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Linux Foundation PCA Exam Syllabus Topics:

Topic	Details

Topic 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PromQL: This section of the exam measures the skills of Monitoring Specialists and focuses on Prometheus Query Language (PromQL) concepts. It covers data selection, calculating rates and derivatives, and performing aggregations across time and dimensions. Candidates also study the use of binary operators, histograms, and timestamp metrics to analyze monitoring data effectively, ensuring accurate interpretation of system performance and trends.
Topic 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alerting and Dashboarding: This section of the exam assesses the competencies of Cloud Operations Engineers and focuses on monitoring visualization and alert management. It covers dashboarding basics, alerting rules configuration, and the use of Alertmanager to handle notifications. Candidates also learn the core principles of when, what, and why to trigger alerts, ensuring they can create reliable monitoring dashboards and proactive alerting systems to maintain system stability.
Topic 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instrumentation and Exporters: This domain evaluates the abilities of Software Engineers and addresses the methods for integrating Prometheus into applications. It includes the use of client libraries, the process of instrumenting code, and the proper structuring and naming of metrics. The section also introduces exporters that allow Prometheus to collect metrics from various systems, ensuring efficient and standardized monitoring implementation.
Topic 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prometheus Fundamentals: This domain evaluates the knowledge of DevOps Engineers and emphasizes the core architecture and components of Prometheus. It includes topics such as configuration and scraping techniques, limitations of the Prometheus system, data models and labels, and the exposition format used for data collection. The section ensures a solid grasp of how Prometheus functions as a monitoring and alerting toolkit within distributed environments.
Topic 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observability Concepts: This section of the exam measures the skills of Site Reliability Engineers and covers the essential principles of observability used in modern systems. It focuses on understanding metrics, logs, and tracing mechanisms such as spans, as well as the difference between push and pull data collection methods. Candidates also learn about service discovery processes and the fundamentals of defining and maintaining SLOs, SLAs, and SLIs to monitor performance and reliability.

Linux Foundation Prometheus Certified Associate Exam Sample Questions (Q10-Q15):

NEW QUESTION # 10

Which PromQL expression computes the rate of API Server requests across the different cloud providers from the following metrics?

```
apiserver_request_total{job="kubernetes-apiserver", instance="192.168.1.220:6443", cloud="aws"} 1
apiserver_request_total{job="kubernetes-apiserver", instance="192.168.1.121:6443", cloud="gcloud"} 5
```

- A. `rate(sum by (cloud)(apiserver_request_total{job="kubernetes-apiserver"}))[5m]`
- B. `sum by (cloud)(rate(apiserver_request_total{job="kubernetes-apiserver"}[5m]))`
- C. `rate(apiserver_request_total{job="kubernetes-apiserver"}[5m]) by (cloud)`
- D. `sum by (cloud) (apiserver_request_total{job="kubernetes-apiserver"})`

Answer: B

Explanation:

The `rate()` function computes the per-second increase of a counter metric over a specified range, while `sum by (label)` aggregates those rates across dimensions - in this case, the cloud label.

The correct query is:

`sum by (cloud)(rate(apiserver_request_total{job="kubernetes-apiserver"}[5m]))` This expression:

Calculates the rate of increase in API requests per second for each instance.

Groups and sums those rates by cloud, giving the total request rate per cloud provider.

Option A incorrectly places `by (cloud)` after `rate()`, which is not valid syntax.

Option B returns raw counter totals (not rates).

Option D incorrectly applies `rate()` after aggregation, which distorts the calculation since `rate()` must operate on individual time series before aggregation.

Reference:

Verified from Prometheus documentation - rate() Function, Aggregation Operators, and Querying Counters Across Labels sections.

NEW QUESTION # 11

Which of the following PromQL queries is invalid?

- A. max without (instance) up
- **B. max on (instance) (up)**
- C. max without (instance, job) up
- D. max by (instance) up

Answer: B

Explanation:

The max operator in PromQL is an aggregation operator, not a binary vector matching operator. Therefore, the valid syntax for aggregation uses by() or without(), not on().

