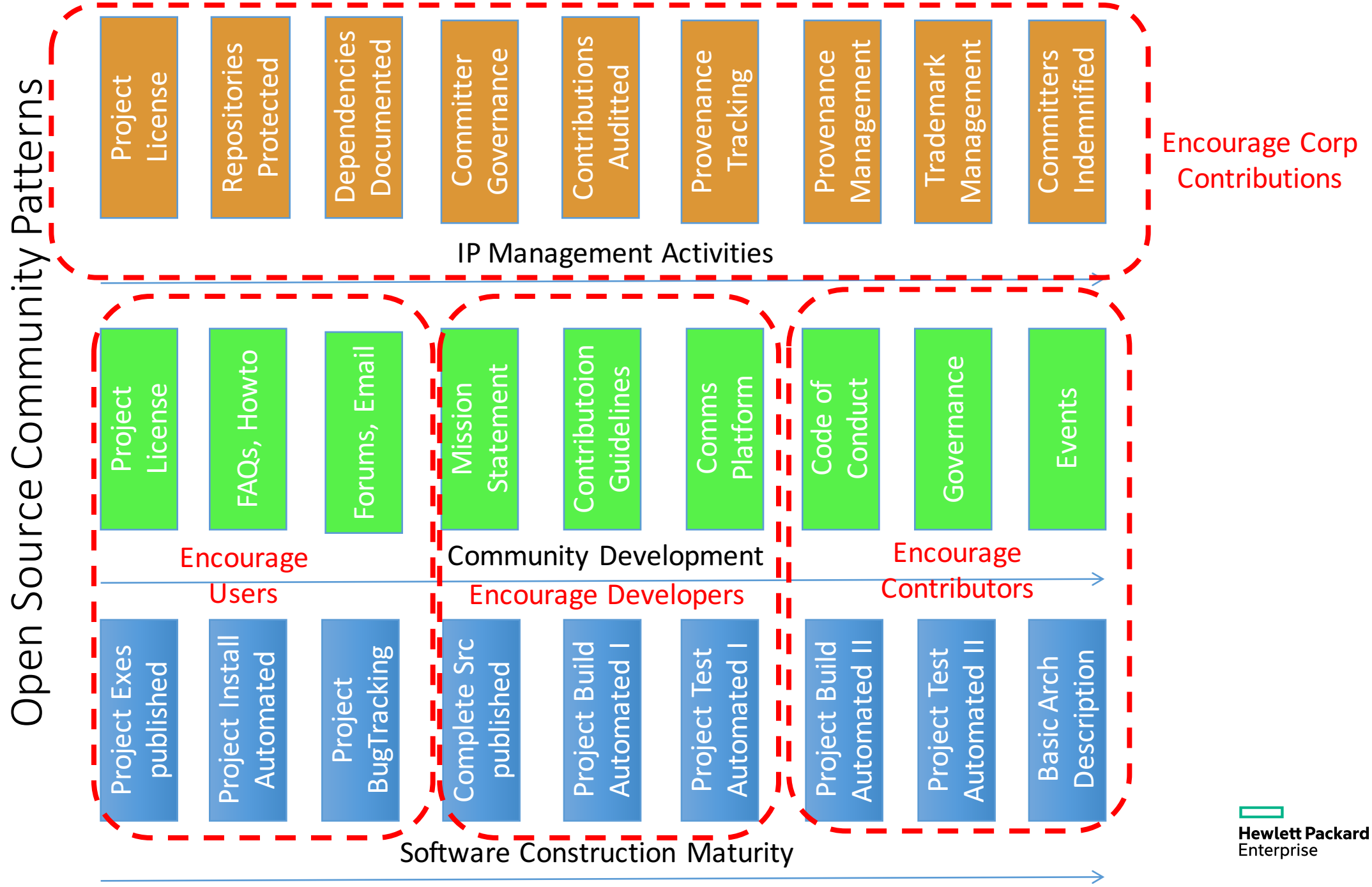

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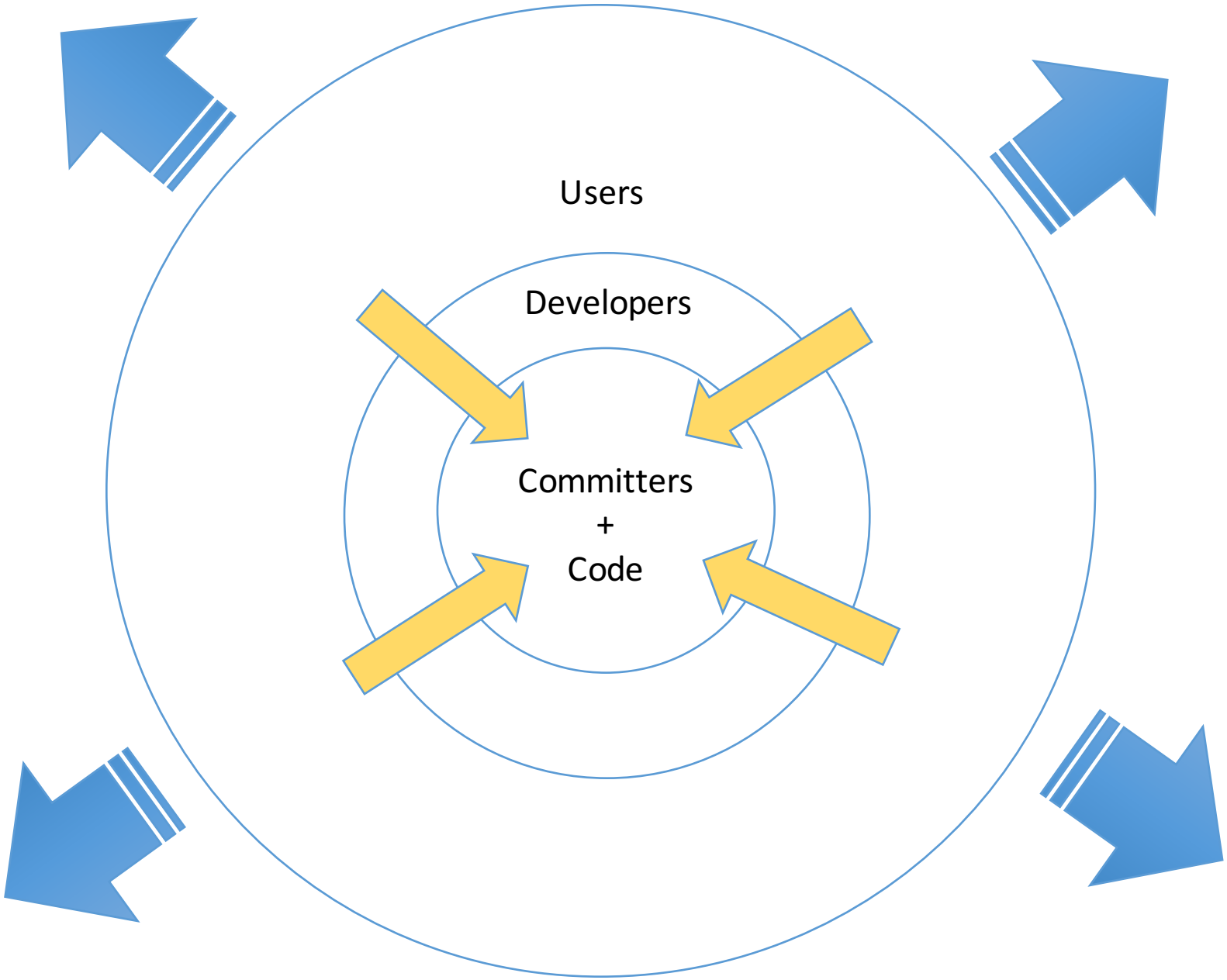

