

Guidelines for small business on how to communicate

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UNDER REVIEW

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The information and views set out in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf.

Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
APRE	Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea
DFBG	Distretto della Pesca e Crescita Blu
EMU	Estonian University of Life Sciences
LCA	Life Cycle Assessment
FBCD	Food & Bio Cluster Denmark
LOBA	GLOBAZ, S.A.
NIBIO	Norsk Institutt for Bioekonomi
RISE	Research Institutes of Sweden AB
UiA	Universitetet i Agder
UNIPA	University of Palermo

This document has been originally drafted in English.

The translation into the other languages has been produced using the AI tool DeepL. Please note that not all the versions were double-checked, so always refer to the original English version in case of doubts.

Contents

1. Introduction	6
2. BlueRev in a nutshell	6
3. Understanding Blue Bio-based Products and Services	7
4. Constructing a successful communication campaign.....	9
a. Understand the target audience	10
b. Draft the right message	10
c. Selecting the best communication tools and channels.....	12
d. Implementation and monitoring	17
5. Conclusions.....	20

1. Introduction

In today's market, the demand for sustainable and climate-neutral products and services is steadily growing, with customers seeking transparency around environmental impact and innovation. For small businesses, effectively communicating the benefits, trade-offs, and unique performance features of bio-based products can be both a challenge and a significant opportunity. This booklet, drafted in the framework of BlueRev dissemination activities, is intended as a guideline specifically for SMEs. It will first introduce blue bio-based products and services, leading them through the fundamentals, providing essential tools and insights specifically related to the blue bio-based sector. To enhance the SMEs' communication strategies around innovation, climate-neutrality, and sustainability the booklet will demonstrate how to understand different audiences, build compelling messages, and finally empowering the SMEs with practical skills to connect with customers and promote the environmental advantages of their bio-based offerings.

2. BlueRev in a nutshell

The BlueRev project focuses on the revitalization of European local communities through innovative bio-based business models, governance frameworks, and social innovations in the blue bio-based sector, and aims to raise awareness on the benefits the wide deployment of the bio-based sector can offer.

To achieve its main objective, the project analysed different value chains (e.g. use of fish side streams, marine bioactive compounds, red algae biomass), to understand social and economic barriers and potentialities in three different pilot regions (Denmark/Greenland, Italy and Estonia). The value chains' analysis was conducted by using existing or advanced monitoring system and indicators that evaluated the effectiveness of the value chains and allowed to propose ways to improve governance frameworks and business models in these regions, and to understand how local communities can be revitalized and environmentally responsible behaviours can be promoted.

For additional information, please visit [Homepage - BlueRev](#).

3. Understanding Blue Bio-based Products and Services

The blue bioeconomy refers to the sustainable use of marine and aquatic biological resources to generate innovative goods and services that contribute to economic growth and sustainable development.

The focus of blue bioeconomy is on **minimizing environmental impact while maximizing the economic potential of resources**. Benefits of blue bio-based products are significant in terms of sustainability: they support climate goals by offering low-carbon alternatives to conventional products, help preserve marine ecosystems and promote circular economy principles.

The use of renewable marine resources allows for continuous replenishment, reducing dependency on finite resources. In addition, innovation in this sector leads to the development of biodegradable materials, reducing pollution and waste in both marine and terrestrial environments.

In general, the materials used in blue bio-based products are sourced from a wide range of marine organisms. Some of the most commonly used materials include:

- **Algae and Seaweed:** Algae, particularly microalgae, are rich in proteins, carbohydrates, and lipids, making them useful in sectors such as food, cosmetics, biofuels, and pharmaceuticals. For example, algal oils can replace petroleum in biofuel production, and alginates from seaweed are used in food processing and packaging.
- **Side streams and by-products:** The fish processing industry generates a significant amount (depending on species, season and process) of secondary biomasses and by-products, such as fish bones, scales, and skin, that contain high value nutrients. Among these, proteins, lipids, carbohydrates and antioxidants, can be recovered and reutilized to obtain and extract value added compounds, bioactive molecules, that can support circular economy pathways related to pharmaceuticals, cosmeceutical, food and nutraceutical sectors. Fish oil rich in omega-3 PUFA, antioxidants, collagen, protein hydrolysates are only some examples of valuable products for medical and cosmetic uses, and fish oils for nutritional supplements.
- **Marine Microorganisms:** Marine microbes offer a wealth of potential in biotechnology. They can be harnessed to produce enzymes, bioactive compounds, and bioplastics.

