

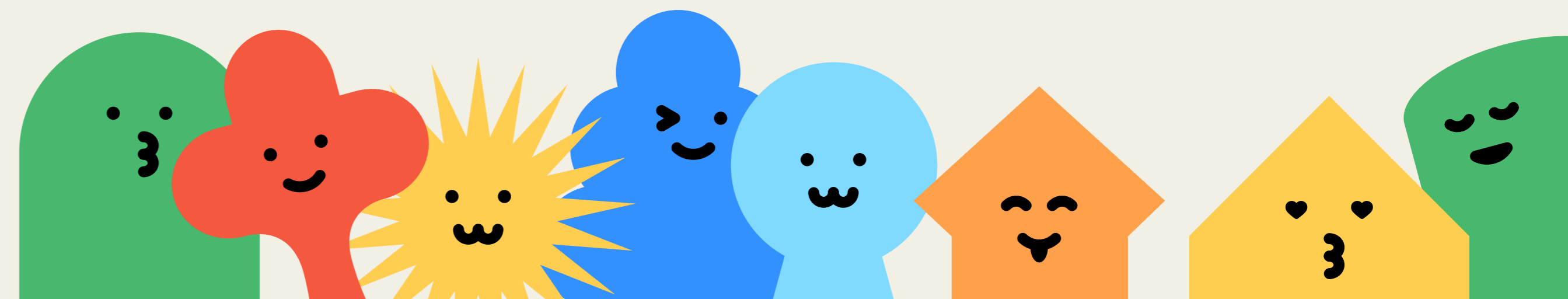
Heynabo!

NaboCanvas is an organizational blueprint designed to unify individuals, creating a sense of belonging and community right where they live. Whether it's in coliving spaces, housing associations, student housing, or any neighborhood seeking to foster deeper engagement among residents, NaboCanvas aims to serve as the cornerstone for better, more connected communities.

NaboCanvas

COMPLETE GUIDEBOOK

VERSION 1



MAKE TOGETHER



GREAT AGAIN

NaboCanvas is a free tool developed by Heynabo!

You can get in touch via heyhabo.com



Thank you!

NaboCanvas is an adaption of the Community Canvas, which was developed by Fabian Pfortmüller, Nico Luchsinger, and Sascha Mombartz. It was originally published under a Creative Commons license BY-NC-SA 4.0. If you are interested in their work, visit community-canvas.org



We've received generous financial support from Realdania.

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Who is this for?

At its core, NaboCanvas is an organizational blueprint designed to unify individuals, creating a sense of belonging and community right where they live. Whether it's in coliving spaces, housing associations, student housing, or any neighborhood seeking to foster deeper engagement among residents, NaboCanvas aims to serve as the cornerstone for better, more connected communities.

While this guide can be used by anyone, it is especially designed for facilitators who guide groups through the intricate journey of community building, offering a structured approach to cultivating a sense of belonging, shared identity, and mutual support among neighbors.

Why did we make this?

Over the past decade, our journey has taken us deep into the heart of neighboring communities, witnessing firsthand the myriad ways they flourish and the challenges they face. From this vantage point, we've learned that while every community is uniquely different, certain universal truths can significantly enhance their collective success.

Two fundamental principles have emerged as pivotal in our observations:

Manage Expectations: The hallmark of the most cohesive communities is their clarity and alignment on the purpose and manner of their coexistence. Misaligned expectations can lead to misunderstandings and discontent, undermining the very fabric of community life. NaboCanvas was created as a tool to guide you in aligning these expectations, facilitating a shared understanding and commitment to the collective vision of living together.

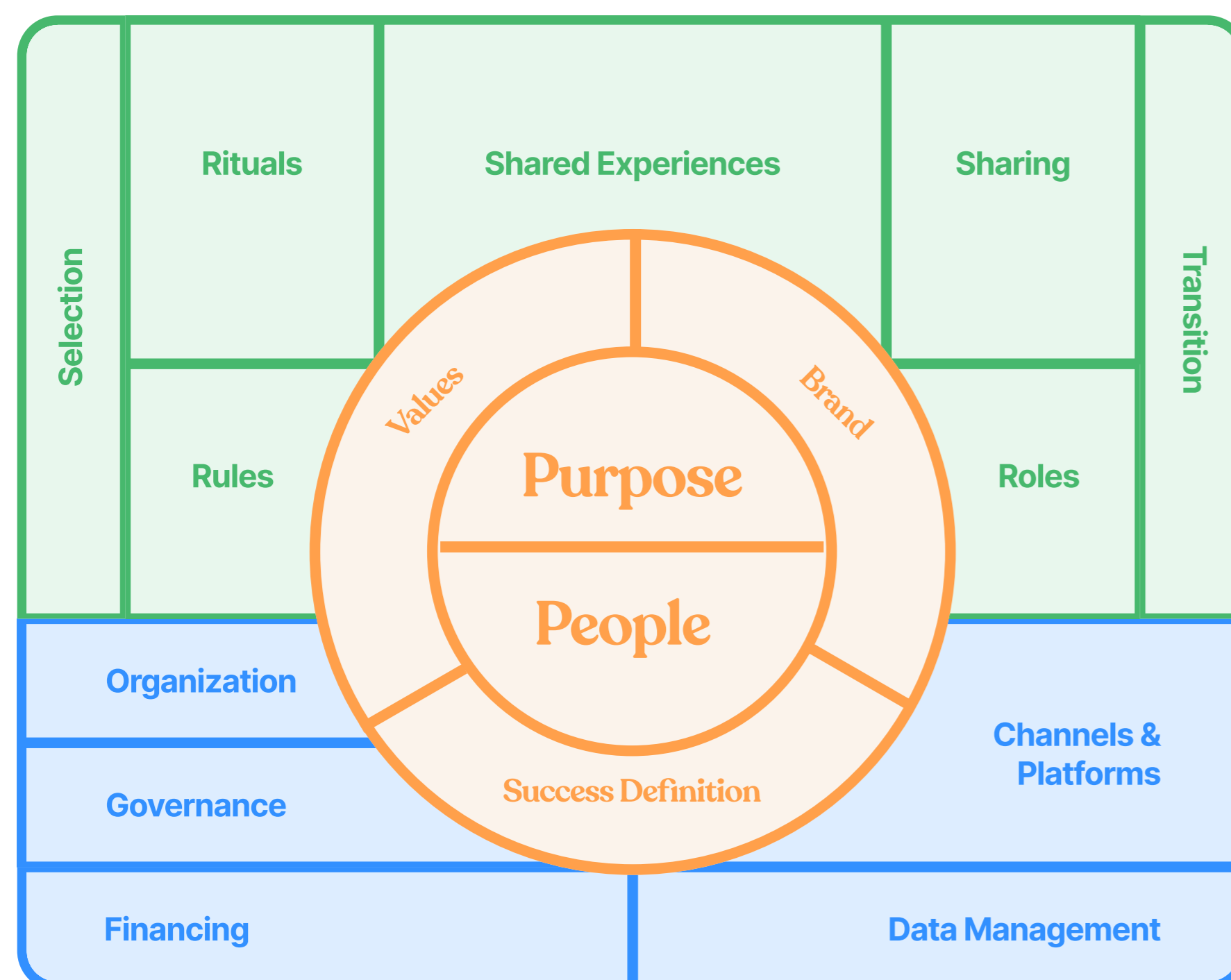
Be Transparent: Invisibility breeds confusion. When the foundational aspects of a community are not clearly visible, it becomes challenging to adhere to or evolve these structures effectively. NaboCanvas seeks to illuminate these often invisible underpinnings, providing a clear framework that not only helps manage expectations but also supports the community in adapting to changes seamlessly. By making the invisible visible, NaboCanvas enables a more transparent, adaptable, and ultimately successful community.

The Canvas

NaboCanvas consists of 3 sections:



These sections are divided into 17 Themes. While not all themes may be relevant for your community, we urge you to read through this guide before selecting the ones you will work with.



Identity

Strong communities have a clear and explicit sense of who they are, why they exist and what they stand for. These questions influence all other parts of the community and that is why Identity is the first section, but also visually at the core of the Canvas.

Experience

In the second part of the Canvas we explore the community from the perspective of the members: what does actually happen in it and how does it translate its Identity into concrete activities that create value for the members?

Structure

The third part of the Canvas focuses on the operational elements of running a community. And while many communities start enthusiastically, only few survive in the long-term. This section asks: what gives the community stability and helps it run smoothly?

