

The Xamk Game Studios Community Guide: Building Roads, Driving Connections

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A stylized, colorful illustration of a city street. In the background, there are several tall buildings in shades of orange, blue, and red. A wide, light gray road with a dashed white center line leads towards the horizon. On either side of the road, there are green trees and sidewalks. The overall style is modern and vibrant.

Intro: Your Roadmap to a Thriving Community

Welcome to your ultimate guide for building and sustaining a vibrant community that connects students, companies, and educators. Like any great journey, it starts with a clear purpose and a well-planned route, but also requires flexibility, care, and collaboration along the way.

This guidebook is designed to take you step-by-step through the essentials of community-building, from understanding who's on the road, what events fuel the journey, and how to plan ahead, to troubleshooting challenges and keeping your community's engine in top shape.

You'll find practical tools, thoughtful strategies, and inspiring ideas organized in a way that makes sense, whether you're just starting out or looking to keep the momentum rolling for years to come.

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Start Your Engines: Why This Guide Exists

Buckle up, because this guide is your GPS for building stronger, smoother, and more collaborative journeys between students and companies.

Picture this:

Your community is a vibrant highway network where two vehicles are always on the move. On one side, we've got a sleek company car; driven by innovation, partnerships, and future opportunities. On the other, a bright yellow student bus; full of energy, curiosity, and potential.

Sometimes, their paths run side by side, like during hackathons or company visits. Other times, they merge at busy intersections like game jams and summer internships. This guide is here to help you navigate those shared roads, avoid detours, and make sure no one misses an exit to collaboration.

Whether you're a student looking for real-world experience or a company seeking fresh ideas and talent, this roadmap is for you. It's packed with tools, stops, and signposts that will help keep your community engine running smoothly.



Welcome Aboard: How to Keep a Community Moving

Now that we know why this guide exists, let's dive into the heart of community-building: how to keep your community moving forward without forcing the engine. It's all about designing the right roads and letting passion drive the journey.

The road doesn't build the travelers: the travelers bring the road to life.

Here's something we've discovered at XGS: You don't keep a community alive by forcing people to engage. You keep it alive by designing great roads, marking meaningful destinations, and setting up places worth stopping for.

In other words, the community isn't something you control. It's something you invite into motion.

Every event we run: whether it's a game jam, a company visit, a guest talk, or a hackathon; is like a pit stop on a shared journey. It's a chance for people to connect, reflect, and refuel. The real magic happens between the signs and the schedules, in the energy that students, companies, and educators bring with them.

And when we do it right?

We don't have to push the car uphill.

The engine runs on its own, powered by passion, curiosity, and shared purpose.

So, this guide isn't here to tell you how to run flashy events or pack your calendar. It's here to help you build routes that matter, and keep the road open for the community to keep moving forward, together. Ready to hit the road?



Community Values & Culture: The Road Signs That Keep Us Safe and Moving

Before we hit the gas, it's important to agree on the rules of the road. Shared values and culture act like road signs, guiding every driver and passenger to travel safely and respectfully together.

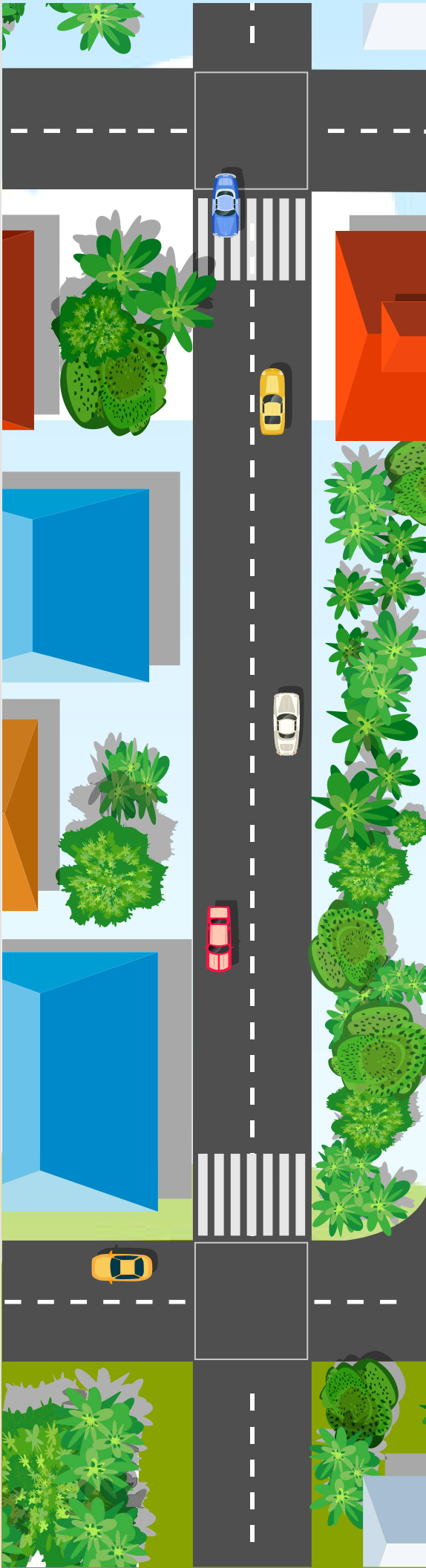
Every highway needs clear signs to keep drivers safe and on track. Your community is no different. Values and culture are the signs that guide how we treat each other, what we celebrate, and how we move forward together.