As far as the transformation of blue bio-based products is concerned, this involves advanced biotechnological processes that allow for the sustainable extraction, transformation, and commercialization of marine resources. Some key processes include:

- **Biorefining:** This process involves converting marine biomass, such as algae, into various bio-based products, including biofuels, chemicals, and materials. Biorefineries maximize the use of the biomass, minimizing waste and creating multiple products from a single resource.
- **Fermentation:** Microorganisms, particularly bacteria and yeast, can be used in fermentation processes to produce bio-based chemicals, enzymes, and other compounds. Fermentation is increasingly used in the production of biofuels, bioplastics, and pharmaceuticals derived from marine resources.

Nowadays, blue bio-based products are finding applications in diverse sectors, including **biofuels, biodegradable plastics, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and food**, providing a promising alternative to fossil-based industries. However, clear communication of their benefits is vital to ensure stakeholders understand their value and potential.

UNDER REVIEW

4. Constructing a successful communication campaign

A *communication campaign* is a coordinated series of activities aimed at conveying a specific message or achieving a particular goal. It involves **strategic planning**, which is the process of defining an organization's direction and making decisions on allocating resources to pursue that direction. It also involves setting clear objectives, developing strategies to achieve those objectives (choose the target group, the right message and the most suitable channel), and creating a roadmap for how the organization will operate and grow over time.

Things that are usually communicated represent **the objective of the communication campaign**. They can be:

Objective

- **A product:** a tangible or digital item you want to offer to potential customers. (e.g. cosmetics derived from algae)
- **A service:** an intangible offering, like a consultation, subscription, or membership
- **An idea:** concepts, philosophies, or beliefs to share, like a vision for the future, a new business model, or an innovative solution (e.g. developing insect-based fish feed as a more sustainable alternative to traditional fish meal made from wild-caught fish)
- **The developments/results of a project**

Once the objective is clear, four steps should be followed to define an effective communication plan:

1. Understand the target audience
2. Use scientifically correct yet understandable claims, tailored to each specific audience
3. Select the best communication tools and channels
4. Implementation and monitoring



Each step is detailed below.

a. Understand the target audience

The first step in planning any communication campaign is to thoroughly understand your target audience.

Who are them? What are their needs, desires, and challenges? This understanding is crucial for tailoring the message in a way that is both relevant and engaging to them.

Target audience

The target audience of a communication campaign is the specific group of people to be addressed, ensuring maximum relevance and impact.

- **General profile:** Identify the age, occupation and lifestyle of the people you want to reach
- **Behavioural insights:** Understand the behaviours, routines, and media consumption patterns of your audience.
- **Cultural considerations:** Respect and incorporate cultural nuances that may influence how your message is received.

It is important to identify people who can act as multipliers and ambassadors of the communication effort, then target and involve them. For example, for an innovation in the blue bioeconomy, ambassadors and multipliers could be researchers in marine biology, influencers, science promoters, but also innovative start-ups, and local industries.

Depending on product, service, idea or project that you want to communicate, you can consider whether it could be beneficial to target schools and education centres to maximise impact. Investing time in education will help grow a future generation knowledgeable and sensitive to environmental issues and to the benefits of the bioeconomy.

To build an impactful awareness and communication strategy, messages should be adapted based on the audience in terms of style and tone. This is the second step needed to build an effective communication plan.

b. Draft the right message

Effectively communicating innovations in blue bioeconomy is crucial for gaining stakeholder support, attracting investment, and engaging consumers. However, these complex concepts must be communicated in an understandable way, compelling to a wide range of audiences.

After identifying the primary target audience, you should define the best way to reach them.

Message

The message of a communication campaign should be a concise and impactful expression, compatible with the target audience you want to reach, and should inspire action or raise awareness.

Below you can see how messages change based on the focus for each type of audience.

1. Consumers:

Message: “Our products are crafted from responsibly sourced marine resources, providing sustainable, eco-friendly alternatives that protect our oceans. By choosing our bio-based options, you’re reducing plastic waste and supporting a healthier planet.”