How to use it

By following a structured approach, communities can navigate through the process of aligning their values, expectations, and goals. Here's a step-by-step guide to making the most out of NaboCanvas:

- **Choose a Facilitator:** Begin by appointing a facilitator or a small leadership team responsible for guiding the community through the NaboCanvas process. This role is pivotal in coordinating discussions, ensuring that objectives are met, and that outcomes are thoroughly documented. A good facilitator can keep the group focused, on track, and engaged throughout the process.
- **Select Your Themes:** Identify the themes most relevant to your community's needs and aspirations. Instead of trying to cover too much ground at once, consider starting with a few specific themes. This focused approach allows for more in-depth exploration and understanding. Themes can range from community engagement and governance to sustainability practices or conflict resolution.

- **Process:** Decide on the methodology for engaging with the selected themes. While workshops offer a dynamic and interactive platform for discussion and brainstorming, the online NaboCanvas platform provides a flexible alternative for communities to engage, discuss, and reflect at their own pace. Consider what works best for your community's dynamics and availability. Workshops can facilitate immediate feedback and collective brainstorming, whereas the online platform can accommodate members' varying schedules, allowing for broader participation over time.
- **Groups:** For more effective discussion and analysis, consider dividing community members into smaller groups based on their interests or expertise in the selected themes. This division enables focused exploration and allows members to delve deeper into their areas of passion or knowledge. Each group can then work on their theme, developing ideas, solutions, and proposals that they will later present to the wider community. This not only harnesses the diverse skills and perspectives within your community but also fosters a sense of ownership and engagement among members.

- **Documentation and Feedback:** It's crucial that the facilitator(s) ensure all discussions, decisions, and proposed actions are well-documented. This documentation serves as a tangible record of the community's journey and agreements, facilitating clarity and accountability. After group presentations, encourage feedback from the broader community to refine ideas and ensure alignment with the community's overall vision and values.

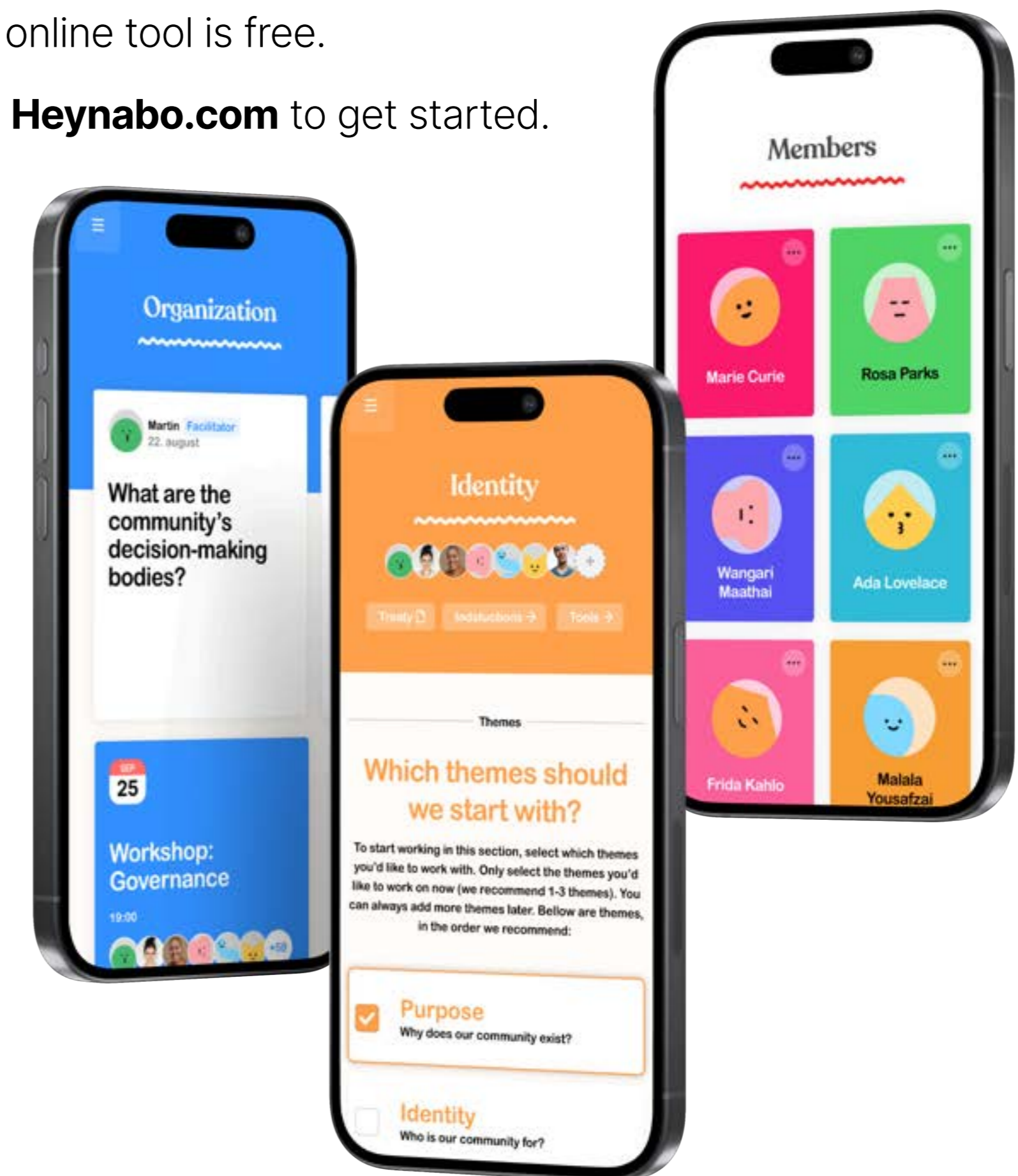
- **Implementation and Review:** With a clear action plan based on the workshop outcomes or online discussions, the community can move forward with implementing the agreed-upon initiatives. Regular review sessions should be scheduled to assess progress, gather feedback, and make necessary adjustments. This iterative process ensures that the community continuously evolves and adapts to meet its members' changing needs and circumstances.

NaboCanvas Online

We've created a virtual version to enhance your community-building experience, recognizing that online discussions often foster better engagement and simplify documentation processes. As we continue to evolve the platform, we'll add new tools, exercises, and resources, all inspired by feedback from users like you, to further enrich your journey.

The online tool is free.

Visit [Heynabo.com](https://hey.nabo.com) to get started.





Identity

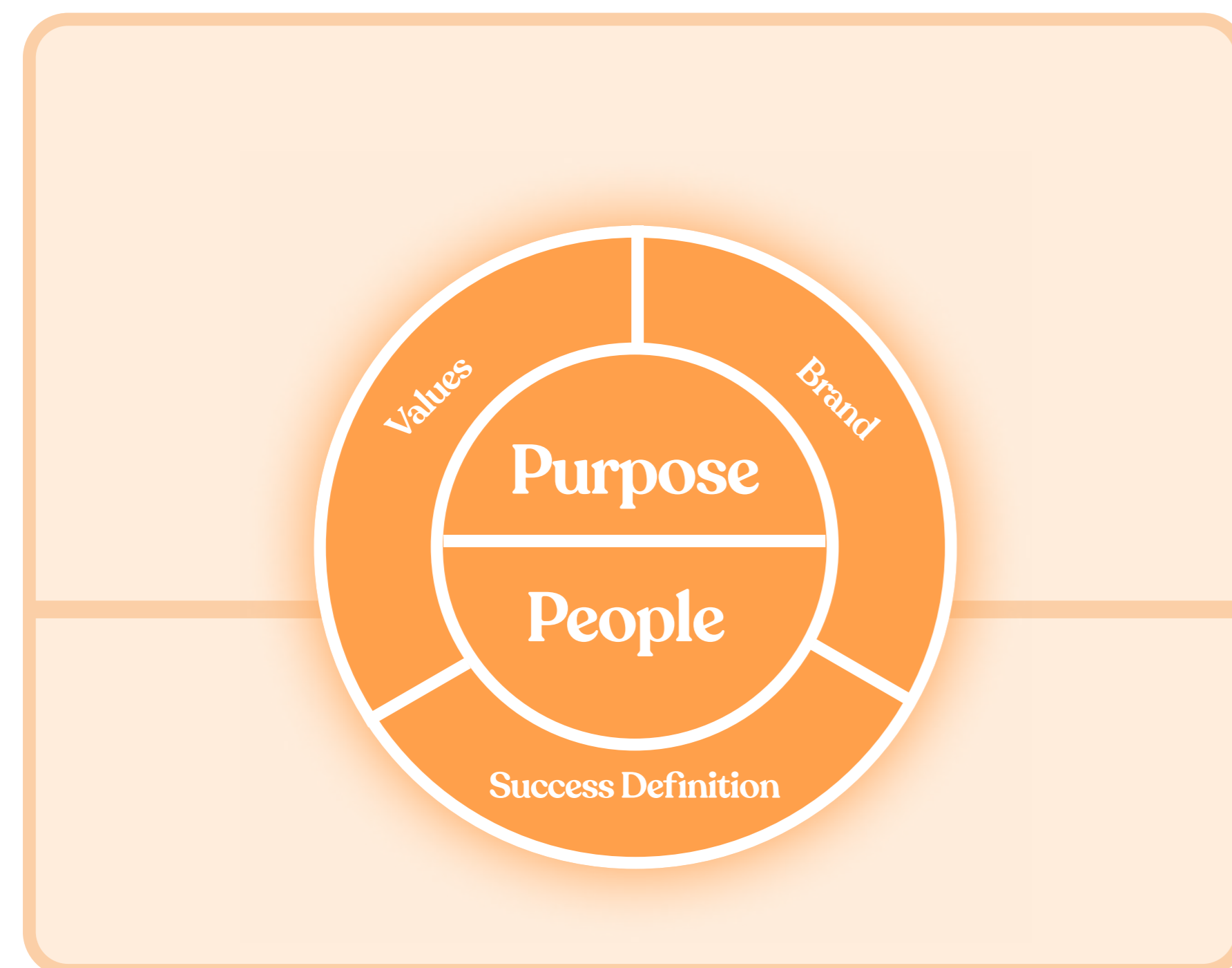
At the center of our community is Identity, which acts as the foundation for everything we do. It's about answering fundamental questions: "Who are we?" and "What do we stand for?"