Why Values Matter

They help build trust and respect, create a welcoming atmosphere, and make sure everyone: students, companies, and organizers feels seen and heard.

Our Core Values: The Road Rules Everyone Agrees To

- Respect the Road and Fellow Travelers
- Everyone's voice matters. Listen actively, communicate kindly, and appreciate different perspectives.
- Drive with Curiosity and Openness
- Be ready to learn, share, and grow. Mistakes aren't dead ends, they're scenic detours on the way to success.






- Keep the Engine Running: Commitment and Follow-Through
- Show up, contribute, and support others. Our community thrives when everyone keeps the momentum going.
- Celebrate Every Milestone
- Big wins, small steps, and everything in between deserve recognition. Every mile counts.
- Be Inclusive: Make Room on the Road for All
- Diversity fuels creativity and strength. We welcome all backgrounds, experiences, and ideas.

Your Community Map: The Roads, the Vehicles, and the Destinations

With a clear set of values lighting the way, it's time to meet the vehicles and roads of our community. Who's driving? Where are we going? And what paths will get us there?

Every strong community runs on three essentials:

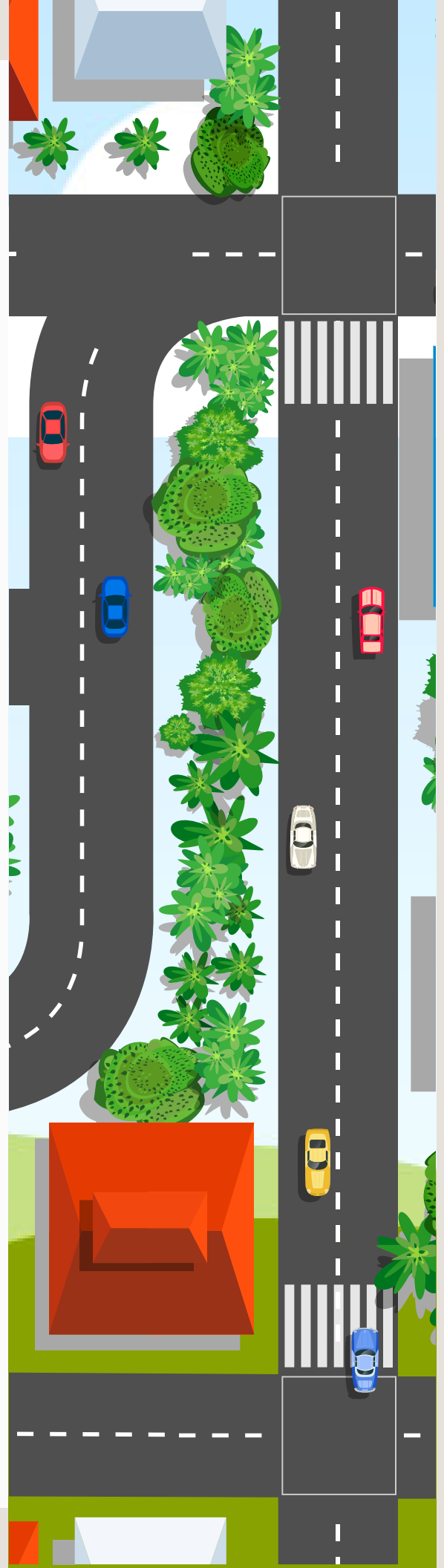
-  People (the vehicles),
-  Purpose (the destination),
-  Pathways to connect them (the roads).

Think of your community as a lively region full of highways, side streets, scenic detours, and the occasional roundabout.

In this metaphor, students, companies, educators, and organizers are all different kinds of vehicles, each with their own route, but all heading in the same general direction: collaboration, growth, and opportunity.

