

MODULE EIGHT:

Growth & Inclusivity

Module Objective: Identify strategies to increase the size of the group while encouraging the group to be more inclusive

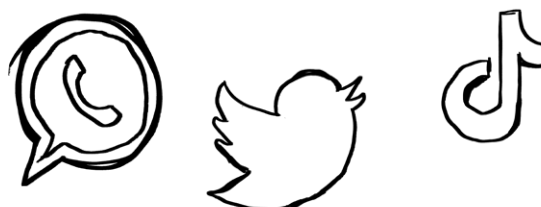
Module Dilemma: I want to expand the numbers and diversity of my group



Expanding your group - Finding new members

CROSS PROMOTING YOUR GROUP

A great way to gain engagement, spread awareness, and attract new members is to cross-promote your group. This could mean building relationships with similar communities on Facebook or expanding your reach to other platforms.



BUILD A NETWORK

Groups can help each other in a big way. Admins can share advice, resources, content, and even audiences – so building a network of like-minded group admins can put you way ahead of the curve.

First, consider where your community fits in the bigger ecosystem of groups. Are there other groups whose members and interests overlap with yours? Look around to see if others run similar or related groups and reach out. It can only help your community (and theirs)!

Connecting with people who are influential in the same space is an easy way to expand your audience. Most admins are eager to make new friends and sharing each other's posts and events is one way to give your members content they'll love while amplifying your own message. You might not have an idea of how to work together right away. Just reach out and introduce yourself!

Here the trainers can ask the participants if any of them collaborate with other groups with similar objectives. Participants can share their experiences and discuss the pros and cons of this strategy.

The trainers can also introduce the participants to opportunities that will help them access other group admins. This includes programs such as: Community Connect, Power Admin Groups, Learning Labs, and Accelerator.

PROMOTE YOUR GROUP ON OTHER PLATFORMS

Many admins use platforms such as TikTok and Instagram to cross promote their group.

Instagram can be a new way to engage potential members with its own hashtags, influencers, and tools. Starting an Instagram for your community is another exciting way to expand your group's reach. The same goes for TikTok! It is important to diversify the platforms we use since it will help us diversify our members too.

See if there's someone in your community who is savvy about using these platforms and ask for their help setting up a profile for your group! If you have photos or other awesome visuals from your group, share them – just make sure you get proper permission before reposting.

Be sure to add a call to action and link to your group from your new profiles – it could be something like “To join us in our group, hit the link in bio!” You can also set up takeovers from community members around the world or “influencers” in your space.

CREATE A FACEBOOK PAGE TO USE AS THE PUBLIC FACE OF YOUR GROUP

Some admins recommend creating a Facebook Page to help promote your group, especially if your group is a private group. These admins use a Page to spread the word about their group and give prospective members a sense of the group's culture. Examples of what you could share on a Page include upcoming public events your group has organised, achievements like successful fundraisers or articles related to your group's subject matter.

A Page can also help you vet potential members. People who have seen your Page before joining your group might have a better sense of whether the group is a good fit for them. By reading people's comments on your Page, you may be able to tell which folks are a good fit for your group, too. You can link the Page to your group so people can easily request to join, or you can proactively invite new members you've seen commenting on the Page.

If you have multiple groups, you can link them all and use your page as a hub. Moreover, using a page also means that you can boost your posts or create ads on both Facebook and Instagram - which is an effective way to get your community seen across the platforms.

BRANDING YOUR COMMUNITY

BRAND YOUR GROUP VISUALLY

A great way you can reinforce your brand and create a familiar space for members is with visuals. Use a consistent colour palette, choose cover photos that reflect your purpose, and think about your logo. Logos can represent your members, the community's purpose, and how you want to express your group mission visually to the world.

Some groups change their cover photo each month based on community suggestions, polls, contests, or submissions. When in doubt, ask your members! How do they view the community? Giving options instead of making them open-ended will help to provide structure.

