ETC
Cooperative

2022 Roadmap

Feb 25, 2022

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Overview

The coming year will have a quite different flavor to previous years for the ETC Cooperative, reflecting the shifting reality on the ground for the ETC ecosystem.   Both IOHK and ETC Labs have departed from the Ethereum Classic ecosystem, leaving the ETC Cooperative as the sole funder of ETC protocol development work.

There are now three members of staff at the ETC Cooperative who are working full-time on client software development (both Hyperledger Besu and Core-Geth) and supporting tools, together with other "public goods". Their work has become a significant part of the ETC Cooperative's roadmap for 2022.

Record fees from Grayscale from April 2021 onwards have left the ETC Cooperative in a very strong cash position. We intend to put some of that money to good use with a fresh ecosystem grants program.

We will also be rebooting our communications and marketing with the hire of a new Communications Manager.

Work items

Ecosystem grants program

In previous years the ETC Cooperative was only able to issue a small number of low-value grants in each calendar year, given our limited funding. With significantly higher fees from Grayscale during 2021 we are now in a financial position to reboot the grants program.

We are budgeting for up to **$250K worth of grant-making** during 2022 if suitable projects are proposed.

With Core-Geth and Hyperledger Besu development in-house, it makes sense to focus on the higher layers of the ecosystem and to incentivize dapp developers to bring their projects to ETC and for infrastructure providers to bring missing building blocks (DEXes, stablecoins, oracle solutions, bridges) to ETC.

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Fresh proposal for a minimal treasury

In September, ETC Cooperative withdrew our support for the ECIP-1098 Proto Treasury which had originally been proposed by IOHK. The need for sustainable funding for both the ETC Cooperative and more importantly for the ETC ecosystem remains. There appears to be some remaining appetite for a treasury system if it is open and fair and limited in scope.

Ongoing protocol stewardship

The ETC Cooperative's primary technical focus must always be on stewardship of the ETC protocol via active participation in the Ethereum Classic Improvement Process ("ECIP") and in the social ecosystem around that process. This is especially important now, given that all the core developers are under the same roof.

This can be a very time-consuming process which requires both technical understanding and interpersonal skills – spanning two worlds. There are certainly plenty of shortcomings in the way that the ECIP process is currently operating, and that is something which the ETC Cooperative needs to help with.

We cannot dictate direction but there are very few other participants who have the skill set and time to propose protocol improvements beyond tracking upstream Ethereum changes. This is a tricky position for us to be in.

The ETC Core team have some protocol ideas which are too early to bring into the ECIP process yet, but which will likely be proposed later this year. ECIP-1049 is also still on the plate, though not urgent and rather contentious.

Core-Geth and Hyperledger Besu development

Client development is the most foundational and essential work in the ETC ecosystem. Core-Geth is used by 94% of nodes, and likely by 100% of mining pools. Under ETC Labs there were three full-time developers for 2021, with a greater number in earlier years. Only two of the three developers came from ETC Labs to ETC Cooperative, so it is likely that we will want to hire a replacement software engineer, to bring the team back up to full strength. Diego was a new hire last year, as our first full-time developer on Besu. The three developers are working together now, maintaining the two client codebases.

We run most (all?) of the boot nodes for the various ETC networks, together with geographically distributed full nodes. We have also inherited all the infrastructure which ETC Core were running under ETC Labs. That will be consolidated over time where we have redundancies.

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BlockScout support

We continue to host and maintain BlockScout instances for ETC mainnet, Kotti and Mordor. There have not been too many uptime issues in the last few months, other than planned node upgrades.   We were in discussions with POA about having them host the BlockScout instances as a paid service, but ultimately, they decided it would have been too much of a switch of working model for them.

Improve our RPC endpoints

Following our migration to Rivet we are getting better insights into the usage and performance our RPC endpoints and are in the process of building a caching frontend on CloudFlare, and extending the monitoring and logging systems. We are serving over 90 million requests each day.