The Vehicles

- Students bring curiosity, energy, and fresh ideas.
- Companies bring experience, real-world challenges, and future opportunities.
- Organizers (like educators, universities, and community leaders) keep the map updated and the traffic flowing.



The Roads

These are your events and initiatives, your pit stops along the journey.

Think game jams, hackathons, internships, and beyond.

Some roads are shared. Some are one-way. Some are built from scratch, together.

The Destinations

- Everyone's driving toward growth:
 - Students want experience and connection.
 - Companies want talent and innovation.
 - Communities want lasting impact and engagement.
- **This section helps you:**
 - Identify who's already part of your community,
 - Map out what roads you've already built,
 - And decide where you want to drive next.



The Annual Roadmap: Planning Ahead

Now that you know the players and the places they travel, it's time to look ahead. Planning your community's calendar will keep your journey steady and ensure no pit stops are missed.

Every great journey needs a well-planned route, a roadmap that spreads out the miles, highlights the scenic spots, and avoids burnout on the highway.

An annual roadmap helps you pace your community-building efforts so the ride stays exciting, sustainable, and full of momentum all year long.



Plot Your Key Pit Stops

Start by marking your big events and milestones on the calendar:

- Game jams, hackathons, internships, company visits, guest lectures, and more
- Include both “scenic detours” (informal meetups, online hangouts) and main highways (major events)

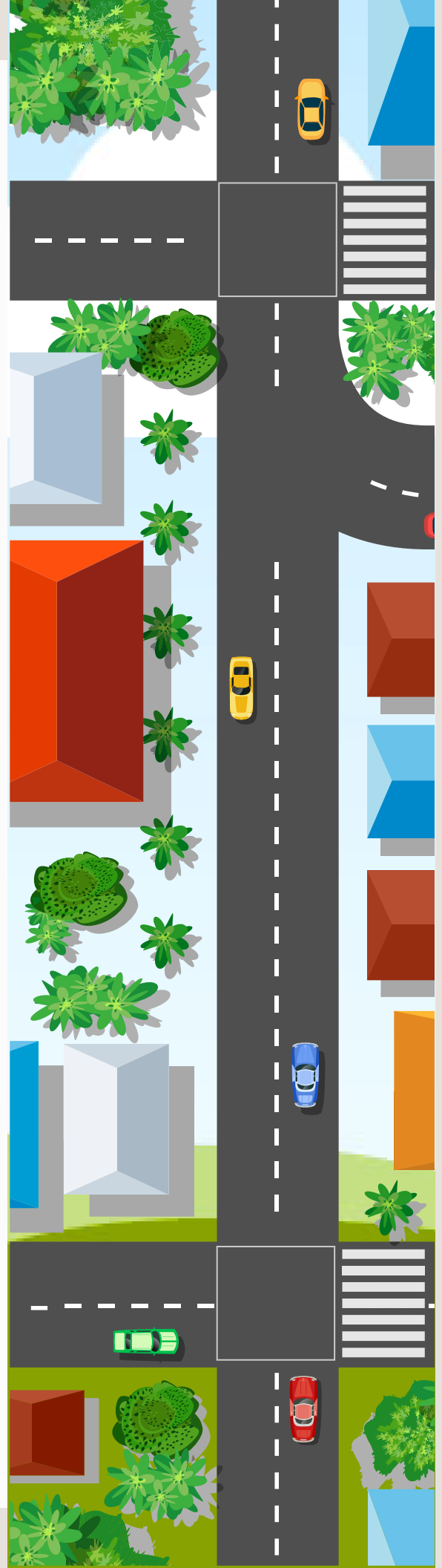
This gives everyone a clear picture of the journey ahead, helping students, companies, and organizers plan their time and energy.



Balance Your Fuel

Mix high-energy events with lower-key gatherings to keep the engine running without overheating:

- Big, intensive events are like mountain climbs, thrilling but tiring
- Smaller events and online connections are the smooth stretches and rest stops that recharge the crew



Build Momentum with Linked Events

Think of your year as a series of connected roads, not isolated trips:

- Use early events to spark interest and skill-building
- Follow up with internships or projects that deepen engagement
- Finish with showcases or presentations that celebrate the journey

Communicate the Route

Share the roadmap early and often:

- Post it on community channels
- Send reminders ahead of events
- Keep everyone updated on changes or new stops

Pro Tip:

Review and adjust your roadmap regularly, sometimes the best routes need rerouting mid-trip!





