

How To Create **Your Community**

Your name:

Project name:

Date:



A Workbook from The Coral Project

Cover image: WOCinTech Chat, CC-BY

Download copies of this workbook at
guides.coralproject.net/workbook

Thank You.

Thank you for the work you do.

We know that community work is not easy, and is overlooked in many newsrooms. We believe that it is essential for the survival of journalism. Because journalism needs everyone.

This guide contains a series of questions that can help you build, manage, and sustain online communities that support your journalism.

Whether you're gathering people to collaborate on a particular piece of reporting or trying to create an ongoing community around a topic, these questions will help you succeed in your work.

The contents of this workbook are based on more than two years of research in online and offline communities. You can learn more about our research and read some of our studies at www.coralproject.net/research.html

This workbook is yours. Pick up a pen and start writing in it.

Start Here

Based on conversations with more than 150 newsrooms, we've distilled our knowledge into **six questions** for you to answer before you begin a new engagement project.

1. What is the mission of your newsroom?
What makes it different from everyone else's?

2. Whom do you serve with that mission? Where do they live, how old are they, what do you bring to their lives?

3. How do the people you serve help you fulfill your mission?

“It’s not the size of the community that matters. It’s about finding the right one.”

Terry Parris Jr
Deputy Editor, ProPublica

4. What are the biggest obstacles you face in completing your mission?

5. How could the people you serve help you overcome these obstacles?

6. How are you measuring if the community is supporting your mission? How could you improve that?

Identifying Success

Whether you are creating a strategy for a single project or your entire site, you need to decide first what success will look like. If any of these questions stump you, talk them through with your team.

What are your goals for this community? Include examples of actions that will demonstrate these goals are being met.

How will community members benefit from participating?

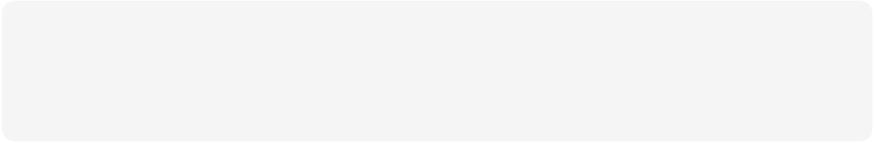
How will community members be recognized for their contributions?

Read more at guides.coralproject.net/write-a-community-mission-statement

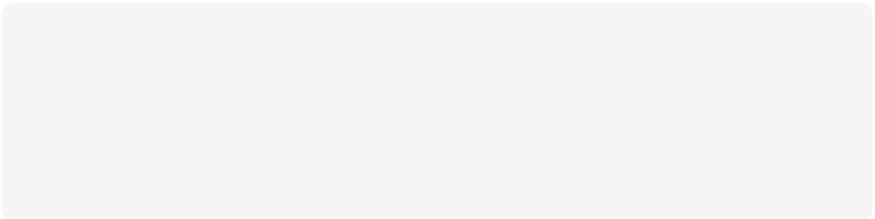
“To keep people coming back, you have to think about what your members are trying to accomplish by visiting.”

Marie Connelly
Community Manager, Vox Media

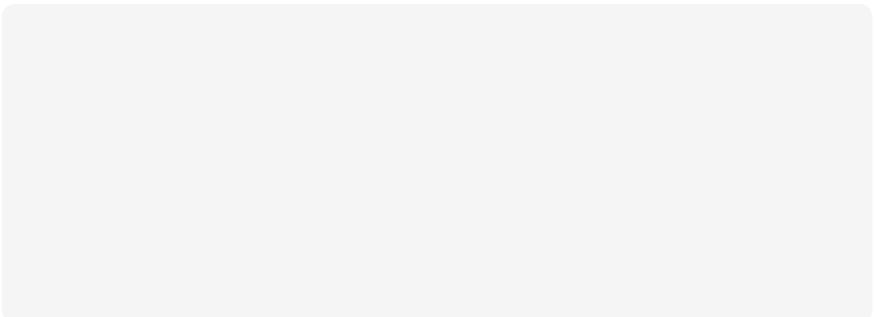
For how long will this community be maintained?



Where will the community gather? In which online/offline spaces will it primarily exist?



Who on your team will be responsible for creating and maintaining the community? What resources do they need?



Shaping Community Behavior

Jessamyn West, former director of operations at online community MetaFilter, defines three kinds of community behavior. Here you can describe how they apply to your community.

What kinds of behavior do you **encourage**?

What kinds of positive feedback can you and other community members give when that behavior occurs?

What kinds of behavior do you **discourage**?