This core understanding influences every aspect of our community, from our daily interactions to our overarching goals. It ensures that our actions and decisions align with our collective beliefs and values, guiding us to create a meaningful and cohesive living experience.

Identity

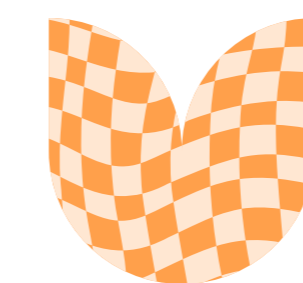


This section consists of up to five themes. Not all themes may be relevant for your community, so feel free to ignore the ones that you don't feel you need.



Purpose

Why does our community exist?



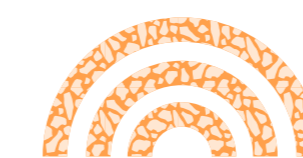
People

Who is our community for?



Values

What is important to us as a community?



Success Definition

How does our community define success?



Brand

How does our community express itself?



Purpose

Purpose is fundamental to any community, acting as the glue that aligns its members, activities, processes, and values.

Most communities we meet find it redundant to express their purpose, because it seems obvious. We urge you to give it a try anyway. It can be your compass in future when you make important decisions or prioritize.

Two kinds of purpose

Communities either have an internal purpose, an external purpose or both. An internal purpose is only concerned with the community itself and its members. Most likely it is about creating a good place to live, helping each other or exchanging knowledge. An external purpose, however, looks outward, seeking to impact the wider world - for example by living environmentally, advancing a certain cause, a lifestyle, a particular interest, a business or a movement. This dual framework allows communities to cultivate meaningful connections within while also striving to make a broader impact beyond their immediate circle.

Internal purpose:

Communities that only have internal purposes very often do not explicitly define and state them; they derive it implicitly from forming the community. It is helpful to be more precise in stating what the objectives are, as it helps align members' expectations. Sure, you want to live together. But why?

External purpose with internal purpose:

Almost all communities with an external purpose also automatically have an internal purpose, but the internal one often stays unnamed. It is important for a community with an external purpose to reflect how it creates value for the members.

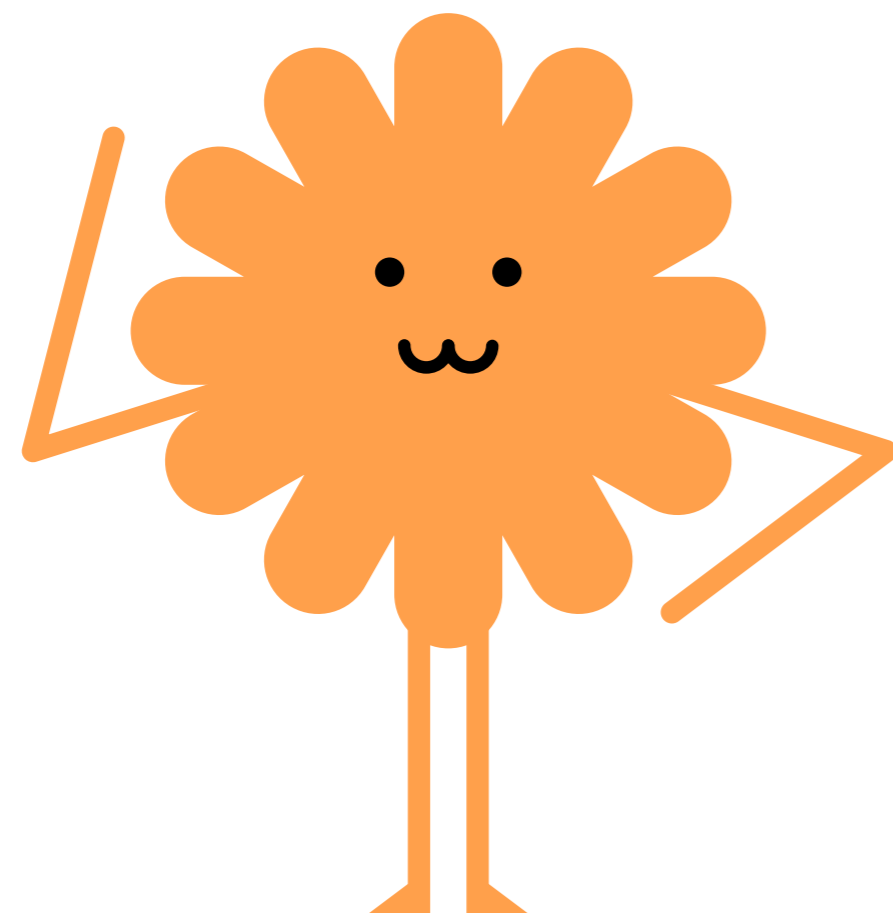
While an external purpose might be important and essential to your community's existence, most of your neighbours will be joining you because of the internal purpose, and the value it creates for them.

For example, you may be on a mission to save the planet by living in balance with nature. But where you create most value for your members isn't necessarily through the pursuit

of this external mission. The biggest value may well come from the relationships you get to build with peers within your community.

Influencing purpose

It's worthwhile to reflect on who can influence the purpose of the community. Sometimes communities are not independent, but part of a larger organization's mission. In that case, while your community might have its own purpose, you are ultimately part of a larger mission. For example, when corporations launch communities, the corporation's interest might be different from the community's own objectives. It is important at the outset and throughout the experience to ask if the two interests are aligned and to identify potential conflicts.



Questions About Purpose

The more specific you can make your questions, the better answers you'll get. We've provided some examples below, but feel free to come up with your own questions.

What does the community hope to achieve?

How will the world be different by having this community?

How will the world be worse off if this community doesn't exist/ceases to exist?

How will it affect the lives of members if they are part of this?



Communities are always “for” someone. When you identify who you are, you’ll make it easier for your community to thrive around shared identities and common interests. These connections could be based on a variety of factors:

- **Geographical:** Living or working in the same area. This one is probably a given.
- **Ideological:** Sharing similar worldviews.
- **Experiential:** Having undergone similar experiences or shared moments. Perhaps you are students at the same university.
- **Social:** Belonging to similar social groups, such as seniors, ethnic minorities, or the same professional field.
- **Affinity:** Sharing a passion or interest, like being fans of ceramics, music, or permaculture.
- **Personal:** Having personal characteristics in common, such as dealing with the same health issues or scoring similarly on the Briggs-Meyer scale.

In small coliving settings, it's easier to intuit these shared identities. However, as our community grows, it becomes crucial to explicitly define what brings us together. Not every shared aspect forms a strong community bond. A meaningful commonality should be a part of how each of us sees ourselves.

Champion Residents:

In every community, some residents are more engaged than others. These individuals are invaluable, acting as the backbone of community engagement, spearheading new initiatives, and representing our community to the outside world. Their enthusiasm is contagious, and their withdrawal could impact our community's vibrancy and health. Recognizing and nurturing these individuals through special roles, direct communication, and involvement in community building is key to a thriving coliving environment.