Pit Stops on the Road: Events That Keep the Community Moving

With the big picture planned, let's zoom in on the exciting moments that fuel your community: the events where real connection, learning, and creativity happen.

Every great road trip needs fuel, rest stops, and scenic detours to keep things interesting, and every thriving community needs the same. We call these pit stops: intentional events where students, companies, and educators pause, connect, and accelerate the journey forward together.

These events are more than just dates on a calendar, they're the lifeblood of a community. They're where the real mileage happens: where ideas are tested, relationships are built, and momentum is gained. Below, you'll find some of the key pit stops on our shared roadmap:

Game Jams

Who's driving? Mostly students

Why stop here? Game jams are creative sprints that encourage rapid prototyping, risk-taking, and collaboration. They're perfect for sharpening skills, testing ideas, and learning to work under pressure, all while having fun.

Company involvement: Mentoring teams, sponsoring the event, judging final pitches

Pro tip: Celebrate all outcomes, not just "winners", every prototype is a milestone.



Hackathons

Who's driving? Both students and companies (but often with different goals)

Why stop here? Hackathons bring together fresh minds and real-world problems. Students get to stretch their creative muscles, while companies gain insight, innovation, and early access to emerging talent.

Organizer tip: Mix teams to include students and company representatives, it builds empathy and stronger results.

Bonus fuel: Add a prize or challenge from a real company brief to raise the stakes.

Summer Internships

Who's driving? Your project, in this case XGS with students and companies as co-drivers.

Why stop here? Internships turn theory into practice. They offer students hands-on experience and companies a chance to mentor and recruit future team members.

Community suggestion: Pair internships with a reflective journal, student blog/SoMe posts, or final presentation to reinforce learning and improve your brand awareness.

Company Visits

Who's driving? Mostly companies and educators

Why stop here? Nothing beats seeing the road ahead. Company visits demystify industry roles and inspire students by showing where their skills can take them.

Student role: Come prepared with questions, and don't be afraid to ask how people got where they are.

Company role: Host the visit, guide the tour, share their story.

Guest Lectures & Workshops

Who's driving? Companies, professionals, or community experts.

Why stop here? These events bring real-world voices into the classroom, connecting learning with industry practice.

Optional features: Q&A sessions, short activities, or even small team challenges

Bonus tip: Record or summarize talks so future “vehicles” can benefit too.

Want to Design Your Own Pit Stop?

You don't need to wait for a green light, sometimes the best roads are the ones you build together.

Check out below these following tools to create meaningful events for your community:

- **Event Planning Checklist:** Make sure every stop is well-marked and valuable.
- **Collaboration Worksheet:** Align expectations, roles, and outcomes across all participants.

When every pit stop is planned with care and collaboration, you don't just keep the community moving, you build momentum that lasts long after the engine cools down.





Event Planning Checklist

Events can be powerful, but only if they're well planned and thoughtfully followed up. Here's your practical toolkit for making every pit stop count.

Basics: Are You Road-Ready?

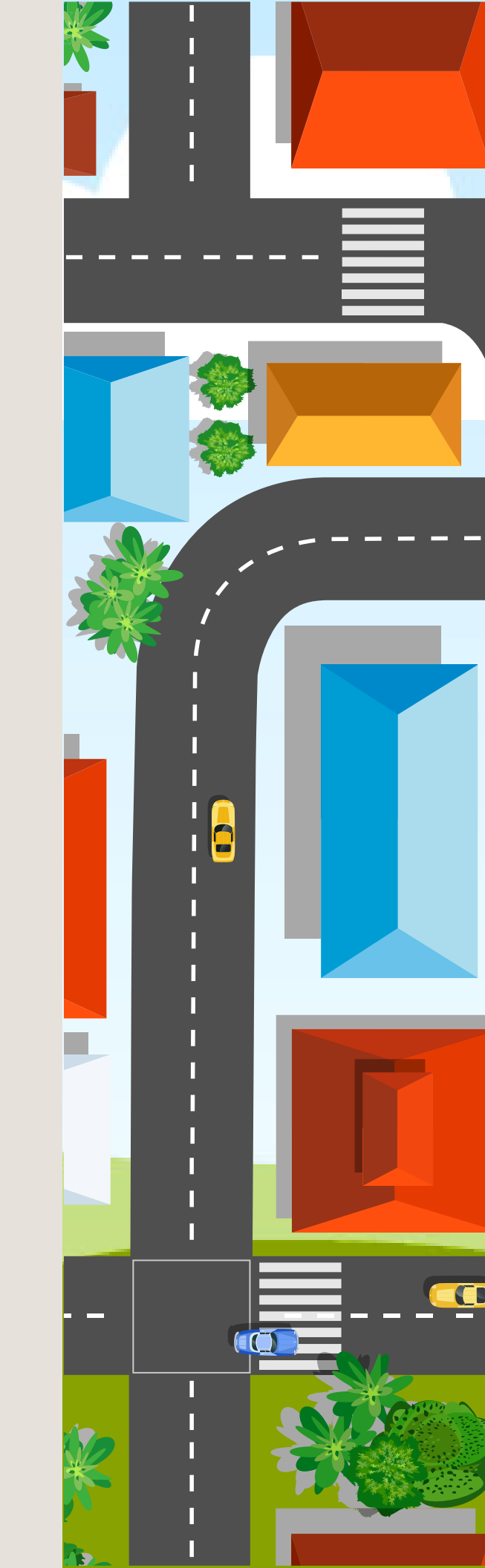
- What's the goal? (Learning, networking, prototyping, etc.)
- Who's driving? (Students, companies, XGS, educators?)
- What kind of vehicle mix? (Only students? Mixed teams? Mentors?)
- Do you have a clear timeline and location? (On-site, online, hybrid?)
- Is the format right for your goals? (Jam, workshop, panel, showcase?)