BE UNIQUE AND CREATIVE

Everybody wants to be a part of something special. Cultivating inside jokes, catchphrases, and nicknames can reinforce a sense of community and culture.

Give your community members a nickname that they can connect with and reinforce it in your posts. Make them feel like they're part of a community, but don't force it – keep it authentic to your brand and involve the community as much as possible.

Example from an admin: "In my community, we refer to each other as GGIs (Girls Gone International) - this brings us together around a shared identity."

Having fun with symbols, emojis and catchphrases can also bring members together and help them participate. Start by thinking of an image or symbol that represents your community and encourage members to use it by using it in your posts.

Example: "In Girl Gone International, our symbol is a woman with a suitcase. We use that imagery in our logo and also think of emojis that might capture our community's brand (we often use a world emoji or female dancer to show our personality as a brand)."



DEFINE YOUR MISSION

Every group has a purpose – a reason for existing. By writing a formal mission statement, you decide your purpose and what you and your members stand for. You can post your mission publicly or use it within your team to guide whether a decision is right for the group. Even if you don't write it down at all, it's useful to think about! To create a mission statement, take a few minutes and write down what your group is all about. Why did you create it? What do you hope people will use it for? What do you hope it will give people? Now write that down.

One way to create your mission statement is to use the following template:

"[YOUR COMMUNITY'S NAME] is a group for [WHO ARE YOUR MEMBERS] that [WHAT YOU DO] and want to [YOUR VISION]."

An example of a mission from a group admin:

"Girl Gone International is a group of women, living, loving, and traveling abroad that want to connect with globally minded international women around the world online and face-to-face."

MAKE YOUR GROUP EASY FOR PEOPLE TO FIND WITH KEYWORDS AND TAGS

Admins recommend using popular words related to your group's subject matter in your group's name since potential group members might search for those common terms. For example, a parenting group might want to include "parents," "moms" or "dads" in their group name. This will help interested people find your group when searching for those words on Facebook.

Here the trainers can ask the participants if any of them have changed the group name since they established the group. If yes, the participants can share their experience regarding this decision: What was the old name? What's the new name? Did this change make the group more visible and accessible?



Note: Consider using group tags to make your group easier to find. Location tags help people search for and discover groups that are relevant to their area. Trainers can also do a quick demonstration to show how to activate group and location tags on Facebook.

USE MARKETING AND ADVERTISING TO GROUP YOUR GROUP

Advertise your group offline with unique pieces of merchandise. Create t-shirts, cups, stickers, or other items and include your group's name and information about the group. Some admins reward top contributors by offering a t-shirt or sticker as a surprise gift.

Some admins leave business cards, flyers, or other items with interested people at local events, trade shows, or conventions. Wear a shirt with your group's name, logo, and other information when attending events as a conversation starter. You can encourage people to join your group right away or have a sign-up sheet and contact interested people later.

Reach out to businesses related to your group's theme to see if they'd be interested in partnering with your group.

A QUICK NOTE ON ORGANIC GROWTH



It may seem challenging to find new members for your group at first. Many successful groups started out small and gradually increased their membership.

If you are starting a group about a topic you are passionate about, you might already know some people who share that passion. Get them involved early and encourage them to actively participate and invite others to the group.

Many experienced admins told us that members who really like your group, often invite other interested people to join. If those new members also invite people, your group can grow pretty fast. All the admins we have spoken to told us that word-of-mouth is a great way to grow your group.

To enable word-of-mouth growth, you'll need to encourage the creation of great posts and foster a sense of community. The type of content created, and the value people receive from the group will vary depending on the type of group you run.

Public, content-driven groups can grow by encouraging members to post great content in the group. Members will share popular group posts to News Feed to share with their friends. Those friends can request to join the group to see more content.

Smaller, closed groups may not have posts shared with others outside the group. The value of this kind of group is in its supportive community.