Focus: Highlighting environmental impact and the everyday benefits of choosing bio-based products.

2. Policymakers and Regulatory Bodies:

Message: “Our blue bioeconomy initiatives reduce dependency on fossil resources, contributing to the EU’s climate neutrality and biodiversity protection targets. Through our bio-based products, we align with regulations aimed at reducing carbon emissions and support local economic growth.”

Focus: Showcasing alignment with sustainability regulations, climate goals, and societal benefits.

3. Local Communities and Educators:

Message: “Our blue bio-based initiatives provide local employment opportunities, preserve natural resources, and offer a model for sustainable growth. We’re committed to educating communities about the benefits of bio-based products and how they can support our environment.”

Focus: Promoting local economic benefits, job creation, and community education on sustainability.

Example: The Scottish company **Oceanium** produces sustainable seaweed-based food ingredients and supplements. In their communications, they emphasize the benefits to local communities, such as job creation and economic opportunities for seaweed farmers. They feature profiles of local harvesters and cooperatives they work with, helping customers connect their purchases to positive local impacts.

In all cases, it is **essential to use scientifically correct, yet understandable claims**. Innovative products, ideas, services or research findings in the blue bioeconomy often involve cutting-edge

biotechnologies, marine biology, and sustainability science, which can be difficult for a non-expert audience to grasp. For this reason, it is important to ensure that claims are based on solid and **trustable scientific background**.

At the same time, it is important to avoid overly technical language and industry-specific jargon. Instead, you could focus on the benefits and practical applications of these innovations. For example, instead of explaining the technical process of algal biofuel production, highlight how it offers a renewable, low-carbon alternative to fossil fuels that can help combat climate change.

c. Selecting the best communication tools and channels

You should then choose the tools where the campaign will be most active.

tools
and
channels

The tools and channels of a communication campaign are the mediums and platforms used to deliver the message effectively, tailored to the preferences and behaviours of the target audience.

Do not forget that using a mix of channels ensures broader reach and more impactful engagement!

Proven successful tools are:

- **Storytelling Techniques to Make Innovation Relatable**

Story Telling is an effective practice as stories can be powerful, captivating and engaging, leading to higher levels of acceptance and a change in people's attitudes. Share stories of fishermen whose by-products are transformed into high-value goods, or coastal communities using algae farming to boost local economies while preserving marine ecosystems can bridge the gap between abstract technologies and their tangible impacts. Explaining how sustainable marine products contribute to ocean health, or how they play a role in the fight against climate change can break down intricate scientific and economic concepts into relatable stories and real-life examples and create emotional connections.

- **Case Studies or Success Stories for Credibility**

Providing case studies or success stories can add credibility. Highlighting examples of companies that have successfully implemented blue bio-based solutions or showcasing a company producing biofuels from algae can demonstrate that blue bioeconomy innovations are not just theoretical concepts but viable, scalable solutions that are already making a positive impact. Including data on

environmental and economic performance—such as reduced carbon emissions or cost savings—can further strengthen the credibility of your message.

- **Exhibition Showcasing Samples of Bio-Based Products**

Exhibitions, conferences, workshops, and panel discussions can allow companies, startups, and research institutions to test cutting-edge bio-based products, technologies, and processes. They can serve as meeting points for experts, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to exchange knowledge, discuss trends, challenges, and opportunities within the bioeconomy. Exhibitions can be a showcase inspiring young professionals, students, and researchers about the latest trends and career opportunities in the bioeconomy. Educational programs and interactive displays at these events can inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs to contribute to the bioeconomy.

- **Social Media and in general online interaction**

Engaging content such as visuals and infographics to explain processes and benefits, videos and animations to illustrate innovations' positive impact, interactive content (like quizzes) to educate consumers can play a relevant role and contribute to a community building process.

Case Study from the Bluerev Project: *The ritunnu salatu case*

A successful innovation was achieved in Sicily through the revitalization and commercialization of *ritunnu salatu*, a fish product made from *Spicara smaris* (menola) a Mediterranean fish species traditionally considered of low commercial value, but abundant in local waters in some season.