Collaboration Signals

- Have you invited the right participants? (Students, companies, mentors)
- Are roles clear? (Who's organizing, mentoring, judging, presenting?)
- Are expectations aligned? (What should each group gain from this?)
- Have you included space for informal connection? (Coffee breaks, Discord chats, etc.)
- Is there a follow-up plan? (Surveys, reflections, shared outcomes?)

Event Enhancers

- Visual identity or theme? (Logo, Funder Logos, tagline, visuals to build excitement)
- Communication channels open? (Email, Teams, Discord, WhatsApp?)
- Prep materials ready? (Intro slides, tasks, checklists, tech support)

- 
- Is it accessible for all? (Time zones, disabilities, tech limitations)

Post-Event Wrap-Up

- Are you collecting feedback? (From students, companies, and organizers)
- Will you showcase results? (Social media, portfolios, videos?)
- Is there a way to continue the momentum? (Internships, meetups, shared docs)

Pro Tip: Use the Collaboration Worksheet(see next section) to map out responsibilities between partners before the engine starts!



Collaboration Worksheet

Before merging onto the same road, let's check that everyone's in the same lane.

Use this worksheet with your team or partners to clarify roles, goals, and contributions, so your event runs smooth from start to finish.

Who's Taking the Wheel?

Use this table to clarify who's steering each part of the journey. Think of each responsibility as a lane—someone's got to drive it, others might ride along or provide roadside support.

Area	Lead Driver(s)	Co-Driver(s)	Notes
Event Concept & Goals			
Planning & Logistics			
Communication & Outreach			
Participant recruitment			
Content/Challenge creation			
Mentoring or Guiding			
Event hosting & Facilitation			
Wrap-up & Follow-up actions			



Fuel for the Road: Budgeting Your Event

Every road trip needs fuel. In community-building, that fuel is time, people, and yes, money.

Whether your event is a short spin around the block or a cross-country tour, a basic budget helps keep things rolling without surprises.

First, Set Your Range

Ask yourself: What kind of trip is this?

A casual meetup? A weekend-long hackathon? A three-month internship program?

The longer and more complex the road ahead, the more fuel you'll need.

And remember, **some trips don't need much fuel at all.**

A low-key online talk, a student-led gathering, or a co-hosted workshop might run entirely on goodwill and shared resources. Sometimes, all it takes is time, people, and a good idea.

