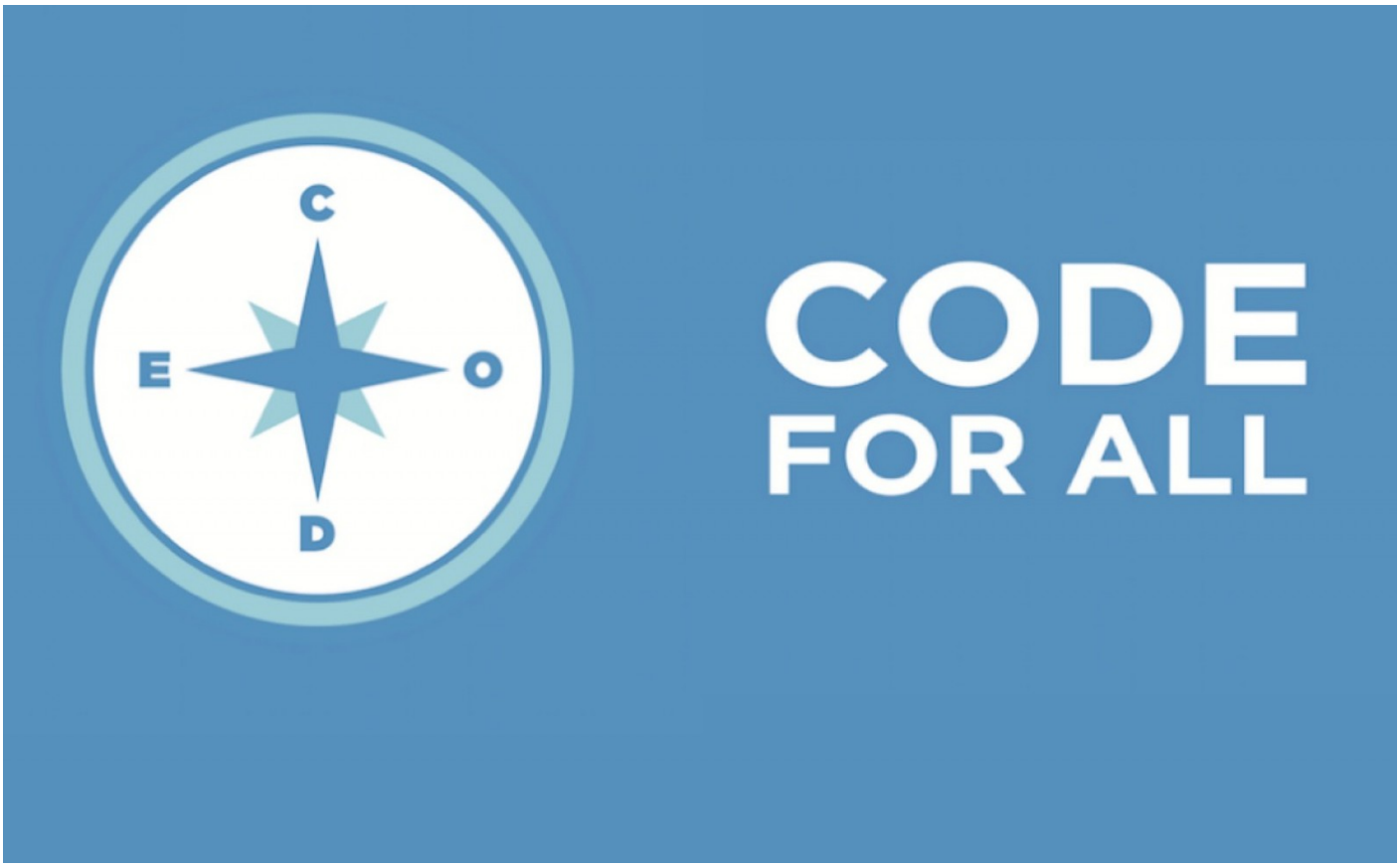
How to manage and engag with large communities - A Checklist by Lorin Camargo and Mar Marín of Code for All



Code for All is an international network of civic tech organizations. Our mission is to connect these organizations so they can learn from each other, share resources, and scale projects together, leading to greater impact in their local communities.

Lorin: I started off my civic tech journey volunteering for Code for America's Brigade, Code for San José, and am currently one of Code for All's Co-Directors. As a Co-Director, I help shape communication, team, organizational, and fundraising strategy for the Network.

Mar: I began my journey doing professional practices with Codeando México. Following my interest to understand the intersecting relationship between political sciences and technologies, while implementing storytelling techniques, I got the opportunity to join Code for All as their Communications Assistant.

How do you manage to bring all participants together in such a large community?