Erigon ETC evaluation

Erigon (formerly known as TurboGeth) is a completely re-architectured implementation of Ethereum, currently written in Go, but with implementations in other languages in their early stages. The Rust implementation is called Akula and the C++ implementation is called Silkworm. It is the third most popular client on the ETH mainnet, with a 6% market share, after OpenEthereum (deprecated) and Geth.

Unlike the other "gen1" clients, Erigon has had a major focus on modularity, rather than having a monolithic architecture.   Adding ETC support should be a matter of adding a new component, and not require a downstream branch to be maintained.

During 2022, we will take the time to fully spec out the work for adding ETC support to Erigon and then maintaining that support.   It would not really make sense to add a third client to our maintenance burden so if we did chose to support Erigon, that would likely be as a replacement for Core-Geth (as we have previously migrated from Geth Classic to Multi-Geth to Core-Geth), or Hyperledger Besu.

Communications and Marketing

The ETC Cooperative significantly underperformed during 2021 in our communications and marketing efforts. This area needs a complete reboot for 2022, starting with hiring of a full-time Communications Manager.   We need a clear position statement for ETC and we need to work with the community on an agreed direction and focus.

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These are our basic channels for communication:

- Coop Website – About, filings and minutes, transparency reports, blog posts
- Medium – Another outlet for the blog posts
- MailerLite – Used for our email campaigns
- Twitter, Discord – Social media and community interactions

Contributing to the ETC community website

In late 2019, [Bob rebooted work](#) on the community-maintained ETC https://ethereumclassic.org website, with Chris Hitchcott then taking the lead.   It has recently undergone significant rework and is very appealing, both in design and in content.

ETC Cooperative has not pulled its weight on the website, despite original good intentions. The community website is the primary landing point for many people new to ETC and unity of messaging needs to be formed around that site.   What is ETC? Why is it important? What do I need to know?   This is where our rebooted communications need to start – as part of that communal effort. We should also fund translations for the site.

Web domains and twitter handles

Terry Culver will be migrating the **ethereumclassic.org** and **etccore.io** domain registrations and the **etc_core** twitter handle to the ETC Cooperative.

The primary **eth_classic** twitter handle (600K followers) is owned by IOHK with Kevin Lord having personal TweetDeck access.   This bottleneck became very problematic in the tail end of 2021 and early 2022.

It might make sense to offer to purchase the domain from IOHK, so that ETC Cooperative can ensure ongoing access to the ETC community, and perhaps to broaden the number of end users who have access, so we have some redundancy.

Conference attendance (and sponsorship?)

After two years of shutdown, in-person conferences are starting to resume. During 2019 and early 2020 these conferences were key opportunities to build in-person connections and tell the "ETC story" within the broader Ethereum ecosystem.   It will be a delight to resume our attendance. Also, given our geographic distribution, such conferences are an opportunity for us to meet and coordinate in-person.

We did not sponsor any conferences in 2019 or 2020, given our limited funding at the time. That is option again now, if there is good ROI.

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Corporate changes

Non-profit status

During the 2022 calendar year we will begin the process of converting the ETC Cooperative from a public charity into a private foundation, due to the lack of diversity of funding sources, which is required to maintain 501(c)3 status. This is called the public support test. The test states that at least 1/3 (33.3%) of donations must be given by donors who give less than 2% of the nonprofit's overall receipts. Over the last year we have discussed with E&Y, that even with the move to a treasury system, this would not satisfy the public support test, therefore a transition would be required. This change will be applicable for 2023.