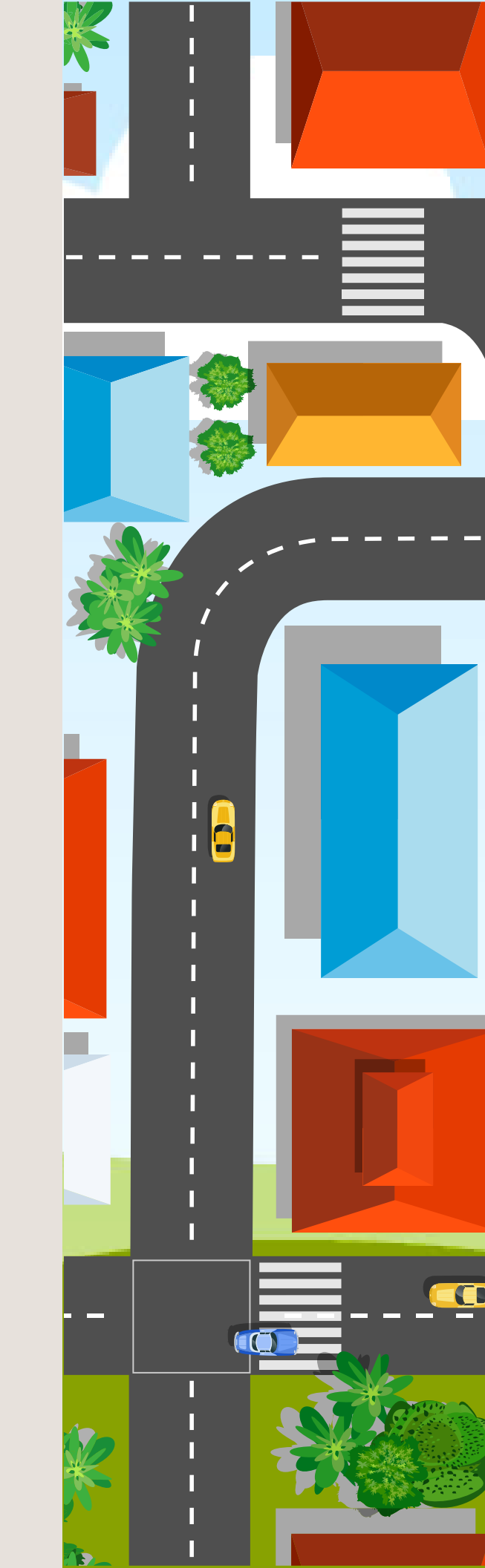
Common Budget Stops Along the Way:

People Power

Every event runs on humans. Consider your drivers (organizers), navigators (mentors), and passengers (participants). **Time is a cost too, especially for long events.**

Gear and Supplies

Think snacks, swag(Stuff We All Get), software, or soldering kits. What do people need to do their best work? What makes the event feel welcoming and professional?



Venues and Tech

Are you renting a space? Booking a classroom? Hosting it online? Include setup, cleanup, AV equipment, and maybe even extra extension cords.

Promotional Fuel

You'll need signs, posts, invites, and maybe even printed materials. It doesn't need to be fancy—but it does need to get seen.

Surprise Detours

Something always comes up. Budget a little extra for last-minute changes, missing cables, or that one pizza order no one expected.

Tips from the Road

Start small, scale smart: Even a tight budget can go a long way with creative planning and good partnerships.

Some trips run on heart: Don't underestimate the power of volunteer energy, borrowed space, or shared tools. Not every event needs a budget line.

Share the ride: Don't be afraid to co-fund events with companies, your university, or community groups. A little sponsorship can open new roads.

Track your journey: After the event, log what you actually spent. Future you (or the next event planner) will thank you.

Roadside Assistance: When the Journey Gets Bumpy

Even the best-planned road trips can hit traffic jams, flat tires, or the occasional wrong turn.

Community building is no different, sometimes momentum slows, drivers lose interest, or the GPS starts recalculating in the middle of the journey. That's where Roadside Assistance comes in: quick fixes, backup plans, and a little encouragement to get everyone moving again.

Below are some common road hazards and how to navigate them.

Low Turnout at Your Pit Stop

What's happening? People are stuck in their own lanes, or they don't see why your stop is worth taking. Quick fix:

- Send personal invites: direct outreach beats mass announcements.
- Highlight the "destination" clearly: what will participants gain by showing up?
- Partner with another group to share the road and the crowd.

Energy Drop Mid-Event

What's happening? The fuel tank's running low, and people are losing focus.

Quick fix:

- Add short, energizing breaks: music, games, or quick challenges.
- Switch gears: move from sitting to active formats.
- Celebrate small wins as they happen to keep spirits high.



🔴 Companies Not Engaging

What's happening? The company car is idling in the parking lot.

Quick fix:

- Offer lighter “on-ramps” like judging a challenge or giving a 10-minute talk.
- Make benefits clear: access to talent, fresh ideas, visibility.
- Invite them to co-design part of the event so they feel invested.

🔄 Student Drop-Off Over Time

What's happening? The student bus is losing passengers at each stop.

Quick fix:

- Keep a steady rhythm of events, momentum matters.
- Offer roles beyond “attendee”, mentors, organizers, ambassadors.
- Show progress: share stories of students who got opportunities through the community.

☁ Unexpected Roadblocks

What's happening? Venue cancels, tech breaks, someone important can't make it.

