

# Market Research Report



## Summary

The Foundation for Intentional Community (FIC) has undertaken a rich study of our audience to learn more about what they want and how we can better serve the movement - website users, customers, communities, and supporters.

### **During August and September 2019 we:**

- Surveyed over 1,000 people
- Conducted dozens of in-depth interviews
- Analyzed website traffic and financial statements
- Methodically asked questions to test our assumptions

The majority of advertisements we sell are for ICs, suggesting that communities crave even more exposure than what a standard directory listing can offer, and they are willing to pay for it.

### **ICs need people. We have people.**

In fact, we have a ridiculously large amount of people, over 500,000 visitors to our website annually, most of whom do not currently live in an IC. We already rank first in all appropriate keywords, without yet having Search Engine Optimized (SEO) our content. People come to look at the online directory, which receives 85% of website traffic. Comparatively, our bookstore, blog, and magazine receive a much smaller amount of visibility.

The most effective way to carry out our mission is to enhance what people are already attracted to - the online directory. By improving matchmaking functionality and adding an internal messaging feature, we can create a powerful platform for connecting people and ICs.

Through surveys we learned that about 70% of website visitors are interested in learning community building skills, yet only 15% of total visitors ever return to ic.org. By better organizing our wealth of resources into a Knowledge Base and uploadable Communities Document Library, we can become a place visitors return to time and time again for quality information and fresh inspiration.

The research compiled in this report was conducted by FIC Staff. We strove to use objective methods and rigorously test our assumptions.

**Stage One** was focused on exploratory research, including *secondary research* from website and search engine analytics, as well as *primary research* from surveys and calls to random samples of all major audience groups.

**Stage Two** was focused on forming a business model *hypothesis* based on the research findings, which then developed into a Business Plan.

**Stage Three** was focused on testing the assumptions made in the Business Plan through more surveys and calls to additional sample groups using more and more specific questions.



Market research is on-going as we begin building the new ic.org platform. We will continue to conduct surveys, as well as engage users in a round of beta testing with focus groups. We welcome the ideas of anyone reading this report through this brief survey form. [Please share your ideas.](#)

We now want to make these findings available to anyone wishing to use them to support the communities movement.

In community,

**Cynthia Tina**

*(FIC Communications Director and Lead Market Researcher)*

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## **STAGE 1 - Exploratory Research**

### Secondary Research Findings

#### **Here are some basic facts about the communities in our Directory\*:**

- Only 6 out of 1076 communities in the directory are NOT open to visitors or new members
- Only 27 are open to visitors but not new members
- # of established communities: 603
- # of forming communities: 462
- # of re-forming communities: 50
- # of disbanded communities: 10

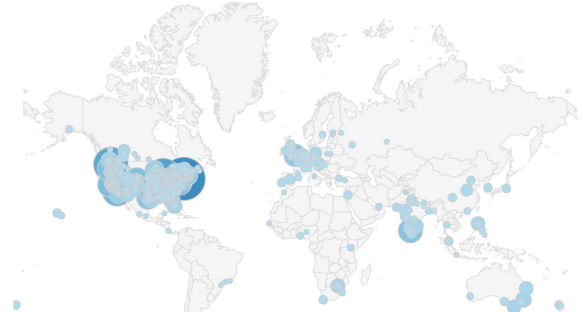
\*The actual number of communities in the Directory at any given time fluctuates between 1,000-1,500 listings.

#### **Here are some basic facts about our website:**

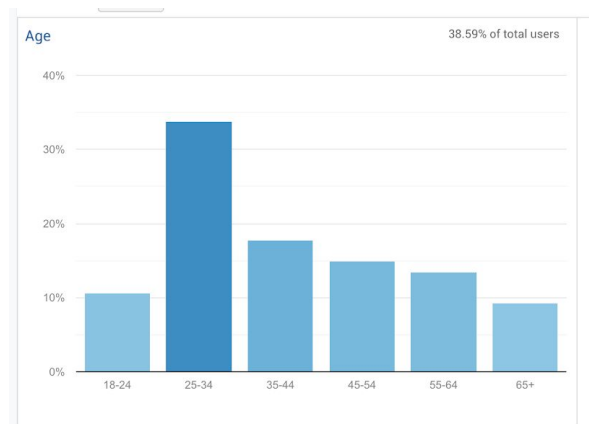
- 63% of users come from organic search
- Estimated 2% estimate of total users already live in ICs
- Estimated 70% of total traffic interested in visiting communities or learning community skills
  - Remaining percentage interested in joining or starting a community
- 85% or more of website traffic goes to Directory pages compared to other pages
- “commune” is the most common search term (40% of total search traffic)
- Website traffic
  - Unique users per month - 40-50k

- Percentage return users from previous month - 15% on average
- Number of pageviews - 200k / month average
- Avg pageviews per visit - 3.38
- Avg time per page - 3 min 42 sec

- 88.97% of website users live in the United States, primarily in cities on the East and West coasts.

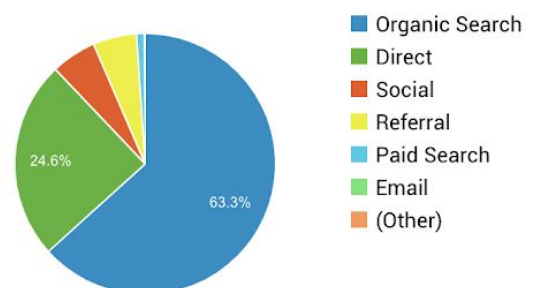


- Website users are predominantly in the 25-34 year old range, with slightly more females than males. Facebook users are also primarily female.



- The majority of users come to ic.org through organic search, i.e. searching Google.

Top Channels



- Below are our top keywords organized based on how much traffic “volume” each word receives (how many people are searching for each word on Google). The word “commune” far exceeds other words in terms of search volume. Based on these results we should focus our messaging on “commune,” “intentional communities” (note plural), and “communal living.” We should also form close partnerships with websites using the other terms and produce our own content with those terms.

