**OSM Community Building Ideas**

Building an OSM community is a great way to learn more about and get better data on OpenStreetMap, accomplish big tasks and meet and collaborate with others in your area.

There are three kinds of people you can connect with to help build the community: active mappers; people who don’t map but might be interested; and people with organizations who can support the community or provide data.

In many cases, people are already active, or could be, but just aren’t connected together or connected to the broader OSM community, or aren’t aware of projects that are happening or ways they can help. And often they’re happy to help if you ask them!

Here are some steps to take to engage, connect and grow the community.

**Find and talk with active mappers**

These are people who are already mapping, or even already active within the community. You’ll want to find them and talk with them – they can help out with your efforts, map things, validate and check data, or even host events or do trainings for others.

In general you want to have some concrete asks and action items when you talk with active mappers. For example, ask if people have ideas for building the community. Can they attend or help out with a mapping event, or even host their own? Can they map/validate/check data on existing tasks? Can they tell their friends about OSM and community events?

Here are some steps for finding and talking to active mappers.

* Look for existing OSM communications channels in your country. Message the active communications channel regularly with updates on your work, upcoming events, asks for help, etc. For example:
  + Country or regional [talk email lists](https://lists.openstreetmap.org/listinfo) or [OSM Forum](http://forum.openstreetmap.org/)
  + The country page at wiki.openstreetmap.org
  + A country-specific OSM Facebook group, Twitter account or Meetup.com group
  + Some OSM communities may also have group chats on WhatsApp, Google Groups, Telegram, Slack or other tools
* Look for who is talking or writing about OpenStreetMap in the country
  + Search the web for “openstreetmap *your country name”* or “osm *your country name”* to see if there are blog posts or articles by or about people who are active in the community
  + If you find them, introduce yourself, tell them about your projects and ask for their help
* There may also be mappers who map a lot but aren’t connected to the community
  + Find the active mappers and message them individually: introduce yourself, give them info about the active OSM communications channels they can join, and ask if they can help.
  + Even if they live in another city or part of the country, they may be able to map remotely, like on HOT tasks, validate data or add missing data, or even organize events in their area
  + Resources to find active mappers:
    - <http://osmstats.neis-one.org/?item=countries&country=Colombia>
    - <http://resultmaps.neis-one.org/oooc>
* If you hold mapathons, mappy hours or other OSM events, make sure to have a signup sheet so you can see who attended and message them about future events/projects. Also tell them about the existing local OSM communications channels
* If there are existing mapathons/mappy hours or meetups, make sure to go and introduce yourself. If there aren’t, try organizing your own!
  + Good places to hold events: restaurants, cafes, tech spaces, libraries
  + Or do mapathons in public places like parks, streets with lots of businesses, etc.

**Find the people who aren’t mappers, but might be interested**

These are people and groups who may be interested in OSM, but don’t know about it or don’t map. With a bit of training, they can become active mappers and community members.

For any non-OSM groups, it’s often good if you have a business card, email address or website with more info about the local OSM Community. The community doesn’t have to be an officially registered organization, but that is an option if you want to pursue it.

In general, “Hello, I am with the local OpenStreetMap community” is more effective than just being a random person who wants to tell them about OpenStreetMap.

Here are some groups that may be interested in OSMs

* Existing open source and tech communities. For example, open source software groups, GIS user groups, Linux user groups, hacker groups, tech meetups, makerspaces, etc.
  + You’ll need to search the web or ask others for their ideas. Meetup.com and Maptime.io may be a good start
  + Tell them about OSM, your projects and why they are important/interesting/cool
  + Ask if they can help and offer to train them on OSM
* Universities and schools
  + Many universities have geography programs. Those professors may be interested in learning more about OpenStreetMap and in teaching their students
  + Computer programming, web development, engineering, emergency response and other related academic departments may also be interested in OSM
  + There is a program called YouthMappers that helps build OSM mapping chapters at universities. Check out their website or contact them to learn more and see how they can help: youthmappers.org
* Mapillary and OpenStreetCam
  + These are DIY street-level imagery tools, a great way to collect images that can be used to add road information, businesses, points of interest and more
  + There may already be people who use them but are not mappers on OSM. You can find them at their respective websites, or reach out to the companies themselves. Mapillary is its own company, OpenStreetCam is supported by Telenav, a GPS navigation business

**Other organizations who may want to support or have data**

These are groups who may or may not be technical, but may want to support your efforts or who might have data they can share that you can use to improve OSM – for example, road and street data, addresses, locations of important places like schools, hospitals, and so on. The key is to explain why it’s useful to help OpenStreetMap.

Again, you’ll want to have a business card, email address or website you can show them that has more info about the local OSM community, especially when talking with the government.

* Government: both local and national
  + National governments might have data you can use
  + Local governments as well – but you may need to go to their offices. Often cities and municipalities have data they are happy to share if you can explain why they should – for example, more people can use the data, they can find things easier, they can suggest improvements, the data can be used by humanitarian groups and local businesses
  + You will need to get in writing that you can use the data in OSM. Here is more information on that: <https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Import/GettingPermission>
  + Note that you can’t just import any data you find. It may be easier to use government datasets to confirm or add missing data rather than importing them wholesale.
  + If you do plan to import the data directly, there are guidelines and rules about that: <https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Import/Guidelines>
* Humanitarian organizations
  + There may be humanitarian and aid groups who already do mapping or may be interested in it to help with their programs, but not necessarily using OSM
  + You’ll need to explain OSM and why it’s useful, and see if they can help. Offer to train them and see if they can hold events or have volunteers who may want to help out
  + Examples:
    - The local Red Cross or other Red Cross societies who are active the country (often American or Dutch)
    - Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières
    - National aid agencies (for example, USAID from the United States, GTZ from Germany, AFD from France, AusAid, etc.)