Quick fix:

- Always have a Plan B (online backup, alternate speakers, flexible agenda).
- Communicate changes quickly and clearly.
- Turn mishaps into stories, sometimes detours lead to the best memories.

Pro Tip:

Keep your own roadside toolkit: contact lists, spare equipment, extra snacks, and a backup activity that can run anywhere, anytime. You'll thank yourself later.





Community Health Check: Keeping the Engine in Top Shape

Every great vehicle needs regular maintenance, oil changes, tire checks, and the occasional polish.

Your community is no different. Without routine checkups, small issues can turn into major breakdowns, and you risk losing the smooth ride you've worked so hard to build.

A Community Health Check is your regular pit stop for reflection, tuning, and making sure everyone's still heading in the right direction.

Step 1: Check the Fuel Gauge

- Are people still showing up with energy?
- Are events well-attended, or are numbers slipping?
- Is there a mix of new faces and returning members?

If fuel is low, it's time to refuel with fresh ideas, new formats, or inviting fresh “drivers” onto the road.

Step 2: Test the Signals

- Are communication channels active and welcoming?
- Do people respond to announcements, messages, or posts?
- Are students and companies talking to each other, not just to organizers?

If signals are fuzzy, simplify your channels or bring everyone together in one clear lane.



Step 3: Inspect the Roads

- Are your events and initiatives still relevant?
- Are they leading to real outcomes: internships, collaborations, learning?
- Do you have both short scenic drives (quick events) and long highways (multi-month projects)?

If the roads feel worn out, it might be time to repave with new event ideas or a refreshed format.



Step 4: Look Under the Hood

- Who's doing the heavy lifting? Are they supported?
- Are roles clear and manageable, or is someone driving three lanes at once?
- Do you have a plan for leadership handovers?

If one driver is doing too much, recruit co-pilots and train new navigators.



Step 5: Check the View

- Is your community diverse and inclusive?
- Are you accessible across time zones, tech limitations, and abilities?
- Are different voices being heard?

If the view is limited, widen the road so more people can join the journey.

Pro Tip:

Run a Community Health Check every 3 to 6 months, and share the results openly with your members. Transparency builds trust, and trust keeps the wheels turning.

The Scenic Route: Beyond Events

Not every mile on your journey needs to be a scheduled pit stop.

Sometimes the most meaningful connections happen when the map is put away, the windows are down, and the road stretches out with no fixed destination.

The Scenic Route is all about those unscheduled, unpressured moments that keep the community alive between major events. They may not be as flashy as a hackathon or as structured as a workshop, but they add color, depth, and lasting bonds to the journey.

Informal Meetups

Coffee mornings, lunch breaks, board game nights, or casual after-class gatherings.

These aren't about formal agendas: they're about being together without pressure.

Bonus fuel: Rotate hosts and locations so different members get to set the scene.

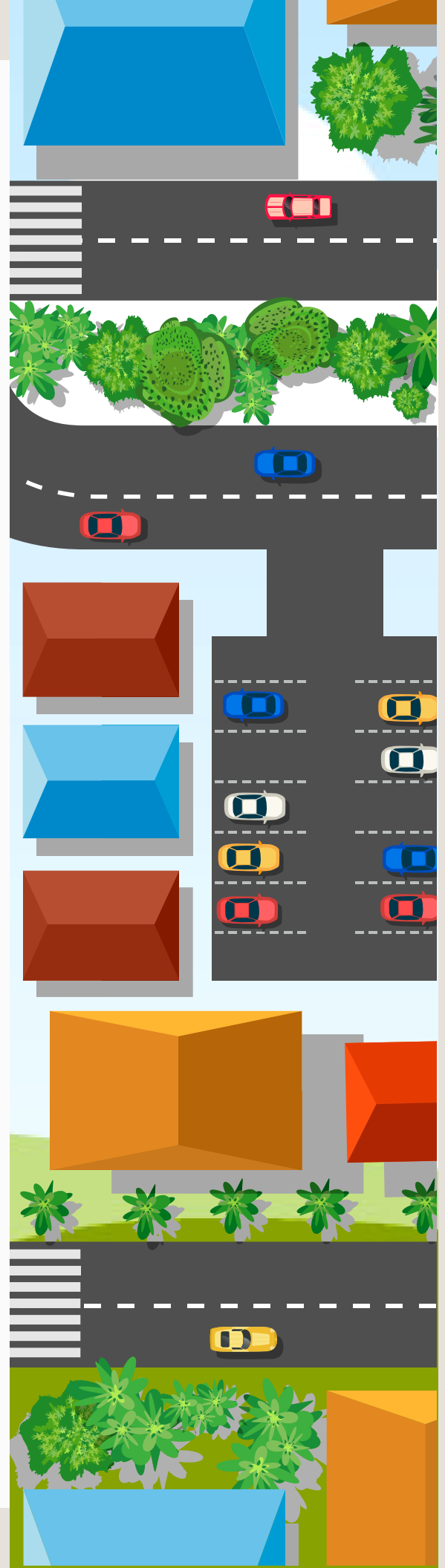
Always-On Online Spaces

Your Discord, Teams, or WhatsApp group can be more than just announcements.