Creating a welcoming, positive community empowers members to want to get the word out about their experience, whether it be to let people know about the group's great content, its supportive community, or both.

Expanding your group - diversity and inclusion

DESIGN JUSTICE

Design justice rethinks design processes, centres people who are normally marginalised by design, and uses collaborative, creative practices to address the deepest challenges our communities face. It is an approach to design that is led by marginalised communities, and that aims explicitly to challenge, rather than reproduce structural inequalities. It has emerged from a growing

community of designers in various fields who work closely with social movements and community-based organisations around the world. Design justice takes the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion a step further when designing tech solutions, physical products but also social movements, and community development endeavours.

The following are some key principles design justice focuses on when developing and designing solutions for communities. It is highly important for digital community stewards to be aware of and practise the following principles when designing solutions and introducing strategies to their online communities:

- We use design to **sustain, heal, and empower** our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems.
- We **center the voices of those who are directly** impacted by the outcomes of the design process.
- We **prioritize design's impact** on the community over the intentions of the designer.
- We view **change as emergent from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process**, rather than as a point at the end of a process.
- We see the role of the **designer as a facilitator rather than an expert**.
- We believe that **everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience** and that we all have unique and brilliant contributions to bring to a design process.
- We share **design knowledge and tools** with our communities.
- We work towards **sustainable, community-led, and -controlled** outcomes.
- We work towards **non-exploitative solutions** that reconnect us to the earth and to each other.
- Before seeking new design solutions, **we look for what is already working** at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

An inclusive community is one that champions members from all backgrounds, provides a safe space for them to share their experiences and encourages them to learn from one another.

Remember, diversity can come through no matter what your group is about - even if it is a female-only community, hyper-local, or already a community where diverse identities come together, there are many ways that your members differ. Think about who your members are and the intersectionality they represent. Some examples are gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Here are the main ways through which we can create an inclusive community.

MAKE INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY A PART OF YOUR VALUES AND STATEMENTS

Your group values are the foundation of your community. This is where you express your group's purpose, what you value and what you and your members stand for. Having strong values can help guide your members and shape the culture of your community.

When considering how your community supports diversity and inclusion, you can start by looking at how you express this in your group statements. Think about the different places where you share your values and purpose - this could be your group description, group rules, in boarding materials and anywhere you speak to members.

When describing who your members are or what your group does, you can add in relevant ways that you support diverse voices. The trainers can ask the participants to revisit their mission statements and group rules to see if these reflect the values of diversity and inclusion.

MAKING YOUR BRANDING AND IMAGERY INCLUSIVE

Visually representing your community is important to communicate your mission and who your members are. Showcasing the diversity of members in your community's cover photo, logo, and across all of your group's imagery can help communicate who your community is.

Some ways you can do this are through:

- **Illustrations** - Illustrations are often the easiest way to represent your members and community's diversity. Look inside your community to see if there are artists or if they have referrals or recommendations. You can also check out Canva or Adobe Stock for illustrations you can use in your designs.
- **Photography** - Photos can help to show real members of your community. You can ask members to submit photos of themselves and other members or use images from events. Make sure to always get permission from everyone in the photo before you share it!
- **Text and other graphics** - There are many more ways to represent your community's members visually. You can create maps to show where members are from, showcase imagery that is representative of their backgrounds or the languages they speak, and more.

You can even rotate your community's imagery every month and ask members to share important dates to celebrate, like Pride Month, Black History Month, International Women's Day, Indigenous Peoples Day - the list goes on! You and your community can use imagery to celebrate your members' diversity and learn how they want to be represented.

Here are some tools you can use to implement the above strategies:

- **Cover photo** - Your cover photo is a great place to highlight your group's brand. Choose an image or logo that represents your community.
- **Messenger** - Messenger can help to keep your team connected. You can use chat to escalate issues, share best practices, and stories from the community, and work together to build your community.
- **Messenger Rooms** - Messenger Rooms is a great way to get your team together to talk through important topics to your community.