#### Organic Search Positions 1 - 100 (1,742) ⓘ

Manage columns 10/15 Export

	<input type="checkbox"/>	Keyword	Pos. ↕	Diff. ↕	Traffic % ↕	Volume ↕	KD% ↕	CPC (USD) ↕	URL	SERP
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	commune	6 → 6	0	7.62	27,100	84.34	0.00	<a href="https://www.ic... nes/">https://www.ic... nes/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	commune	7 → 7	0	6.10	27,100	84.34	0.00	<a href="https://www.ic... une/">https://www.ic... une/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	breitenbush	10 → 10	0	0.27	8,100	69.75	1.84	<a href="https://www.ic... 018/">https://www.ic... 018/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	intentional communities	1 → 1	0	9.52	3,600	66.69	2.79	<a href="https://www.ic.org/">https://www.ic.org/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	intentional communities	2 → 2	0	2.63	3,600	66.69	2.79	<a href="https://www.ic... ory/">https://www.ic... ory/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	communal living	3 → 3	0	1.82	3,600	77.58	2.02	<a href="https://www.ic.org/">https://www.ic.org/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	gesundheit institute	5 → 5	0	0.16	2,900	81.00	0.00	<a href="https://www.ic... ent/">https://www.ic... ent/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	the farm tennessee	7 → 7	0	0.36	1,600	76.82	0.11	<a href="https://www.ic... arm/">https://www.ic... arm/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	cohousing	3 → 3	0	0.15	1,600	60.63	3.21	<a href="https://www.ic... ies/">https://www.ic... ies/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	what is a commune	4 → 4	0	0.63	1,600	88.08	0.00	<a href="https://www.ic... une/">https://www.ic... une/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	grateful dead house	6 → 6	0	0.45	1,600	75.16	0.92	<a href="https://www.ic... use/">https://www.ic... use/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	dancing rabbit	7 → 7	0	0.36	1,600	71.15	0.56	<a href="https://www.ic... age/">https://www.ic... age/</a> ↗	
>	<input type="checkbox"/>	village homes davis	8 → 8	0	0.21	1,300	75.43	3.95	<a href="https://www.ic... -ca/">https://www.ic... -ca/</a> ↗	

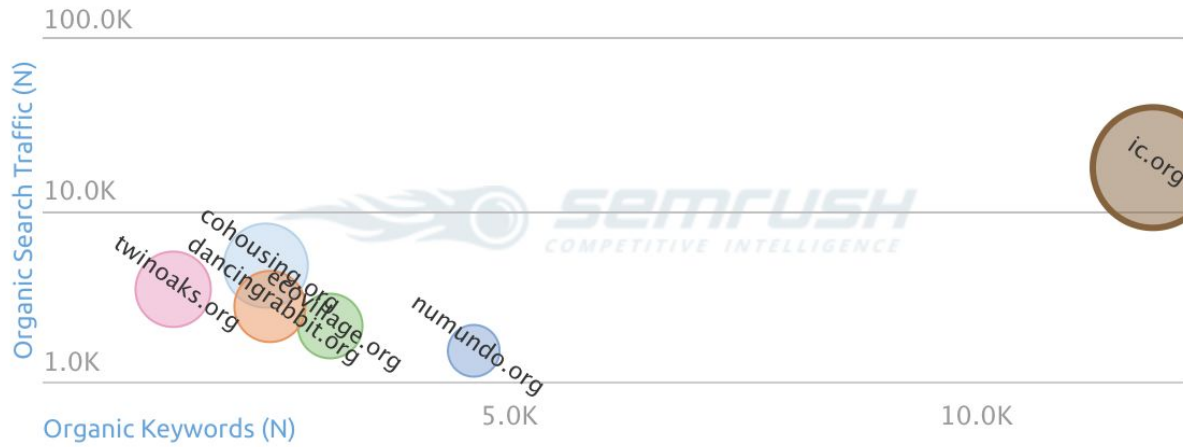
- These are the other websites that use similar keywords (our top “competitors”).

#### live update MAIN ORGANIC COMPETITORS (13,890) ⓘ

Competitor	Com. Level	Com. Keywords	SE Keywords
<a href="https://cohousing.org">cohousing.org</a>	<div><div></div></div>	<a href="#">317</a>	<a href="#">2.4k</a>
<a href="https://ecovillage.org">ecovillage.org</a>	<div><div></div></div>	<a href="#">180</a>	<a href="#">3.1k</a>
<a href="https://twinoaks.org">twinoaks.org</a>	<div><div></div></div>	<a href="#">94</a>	<a href="#">1.4k</a>
<a href="https://dancingrabbit.org">dancingrabbit.org</a>	<div><div></div></div>	<a href="#">72</a>	<a href="#">2.4k</a>
<a href="https://numundo.org">numundo.org</a>	<div><div></div></div>	<a href="#">81</a>	<a href="#">4.6k</a>

- Compared to these other websites ic.org receives far greater traffic. This means we are the top website for anyone searching our key words.

## COMPETITIVE POSITIONING MAP



- Of all the pages on our website, the vast majority of traffic goes to our Directory pages. You can see the number of pageviews for our top pages in the last week.

Page	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit	Page Value
	43,479 % of Total: 100.00% (43,479)	33,305 % of Total: 100.00% (33,305)	00:01:41 Avg for View: 00:01:41 (0.00%)	13,366 % of Total: 100.00% (13,366)	58.32% Avg for View: 58.32% (0.00%)	30.74% Avg for View: 30.74% (0.00%)	\$0.00 % of Total: 0.00% (\$0.00)
1. <a href="http://www.ic.org/directory/index.php">www.ic.org/directory/index.php</a>	3,148 (7.24%)	1,632 (4.90%)	00:01:00	898 (6.72%)	26.64%	16.84%	\$0.00 (0.00%)
2. <a href="http://www.ic.org/index.php">www.ic.org/index.php</a>	3,082 (7.09%)	2,393 (7.19%)	00:00:58	2,124 (15.89%)	31.86%	30.69%	\$0.00 (0.00%)
3. <a href="http://www.ic.org/directory/intentional-communities-by-country/index.php">www.ic.org/directory/intentional-communities-by-country/index.php</a>	1,921 (4.42%)	1,021 (3.07%)	00:00:24	178 (1.33%)	18.64%	5.62%	\$0.00 (0.00%)
4. <a href="http://www.ic.org/community-classifieds/index.php">www.ic.org/community-classifieds/index.php</a>	1,313 (3.02%)	731 (2.19%)	00:00:36	237 (1.77%)	30.80%	13.48%	\$0.00 (0.00%)
5. <a href="http://www.ic.org/directory/listings/index.php">www.ic.org/directory/listings/index.php</a>	988 (2.27%)	830 (2.49%)	00:02:03	135 (1.01%)	61.48%	26.52%	\$0.00 (0.00%)
6. <a href="http://www.ic.org/directory/communes/index.php">www.ic.org/directory/communes/index.php</a>	985 (2.27%)	859 (2.58%)	00:03:37	729 (5.45%)	50.75%	47.72%	\$0.00 (0.00%)
7. <a href="http://www.ic.org/community-with-opening/index.php">www.ic.org/community-with-opening/index.php</a>	930 (2.14%)	378 (1.13%)	00:00:55	41 (0.31%)	43.90%	9.14%	\$0.00 (0.00%)
8. <a href="http://www.ic.org/directory/search/index.php">www.ic.org/directory/search/index.php</a>	895 (2.06%)	602 (1.81%)	00:01:10	65 (0.49%)	36.92%	9.16%	\$0.00 (0.00%)
9. <a href="http://www.ic.org/directory/maps/index.php">www.ic.org/directory/maps/index.php</a>	750 (1.72%)	365 (1.10%)	00:01:16	135 (1.01%)	40.00%	16.40%	\$0.00 (0.00%)
10. <a href="http://www.ic.org/directory/ecovillages/index.php">www.ic.org/directory/ecovillages/index.php</a>	354 (0.81%)	294 (0.88%)	00:03:11	172 (1.29%)	53.49%	42.37%	\$0.00 (0.00%)