Diversity and Inclusion: Successful coliving communities are deliberate in embracing diversity. A diverse community not only enriches our living experience but also strengthens our bonds, provided we share common values and identities. Achieving diversity requires intentional effort, from inclusive selection processes to creating an environment where everyone feels welcome. Events, rituals, and community practices should celebrate and leverage our diverse backgrounds. Ultimately, diversity should be woven into every aspect of our community life, making it richer and more vibrant for everyone.

By focusing on these principles, we can cultivate a coliving community that is both strong and inclusive, where every member feels valued and connected.

Questions About People

What are the traits that our members share?

How does our community describe our members?

What is the profile of our community's most active members?

How does our community take special care of them?

How is diversity defined and what is its role?

How is diversity enacted in all parts of our community?

Values

In coliving communities, we have the unique chance to forge deeper connections and foster a culture of mutual respect and support, surpassing what we might find outside this communal setting. **For this to happen, we must first agree on what we believe in.**

If you think that values are silly buzz words without much meaning, we understand. Often they are. But we've also seen values be incredibly powerful. They can represent an aspirational way of life for our community and provide a north star for all our actions and interactions. Ultimately, knowing that we believe in similar values will help us create deeper and longer lasting bonds.

Defining Our Values: Identifying and articulating our values is crucial, yet challenging. It requires a delicate balance between leadership direction and member participation. Though it might be tempting to dictate values from the top, the most resilient communities engage their members in the process. This collaborative approach might be complex and at times contentious, but it is essential for developing a shared identity that everyone is invested in.

Living Our Values: Beyond mere words, our values should be actively integrated into every aspect of our community life. This means making them visible and actionable. For instance, we could introduce rituals or commitments that new members make to uphold these values, similar to how businesses require acceptance of terms and conditions. This formal acknowledgment helps ensure that everyone is aligned from the start.

Making Values Tangible: To bring our values to life, we can express them in various forms, such as manifestos or principles. Unlike abstract values, principles offer a concrete commitment to a lifestyle that every member agrees to embody. Inspirational models include the 10 Principles of Burning Man, 12 Principles of Alcoholics Anonymous, or the 7 Unitarian Universalist Principles. Other organizations embed their values in guidelines for gatherings, like for example the Circle of Trust Touchstones by the Center for Courage and Renewal.

Reconsidering: Our favorite part about having values documented is that it opens up the possibility for renegotiation. When new members join our community, the values are not just implicit, and this can be an open invitation to ask “Why?”

Questions About Values

How do we want our members to treat each other?

How do our values help fulfill the community’s ultimate purpose?

What is the “vibe” of our community?

What is the aspirational way of life our community promotes?

How do we capture and communicate our values, both internally and externally?



Success

In our coliving community, our collective actions and goals, though often intangible, are what define us. Success for us hinges on having a clear, common objective we consistently strive toward. It's essential for us to articulate the ideal member experience, the value we aim to provide, and to translate this into tangible success metrics.

Defining Success: Success isn't always straightforward to define, especially for communities focused on internal growth and support. For those with an outward mission, success might be measured in terms of impact. However, for our community, success often revolves around more nuanced, qualitative factors.

Sustaining Engagement: A key indicator of our success is the level of ongoing engagement. Many communities experience a drop in activity over time. Our goal is to maintain high engagement levels by integrating strategies that keep members actively involved and committed for the long haul.

Measuring Trust: Trust is a cornerstone of our community, yet it's challenging to quantify. We might consider proxies for trust, such as the frequency of personal invitations to significant events or the willingness to host fellow members during travels. These indicators, though imperfect, can offer insights into the deep connections within our community.

Sustaining Engagement: A key indicator of our success is the level of ongoing engagement. Many communities experience a drop in activity over time. Our goal is to maintain high engagement levels by integrating strategies that keep members actively involved and committed for the long haul.

Defining Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Despite the challenges in measuring success, setting early KPIs is crucial. These indicators, which will evolve over time, help initiate a positive feedback loop: when members see their contributions being measured and valued, their commitment to the community deepens.

Here's an example of success criteria for a coliving community (internal purpose):

Activity

- Attendance at events
- Online interactions
- Resources shared

Growth

- Retention: Do people stay, or do they move out?
- Outreach: Do we interact with the community around us?

Experience

- Trust felt
- Responsiveness: Helping out and answering questions
- Generosity: How much do we support each other?
- Celebrations: Birthdays and other moments

These criteria should also include KPI's directly linked to our purpose. So if our goal is biodiversity, then this should be measured and visualized to our neighbours.

Questions About Success

What does the ideal community look like?

What kind of membership in the community is considered a success?

What kind of value does the community create for its members?

How do we measure success?

Brand

Many communities overlook this area, because it is considered “commercial”. However, when it is done right your brand can have a tremendous impact on how your community expresses your purpose, values, and overall identity. The community itself is a very abstract thing, but the brand and experience are visible manifestations. A strong brand not only unifies us but also becomes a source of pride, shared and celebrated among members.

Language Matters: The words we choose are pivotal. While many organizations default to a corporate tone, our community thrives on authentic, human-centric communication. This involves selecting words and tones that reflect our values and foster a sense of belonging.

Defining language

- What words are important and act as anchor? Does our community consistently use them in our communication?
- What tone of language reflects our values? How can the tone of conversation bind our members further together?
- How does our communication reflect a real human member?
- Who is the communication coming from? Is it a real person or a dehumanized “info@community.org” address? Is the person’s name in the communication? The person’s signature?
- With what words does our community describe itself? What words do we use to describe our members? Do these match our values?

Design identity: Some communities think of design as an unnecessary luxury, but we find strong communities to have a clear sense of their esthetic and their own design identity. While today, many interactions with a community's brand are online, traditionally, communities would reflect their brand through artifacts, physical objects, that further strengthen their sense of purpose, their values and their overall brand. Examples include uniforms, badges, rings, clothing items, hats, necklaces, stickers, notebooks and other merchandise.

Architecture: This component may well deserve its own section. Especially for co-building communities, it is important to define the guidelines for your aesthetics and architecture. Do we have a harmonious, uniform expression, or do we provide a framework that buildings and interiors should adhere to?

Bear in mind, that when discussing architecture there should be a clear divide between shared common spaces, and private homes.

Questions About Brand

How do we use language, visuals and objects to strengthen our identity?

What is our community's esthetic?

How does our community's brand reflect our values?

How does our community communicate our identity to the world?

Are there guidelines for our architecture, and if so, what are they?



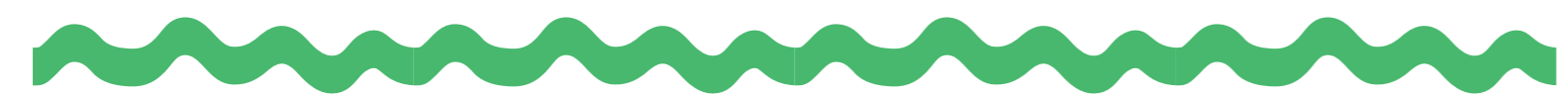
Experience

In our coliving community, understanding the member perspective is crucial to recognizing the value the community provides. This aspect of our communal life focuses on the experiences and benefits that membership offers:

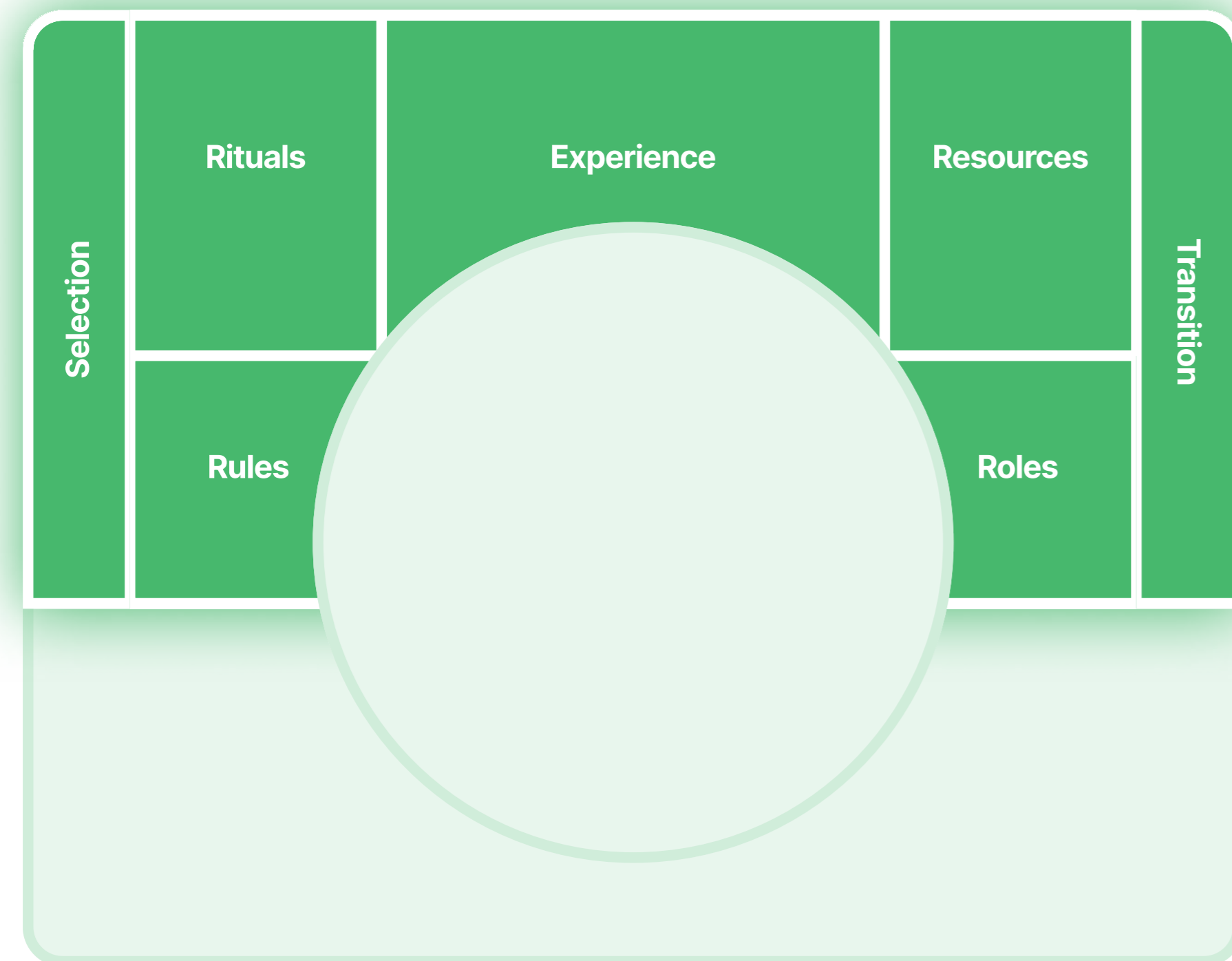
Member Experiences: It's essential to delve into what occurs within our community from the viewpoint of our members. This involves exploring the range of activities, interactions, and opportunities available. What unique experiences do our members have access to? How do these experiences align with and enhance our shared values and objectives?

Creating Value: At the heart of our community is the value it brings to each individual member. This value can manifest in various forms, from tangible benefits like shared resources and amenities to intangible ones like a sense of belonging, personal growth, and enhanced well-being. How does participating in the community enrich the lives of its members? What specific aspects of community life are most valued by the members?

Experience

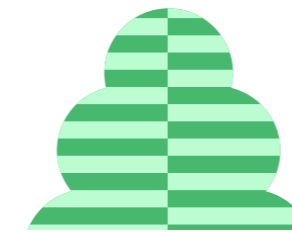


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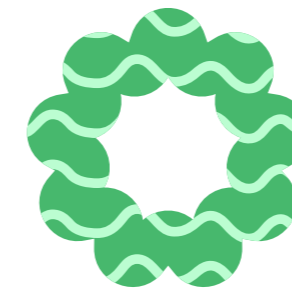
Member Selection

How do people join our community?



Experience

What experiences do we share?



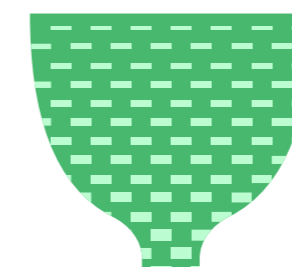
Rituals & Traditions

Which rituals enhance our experience?



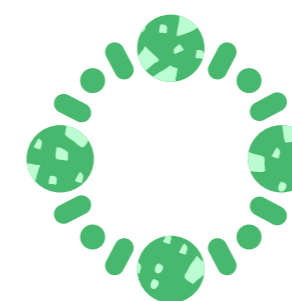
Sharing

What resources do we share in our community?



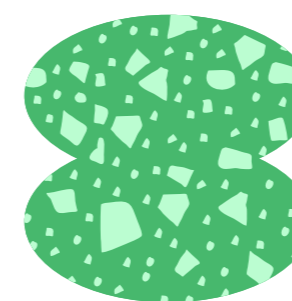
Rules

What are the community's member rules?



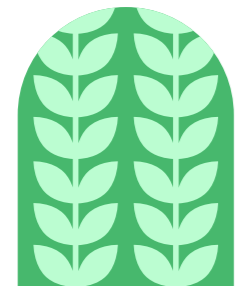
Roles

What needs to be done? Who does it?



Transition

How do members leave the community?



Member Selection

There are many different models for how much authority communities have when selecting new members. Some places have no influence on who can move in, while others have a framework for selecting new neighbours. How selection is organised has a huge impact on the dynamics of day-to-day life in the community, and is therefore a subject that should be considered carefully.

Open vs. Closed Communities:

To simplify, we've divided communities into two categories:

Open and Closed. In an open community, the current members have very little influence on who joins. If this is the case, the community should consider their onboarding process, but also needs to accept the diversity of the members and their needs. Closed communities, with their selection criteria, can foster a stronger sense of identity and commitment, but can lack diversity and may become more inflexible in their structures, rules, and hierarchy.

It can be beneficial - in both open and closed communities - to have members join explicitly and possibly in connection with a shared rite of passage.

Selection Process:

Crafting a selection process that reflects your community's values and goals is crucial. Options include:

- Invitation/Nomination: Allow current members to invite or nominate new members, fostering a decentralized growth approach.
- Application: Prospective members apply and are evaluated by a committee, ensuring alignment with community values.
- Referral: Membership through referral by current members can strengthen trust and cohesion.

Onboarding: Successful communities are intentional about how they not just select, but then carefully onboard new members. A strong onboarding process includes the following elements:

- Welcome new members warmly, making them feel safe.
- Introduce core beliefs, purpose, rules, and guidelines.
- Outline expected commitments, helping members understand their role.
- Make areas of responsibility visible, so new members know how they can take part in the community.

Some communities have an onboarding ritual, like planting a tree in the garden, or hanging a framed photo of the new members in one of the communal areas.

You might also consider what your expectations are to member retention. In student housing, members leave often, while other places hope members leave “feet first”. It can be helpful to express your expectations, so that you know what to measure, and can take initiatives that support this vision.

Growth Planning: Most places have a limited number of homes, and therefore do not need to consider a strategic approach to growth. However, you might consider:

- **Inbound Identification:** Creating avenues for potential members to discover and express interest.
- **Outbound Identification:** Actively seeking potential members through research or leveraging current members' networks for referrals.

Questions About Selection

Is this an open or a closed community?

What is the onboarding process for new members?

How are the people identified who should be part of the community?

Which commitments do we require from new members in order to join us?

Experiences

From the perspective of a member, the shared experiences are what makes up the core of the community. As you build your coliving community, fostering shared experiences among members is crucial for cultivating a strong communal bond. It takes practice to get there, so just because something doesn't work the first time around, it doesn't mean it is a bad idea. Discuss, adjust, and try again.

Staple Experiences:

A good way to look at experiences, is by basing them on the life you already live. There are things that you do every day or week, and these can easily become shared experiences. This could be communal dining, exercise, kid's playtime or movie nights. Try plotting the events into a calendar that repeats weekly. Then discuss how you and your neighbours can share not just the experience, but also the responsibility.

Highlights: Some experiences are less regular, but can still be part of the overall shared experience of living together. These could be an annual retreat, holiday party, or garden maintenance.

Variety: Encourage a range of activities to cater to different interests and schedules. The more homogenous a community is, the easier it is to plan experiences. But if you are very different, it can make sense to plan for more flexibility. For instance, a single student might eat dinner at 8pm, but for the young family this is way past bed time. They probably won't eat together three times a week.

Consistency and Rhythm: Establishing a reliable schedule for shared experiences is more critical than the activities themselves. A consistent rhythm provides a sense of security and continuity, encouraging members to view the community and its relationships as a long-term investment.

Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up Organization: Shared experiences can be organized by community leaders (top-down) or initiated by members themselves (bottom-up). While top-down organization ensures structure and scale, bottom-up initiatives foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. Striking a balance between the two approaches signals that running the community is a collective effort, encouraging active participation and engagement from all members.

Simplicity and Repeatability: While the temptation may be to design complex and elaborate events, simplicity often yields better long-term engagement. Simple, repeatable events are easier to manage and more likely to become a cherished part of the community routine, fostering consistent participation.