PROMOTING INCLUSION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

You have a thriving community filled with diverse voices, perspectives, experiences, stories, learnings, and so much more. Sharing the voices of your community and creating space for members to feel seen and be referred to in the proper way can provide insight to many of your members and strengthen their bonds.

Here are the main ways through which you can promote inclusivity within your community.

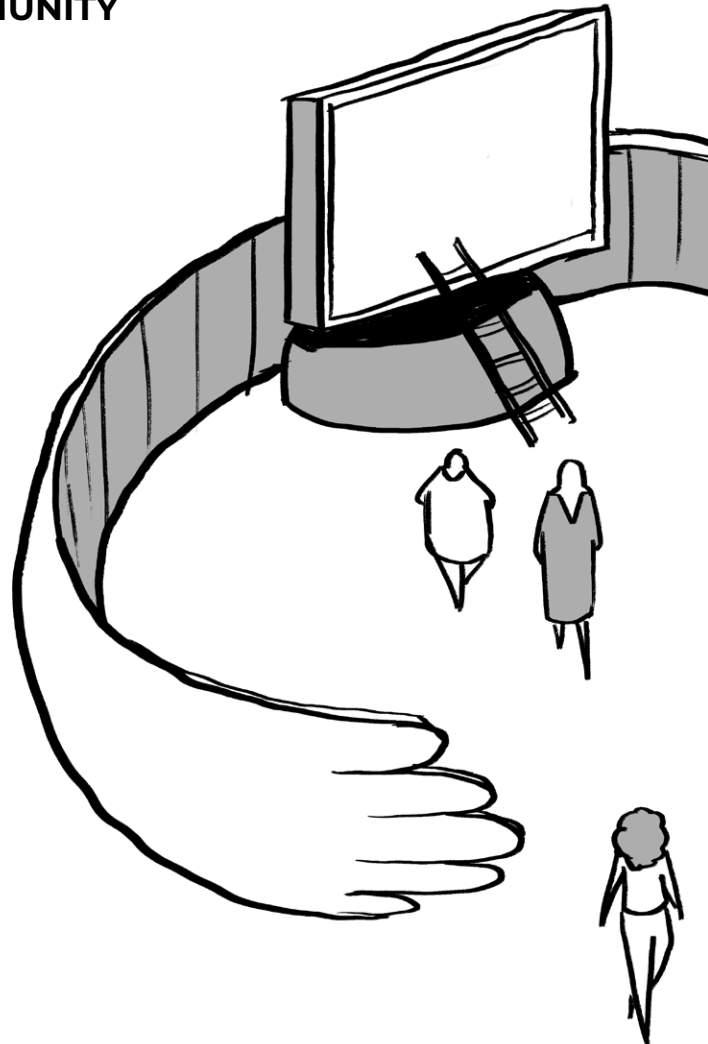
ASK YOUR MEMBERS TO SELF-IDENTIFY BY SHARING PRONOUNS

As an optional membership question, you can ask members to self-identify by sharing their pronouns (ex. she/her, they/them). This can help set the tone in your community for everyone to have themselves be correctly addressed. You can include this in your Welcome Post with new members and set the tone by sharing more about yourself, this could be where you are from, your pronouns, and other information you are comfortable sharing.

Again, this is an optional opportunity for your members to share more about themselves if they chose, so representing that in your question is important (ex. “Optional: Would you like to let us know your pronouns?”). Keep in mind that this is very personal to people so making it optional with the expectation that people may or may not want to share is important. Ensuring that your community members are in a safe space and will be protected is also key, again you want to make sure you are setting a tone for inclusion and not exposing your members to harassment.

HIGHLIGHT DIVERSE STORIES FROM WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY

Learning more about your members and sharing it with the rest of the community is a great way to create bonds and help members find others that they identify with. Highlighting diverse stories from within your community i.e. “Spotlight/story/member of the week” posts, can bring your members closer together and get them excited to learn more about each other.