- Please note that our blog posts and product pages are not optimized for SEO. The vast majority of content on our website is difficult to find through search engines and difficult for the user to find within our website itself.

All of the above information gives us a picture of who our main audience is (young-ish Americans) and what they are searching for (commune, intentional communities, communal living) and how they are very likely to find our website. That's excellent! We have great "findability." The key now is to generate profit from our users by offering products and services that they want and are willing to pay for.

## Primary Research Findings

Primary research was focused on capturing insights from a variety of audience segments using both phone interviews and online surveys.

### Audience segments:

- Bookstore customer
- Magazine subscriber
- Donor
- Advertiser
- Community in the Directory
- Newsletter & website users

### Primary audience types:

- People who live in an intentional community
- People who lived in a community in the past
- People want to visit community(ies)
- People wanting to join a community
- People wanting to start a community
- People wanting to learn about intentional communities in general
- People who have never lived in intentional community

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*"I'm trying to build skills and learn the necessary steps. I have a few friends who want to do it with me so we're just trying to learn the way that people usually do things, so connecting with those people is valuable, which you all have already done for me. Excited to look through what I just bought. Seeing a diversity of possibilities is helpful." - [Michael Coleman](#), bookstore customer, phone interview*

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*“My community is an urban project that’s been around for 10 years. We have consulted and supported several community projects in our city. We are focused on affordable housing. About half of the people who reach out to us, found us through ic.org. We are grateful for you all and helping people find us who otherwise might never had!” - Nicholas Shaver, McGregor House, phone interview*

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## **WEBSITE POP UP SURVEY**

**A website survey was open for 48 hours and generated 62 responses. [See full survey results.](#) These are the highlights...**

### **1. Why are you interested in intentional communities?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ I live in an intentional community	0.00%	0
▼ I'm seeking a community to visit or join	79.66%	47
▼ I want to start an intentional community	20.34%	12
TOTAL		59

This tells us that the majority of people visiting our website are “seeking a community to visit or join,” a much fewer number want to start an intentional community, and few to none already live in an intentional community. However, the open “other” option produced a more varied and nuanced response...

*“A combination of wanting to find and join one and wanting to start my own”*

*“I seek to find like minded people, and live within an intentional community. I believe they are an important key into a possible paradigm for future society.”*

*“I'm curious about how these communities might benefit elders as we age.”*

### **2. How could we improve our website and services to help you find everything you need?**

Many people said they were hit with the survey popup too soon, before they had a chance to use the website. This indicates that 1. We can make the survey pop up later, and 2. Many new people are coming to our website, people who want to engage enough to fill out a survey on their first visit (this is an easily engaged audience!)

Still, we received a number of helpful pieces of feedback. It seems that everyone was engaging or wanting to engage with our Directory (not other types of content).

*“The map feature is great! It has helped me to plan out a trip to visit several IC's in the month of September--allowing me to plan a route to maximize my time. One thing to consider is that it is sometimes hard to reach some of the IC's. I'm waiting on several emails. I will try to call next, but it would be nice to receive an email response. Not sure how that could be improved, but just wanted to share that. Once I visit some of these IC's, I will know more about the description accuracy. I have run into trying to find IC's that are actual communes is a bit tricky. I have often been deceived into thinking that a particular IC was a commune, only to find that it is a neighborhood association of homeowners, etc. Not at all a commune! But, providing more clarity in the style of living would help. I'm really seeking information on alternative housing, off-grid living, permaculture, and communal living/sharing. It's hard to wade through all of the IC's to find EXACTLY what I'm looking for.”*

*“Improve search features, group communities into various categories for perusing such as - anarchist, primitive, advanced technology, nudist friendly, polyamorous, vegan/vegetarian, pet friendly, aging, diverse nationalities, etc.”*

*“Have a legend explaining what the meaning of certain phrases are.”*

*“Insert a filter for religious based groups. That's a big factor for me to NOT be part of a religious homestead. It would be nice to separate out those communities. Also a SAVE function would be cool, so while searching I can save my favorites to contact at a later date.”*

*“A more advanced classifieds and search feature.”*

## **MEMBERS SURVEY**

**100 FIC Members were contacted via email. Within a two day period, 10 completed the survey. [See full survey results](#). These are the highlights...**

### **1. Which best describes you?**

ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ I currently live in an intentional community	60.00%	6
▼ I lived in an intentional community in the past	10.00%	1
▼ I'm starting an intentional community	10.00%	1
▼ I have never lived in an intentional community	20.00%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>10</b>

## 2. Why are you an FIC Member?

*"I want to support a worthy organization whose focus is important to me and whose benefits to the intentional communities movement are obvious."*

*"Strongly believe that intentional communities, esp. Co-Housing, is the way our nation will learn to live together peacefully and develop healthier, happier, more affordable lifestyles that will save our earth. It will also be the one living arrangement that will keep millions of older Americans from being alone, being lonely, becoming inactive & senile before their time."*

*"Our community is listed in the FIC directory. Seems appropriate to be a member to help financially support the organization."*