Inclusivity and Diversity: Design experiences with the community's diversity in mind, ensuring they are welcoming and accessible to all members, including those who are introverted or part of minority groups. This consideration helps prevent alienation and promotes a more inclusive community atmosphere.

Questions About Experience

Which experiences do we want on a regular basis?

**How is it organized? Who is responsible?
How can we involve as many people as possible?**

Does the experience speak to a diverse or specific group? Can we make it more inclusive?

Is participation mandatory or voluntary?

Why are certain experiences more important than others?



Rituals & Traditions

For those shaping coliving communities, rituals and traditions play a crucial role in deepening the sense of belonging and community among members.

In contrast to shared experiences, rituals have primarily a symbolic value, and can be very personal. Often, their goal is to add deeper meaning and significance to “administrative” actions in a community, such as adding new members for example.



If you are a new community, it might be a good idea to approach this theme from a theoretical angle (what type of rituals do we want?). This allows you to add more as they come up over time. If you already have a history together, this can be a good place to document them so they are visible, and so you can define areas of responsibility in order to ensure that the traditions are carried into the future.

Choosing Rituals and Traditions:

Remember, the choice isn't between having traditions and not having them. Traditions will come up naturally, so a community ideally sets them consciously. Thoughtful communities design these rituals with the community's purpose and values in mind. Initiate them, and consistently continue practicing them until they become second nature to your community members.

Categories of Rituals and Traditions: Broadly, these can be divided into: **Strengthening connection**, **Celebrating our values**, and **Milestones in membership**.

Strengthening connection: Small actions can significantly impact, showing care and making everyone feel welcome. For example, some communities have a tradition to announce the birthdays of its members. This gives members a reason to reach out and celebrate each other. Some communities always make sure that everyone says hello to each other at an event, no matter who is there. This makes any newcomers automatically feel welcome and shows a dedication to taking care of everyone.

Celebrating values: To make abstract values tangible, rituals can serve as a powerful tool. For instance, a tradition of turning off phones at events to emphasize “presence”, avoiding business talk to foster “genuine relationships”, or sending postcards when on holiday can vividly manifest community values in everyday actions. Rituals can also be based on specific goals, such as reducing the CO2 output of the community, or visualising how far the walking-group has travelled.

Milestones: Most rituals and ceremonies are rites of passage, indicating a change in your life. Ceremonies marking the journey through the community—from welcoming new members to celebrating milestones like birthdays or graduations—serve as rites of passage, signifying growth and transitions within the community fabric.

Mark the end of the community experience with significant rituals to honor the time spent and contributions made by departing members. We don't live forever, and for certain communities it makes sense to discuss how to deal with the passing of a member.

Questions: Rituals & Traditions

Which rituals deepen the bonds among members?

Which rituals embody our community's values?

Which rituals mark specific milestones in our membership experience?

Which rituals happen online?

Which rituals happen in person?

Sharing

In the fabric of coliving communities, the principle of sharing stands as a cornerstone, weaving together individuals from diverse backgrounds. The essence of sharing in co-living transcends the mere distribution of physical resources; it fosters a culture of mutual support, collective responsibility, and interconnectedness that enriches the lives of its members.

The benefits of sharing are manifold. Economically, it allows individuals to access a higher quality of life at a reduced cost, as expenses for common resources are distributed among members. Environmentally, it promotes sustainability through reduced consumption and waste, as resources are used more efficiently. Socially, it enhances community bonds, as shared spaces and resources become catalysts for interaction, collaboration, and mutual support.

General Considerations

The implementation of sharing in coliving requires thoughtful planning and consideration to ensure that the benefits are maximized for all members. Key considerations include:

- **Equity and Fairness:** Establishing guidelines that ensure equitable access to shared resources and fair distribution of responsibilities.
- **Privacy and Personal Space:** Balancing the communal aspects of coliving with the need for individual privacy and personal space.
- **Community Engagement:** Encouraging active participation and engagement in the management and utilization of shared resources.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Designing systems and policies that are flexible and adaptable to the changing needs and dynamics of the community.

Here are some shared resources that you can consider:

- **Common areas:** Kitchens or shared social spaces
- **Workspaces:** Desks or meeting rooms
- **Guest rooms**
- **Transportation:** Cars, bikes, etc.
- **Tools** or workshops
- **Hobby items:** Kayaks, game consoles, or books
- **Fitness items:** A gym, yoga room, or sauna
- **Utilities:** Internet, security, water/heating, or washing
- **Services** and subscriptions: Newspapers, streaming services, or health/wellness instructors)

Meta-physical sharing

Everyone is good at different things, and the most powerful things we share are often ideas, skills or advice. Think about how you can it visible that members have skills they are willing to contribute to the community.

Questions About Sharing

List the items, services, or skills that you will share, and try to consider the following questions:

Who owns the resource: An individual member, the community, or an external provider?

How is the resource managed and maintained?

Who is responsible for the resource? An individual? A group? An external partner?

What does it cost? Are there limitations to it's use?

How do we handle damages, repairs, and service?

How are decisions regarding the resource made?

Rules

Communities are mini-societies and a clear set of rules makes the interactions easier and the overall organization more stable. While governance (covered in [section 3: Structure](#)) focuses on decision making for the overall organization, this section looks at the rules that guide member's experience.

Setting expectations: If every member knows what is expected, they can contribute accordingly (or choose not to). The member will also take the community more seriously if they know that everyone has signed up to the same expectations, thereby making it more likely that they will be met. The community's success definition ([→ Identity > Success Definition](#)) offers a great starting point for this.

Conflicts: Enforcing rules isn't always easy. Many communities tend to be conflict shy, as they hope to optimize overall trust and social cohesion. Even more so it's important to define in advance if the rules get enforced and if yes, by what entity ([→ Structure > Governance](#)).

It is important to remember that conflicts *will* happen. The way that we handle a conflict becomes a 'norm'. This can make future handling of conflicts easier, but also more difficult if the norm is negative.

Commitment

- Define what it means to be an "active" member
 - What duties does a member have?
- Is there a minimal engagement for a member?

Etiquette

- How do members agree to interact and treat each other?
- Does the etiquette relate to the community's values?

Accountability

- What happens if someone breaks the rules?
 - Who keeps the group accountable?
- What makes people take the rules seriously?

Embedded rules: Ideally, the expected member behavior isn't just a written rule, but built into rituals and experiences. See if you can find simple and repeatable applications of your rules. This makes living up to the community's values easier, and allows members to transition from the outside world to the inside community with its own set of values.

Agreeing to rules: We have seen successful communities develop a tradition of members not just being informed of the rules, but having to explicitly agree to them (similar to a user agreeing to the terms and conditions of a service). Some communities choose to do this once, at the beginning of the membership experience. Some do this regularly, for example once a year, asking the member to confirm they are still committed to them. This acknowledgement of rules can be packaged in traditions and rituals, such as the signing of a "social contract" or by asking members to swear on them.

Visibility: Make sure your rules are accessible to all members, and that renegotiating them is possible. There's always room for improvement, but only if you can see what you are actually improving.

Questions About Rules

What does the community expect from each member?

What can the member expect from the community?

What is considered "out of bounds" misbehavior?

What are the rules for online interactions?

What are the guidelines for in-person gatherings?

How does the community deal with inactive members?

What happens if someone doesn't follow the rules?

Which entity has the authority to create, change and enforce rules?



Roles

This Theme deals with the roles any member can take in the day-to-day experience of our community. Formal roles are in [→ Structure > Organization](#). We find that communities where members can contribute are the most successful. For this to happen it helps to be transparent about how to get involved, and to what degree involvement is permitted.

A good way to organize roles is through groups or committees. We find that having visible groups increases engagement. Examples:

Event Organizer

Plans and coordinates social events, gatherings, and activities for the community. This role is crucial for building a sense of community and encouraging social interaction among residents.

Maintenance Volunteer

Assists in minor maintenance tasks, DIY projects, or gardening efforts within the community. This role helps keep the living environment pleasant and functional without always relying on external services.

Cleaning Coordinator

Organizes cleaning schedules or initiatives to ensure shared spaces remain tidy and hygienic. This role might involve coordinating cleaning rotas or leading cleaning drives.

Sustainability Advocate

Leads efforts to implement sustainable practices within the community, such as organizing recycling programs, composting, or energy-saving initiatives. This role focuses on reducing the community's environmental footprint.

Community Welcomer

Welcomes new residents and helps them integrate into the community. This role may involve providing new tenants with essential information, giving tours, or organizing welcome events.

Safety and Security Volunteer

Works to ensure the community is safe and secure. This might involve coordinating with security services, organizing neighborhood watch programs, or educating residents on safety practices.

Dispute Resolution Facilitator

Helps mediate conflicts among residents, offering a neutral perspective to facilitate understanding and resolution. This role requires strong communication and mediation skills.