Think about members who are of different races and ethnicities, sexual orientations, genders, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, or people with disabilities. Ask members to nominate each other or check your “Top Contributors” in your “Insights” tool to get started! At the end of your spotlight, you can ask, “Who would you like to nominate for the next spotlight?” This can also include your community’s allies.

Here are some tools you can use to implement the above strategies:

- **Member questions** - Setting up member questions can give your members the chance to share their pronouns and helps set the tone of your community.
- **Welcome post** - Welcome posts can help you set the tone for your members, sharing their pronouns and creating a space where members can connect.

PROVIDING SAFE SPACES FOR DIVERSE MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMUNITY

Your community is a place where people are coming together to share, build and have conversations. As with every community, it is important to have all voices represented and heard. As a community leader, you can help create a place where your members feel safe to share their experiences openly. Here are the main ways through which we can provide safe spaces for the members of your community.

CREATING STRONG RULES WITH STRICT MODERATION

As a community leader, you know the importance of rules and guidelines for your community. Having strong rules against hate speech, misinformation and discrimination are clear but sometimes they take form in other ways.

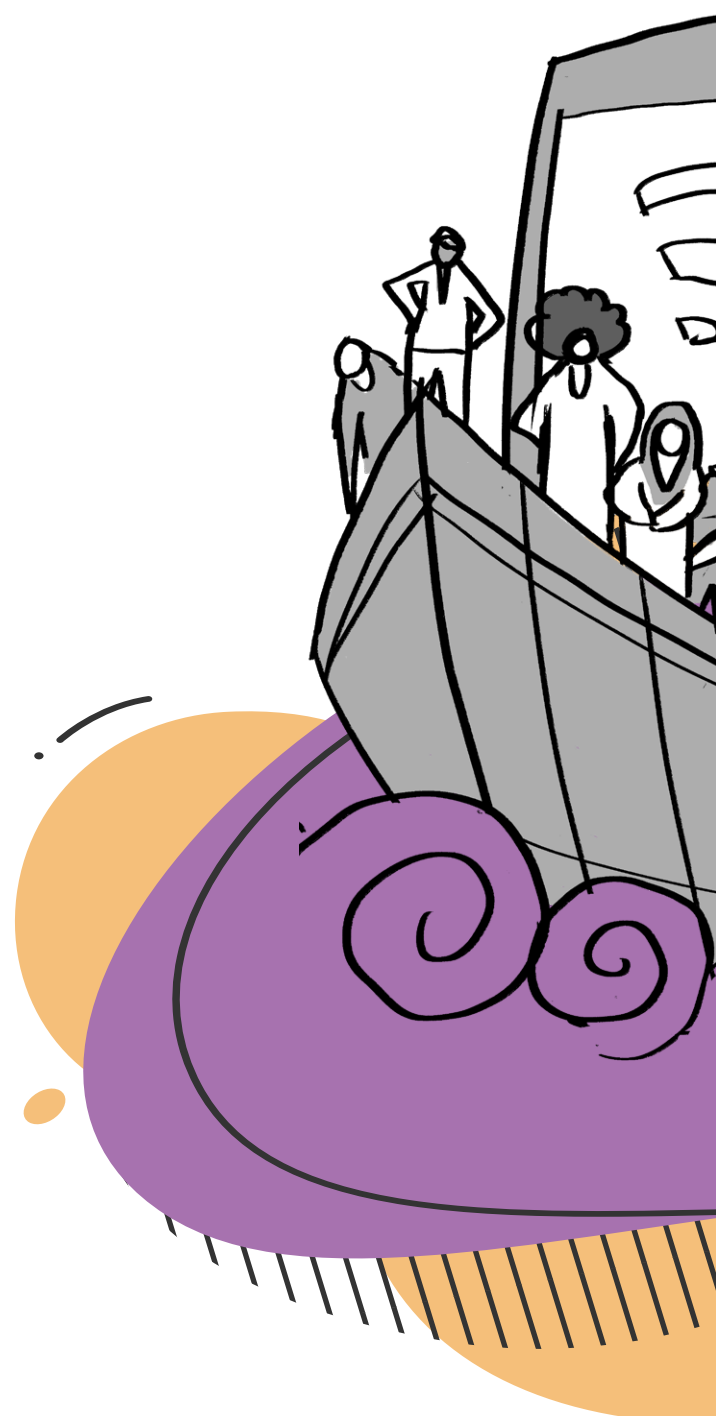
For example, “All Lives Matter.” This seems like an innocuous way of expressing that everyone should be considered when talking about rights. But this is disrespectful to members of the Black community. Proclaiming that “All Lives Matter” negates the “Black Lives Matter” movement and experience of Black people. There are many ways that this can be explained to community members, and resources can be shared with infographics, analogies, etc. Negating the experience of others is not providing a safe space for those members of your community.