Encourage:

- Weekly photo prompts (“Show us your workspace!”)
- Question of the week
- Resource sharing (articles, job posts, tutorials)

The key? Keep it friendly, light, and open so people feel welcome to jump in anytime.



A vertical collage of 12 panels, each showing a different scene from a top-down perspective. The panels are arranged in a grid, with some showing buildings, trees, and cars, and others showing close-ups of people's faces and hands. The scenes are: 1. Top-left: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 2. Top-right: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 3. Second row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 4. Third row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 5. Fourth row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 6. Fifth row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 7. Sixth row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 8. Seventh row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 9. Eighth row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 10. Ninth row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 11. Tenth row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down. 12. Bottom row: A close-up of a person's face, looking down.

- A one-day challenge to redesign a game mechanic
- A shared playlist for focus music
- A collaborative blog post between a student and a company mentor

Local Adventures

- Attend public talks together
- Visit exhibitions or festivals related to your field
- Support each other's side projects and showcases

The Scenic Route works best when it's organic, don't over-plan it.

Give your community permission to create its own side trips, and watch the bonds grow in unexpected ways.



A Note from the Driver's Seat: Our Online Journey So Far

We'll be honest, throughout Xamk Game Studios, we haven't fully explored the potential of online hangouts like Discord or other digital spaces.

It's a bit like cruising on the highway without pulling off at rest stops where travelers can connect, swap stories, and recharge between big events.

Since this project wraps up in December 2025, we won't be able to build out these online roads much further ourselves.

But that's where you come in.

Think of this guide as a roadmap you can take with you beyond this journey, into your own future communities.

Building vibrant online spaces can keep your engines running smoothly between the major events, making every mile count.

So, whether it's Discord, Teams, or something new, we encourage you to take the wheel and keep expanding the road for those who follow.

Because great roads aren't built by one driver alone, they're built by everyone who rides along.



Passing the Wheel: Leadership Transition Guide

Every great road trip eventually needs a fresh driver, someone new to take the wheel, keep the engine running, and maybe even discover new routes.

In community-building, leadership transition isn't just about handing over keys. It's about making sure the journey continues smoothly, with no unexpected detours or stalled engines.

Why Passing the Wheel Matters

- Keeps momentum alive when key organizers move on
- Avoids burnout by sharing driving duties
- Brings fresh energy and perspectives on the road ahead

Mapping the Transfer

Before the handover:

- Document the route so far: what worked, what didn't, and key landmarks (contacts, tools, traditions)
- Share this community map with the new driver(s) so they know the best roads to follow and where to explore next

Co-Drivers and Pit Crew

Leadership doesn't have to be a solo drive.

- Recruit co-drivers to share responsibilities
- Train new navigators early to avoid sudden breakdowns
- Create a support crew for behind-the-scenes help (communication, tech, logistics)

Set regular check-ins between outgoing and incoming leaders.

- Discuss upcoming events, challenges, and opportunities
- Align on vision and goals for the community's future
- Use this time to pass on tips and tricks from the road

**Tools to Pass Along**

- Shared folders, calendars, and contact lists
- Communication channels and login info
- Event templates and reports
- Feedback and evaluation data

Pro Tip:

Make leadership transition part of your annual roadmap, not just a last-minute pit stop.

That way, you avoid sudden shifts and keep your community cruising smoothly, mile after mile.

Final Destination: Keep Driving Forward

You've got the map, the tools, and the roadmap to build a thriving community where students, companies, and educators all journey together. But remember, the best adventures don't end when you reach a destination. They keep evolving, fueled by curiosity, collaboration, and a shared vision for what's next.

Whether you're planning your next event, welcoming new leaders, or simply reflecting on the road traveled so far, keep your community moving with passion and care. Every connection made, every idea shared, and every challenge overcome adds miles to a journey worth taking.

Thanks for being part of this ride. Now, go hit the road, and make your community's journey unforgettable.



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