To promote this product to consumers, the cooperative decided to emphasize its nutritional value and its commitment to biodiversity, as fishing less common species helps to reduce the pressure on those in higher demand, like tuna.

As part of the sales strategy, the producer organized a tasting event in an open lab, allowing consumers and experts to experience the product firsthand. This interactive approach provided direct feedback, built interest, and reinforced the product's uniqueness. Additionally, the producer started the commercialization through restaurants, thereby leveraging word of mouth within a network of

culinary professionals and enthusiasts. Also, participation to big fairs and events had an important role, for instance the presence at the Expo 2015 in Milan, Italy.

Thanks to the collaboration with a university and a European project, the cooperative was able to reach new channels and markets (including other project hubs, such as Greenland), which could serve as an inspiration to other businesses.

Case Study from the Bluerev Project: *Dog food from fish processing side streams in Greenland*

Milak Productions, a small business based in the South of Greenland, uses side streams from fish, lamb and seal to create an innovative dog food line. This approach generates local economic value and aligns with Greenland's circular economy aspirations, ensuring sustainable growth rooted in community engagement and resource efficiency.

The dog food, which is a dried product packed in 25-kg bags, is developed starting from side streams from three companies in Greenland, Neqi, Polar Seafood Greenland and Halibut Greenland.

Milak Productions advertises the dog food line on social media, and mainly Facebook, where they also shared the visit received by the Danish royal family in 2024. However, the product is known also thanks to its presence on another Greenlandic company webshop, named *Wildfood*.

In January 2023, Milak Production was mentioned by the Greenlandic newspaper *Sermitsiaq* in an article about the dried dog food: the article explained that they had received loans and support from the company *Nalik Ventures*, and had just received the production equipment to start production. Later in 2024, the newspaper again mentioned Milak Productions when the couple behind the company was awarded the "Entrepreneurship Award 2024" during *Future Greenland* for their efforts in establishing Milak Productions ApS. The award celebrates their initiative in creating a sustainable local production of dog food.

Case Study from the Bluerev Project: *Developing an Omega-3 enriched functional beverage in Denmark*

In Denmark, during a co-creation activity, an innovative proposal to develop an Omega-3 nutrition drink targeted at the rapidly growing Chinese market emerged as the best practice to be developed. The concept combines health-focused innovation with a circular approach, as it aims to transform fish processing waste into high-value, consumer-friendly products, offering environmental benefits by utilization of waste materials, as well as social benefits of creating local jobs, particularly in fish processing and sustainable production.

To successfully promote the Omega-3 nutrition drink in the Chinese market (the target audience), it would be essential to position it as a premium, science-backed health beverage that supports heart, brain, and immune health. The message to potential buyers should highlight the environmental impact and the everyday benefits of choosing this over other products: in this regard, understanding local taste preferences is key, e.g. flavours like matcha, red bean, lychee, and jasmine are potentially appealing to Chinese consumers.

The branding strategy should strike a balance between traditional Chinese health values—such as longevity and vitality—and a sleek, modern aesthetic that enhances its premium appeal. Clean labelling, sustainable sourcing (e.g., algae-based Omega-3), and ensuring no fishy taste will be crucial selling points to build consumer trust.

For distribution, a strong e-commerce presence would be vital, supported by influencer marketing and digital promotions. Additionally, offline availability in supermarkets, convenience stores, and health-focused retailers would increase accessibility and credibility. Offline, experiential marketing through sampling at gyms, malls, and health expos could encourage trial, while corporate and institutional partnerships with fitness centres, offices, and airlines could establish the drink as a premium wellness choice.

Case Study from the BlueRev Project: *Red algae valorization in Saaremaa*

The Estonian pilot region of Saaremaa Island focused on leveraging red algae (*Furcellaria lumbricalis*) for sustainable business models in the blue economy.

Red algae have been used since the 1960s for the production of furcellaran, a gelling agent in the food industry. Red algae now present new opportunities in cosmetics, nutraceuticals, bioplastics,

and agriculture. Harvesting involves trawling and beach collection, with a permitted annual limit of 2,000 tons, though actual volumes have remained below this threshold. The enterprise *Est-Agar* is the only industrial-scale processor of furcellaran and has been at the forefront of researching new applications and cultivation as well as building good communication on the value of local unique blue bioresources and the further valorization options of red algae and biomass by-products.