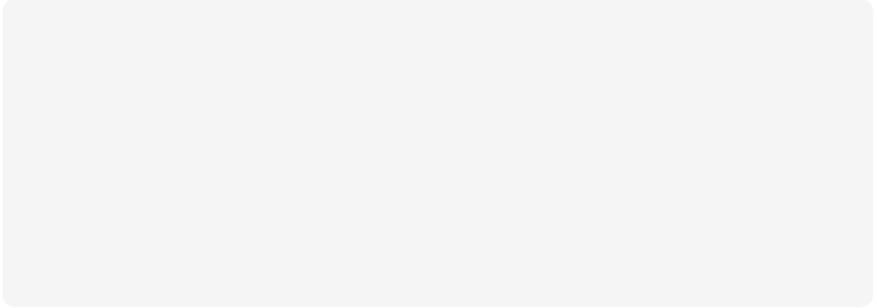
This is behavior that is allowed but that moderators will want to prevent happening too much. What kind of feedback will you give to discourage it from happening more?

“One of the tools we use most is simply emailing to say, ‘Hey, is everything okay?’”

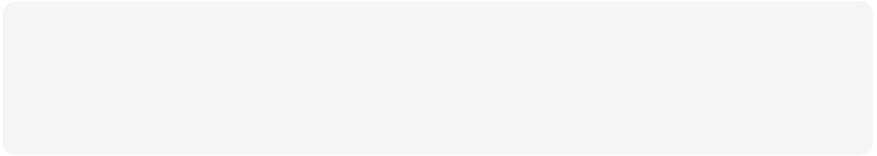
Jessamyn West

What kinds of behavior are **actionable**?

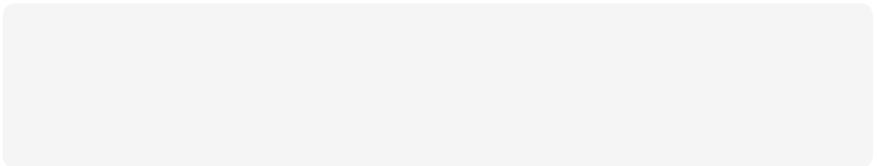
How will you act if it occurs? How do you respond to a productive community member who is having a bad day?



How will your community know the boundaries of each type of behavior? Are there clear guidelines?



How will community members contact you to appeal a decision or to request a rule change?



Read more at guides.coralproject.net/manage-a-successful-community and guides.coralproject.net/how-to-moderate-effectively

Preparing for the worst

Communities sometimes come under threat from bad actors. It helps to have a plan. We've adapted an Electronic Freedom Foundation checklist on threat modeling to help you prepare.

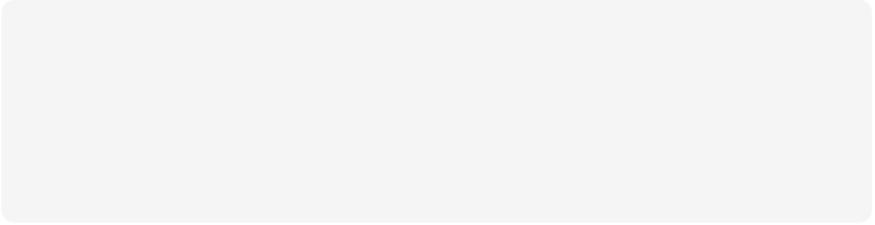
Who/what do you want to protect? Who are the most vulnerable members of your community?

Who do you want to protect them from?

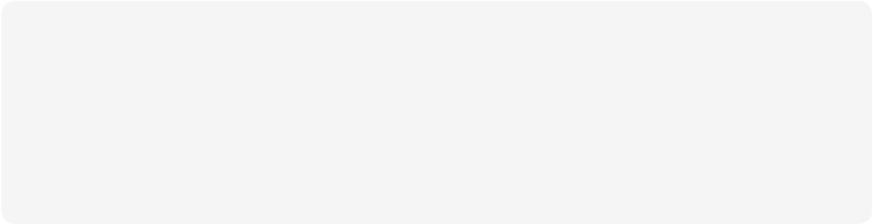
How likely is it that you will need to protect them?

Read more at guides.coralproject.net/threat-modeling-for-communities
and guides.coralproject.net/creating-a-successful-community-management-team

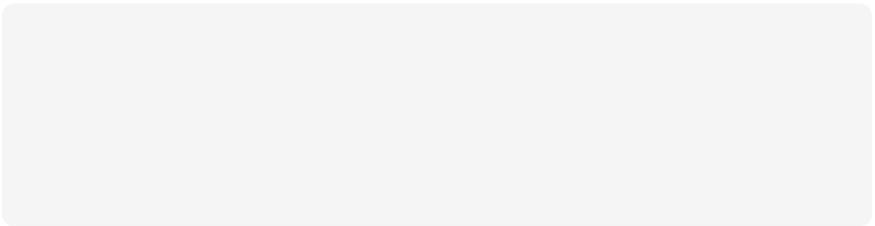
How bad will the consequences be if you fail?