*"I love community and want to support the movement"*

## 3. What is the top benefit that has FIC brought to you or your community?

*"People have found our community both through Communities magazine and through the directory, we've been able to share some of what we've learned and to network with other communarians, activists/educators, and seekers through articles in the magazine, and we've recruited new residents through combo ads online and in the magazine. These platforms have affirmed the value and relevance of our community experiment, have helped it be more successful, and have also made our connections to a wider movement more clear (so helped us feel supported rather than isolated)."*

*"I believe the top benefit is a feeling of strong connection: knowing you are an important part of something that helps so many people and that will be there for you."*

*"Inquiries from prospective new members."*

*"the ability to list in the community directory and be found by interested people"*

4. What ideas do you have for how FIC could improve its service to communities and people seeking community?

*“Anything that could make the vast resources FIC has already produced more easily accessible to those who would benefit from them would be a great service (for example, a better searchable index of past magazine and directory articles and of online posts). So would easier ways for community seekers to find what they're looking for, through "community search consultants" and/or some more automated systems. Perhaps an irresistible membership package that would draw in both communities and seekers while providing service to both.”*

*“Getting local newspapers, magazines, radio programs to run articles that tell what it really is! Too many people think Intentional Community means "hippie commune" or "religious co-op". I have been trying for almost 5 years to start co-housing community on the Mendocino Coast of California, but can't find enough people who understand what it is. Even Planning & Building Dept. are pretty ignorant. I give them articles, books, magazines....but they don't read them.”*

*“I do not find the web site very user friendly.”*

*“More connection with the full-time recreational vehicle community. Yall are missing this HUGE mobile intentional community organized as groups like the Escapers. Running events page organized by region, available free to any member IC.”*

*“Recommend podcasts ... better categorize the types of intentional communities available”*

*“host online meet and greets for people considering community”*

**FACEBOOK SURVEY**

**A Facebook post was shared on our page and in various intentional community groups. We received 55 responses. [See full survey results](#). These are the highlights...**

1. Why are you interested in intentional communities? (select all that apply)



ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ I currently live in an intentional community	10.91%	6
▼ I lived in an intentional community in the past	23.64%	13
▼ I want to join an intentional community	60.00%	33
▼ I want to visit an intentional community	38.18%	21
▼ I want to start an intentional community	40.00%	22
▼ I want to learn about intentional communities	52.73%	29
Total Respondents: 55		

## 2. What kind of information or support would be helpful in your intentional community journey?

These are some common themes and interests that came up....

- Basics of starting community (step-by-step, legal structures, problem solving, decision making, purchasing land)
- Elder seeking community (especially intergenerational)
- Networking and learning (events, information)
- Ideas for improving ic.org and sharing knowledge
- How to join a community and find the best fit

*“More online ways to see local & regional networks, events, & ICs forming.”*

*“Start up information:*

*“I am an elder interested in a multi-generational, affordable community. Most are cost prohibitive for those of us with limited financial resources yet have intangible gifts to offer. Also, the IC website is confusing to navigate when looking for specifics.”*

*“I stayed with a group who operated a successful community. I can bring my experience forward to all groups interested”*

*“A better functioning website search. Finding the best group is not easily done as it is set up. I would like to have a "come spend the night" designation for communities that are open to camp style visitors who may then seek to stay more if everyone is agreeable. Making it easier to have like minded kind folk on the road to share a plate with.”*

*“We would love something like the "Commune in a Box" projects proposed coverage. The different policies of income sharing communities on various topics from decision making to expulsion to pregnancy to pets. Why re-invent the wheel, lets take these existing policies and make them available to new young communities (like Cambia where i live) so that they can avoid creating them by scratch.”*

*“I think there just needs to be more intentional communities. There aren't enough options in Colorado.”*

*“sharing of stories of how successful communities were formed, how they did it and suggestions for doing things better”*

*“legal issues - pooling resources to purchase land - transferring deeds and titles to other people ie family and estate planning - how is land and resources structured and recognized legally zoning bylaws to apply for development permits to build an intentional community - how to start one if one has no land or money - joining intentional communities in countries other than my own ie visas legal requirements the beliefs and values of the intentional community how will the land be used and zoned who has access and control over what resources conflict resolution - what to do if you or someone in the community do not share same values beliefs or operate in a fair equitable manner ie paying their fair share working etc aging in place in an intentional community how are the single vulnerable elderly cared for how will assets be distributed if one dies without any heirs or intestate locations of intentional communities database so i can find one in my area if I want to join one, or start one in my community if i can't find one where i am. I see many large parcels of land and think oh that would make a nice eco village etc but I'm 9,000 owing on a student loan and no credit card. So it's a steep uphill climb to buying land or my own place.”*

*“what is necessary to start one. what are common pitfalls/successes?”*

*“Just seems so overwhelming to start and there's so much pushback from people in our culture”*

*“written community bylaws, including; consensus decision-making procedures, common areas, homesite ownership status.”*

*“Land purchasing advice, networking, legal advice.”*

*“What is available for older adults? Ideally i'd Like to live in a multigenerational community 🙌”*

*“I'd like to learn about how the 'self' and the 'collective' are structured at ICs, in terms of redefining concepts of responsibility, consciousness, potential, and reward. Through tours/workshops/podcasts, I'd like to learn about day-to-day happenings within ICs and how these actions impact both the IC and non-IC ecosystems that surround. Lastly, I'd like to learn what routines I can adopt that will bolster the IC model without technically living in one.”*

## **STAGE 2 - Hypothesis Generation**

**Our hypothesis took the form of a [Business Plan](#) which we then further researched and tested.**

## **STAGE 3 - Testing**

In this phase our goal was to “test” or “validate” our proposed business model as much as possible before beginning business development. We did this by researching current sales and engagement with the services we currently offer and plan to develop further in our new model, such as advertisement and engagement with the online directory.