The communication has utilized storytelling, starting with the history of red algae discovery and processing in Saaremaa and its use in the Estonian confectionary industry, and building the story on the further development options and application in cosmetics, food, pharmaceuticals, and the packaging industry. The communication message includes the uniqueness of the processing and the product, local resources and traditions providing economic and social value to the community, and ecosystem impacts from the removal of nutrients from the Baltic Sea. The evaluation of the environmental footprint, clear communication, and demonstration of the activities implemented to increase production sustainability provide credibility to the communication message. Key actions include fostering collaboration with researchers, as the enterprise has been active in various research projects.

Case Study in Blue Bio-Economy: *Planet Ruhnu Gin from bladderwrack - building a story on coastal heritage*

In the Baltic Sea, on Estonia's most remote island of Ruhnu, the social enterprise *Planet Ruhnu* has launched an innovative seaweed farming operation, producing a novel ingredient and revitalizing the island's economy, creating sustainable jobs, and preserving cultural heritage while addressing environmental challenges. The farm is specialized in cultivating the bladderwrack (*Fucus vesiculosus*), a native seaweed species harvested from the pristine waters surrounding the island. After harvesting, the algae is fermented into a distinctive seaweed gin.

The seaweed farm functions as a natural biofilter, removing excess nutrients from Baltic waters, an essential environmental service in a sea plagued by eutrophication: each hectare of seaweed cultivation effectively removes nitrogen and phosphorus while producing oxygen and serving as a carbon sink. This demonstrates how blue economy initiatives can simultaneously address climate challenges, create economic opportunities and sustain cultural identity. For Ruhnu's small

population, the farm provides new skilled positions employment, reducing the need to emigrate to the mainland.

The branding strategy of Planet Ruhnu highlights the connection between innovation and tradition, with slogans like *“From Sea to Spirit: Planet Ruhnu Seaweed Gin”, “A salty breeze on your lips, your feet in the beach water—a gin made from local algae, crisp in the Nordic style with mineral notes from the sea—each sip will take you to the paradise beach of Ruhnu for a journey of the mind”, “a tangible connection to Ruhnu's maritime culture and a demonstration of how traditional knowledge can be transformed into sustainable modern enterprise. Each bottle tells the story of the island's unique environment and the community's commitment to preserving it”.*

Planet Ruhnu promoted the product participating to competitions: the gin won several awards that help to raise awareness of the local heritage and seaweed and market the product. The drink was also in the foreground when Estonian islands Saaremaa, Muhu and Ruhnu were nominated as “The Food District of 2024”. This is a campaign that is initiated by Enterprise Estonia to raise awareness and to promote local food. The seaweed harvested by Planet Ruhnu was also one main component of a popular TV show in 2024 that focused on a competition between several well-known master chefs.

<https://planeetruhnu.ee/en>

d. Implementation and monitoring

A successful communication campaign does not end with launching messages; continuous monitoring and adaptation are essential to ensure effectiveness.

- The first thing to do is to **set up metrics to track performance** across the chosen channels. This includes measuring engagement rates on social media, attendance and participation in events or webinars, feedback from surveys, or even inquiries from potential partners or customers.
- Use **engagement tactics** to keep the audience active: Interact with your audience through events, social media, and community outreach.
- **Listen carefully to audience responses** and look for recurring questions or concerns. Are there points of confusion about your bio-based products, or specific benefits that audiences

are particularly excited about? Use this feedback to refine your messaging, perhaps by simplifying complex concepts or emphasizing certain aspects more prominently.

- Additionally, **keep an eye on industry trends** and shifts in public sentiment regarding sustainability and the blue bioeconomy. Adapting to these developments can help you maintain relevance and align with emerging expectations.

By actively monitoring and adjusting your campaign, you can maximize its impact, ensuring that your communication stays engaging, clear, and effective in promoting the unique benefits of your bio-based products and services. Below some examples of adjustments actions:

Example 1: Social Media Engagement

- **Monitor:** You post a series of infographics on social media explaining how your bio-based products reduce plastic waste. You notice that posts focusing on "ocean health" receive more likes and shares, while posts on "carbon reduction" have lower engagement.
- **Adjust:** Based on this insight, you can emphasize ocean health more prominently in your future posts, perhaps incorporating stories of marine conservation or testimonials from eco-conscious customers. You could also explore simpler, more visually engaging ways to convey carbon reduction benefits to make that topic more accessible.