Communication Specialist

Manages internal communication channels, such as newsletters, community boards, or social media groups, ensuring residents are informed about community news, events, and important updates.

Fitness or Hobby Group Leader

Leads fitness classes, hobby clubs, or interest groups within the community. This role is key to promoting wellness and personal development among residents.

Technology Helper

Assists residents and management with technology-related issues, such as setting up Wi-Fi networks, troubleshooting communal devices, or advising on tech upgrades for the community.

Resource Coordinator

Manages a specific resource (→ **Experience > Sharing**)

Questions About Rules

Which roles do we have in our community?

What are the expectations for each role?

Transition

Most communities think about how the experience starts, but many do not have a plan how the experience ends. We have seen many communities use the departure to their advantage: This is where you can get feed-back and reevaluate aspects of the community.

You can also use the occasion to “hand over” values to the new member taking the departing member’s place.

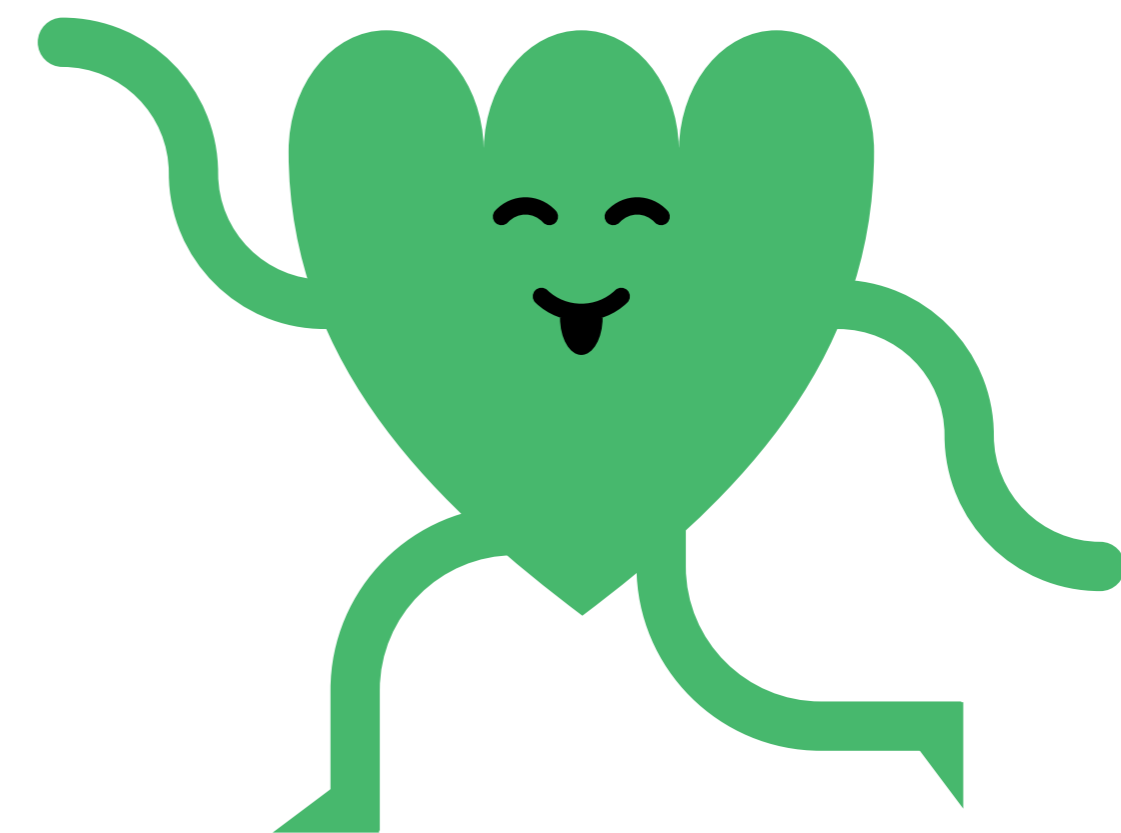
Finally, consider whether you have alumni. People leaving successful communities often have a strong sense of shared identity that can last for many years beyond their actual membership. This can be further enhanced and empowered by channeling members into a alumni community. The alumni community can operate on a spectrum from being completely independent from the original community to being a core pillar of it.

Questions About Transition

Is there ever an end to the experience or does membership continue on indefinitely?

If we have alumni, is there a structure for it?

How do we say good-bye to members who leave?





Structure

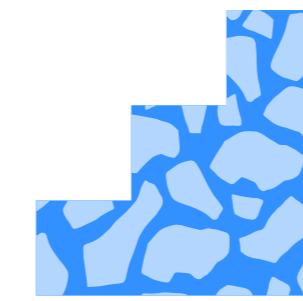
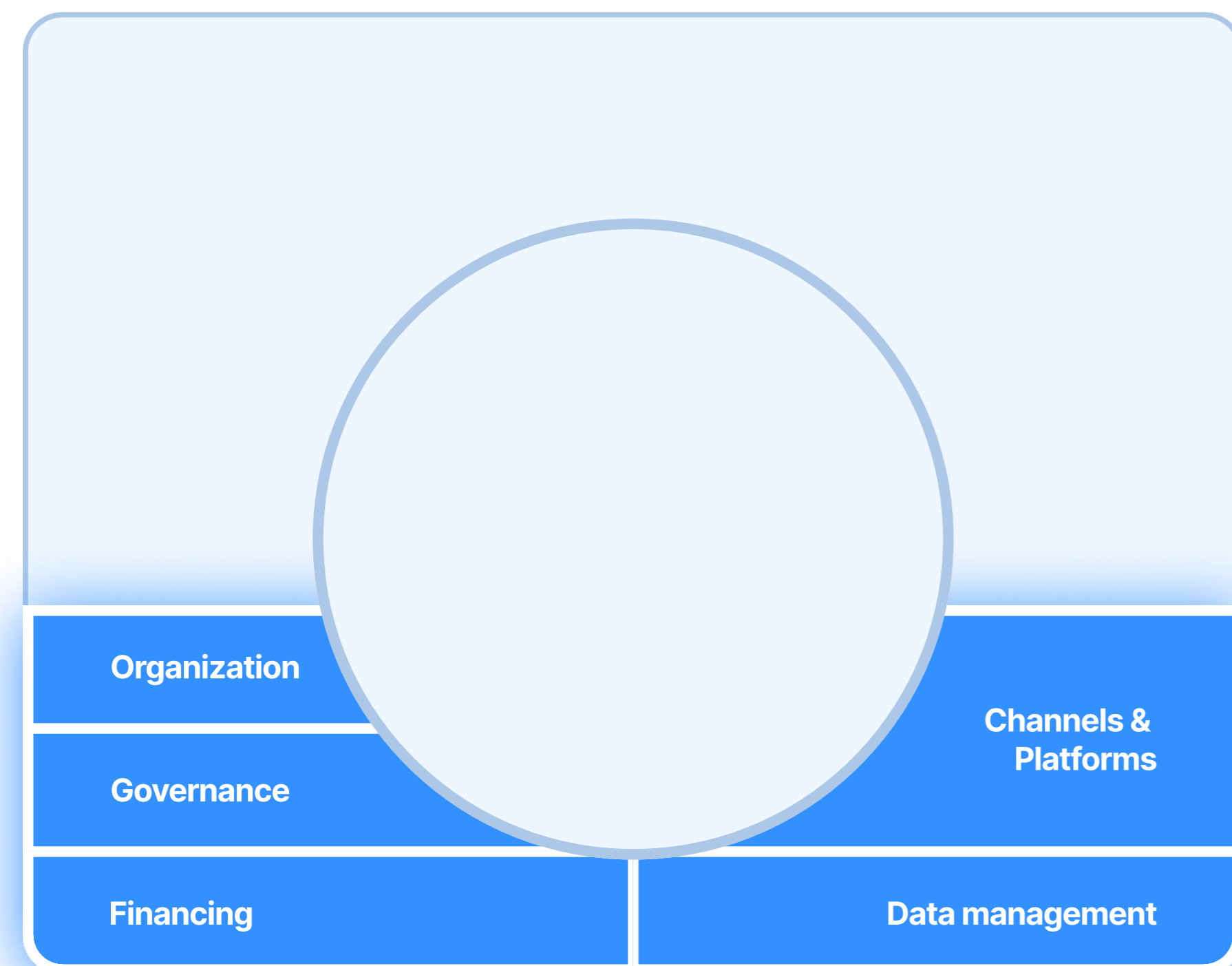
This section outlines the organizational, governance, and operational frameworks essential for fostering a resilient and enriching shared living environment. However, it's important to note that not every theme discussed here will apply universally. Your community may already have defined certain areas or require unique adaptations. This section offers a flexible toolkit designed to be tailored to fit the specific needs and aspirations of your community.