### **DIRECTORY USERS - challenges and values**

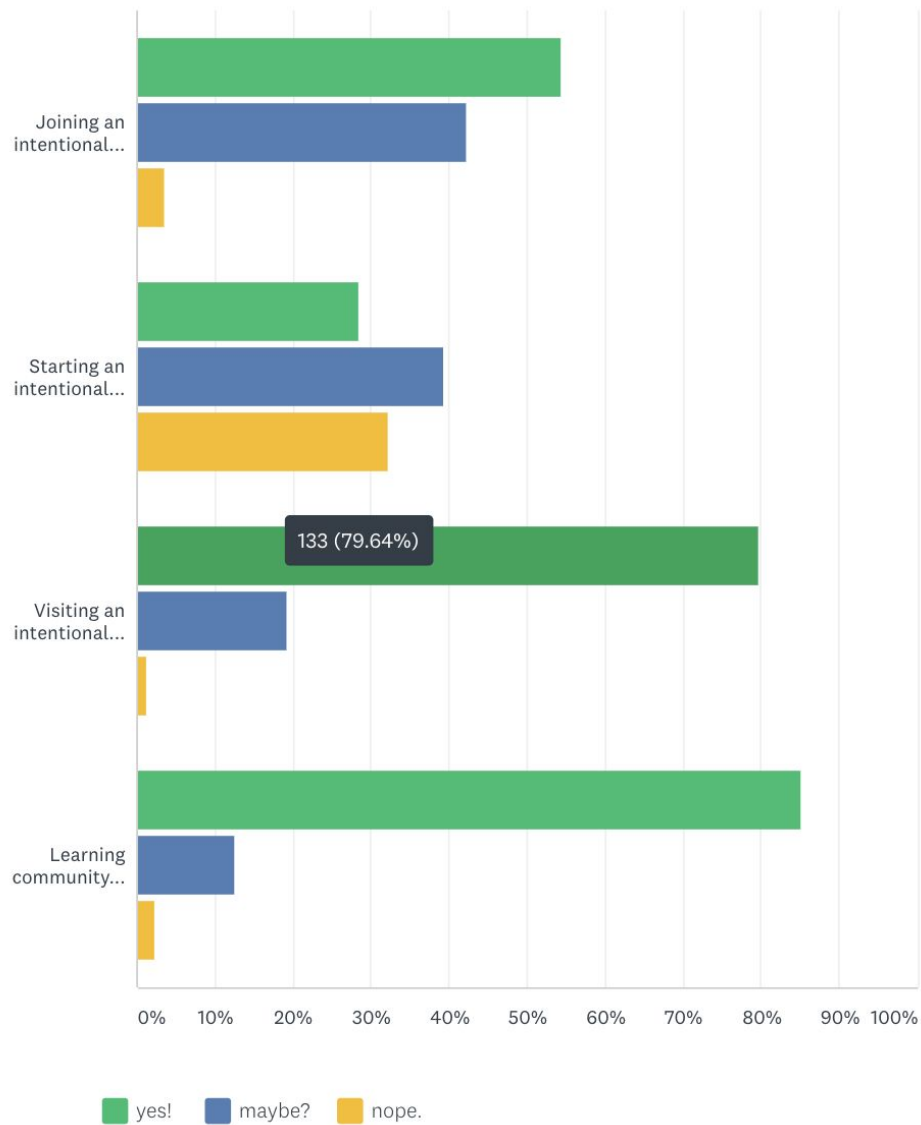
**A survey was created as a pop-up on ic.org. Within a two day period, the pop-up was viewed 3000 times and the survey completed 173 times. [See full survey results](#). These are the highlights...**

1. I'm interested in joining, starting, visiting, learning, starting an intentional community...

As you can see below, most people are interested in learning and visiting a community. Some want to join and people have the most uncertainty about starting a community. This validates our focus on educating and connecting people.

## I'm interested in...

Answered: 173 Skipped: 0



*Actual order of questions was made randomized.*



## 2. What is your biggest challenge or fear about living in community?

personal<sub>want</sub> many<sub>sure</sub> move<sub>fit</sub> challenge<sub>connection</sub> lack<sub>right</sub>  
living<sub>Finding one</sub> fear<sub>conflict</sub> people<sub>along</sub>  
community<sub>everyone</sub> Finding<sub>biggest challenge</sub>  
privacy<sub>everything</sub> needs<sub>Cost</sub> work<sub>none</sub> make<sub>seems</sub> one<sub>will</sub>  
enough



### Highlighted responses...

The quality of the people involved and our chemistry with them. And having it be a safe, educational, supportive community environment for my three small children

I have never found a place yet who accepts weird people like me. But if I am to stay alive I need to stop trying to be normal and just be me.

Getting the organizational structure figured out before moving forward. Initial funding.

Balancing different levels of intimacy/social connection with time alone

conflict due to dogmatic beliefs or conflict arising from living in close quarters.

Change and fear of not fitting in.

Freedom

Are the people normal, do I get my own room and is it nice, can I financially make it work?

Acceptance by the locals

Stability and being able to visit family again

That people won't like me... that I won't find acceptance.

Compatibility

poor governance - unwise, unsustainable and/or power tripping leadership. Also many members of intentional communities might have very challenging personalities or states of mental health

Prices in Cohousing communities seems to be very high and increasing faster than surrounding markets. I fear it is becoming an upper middle class exclusive community.

That I won't like the people or get along with them. Also that I won't have my own space.

My husband is not convinced. He's worried there wouldn't be enough privacy or the house would be too small.

Where are they?

### 3. Why do you think community living is important?

A word cloud of responses to the question 'Why do you think community living is important?'. The words are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape, with some words appearing larger than others. The words include: family, well, isolated, human, nature, made, aspects, create, meant, live, work, working together, sharing, resources, values, help, around, social, things, important, loving, connection, earth, think, whole, better, better way, need, people, coming, together, shared, focus, community, brings, living, time, people, minded, people, human, know, life, seems, support, planet, together, respect, learn, SHARING, LOVE, way, village, resources, sustainability, believe, safe, us, provides, part, shared, space, live, community, also, way, live, help, people, feels.

The responses to this question were very touching. People didn't necessarily talk about a social movement or changing the world, people talked about simple things... raising their kids in a good environment, the natural human desire for community, staying healthy into old age, the practicality of sharing resources, caring for others, friendship, support, peaceful living...

This inspired me to draft a [BrandScript](#) based on the findings.

#### **Highlighted responses...**

Connection, quality, and alignment. I crave human connection and peaceful living.

Lower impact on Mother Earth, Not driving all over to meet social & other needs. Living with like minded people, focus on members (tribe) who are living in a better way rather than people stuck in the american trap.

Because that's how humans are supposed to live with the earth

Support in living. I don't think we weren't meant to be this individualistic and separate with such an aversion to needing one another. Success is more based on our co-creative and collaborating plenty than the lie we have done it alone and independent of others and that economics are the only measure of that success. We could be so much more inclusive and evolutionary in our ways of living as we open to a different process and set of agreed on values.

Saves resources, encourages responsibility for caring for others.

We are made to be part of some thing. To work together to achieve some thing. We are so isolated and addicted to technology and stuff it is time for a change

We all need support, belonging, and vegetables

i believe it is a human need and the lack of community and belonging leads to a lot of world problems and health issues.