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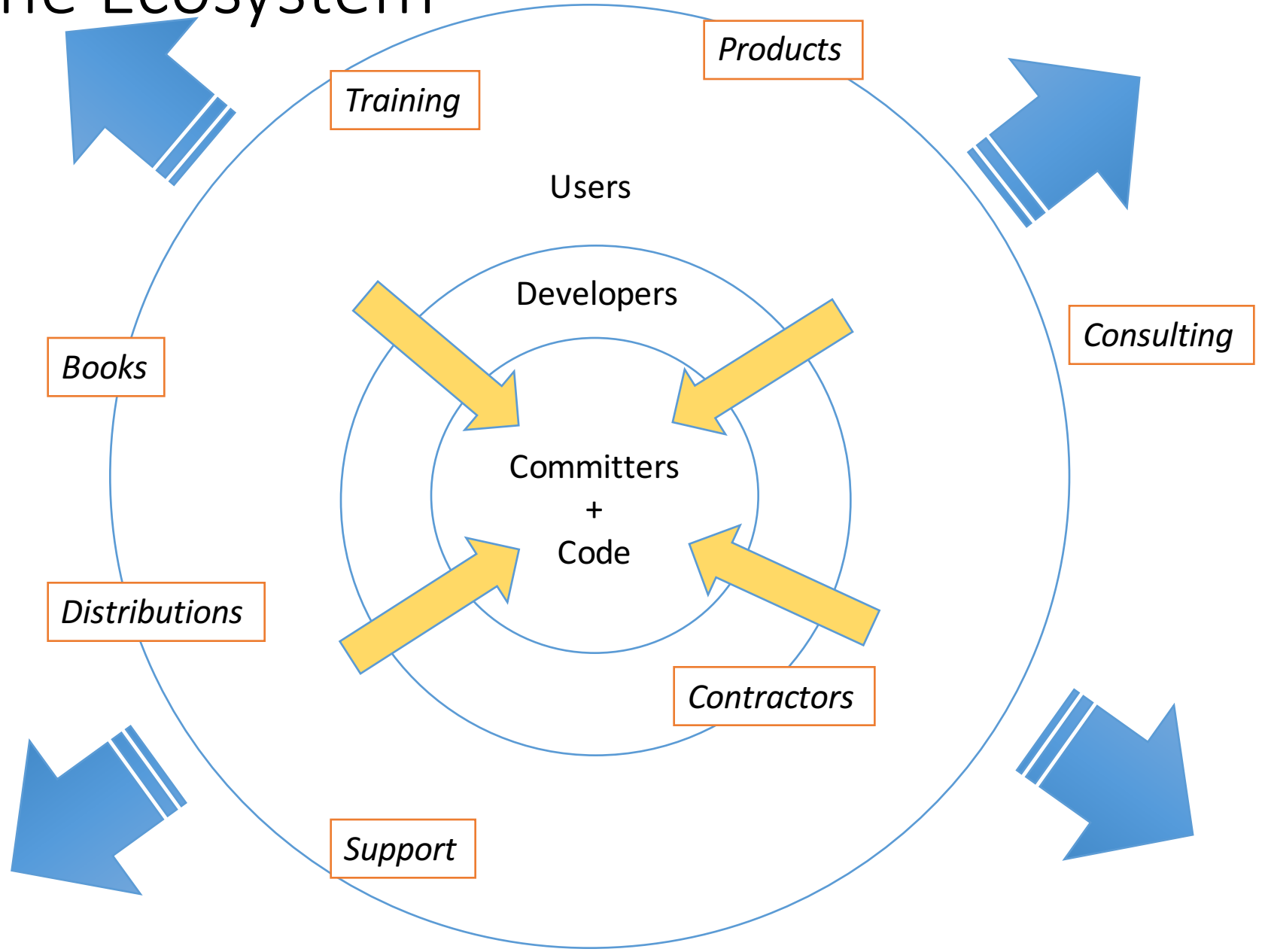
Building the Ecosystem



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