Example 2: Customer Feedback and Inquiries

- **Monitor:** After launching an email campaign, you receive a high number of replies with questions about what "bio-based" means. This indicates that many people are unclear on the concept and need more information.
- **Adjust:** Consider creating an easy-to-understand FAQ or a brief introductory video about bio-based products and link to it in future emails. This proactive approach can build understanding and reduce confusion, helping customers feel more confident about your products.
- **Example:** A company producing biodegradable packaging from seaweed, like [Notpla](#), shares on its website a detailed FAQ section explaining what bio-based and biodegradable mean, along with the environmental advantages of seaweed. They include educational videos that show how seaweed is harvested sustainably and outline the lifecycle of their packaging, making the benefits accessible to customers and partners alike.

Example 3: Event Participation Metrics

- **Monitor:** You hold a webinar about the environmental benefits of your blue bio-based products and notice that the Q&A segment at the end receives the most engagement, with many questions on the economic impact of your products.
- **Adjust:** For future events, allocate more time to the Q&A or even create a dedicated event to discuss economic benefits in depth. You could also add specific case studies or customer testimonials that address the economic value of bio-based products, to satisfy this interest.

By actively responding to these insights, your campaign will not only maintain relevance but also enhance trust and interest among your audiences.

UNDER REVIEW

5. Conclusions

A well-structured and strategically planned communication campaign is essential for boosting visibility, fostering trust among the target audience, generating greater interest, and strengthening your reputation within the bio-based industry.

Below are condensed few tips to communicate and promote innovations in the blue bioeconomy and related best practices:

1. Promote quality, sustainability and environmental impact

Consumers need to feel that the product is not only sustainable but also high-quality. Demonstrate that the initial materials have been transformed into something durable, innovative, functional, tasty. Emphasize that each product may have small variations due to the nature of the original materials, increasing its perceived value.

Atlantic Leather, a company making leather from fish skin, shares information on how they responsibly source materials from Iceland's fishing industry. By-products that would go to waste are turned into luxury goods throughout a zero-waste process and partnerships with certified sustainable fisheries. They display a "product journey" section that helps customers trace the raw materials and see the company's commitment to ethical sourcing.

2. Address trade-offs honestly

Be upfront about any trade-offs associated with your bio-based products or services, such as potential differences in cost, durability, or availability compared to conventional options. Transparency about these factors will build customer trust and help manage expectations.

Biome Bioplastics, a company making bio-based plastics, openly discusses that some of their bio-plastics may be more costly than conventional plastics due to sustainable sourcing and manufacturing practices. They explain this as an investment in sustainability and demonstrate how the long-term environmental benefits outweigh the initial price difference.

3. Prioritize transparent communication

Clearly communicate where the initial materials come from, how they are transformed, and the specific benefits of the product. Use social media to share images, videos, or stories that show the process of turning the initial material into a finished product, making the journey more tangible.

Evoware, an Indonesian company making edible seaweed packaging, uses a combination of Instagram videos and infographics to show the journey from seaweed farms to final products. The visuals illustrate not only the unique properties of their products, but also the local cultural connections and environmental benefits, making the concept more engaging for the audience.

4. Work on Community Engagement and collaborations

Create campaigns that actively engage consumers, such as recycling programs or collective upcycling initiatives; organize events or workshops where consumers can see firsthand how the initial materials are transformed into valuable products; showcase the community impact, gathering testimonials, photos, and stories from customers who share their support for the sustainability movement. Use social media to spread the word and reach more people. Partner with research institutes, environmental organizations or European projects, then can increase visibility and credibility.

Zero Waste Daniel is a US fashion brand that focuses on creating clothing from fabric scraps. They regularly host upcycling workshops where consumers can bring their own scraps or old clothes and learn how to turn them into something new. These events highlight sustainable fabric sourcing, as well as how the waste from traditional garment production can be repurposed.

BlueRev

Bio-based revitalisation
of local communities

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