I think it is genuinely how we are meant to be living, ancient history demonstrates it.

It feels closer to how humans are meant to live. Being separated into individual homes and economic units means we're all exhausted, all struggling for resources and are yet isolated from one another.

Quality and longevity of life, establishing a sense of family and support, having our resources go further.

Connection with people engaged in a common purpose and passion with shared beliefs and values very important to me.

Because it teaches people to get along better, accept one another for who they are. Sharing love and respect for all is the only way we can thrive and keep our planet safe from further harm, too.

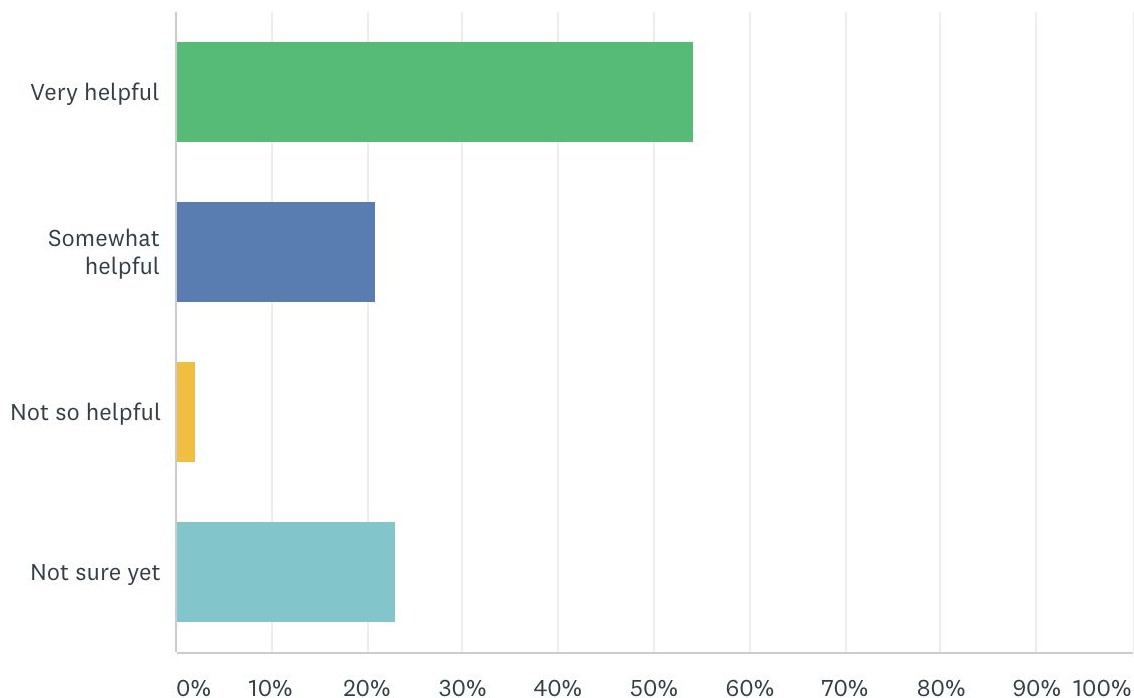
allows opportunities for sharing, friendship, support

Combined resources. Love the idea of shared space such as community gardens, entertaining areas and business centers. Also, as a single mom with no family near, I like the idea of 'village' mentality and helping your neighbor.

## **DIRECTORY USERS - helpfulness of the directory**

Another survey was created as a pop-up on ic.org. Within a two day period, it was completed 48 times. (The survey was a bit more specific and “company centric”, which explains the lower response rate.) [See full survey results](#). These are the highlights...

### **1. How helpful is our directory of intentional communities?**



### **2. How could we make the directory better?**

Many said that they had only just arrived and hadn't yet used the directory. Many said they were still trying to figure out what it is.

### **Highlighted responses...**

Explaining the objective criteria used to include the communities on the map. Considering amplify the map of communities.

I'm looking for a way to start a community but I don't see many resources on that topic.



Not sure yet. I single. But would like to enter this lifestyle but I am looking for a partner. How does one do that?

#### More User Friendly

The search function is rather odd and doesn't return what a searcher might expect. When I searched on the name of my community, Village Hearth Cohousing, from the front page, it was the 10th entry to turn up in the results, even though some of the others didn't even include all three words in their listings. When I went to the cohousing section first and searched for "Village Hearth", we were on the 13th page. When I searched for Village Hearth Cohousing" we were on the 19th page. When I searched for North Carolina from the Cohousing page, it gave me 129 communities from all over the world. The advanced search does much better but many people won't go there.

I am not sure. It would be helpful, if there was a list of communities with their philosophy statement, i.e., political, religious affiliation, emphasis, etc. Maybe this exists and I am unaware where to find it.

Remove listings with no activity after a set amount of time. Many of these haven't updated in years and no longer exist.

### 3. What help might you need to find an intentional community to visit or join?

Many said that they don't know yet.

#### **Highlighted responses...**

Be able to search by amenities

More information about cost

Help to find the facebook pages of communities which seems the best way to reach them

what is the investment needed?

I'm not looking myself, but you could help others find us by having a better search engine. It would also help to include more fine-grained categories than forming, which sounds like they are just getting started. "Have land" and "Building" come to mind to indicate a group that is further along in the process.

Perhaps a platform to help individuals and families interested in speaking with other local residents open to exploring various ways of enhancing cooperative habitat experience, from a full-blown eco-village on down to humbler ambitions of sharing a house with like-minded souls because your home has too many bedrooms.

### **WEBSITE USERS - testing popularity of new features**

Another survey was created as a pop-up on ic.org. Within a five day period, it was completed about 300 times. [See full survey results](#). These are the highlights...

Average score of each feature (higher score = more desirable)

SCORE	FEATURE
1.947598253	Create a profile that displays your interests and skills to prospective community mates.
2.09589041	Receive notifications when communities that match your interests join our Directory.
2.112820513	See when a community has “verified” through a background check.
2.014634146	Chat with people and communities through an internal messaging system.
1.835365854	See the average amount of time it takes a particular community to respond to messages.
2.156862745	Access a library of intentional community handbooks and agreements.
2.148717949	Save and favorite communities that you like.

The small differentiation indicates there is little preference distinction amongst features. In general, people like all of the features.

