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Linux Foundation PCA Exam Syllabus Topics:

Topic	Details
Topic 1	• 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 2	• 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.
Topic 3	• 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 4	• 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 5	• 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.

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Linux Foundation Prometheus Certified Associate Exam Sample Questions (Q25-Q30):

NEW QUESTION # 25
What popular open-source project is commonly used to visualize Prometheus data?

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

Answer: C

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 # 26
Which of the following metrics is unsuitable for a Prometheus setup?

- A. http_response_total{handler="static/*filepath"}
- B. user_last_login_timestamp_seconds{email="john.doe@example.com"}
- C. prometheus_engine_query_log_enabled
- D. promhttp_metric_handler_requests_total{code="500"}

Answer: B

Explanation:
The metric user_last_login_timestamp_seconds{email="john.doe@example.com"} is unsuitable for Prometheus because it includes a high-cardinality label (email). Each unique email address would generate a separate time series, potentially numbering in the millions, which severely impacts Prometheus performance and memory usage.
Prometheus is optimized for low- to medium-cardinality metrics that represent system-wide behavior rather than per-user data. High-cardinality metrics cause data explosion, complicating queries and overwhelming the storage engine.
By contrast, the other metrics-prometheus_engine_query_log_enabled, promhttp_metric_handler_requests_total{code="500"}, and http_response_total{handler="static/*filepath"}-adhere to Prometheus best practices. They represent operational or service-level metrics with limited, manageable label value sets.
Reference:
Extracted and verified from Prometheus documentation - Metric and Label Naming Best Practices, Cardinality Management, and Anti-Patterns for Metric Design sections.

NEW QUESTION # 27
What does scrape_interval configure in Prometheus?

- A. It defines how frequently to evaluate rules.
- B. It defines how often to refresh metrics.
- C. It defines how often to send alerts.
- D. It defines how frequently to scrape targets.

Answer: D

Explanation:
In Prometheus, the scrape_interval parameter specifies how frequently the Prometheus server should scrape metrics from its configured targets. Each target exposes an HTTP endpoint (usually /metrics) that Prometheus collects data from at a fixed cadence. By default, the scrape_interval is set to 1 minute, but it can be overridden globally or per job configuration in the Prometheus YAML configuration file.
This setting directly affects the resolution of collected time series data-a shorter interval increases data granularity but also adds network and storage overhead, while a longer interval reduces load but might miss short-lived metric variations.
It is important to distinguish scrape_interval from evaluation_interval, which defines how often Prometheus evaluates recording and alerting rules. Thus, scrape_interval pertains only to data collection frequency, not to alerting or rule evaluation.
Reference:
Extracted and verified from Prometheus documentation on Configuration File - scrape_interval and Scraping Fundamentals sections.

NEW QUESTION # 28
Given the metric prometheus_tsdb_lowest_timestamp_seconds, how do you know in which month the lowest timestamp of your Prometheus TSDB belongs?

- A. prometheus_tsdb_lowest_timestamp_seconds % month
- B. format_date(prometheus_tsdb_lowest_timestamp_seconds,"%M")
- C. month(prometheus_tsdb_lowest_timestamp_seconds)
- D. (time() - prometheus_tsdb_lowest_timestamp_seconds) / 86400

Answer: D

Explanation:
The metric prometheus_tsdb_lowest_timestamp_seconds provides the oldest stored sample timestamp in Prometheus's local TSDB (in Unix epoch seconds). To determine the age or approximate date of this timestamp, you compare it with the current time (using time() in PromQL).
The expression:
(time() - prometheus_tsdb_lowest_timestamp_seconds) / 86400
converts the difference between the current time and the oldest timestamp from seconds into days (1 day = 86,400 seconds). This gives the number of days since the earliest sample was stored, allowing you to infer the time range and approximate month manually.
The other options are invalid because PromQL does not support direct date formatting (format_date) or month() extraction functions.
Reference:

Extracted and verified from Prometheus documentation - TSDB Internal Metrics, Time Functions in PromQL, and Using time() for Relative Calculations.

NEW QUESTION # 29
What does the rate() function in PromQL return?

- A. The per-second rate of increase of a counter metric.
- B. The number of samples in a range vector.
- C. The average of all values in a vector.
- D. The total increase of a counter over a range.

Answer: A

Explanation:
The rate() function calculates the average per-second rate of increase of a counter over the specified range. It smooths out short-term fluctuations and adjusts for counter resets.
Example:
rate(http_requests_total[5m])
returns the number of requests per second averaged over the last five minutes. This function is frequently used in dashboards and alerting expressions.

NEW QUESTION # 30
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