



Customer Experience & Electricity Availability Panels

Joint Meeting #5 | Summary Notes

Details	Members	AusNet Staff	External Observers
10.00am-1.00pm Wednesday 18 October 2023 Online (MS Teams) Chair: Fran Duiker Secretariat: AusNet	Chris Harvey Emily Peel Helen Bartley John Mumford Kieran Donoghue Mark Grenning Piang Lilian Tony Robinson Apologies: Jonathan Kneebone	Fran Duiker Charlotte Eddy Lucy Holder Sonja Lekovic Jennifer Turner Rob Ball Christina Telya Monica Daniel Michaela Jackson Eliza Cochrane Emma Ferrie Jeremy Lee	Aaron Yuen (ESC)

Focus Question	Objective of the meeting	Key outcomes	Next meeting objectives
Electricity Availability FQ5: How might AusNet best plan its works to minimise adverse impacts of planned outages on customers? Customer Experience FQ2: How might we minimise the adverse impacts of outages on customers?	- How might we minimise the adverse impacts of outages on customers? - Involve on customer preferences around planned outages, including frequency, duration and communication preferences, as well as potential improvements to the planned outage process that could be considered for the 2026-2031 regulatory period.	Agreement on: - the importance of improving customer satisfaction and communication during planned outages. This includes providing clear and informative messaging to customers and offering a variety of ways for receiving notifications. - considering the impact of outages on businesses (especially in smaller towns) and ensuring the reliability of power supply for major events. Analysis to determine the optimal level of planned maintenance would be valuable.	Electricity Availability (November '23 joint forum) Further collaborate on Resilience Investment Framework. Begin discussions on how the framework will be applied. Customer Experience (November '23) Collaborate on improvements to the unplanned outage customer experience, with a focus on outage communication and opportunities for improvement.

- the need to minimize disruptions caused by planned outages while ensuring safety and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Item	Time	Topic	Lead/s
	10.00am – 10.05am	Welcome and agenda	Charlotte Eddy
Part 1	10.05pm - 10.15pm	General items: reporting back on actions from Customer Experience and Electricity Availability Meetings #4, as well as updates from other workstreams and joint activities.	Charlotte Eddy
Part 2	10.15am – 10.40am	Planned outage context: approach to planned outages in 2021-25, customers' experience and known pain points, earlier discussions with Customer Experience panel.	Charlotte Eddy & Lucy Holder
Part 3	10.40am – 11.15am	Minimising the number of planned outages: priorities trade-offs, and the value of investing.	Eliza Cockrane & Sonja Lekovic
Part 4	11.15am – 11.55am	Timing and scheduling of planned outages: current approach and potential improvements for 2026-31.	Rob Ball
	11.55am – 12.05pm	Break	
Part 5	12.05pm – 12.40pm	Planned outage communications: context, current situation and future opportunities	Monica Daniel & Jen Turner
Part 6	12.40pm - 1.00pm	Other matters & close Open floor Meeting close and next steps	Charlotte Eddy

Welcome & Introductions

Members were welcomed to the panel by Charlotte Eddy, AusNet General Manager Regulation (Distribution) who also gave an Acknowledgement of Country. In opening the meeting, Charlotte invited thoughts and comments from members as a result of the Victorian Distribution Business's Joint Resilience Forum, which was held on Monday 9 October.

Discussion included the Victorian Government's Resilience Review, and that AusNet will be required to develop a resilience plan; resilience spend; that in areas with underground power supplies, customers might not see a pressing need for resilience improvements; and the importance of considering environmental factors and challenges related to resilience. Panel members emphasised the importance of AusNet taking a proactive approach and considering social equity and broader criteria in resilience planning.

Charlotte then introduced the meeting agenda, and the joint focus question for today's meeting 'How might we minimise the adverse impacts of planned outages on customers?'

Part 1: Standing Items

Topics	Discussion points
Actions	AusNet referred to actions associated with both the Customer Experience and Electricity Availability panels, noting that several actions generated through past meetings of the Customer Experience panel would be discussed in today.