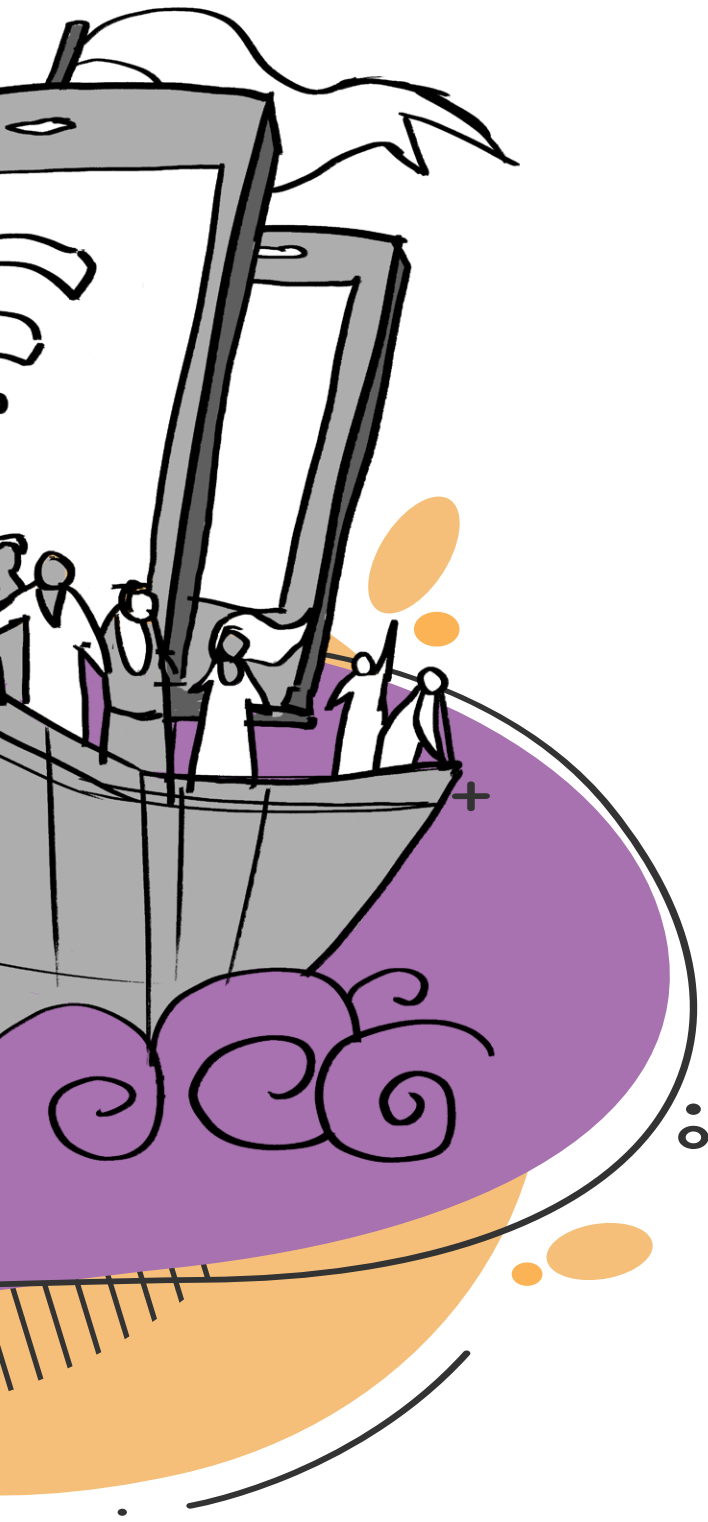
Strong rule enforcement for inflammatory language is important when creating a safe space for important conversations. As we approach things with empathy, it can be challenging to strike a balance between what is an “education” moment and what is a “delete and ban this person” moment. Admins often employ a strike system for members, automatic deletion, muting of members, and/or posting themselves to address certain violations.