As we explore key elements like decision-making processes, financial planning, and community management strategies, remember: the goal is to build a structure that supports involvement, belonging, and sustainability.

Structure

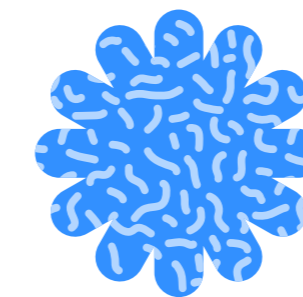


This section consists of up to five themes. Not all themes may be relevant for your community, so feel free to ignore the ones that you don't feel you need.



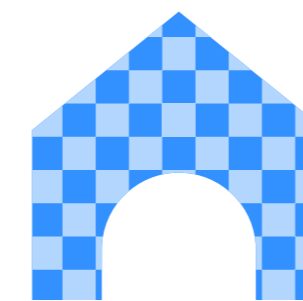
Organization

Who runs our community?



Governance

How are decisions made in our community?



Financing

How are we financially sustainable?



Channels & Platforms

How do we communicate and gather?



Data Management

How do we manage our data?



Organization

For those creating or managing coliving communities, understanding the organizational structure and addressing key issues is essential for sustainability and growth. Here's a guide on areas that require special attention:

Knowledge Transfer: In communities often powered by volunteers, leadership transitions frequently. This can lead to a loss of valuable knowledge and stability, as new leaders may struggle without the insights from their predecessors. To combat this, mature communities cultivate a culture of documenting processes and sharing best practices, ensuring a smooth transfer of knowledge and continuity.

Incentives for Leadership: Recognizing the hard work and dedication of volunteer leaders is crucial. While the intrinsic rewards of community involvement are significant, without tangible incentives or acknowledgments, leaders may experience burnout. Communities should explore various forms of appreciation, from symbolic gestures to practical

support like coaching, mentorship, or promoting their external projects, ensuring leadership remains motivated and supported.

Board vs. Management: Drawing from corporate structures, communities benefit from separating operational tasks from strategic planning. This division allows for more focused management of daily activities and long-term goals, ensuring both immediate needs and future visions are adequately addressed.

Defining Minimal Critical Activities: Identifying and maintaining a set of core activities is vital, especially during cycles of fluctuating engagement and resources. Mature communities determine these critical functions—such as member selection, volunteer support, and digital platforms—to focus on sustaining the community's heart during leaner times. This strategic prioritization helps in maintaining continuity and member engagement.

Legal Entity Considerations: While informal communities can function without legal formalities in the short term, establishing a legal entity (such as a non-profit) can provide a foundation for more formal operations. This requires careful consideration of ownership, control, and responsibilities towards stakeholders, ensuring the community's legal and financial integrity.

Examples of traditional roles:

- Resident Representative or Tenant Board Member
- Financial Officer or Treasurer
- Maintenance Supervisor
- Selecting new residents
- Onboarding new members
- Communication (internal / external)
- Social host or coordinator

Questions About Structure

How is leadership organized?

Who does what?

How is leadership incentivized for their work?

Who hires and manages suppliers?

What functions are considered critical for survival?

What is the legal entity of our community and what requirements come with it?

Governance

As communities evolve from their initial stages, where decision-making may be informal and ad-hoc, to more mature stages, the need for a structured approach to governance becomes critical.

Most coliving communities will be organized with a tenants board as the governing body. But this board can involve community members on many different levels.

Concentrated vs. Distributed Decision-Making: A central question for many communities is how much decision making power should be located in one central entity (founders, board, full-time staff) versus the members. While centralized decision-making can offer clarity, speed, and consistency, decentralized approaches foster engagement, trust, and a sense of ownership among members. Mature communities strive to find an equilibrium, delineating which decisions are best centralized and which can be effectively made through broader member involvement.

Christiania, located in Copenhagen, is home to 1.000 residents who have collectively decided that all decisions must be reached through consensus. As a result, their meetings can extend over several days.



Mixed Decision-Making Examples:

- Smaller group leaders autonomously manage their sections within guidelines set by the main leadership, blending centralized strategy with subject specific execution.
- Annual member surveys and voting inform strategic decisions, integrating member input into leadership's final decisions.
- A community is divided into clusters, where a representative gathers resident feedback, and then collaborates with main leadership in strategic meetings to make informed decisions.

Conflict Resolution:

Addressing conflicts is inevitable in any community. Mature communities preemptively establish clear procedures for conflict resolution to ensure that disagreements are managed constructively. Considerations for a conflict resolution strategy include:

- **Member Conflicts:** Designating responsible individuals or committees to mediate disputes among members.
- **Member-Staff Conflicts:** Outlining procedures for resolving issues between community members and hired staff, suppliers, or the governing body (leadership).
- **Leadership Conflicts:** Establishing mechanisms for addressing disagreements within the decision-making body.

Questions About Governance

What are the community's decision-making bodies?

How is decision-making power distributed or concentrated within the community?

What gives the decision-makers their authority?

How are conflicts handled within the community?

Financing

Coliving communities typically manage their finances in two distinct categories:

Private Finance: Essentially your personal living areas. In most instances, the financial arrangements for these spaces are predetermined. Therefore, unless you are rebuilding Taliesin, financial responsibilities for private spaces are generally handled by individual members.

Community Finance: This covers shared facilities, services, resources, and communal activities. It encompasses everything that the community uses collectively.

The primary sources of income for coliving communities is usually internal. However, some communities have successfully created additional revenue streams by leveraging community assets. This can include offering consulting services, renting out communal spaces for events, or hosting events themselves. Furthermore, there are communities that engage in charity-based partnerships, securing grants or fellowships to support their activities.

Questions About Financing

Private Finance: How is this organized?

Are community expenses shared, or is there a payment based on individual usage?

What are the main categories of expenses in the community?

What are the specific expenses? Can we prioritise them?

Channels & Platforms

Community First, Platform Second: Experience suggests that successful communities are built on understanding the needs and habits of their members before choosing digital tools. Starting with a platform and attempting to construct a community around it often leads to mismatched expectations and needs.

Keep it simple: It's tempting to try getting everything into a single platform. We've found that a simpler approach tends to be more successful. Start with a place where you can communicate, and build out from there as the needs arise.

Map your needs:

- What needs do members of the community have that digital tools could address?
- What tools do members naturally use outside of the community already?
- What kind of platform will create the most value for them?

Activity Levels Over Features:

When it comes to platforms, higher activity and retention rates often outweigh sophisticated, custom features.

Communities might face the choice between developing bespoke digital solutions or leveraging existing platforms with basic features but established user bases. Experience shows that integrating into widely-used platforms (like Facebook, WhatsApp, Slack, or LinkedIn) usually results in more vibrant and active community engagement.

Consistency Over Technology:

Consistent and regular communication is crucial, much like the importance of rhythm in shared experiences. The specific medium of communication is less important than ensuring that interactions occur regularly and reliably. This consistency in communication helps to strengthen community bonds and ensures members feel connected and engaged.

A small plug

You might also consider our platform, Heynabo! which has been developed specifically for neighbour communities. Heynabo! contains the features we think are most important, such as communication, files, event calendar, booking shared items, planning events, and managing maintenance and support.

There are lots of good alternatives, with different takes on community..Take a look at platforms like Spaceflow, Discord, Hococo, or Mastodon.

Questions: Channels & Platforms

What are the core digital needs of the members and which platforms can fulfill them?

What is the existing digital behavior of the members and how can the community integrate into that?

**How does the community communicate internally?
How often?**



Data Management

The data your community collects is not merely informational—it's foundational. The selection of data types directly influences the community's structure, values, and operations. A lack of consistent data management practices can lead to inefficiencies and the need for repetitive restructuring of data systems. Here are some categories:

Members: Details about each member, including contact information, demographics, professional backgrounds, and personal interests.

Practical Information: Information on logistics, facilities, event schedules, and resource availability underpins the daily functioning and convenience of community life.

Rules and Regulations: Documenting community guidelines, policies, and behavioral expectations ensures clarity and consistency in community governance.

Ideology and Values: Articulating the community's core beliefs and values helps align members with the community's purpose and fosters a shared sense of identity.

Insights and Knowledge: Capturing learnings, feedback, and innovative ideas from members contributes to continuous improvement and adaptation.

Questions: Data Management

How do we keep our member contacts up-to-date?

What insights are critical for the community to regularly derive from its members?

How do we capture insights from members?

How do we make information accessible to everyone?

How do we ensure that information is updated?