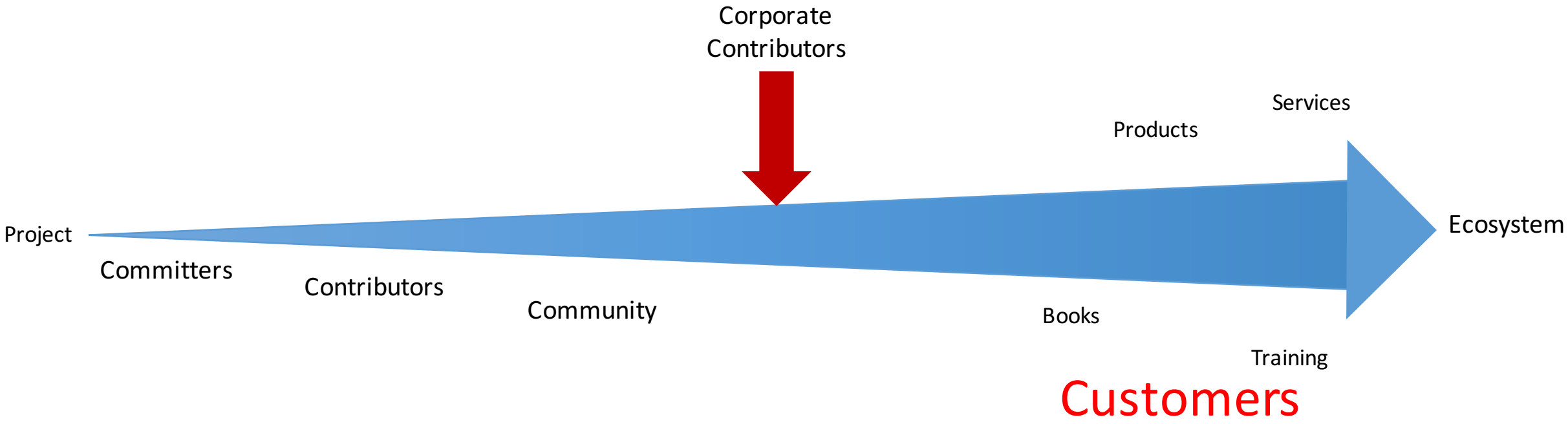

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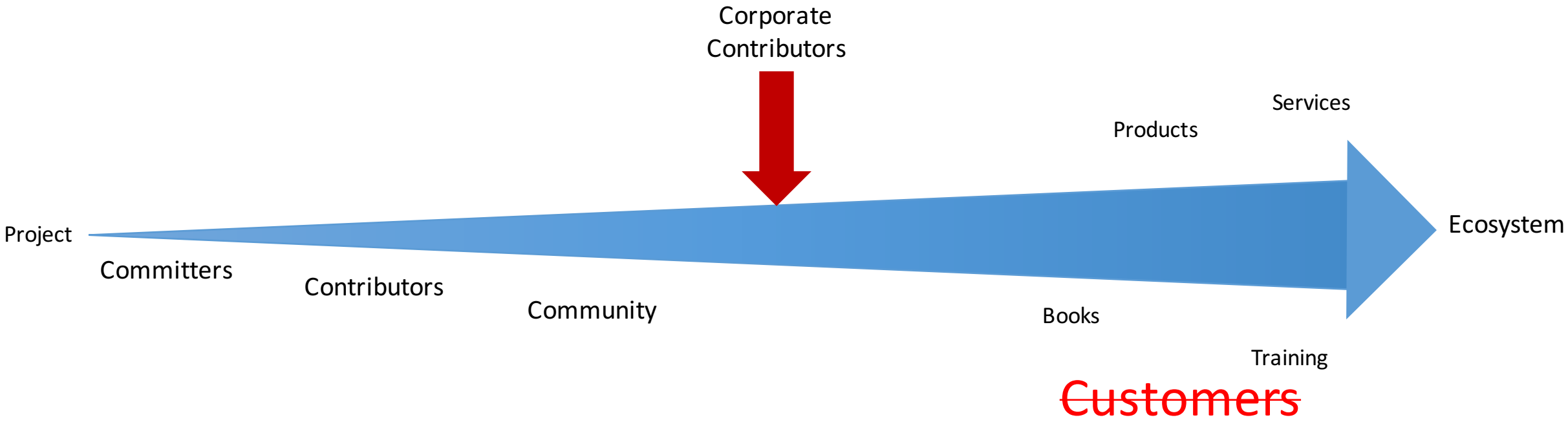

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Questions & Comments

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