- max by (instance) up → Valid; aggregates maximum values per instance.
- max without (instance) up and max without (instance, job) up → Valid; aggregates over all labels except those listed.
- max on (instance) (up) → Invalid; the keyword on() is only valid in binary operations (e.g., +, -, and, or, unless), where two vectors are being matched on specific labels.

Hence, max on (instance) (up) is a syntax error in PromQL because on() cannot be used directly with aggregation operators.

Reference:

Verified from Prometheus documentation - Aggregation Operators, Vector Matching - on()/ignoring(), and PromQL Language Syntax Reference sections.

NEW QUESTION # 12

What popular open-source project is commonly used to visualize Prometheus data?

- **A. Grafana**
- B. Loki
- C. Thanos
- D. Kibana

Answer: A

Explanation:

The most widely used open-source visualization and dashboarding platform for Prometheus data is Grafana. Grafana provides native integration with Prometheus as a data source, allowing users to create real-time, interactive dashboards using PromQL queries. Grafana supports advanced visualization panels (graphs, heatmaps, gauges, tables, etc.) and enables users to design custom dashboards to monitor infrastructure, application performance, and service-level objectives (SLOs). It also provides alerting capabilities that can complement or extend Prometheus's own alerting system.

While Kibana is part of the Elastic Stack and focuses on log analytics, Thanos extends Prometheus for long-term storage and high availability, and Loki is a log aggregation system. None of these tools serve as the primary dashboarding solution for Prometheus metrics the way Grafana does.

Grafana's seamless Prometheus integration and templating support make it the de facto standard visualization tool in the Prometheus ecosystem.

Reference:

Verified from Prometheus documentation - Visualizing Data with Grafana, and Grafana documentation - Prometheus Data Source Integration and Dashboard Creation Guide.

NEW QUESTION # 13

What is the maximum number of Alertmanagers that can be added to a Prometheus instance?

- A. 0
- B. 1
- **C. More than 3**
- D. 2

Answer: C

Explanation:

Prometheus supports integration with multiple Alertmanager instances for redundancy and high availability. The alerting section of the Prometheus configuration file (prometheus.yml) allows specifying a list of Alertmanager targets, enabling Prometheus to send alerts to several Alertmanager nodes simultaneously.

There is no hard-coded limit on the number of Alertmanagers that can be added. The typical best practice is to run a minimum of three Alertmanagers in a clustered setup to achieve fault tolerance and ensure reliable alert delivery, but Prometheus can be configured with more than three if desired.

Each Alertmanager node in the cluster communicates state information (active, silenced, inhibited alerts) with its peers to maintain consistency.

Reference:

Verified from Prometheus documentation - Alertmanager Integration, High Availability Setup, and Prometheus Configuration - alerting Section.

NEW QUESTION # 14

Which of the following is an invalid @ modifier expression?

- A. `sum(http_requests_total{method="GET"}) @ 1609746000`
- B. `sum(http_requests_total{method="GET"}) @ 1609746000`
- C. `go_goroutines @ end()`
- D. `go_goroutines @ start()`

Answer: A

Explanation:

The @ modifier in PromQL allows querying data as it existed at a specific point in time rather than the evaluation time. It can be applied after a selector or an entire expression, but the syntax rules are strict.

- ☐ `go_goroutines @ start()` → Valid; queries value at the start of the evaluation range.
- ☐ `sum(http_requests_total{method="GET"}) @ 1609746000` → Valid; applies the modifier after the full expression.
- ☐ `go_goroutines @ end()` → Valid; queries value at the end of the evaluation range.
- ☐ `sum(http_requests_total{method="GET"}) @ 1609746000` → Invalid, because the @ modifier cannot appear inside the selector braces; it must appear after the selector or aggregation expression.

This invalid placement violates PromQL's syntax grammar for subquery and modifier ordering.

Reference:

Verified from Prometheus documentation - PromQL @ Modifier Syntax, Evaluation Modifiers, and PromQL Expression Grammar sections.

NEW QUESTION # 15

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