There will still be a tax deduction for any donations received from other parties. However, a foundation must pay a nominal excise tax of 1.39% on their net investment income.
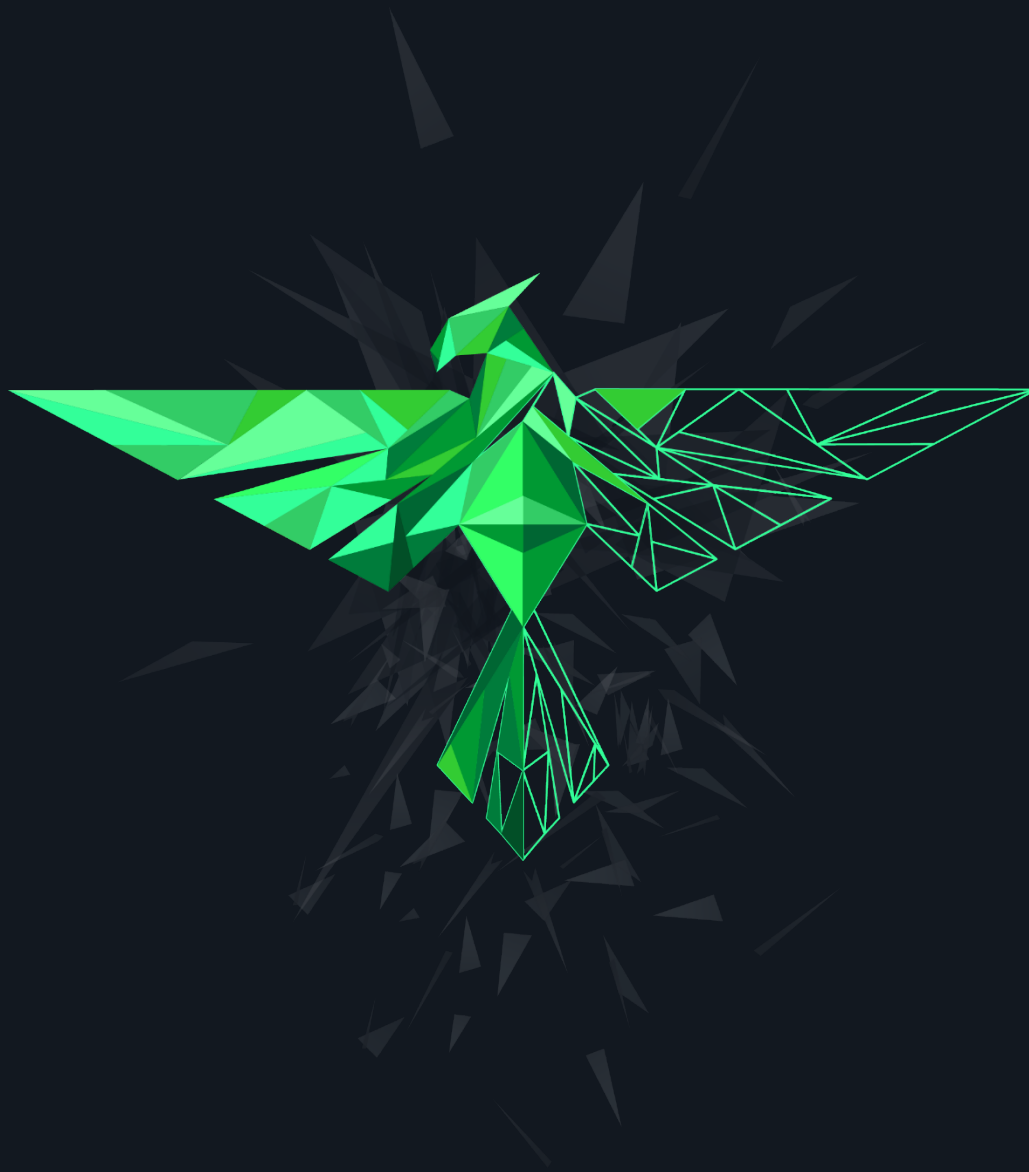
Although foundations typically make grants to public charities, they can also run programs, provide services, and conduct direct charitable activities. Ripple Foundation is an example of a crypto foundation.

A foundation must also distribute 5% of its assets annually. Distributions that count toward this requirement include grants to charities, certain related expenses, and necessary and reasonable administrative costs, for Operating Foundations, which the Coop would be.

We will be working with E&Y this year to flush out all the requirements for the transition and what effect that will have on the Coop, however per our discussions, it does not appear that it will result in many operational changes.

Reporting

We will be moving to a quarterly reporting timetable. We found that in 2021, most reports ended up being done on a 2-month period, due to there not being significant changes month to month, with programs, spending, or daily activities. Bob will notify the Board if there are any significant issues/changes as per current procedure.

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