**Additionally, responders made the following suggestions (selection)...**

#### **Suggested features:**

Filters, an ‘others viewed’ part, small boxes of info about questions to ask, points to consider when

choosing a community, looking beyond the word cult

Filter for community 'rules'. Eg I have a dog and many communities will not accept pets, so this narrows down options considerably. Information about where to start in setting up a community, people who would agree to mentor or communities who would agree to visits by people trying to start their own communities would be really helpful.

Save recent searches or show dots on the map as different color for those that have been viewed.

Index to articles by topics like. Community Land Trust, Membership Processes, Privacy in community, religious & political freedoms in community, Site Analysis, Visioning processes, Zoning, Building relationships with neighbors/community.....

Keep it free! And be able to filter communities with keywords like "vegan" "raw" etc...

Being able to list what skills and education you have to be able to offer the community.

Honest reviews from visitors and residents of each place.

A forum to discuss what has and hasn't worked in the communities and why as well as people's experiences in communities; both positive and negative.

Number currently living in a community and age range. How many are over 60 and how does the community feel about that. Requirements for being approved to live there long term. Whether there is a temporary housing available for those wanting to try it out. Are visiting travelers allowed to bring their pets? Maybe #6 will answer most of those questions.

Community matching service, like a match.com, but for intentional communities. Also, info about communities that take volunteers or allow for other off-site member participation

Pictures or videos 😊

More and lengthy descriptions of type-s (community living, money, partnership, governance, etc) with examples of communities for better understanding. Thank you

The ability to tag references and communities of interest for personal reference without broadcasting some sort of like/dislike opinion would be helpful.

THIS IS AWESOME!! I want all these features on here! Make it more like couchsurfing, except instead of individual profiles it focuses on community profiles. Just make it easier to find and match to and save and actually get in touch with (!! ) the communities with my interests! THANKS FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO!!

Organize a section for families! Family friendly communities, events, etc. So many communities cannot support a family with children and it'd be great to have a section of communities that do :-)

Index of cross referenced interests, inspirations and areas of expertise of communities. Checklists of features and qualities of the communities and their membership.

That communities provide a full description of the candidate/volunteer profile they are looking for.

Images of various community floorplans, or housing layouts including landscaping. Samples of successful agreements, including legal/ ownership/ incorporation agreements Description of

successful conflict resolution schemes or experiences

Require communities to update every 3 months or consign their listing to a separate, historic listing. Also, a link if you want to be contacted by a community to arrange a visit or more info.

A "starter kit" for those looking to start their own communities.

Not sure if this is already on your site. I'm traveling in a small camper and would be interested in staying with communities along the way. An index of communities who allow this by zip code or area code would be helpful.

I'd like communities to list their average housing purchase costs up front; saves time and disappointment. Thus far, I have not found any established community with house purchase costs under \$300k. I had no idea "intentional community for seniors" meant "wealthy only!"

### Suggested community criteria to display:

More distinct macro-economic leanings, such as are they capitalist, socialist, libertarian socialist, democratic socialist, etc... A short description of the major macro-economic theories of human kind that the community tends toward may help.

Gender and race information, lgbtq friendly? Other profile demographics

Contact information

religious or spiritual bases or foundation--types of commitment--costs of living--length of time the community has existed

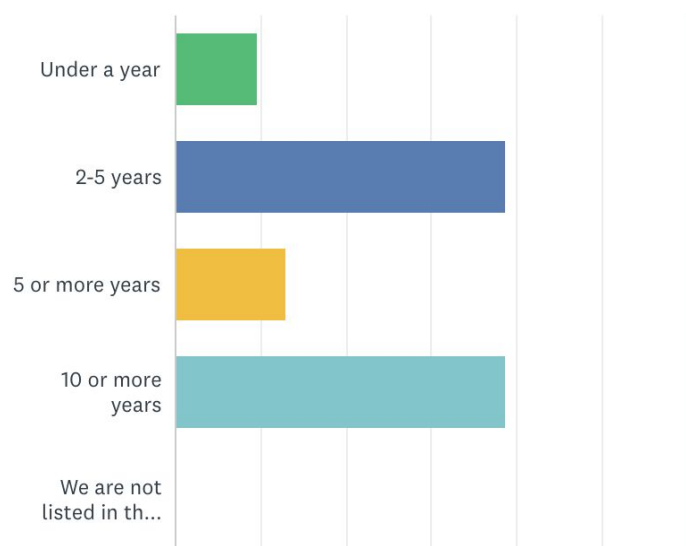
Specific interests of potential groups. I.E. arts, pottery, camera buffs, gardening, raising small animals, raising larger animals, etc.

### **COMMUNITIES - testing interest in new features**

[See full survey results.](#)

32 communities responded to a survey sent randomly via email to 200 communities listed in the Directory.

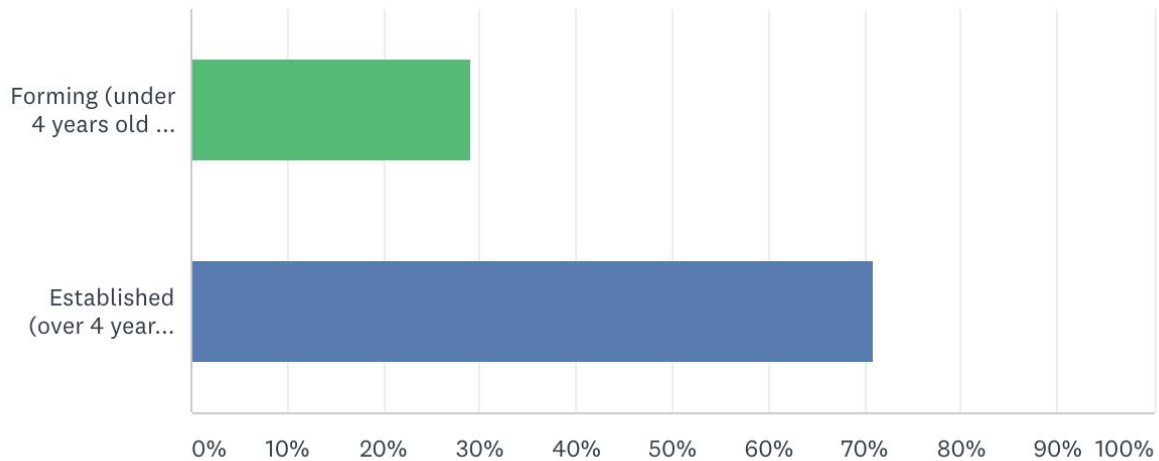
70% of those communities considered themselves as established communities





