

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT WITH NEWCOMERS

UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

WHY USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD COMMUNITY?

- Social media is highly prevalent in our modern world. Often times, newcomers of all digital literacy levels may have some form of social media that they engage with on a daily basis.
- Newcomers are more likely to have digital access to cellphones and social media platforms rather than laptop devices. By understanding this digital dynamic, settlement and integration agencies can capitalize on this connection with newcomers.

Source: <https://mediaincanada.com/2021/11/26/newcomers-to-canada-are-more-reliant-on-their-phones/>

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWCOMERS

Incorporating social media can benefit newcomers by:

- Enhancing newcomers' **mental wellbeing** by building and maintaining relationships
- **Connecting to other newcomers'** to share their unique experiences and information from newcomers' who have been on the same path as them
- Increasing **participation in civil society** by connecting newcomers' to their community and communities beyond their physical reach



CREATE A SAFE SPACE

When considering utilizing social media to engage newcomers, create ample opportunities to discuss the proposal with the community group beforehand. This can encapsulate:

- Discussions on safe internet practices to prevent phishing, avoiding internet scams
- "Netiquette": establishing boundaries on what is appropriate behaviour to engage virtually



For more information on creating a safe virtual space, see: [How to teach digital literacy skills for low print literacy learners](#)



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HOW TO PICK A SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM TO ENGAGE WITH NEWCOMERS

Step 1) Survey users

Step 2) Set up a profile

Step 3) Create policies for conduct

Step 4) Create a posting schedule



STEP 1: SURVEY USERS

Conduct a survey to assess what existing platforms the newcomers that you serve are already on. This can be in an informal manner in the form of a group discussion.

When surveying the platforms, consider:

- Are they free to join?
- Are they accessible in multiple languages?

STEP 2: SET UP A PROFILE

Once you have decided which platform to facilitate community engagement through, set up a profile outlining the goals of the service.

Create clear goals of the profile such as:

- *"This page serves to improve broader community engagement, educate community members on upcoming events and ways to participate."*
- *"This is a WhatsApp group to act as a virtual Conversation Circle; a safe space for newcomers to practice English Language Skills."*



STEP 3: CREATE A CODE OF CONDUCT

Before integrating social media engagement, it is vital to create a code of conduct to ensure there are clear expectations as to what the engagement aims to achieve and what is acceptable and what is appropriate for this public space.



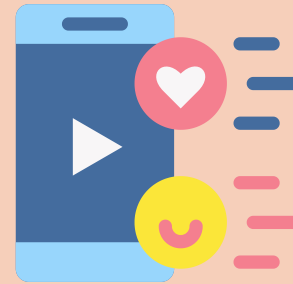
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HOW TO SET UP A WHATSAPP GROUP



TEMPLATE FOR CODE OF CONDUCT POLICIES



STEP 4: CREATE A POSTING SCHEDULE

Creating a posting schedule is important to ensure on-going engagement. Staying consistent with posting schedules to act as reminders for the participants that the organization has outputs that they are delivering.

- Regular posting creates opportunities for engagement to promote growth and mutual communication channels
- Utilize marketing software that can assist in scheduling content. These softwares have the capacity to post new content automatically, and recommend a posting schedule
- Free artificial intelligence software such as ChatGPT can be given a description of the community group, goals of the social media outreach and can recommend targeted content to create



Platforms that can assist in scheduling content:

- Hootsuite.com
- Monday.com
- ChatGPT



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UNIQUE CONSIDERATIONS

Establish inclusive practices when publishing public content on social media groups.

- Be mindful of incorporating inclusive language
- Be mindful of things that may trigger traumatic experiences of different groups
- Be culturally inclusive, promoting and celebrating cultural events and differences
- When possible, share information in more than one language to reach a larger audience
- When possible, create visually accessible content that can include high contrast colours, simple formatting and plain language descriptions

Newcomers' are increasingly using social media for information sharing. Often times, this is done through existing social connections, such as family and friends, or within their ethnocultural groups.

Newcomers' can be more inclined to trust media that circulates within their existing social circles as it is available in their first language, connects to their cultural backgrounds and may affirm their existing biases.

It is important to recognize these differences to include culturally appropriate content.

 For more information regarding accessibility, see: [How to create an accessible and equitable hybrid classroom](#)

A WORD OF CAUTION

Although social media can be a powerful and popular tool for newcomers to create community connections, keep in mind that individuals may have previous experiences that make them wary of participating in social media. **Some newcomers may come from backgrounds where freedom of speech, sharing their opinions, and personal experiences was unsafe. These past experiences may act as a barrier for newcomers to want to join social media groups.** However, the practices and tools to build community connections virtually can be made on existing engagement platforms that are private and closed groups.

Examples include: Blackboard, Google Classroom, Moodle, Avenue.ca