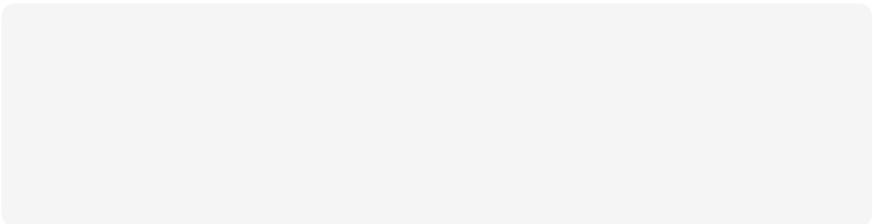
How much trouble will you be willing to go through in order to try to prevent those consequences from happening?



How quickly will you know if your community is under attack?
How about at night/over the weekend?



What processes can you put in place now so that your team knows how to act if it happens?



Welcoming newbies and sharing knowledge

These questions are designed to help new people feel welcome in your community, and to create a buzz around your work.

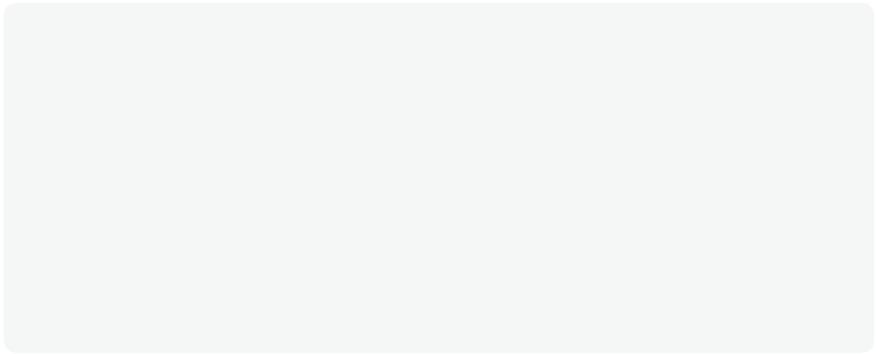
How will people find your community?

How will you welcome new people and encourage them to stick around?

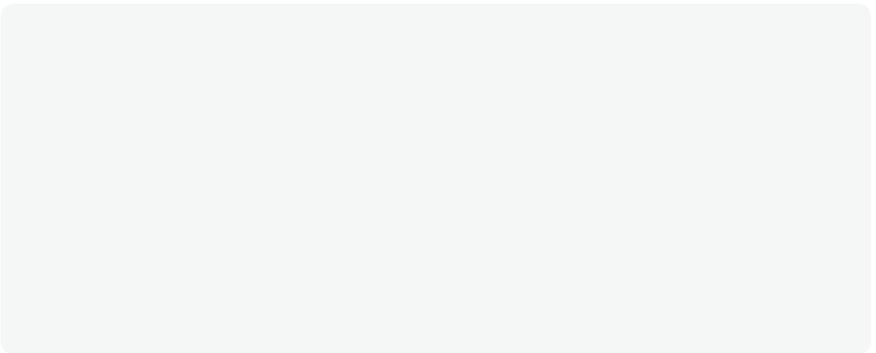
“The more you communicate what you value, the more people you get with valuable stuff to give you.”

Mónica Guzmán
Cofounder, The Evergrey

How will you document the community’s successes as they happen?



How will you share your community’s successes with people outside the community?



Read more at guides.coralproject.net/how-to-make-the-case-for-community and guides.coralproject.net/creating-community-culture

Keep going.

These questions are just the beginning. Other key areas you may consider include selecting key metrics and building ladders of engagement.

You can find pieces on these, as well as case studies, advice from other community professionals, and much, much more at guides.coralproject.net

We also create free, open-source software to help newsrooms engage more effectively. We have a form builder / submission manager / gallery tool called **Ask**, and a next-generation comments platform, already being used by The Washington Post, called **Talk**.

Learn more about our tools at coralproject.net.

Your friends,
The Coral Project

Was this useful? What did we miss?
Talk to us: coral@mozillafoundation.org

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The Coral Project from Mozilla

The Coral Project was created in 2015 as a collaboration between Mozilla, the New York Times and the Washington Post, with a grant from the Knight Foundation. Our mission is to bring journalists closer to the communities they serve.

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www.coralproject.net

We read the comments.

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