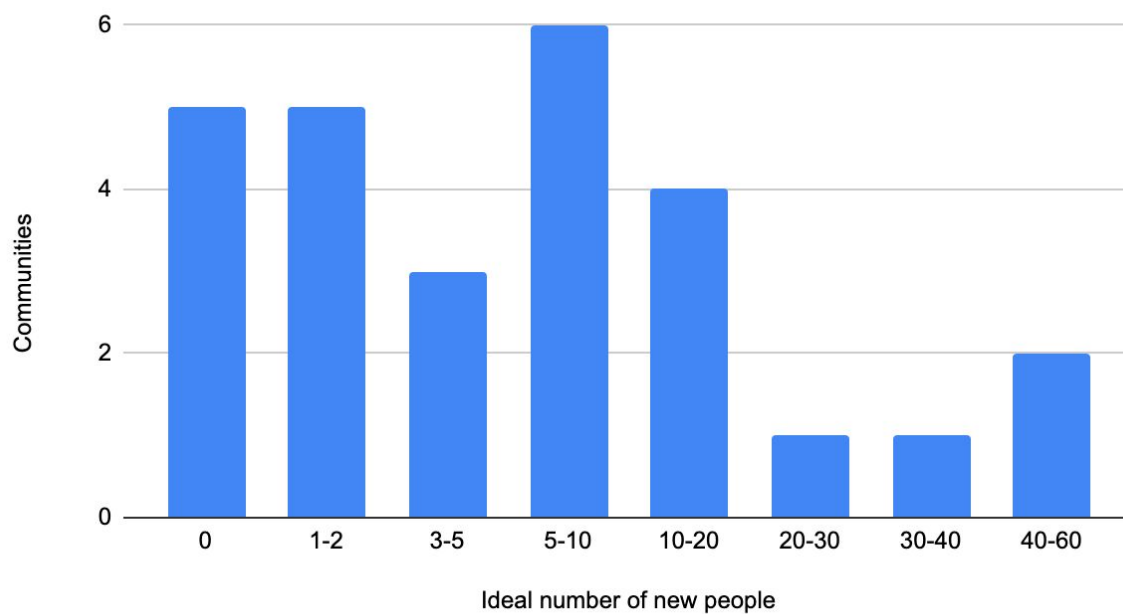
(over 4 years old with at least 2 adult members).

Most have been listed in FIC's Directory for over one year, and many for 10 years or more.



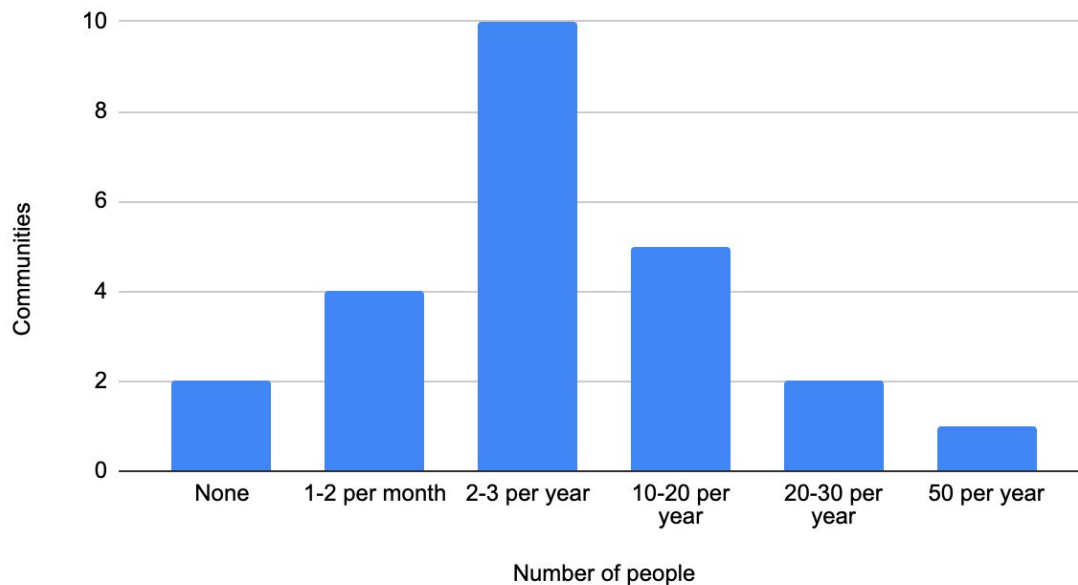
The graph below displays how many new visitors or members the communities would like to receive in total or per year.

Communities vs. Ideal number of new people



The graph below displays how many people find out about the communities through FIC (www.ic.org, Communities magazine, print Communities Directory, etc.)

Communities vs. Number of people who find them



Communities were asked to select all of the potential new services that would be useful to their community. Most all of the services were selected as useful to most communities.

▼ Enhanced advertising opportunities on ic.org	31.03%	9
▼ Internal messaging amongst individuals and other communities	34.48%	10
▼ Knowledge base of our best resources about community building	62.07%	18
▼ Automated “matchmaking” between people and communities	51.72%	15
▼ Ability to upload photos and videos to your community page	48.28%	14
▼ Optional “verification” badge for communities that have completed a background check	41.38%	12

Here’s some highlighted answers from the one response question at the end of the survey.

I would advise against a "verification badge"--it would open ic.org and any employees or volunteers to extreme legal liability.

Being able to pay for program advertisements to your mailing list/s would probably be the most useful for us.

update requirements to continue to have you community listed in the online directory. I have definitely found many outdated listing in the past when I was searching for communities. Personally I just realized that my listing was out dated, many things have changed in the past year. also some way to have a listing reviewed could be

beneficial. I personally know how hard it is to take all these ideas and dreams and put them into words. I don't really know what the solution here is but think of a service where you could work with someone to help you best describe the community you dream of helping to build.

Please find one service (and one rate structure, either a specific dollar amount or sliding scale) that pays enough for people working on it to have all the services they need to live on without stress.

When editing our listing, it is awkward to have the Submit button down at the bottom of such a long page, and yet not all the way at the bottom, so sometimes hard/fiddly to find . . . Perhaps there could be multiple Submit buttons interspersed down the long page?

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***Market research conducted by FIC is on-going. Modifications and additions to this report based on new findings are to be expected.***

Thank you for reading the entire report and for your interest in FIC! Will you consider making a donation to support our non-profit work? Go to [ic.org/donate](https://ic.org/donate). And thank you!