LISTEN TO YOUR MEMBERS THROUGH CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK

Listen to your members! How can you improve? How can you create a better community for everyone to connect? How can you make your community the best possible community for your members?

Send out surveys! There are many, simple, anonymous survey platforms (such as Survey Monkey and Google Forms) you can find to ask your members about themselves, what you can improve, what issues can be addressed, what rules can be better enforced, and what changes to your mission can be made. Make it a point to do these often - some admins do them every three-six months (ex. mid-year, end of year). You can even do these around major cultural moments (ex. BLM movement, COVID-19, elections) to understand how you can address the needs of your members through these times.





When discussing topics such as inclusivity and safety, admins need to be self-aware of the power they hold and exercise over these online communities. This is why listening and reflecting are essential to make members feel valued and heard. As a community leader and member, you are there to listen as much as you are there to share. Being an active member of a community is often about learning, listening, and implementing, and sharing what you've learned. Remember that member feedback and active listening are crucial in improving trust and overall group dynamics!

EDUCATE YOURSELF AND PROVIDE MENTORING AND SUPPORT WHEN POSSIBLE

Helping to educate yourself and others with reputable resources on topics like anti-racism, discrimination against minorities, the history of oppressed groups, immigration policies, etc., is the first step toward creating a healthy dialogue. Use your voice to share information, resources, organisations, and places to donate, and educate others on how they can do the same. Providing a safe space for fellow community members to interact and share their diverse experiences is an important part of leading and interacting in communities. Lifting the voices of your fellow community members and calling out discriminatory and disrespectful behaviour is our obligation as community members and allies.

Many communities are dedicated to a certain interest, identity or stage of life. Working with other communities (whether within the same ecosystem or on a different topic) can help to bring a richer experience to you and your members. Reach out to other community leaders or influential people in your space and ask them to join your community for a panel, interview or more! Remember, this is a collaboration, so be open and frame your ask in a way that is reciprocal. Creating bonds with other community leaders can help both of your communities.

Here are some tools you can use to implement the above strategies:

- **Rules enforcement** - Rules enforcement lets you inform your members of the rule they violated. This can be done through Admin Tools when you are muting a member or approving posts.
- **Turn off commenting** - Sometimes, a post's comments can become unproductive. You can turn off the comments to prevent additional comments to the thread. It also helps to let your community know why you are turning off the comments.
- **Keyword alerts** - When you want to keep an eye out for when certain words or phrases are used in your group, or quickly receive notifications about it, you can set up Keyword Alerts using these phrases, admin team names, or hashtags that you use for members to self-moderate.
- **Polls** - Polling your members is a great way to learn what matters most to your community and get suggestions. For example, you can poll your members on how you can help support diverse businesses or ask for feedback or ideas on how to continue to support diverse voices.