1. **Have a central place for your community to meet asynchronously** to share their work, discuss challenges, promote opportunities, and to connect about non-work stuff (it's always good to have some fun channels Slack is our central meeting hub; it allows space for Code for All community members to connect with each other on their own time, and it's also a place to find ample civic tech news, events and opportunities.
2. **Bring people together in at least one consistent, recurring way**. We host an annual Summit, which aims to bring the global community together and allow space for showcasing projects, sharing knowledge and workshopping ideas. Along with all the other events we host, I find the Summit to be very important because it's consistent. It's something the community can rely on each year as a way to connect and share work.
3. **Be aware of and accommodating to diverse needs**. We spend a lot of time thinking about inclusivity and accessibility and always strive to create welcoming, safe spaces to bring people together. We often ask for feedback after events, or when we design just about anything, to make sure we are taking our community's needs into consideration. It's important to us that accessibility is something that's built into the things we do, versus being an afterthought. We're nowhere near perfect in this realm, but it's a priority for us to always be improving.
4. **Be aware of and accommodating to different time zones**. Being a global network, we spend a good deal of time working around time zones and trying to accommodate everyone. We aren't always able to make events work for everyone, but we often host multiple sessions of the same event in order to account for different time zones. We also record some events for post-watching, and like to create documents with concise, key take-away points so folks who miss sessions can quickly catch up without having to pour through notes that haven't been edited down.
5. **Use what you have**. Our member organizations all have extensive communities and networks of their own. When we have something we want to spread throughout the global civic tech community, we always share the information with our members and ask them to pass it along to their communities. For each of our member organizations, we have at least one representative who acts as a point of contact between us and the organization. Having this point of contact makes it easy for us to share information and promote opportunities with entire communities in just one quick step.

What are useful methods when engaging with a large community?

The Code for All community is both large and international, so one big thing we keep in mind is the language we use. We haven't yet had the resources to offer all of our materials in several

languages, and we primarily use English for communication, however we try to avoid using complicated jargon, so that our articles, opportunities, and resources are as easy-to-understand as possible for a varied audience. Similarly, we've heard from our member organization g0v, that in order to engage their large community, they often create multiple versions of communication material for any given event or opportunity, each version targeted to a different type of community member (for example, different age groups or professions, or reaching out to a student, or parents of students). You can find some brief key take-aways from a discussion around this here.

How do you deal with conflicts within the community?

We have a Code of Conduct which explains what is expected from network activities, events, and digital forums. Luckily, we haven't had many conflicts within the community, but depending on the severity of the conflict it is something we would either deal with as the Core Team, or would consult Governing Members of the network. In many cases, it would be important for us to try to understand all perspectives involved before solving the conflict.

How do you do outreach? What are your methods when acquiring new community members?

1. **Annual Summit:** Our annual summit is an amazing opportunity to showcase what our member organizations, volunteers and civic tech organizations around the world are doing and draw attention towards Civic Tech and the amazing projects around the world. The themes are always voted in, and are based on the interests of the community. The event has proven to be an occasion for organizations to gain interest in joining the Network.
2. **Communities of Practice (CoPs)**: These groups are about bringing network members, and organizations beyond the network, together to form groups and discuss common topics relevant to the civic tech ecosystem. This has proven to be an amazing opportunity for experts and people interested in connecting with other organizations working on similar topics to discuss best practices around civic tech projects.
3. **Events**: This year we have been working on developing strong relations with key stakeholders that can draw attention to the intersection between Civic Tech and other relevant fields. We began the **Civic Tech & SDG Webinar Series**, an initiative that was born as our members have been advocating for data-driven development for years. To voice their work and collaborations that put the power of data behind delivering the Sustainable Development Goals, we have designed and organized the webinar series with key stakeholders in international and regional organizations.
4. **Social Media Strategy:** We have noticed people like to know what's going on with our member organizations and also want to know more about civic tech in general. We try to share updates from the global civic tech community in engaging, fun and easy-to-understand formats. Understanding our audience is an important step in forming our social media strategies. For example, as a generalization, many civic techies are fans of certain branches of popular culture, and have fun interacting in conversations that use engaging themes such as Star Wars (here's a quick example).

Do you recommend specific tools that help the community in collaborating (online and offline)?

- **Slack**: A mighty collaboration tool that Code for All has been using since its inception.
- **Trello**: To organize projects, share information or conduct group discussions. For example, we sometimes use Trello mixed with a Zoom call to conduct our bi-monthly retrospectives.
- **Miro/Jamboard**: Both are great online whiteboards to brainstorm collaboratively.
- **Notion**: My personal favorite. It is an all-in-one collaborative application that brings together, on a single platform: documents, databases, public websites, knowledge bases, project management systems and beautiful notes.
- **Zoom**: For synchronous meetings and events.
- **Google Drive**: For generating and storing documents.

Do you have advice for the cooperation between volunteers and paid staff?

We don't have a lot of advice on this front from our team, but we recently held a small group discussion around this in one of our Support Squad meetings, where a volunteer from Code for Romania shared their thoughts. You can watch the recording of that discussion here (in English).

How much self-determination do individual community members have (or how much is controlled centrally?)

Code for All is here to help connect civic tech organizations and individuals, and provide resources and opportunities to help their work. Our member organizations work completely independently from us, and have absolute self-determination in their work. We do not influence or control any aspect of their independent work, but act as a source of support to help advance, scale or replicate their projects.

You also work on the fundraising side of things - are there any insights from that part of your work that could help other people who try and build a sustainable civic tech/public interest tech project?

We have an article that covers some highlights around this: Challenges & Tips for Funding Civic Tech. We also held a sustainability workshop recently for some of our members, and the insights they learned are shared here.

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