Part 2: Planned outage context

Topics	Discussion points
Approach to planned outages in EDPR 2021-2026 & known pain points	AusNet's Charlotte Eddy recapped customer commitments related to planned outages, including the volume of outages and maintenance that sees AusNet conduct more than 7,000 planned outages annually, impacting 1,300 customers per day. Charlotte noted the pack referenced that this impacts 9m non-unique customers a year – this was an error in the pack at the actual number is far lower than this at around 475,000 non-unique customers a year. Lucy Holder provided insights into customer satisfaction scores, noting approximately 80% of customers rating their satisfaction with planned outages at 7 or higher out of 10. AusNet staff noted the focus on addressing the drivers for satisfaction and acknowledged differences in the needs of business customers, who often require earlier warnings and have more complex contingency plans. Discussion Participants discussed multiple aspects of recent performance and customers satisfaction with planned outages. Within discussion there was agreement on the importance of improving customer satisfaction and communication during planned outages. Participants were broadly comfortable with encouraging digital notification methods, where customers preferred this option. Discussion centred around: - opportunities to improve communication with customers and taking a wholistic view around customer satisfaction with outages. Participants acknowledge the complexity of factors affecting satisfaction and while there were differences in emphasis or specific strategies, <i>the participants agree on the importance of improving customer satisfaction and communication during planned outages</i> – including welcoming updates as the outage proceeds. This includes the idea that providing clear and informative messaging to customers, and offering a variety of ways for receiving notifications, can enhance their experience during planned outages. - the requirement to notify customers through traditional mail, with AusNet's Fran Duiker also sharing there has been limited customer uptake of digital notifications. Panel members flagged concerns about customers without mailboxes and challenges related to the retail-distributor relationship. Potential cost savings in transitioning to digital communication were also noted. - panel members recent experience of a planned outage, including one panel member who advised they received a letter and 2 texts about the outage before it occurred, but nothing on the day of the outage. The outage occurred at an inconvenient time and added that Fridays can be a peak day for businesses - communication and timing considerations are essential. Other panel members shared – in the meeting and via Padlet - they haven't received any planned outage notifications via text or mail for 2 or more years. - regulations and customer preferences for receiving notifications. Charlotte Eddy highlighted the importance of accommodating customer preferences while also ensuring customer protection, especially for life support customers. Aaron Yuen from the Essential Services Commission (ESC) acknowledged on the value of today's discussion and the role of ESC in regulating this area.

Part 3: Minimising the number of planned outages

Topics	Discussion points
Priorities, trade-offs and the value of investing	AusNet's Eliza Cochrane discussed initiatives to reduce planned outage frequency and duration, underscoring their influence on customer satisfaction. She pointed out that these efforts are driven by the Customer Service Incentive Scheme (CSIS) and presented data demonstrating improvements in outage metrics over the past 5 years across various regions and feeder types. There was broad agreement on considering the impact of outages on businesses (especially in smaller towns) and ensuring the reliability of power supply for major events. Participants generally feel analysis to determine the optimal level of planned maintenance would be valuable. Discussion Discussion covered a range of topics, and participants shared various opinions and questions related to planned and unplanned outages, customer feedback, and appliance functionality: • Via Padlet there was positive acknowledgment of a declining trend in the duration and frequency of planned outages. The panel discussed the balance between planned and unplanned outages, cost-effectiveness, and how customers perceive this balance. - The discussion touched on the correlation between planned and unplanned outages, suggesting that addressing planned outages may help reduce unplanned outages, although this connection hasn't been thoroughly analysed. Via Padlet a member suggested that additional upfront costs to 'build-in' both reliability and longer asset life can be more than offset by savings in downtime costs and improved customer satisfaction. Bundling of planned outages was another suggestion by a panel member, to improve the customer experience, as was referring to planned outages as 'unplanned mitigation works'. - AusNet noted participants' desire to understand the cost of business-as-usual maintenance on specific lines and the possibility of exploring more innovative solutions that require less ongoing maintenance, while still ensuring network reliability. AusNet agreed to investigate costs to maintain the Cann River as an evidence point. • Several panel members highlighted the impacts of outages particularly on rural areas and small communities and the importance of reliability, especially for events. Panel members discussed the specific needs of different communities and businesses, in terms of outages and the potential impact of power outages on appliances. AusNet agreed to investigate what data is available regarding a correlation between outages and appliance malfunctions in rural areas.

Part 4: Timing and scheduling of planned outages

Topics	Discussion points
Timing and scheduling	AusNet's Fran Duiker and Jeremy Lee discussed various aspects related to planned outages and the scheduling of these outages. This included the timing of outages (i.e. when they occur) and communication with customers regarding planned outages. Overall, panel members agreed on the importance of effective communication with customers and the need to minimize disruptions caused by planned outages while ensuring safety and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Discussion

Discussion included the following points, and at times included the management of unplanned outages:

- Fran Duiker emphasised the importance of notifying customers in advance of planned outages and discussed the methods of communication, including traditional mail (snail mail), email, and SMS. The discussion highlighted efforts made in 2023 to engage major business customers and the community regarding planned outages.
- Factors affecting the timing of planned outages were discussed, such as the focus on weekdays and specific time frames but recognising that these timings may not always be convenient for all customers. Participants asked questions and provided input on topics related to planned outages and contractor arrangements. AusNet's Jeremy Lee explained collaboration with delivery partners and the need to consider the current scheduling approach for planned outages in the next period. Jeremy Lee highlighted safety as a top priority when planning outages, and unplanned cancellations could occur due to inclement weather or safety concerns.
- Fran Duiker mentioned acknowledged room for improvement regarding communication with customers when planned outages are cancelled and shared some efforts to engage with the community and business customers more effectively.
- Toward the end of the session, participants discussed the completion of the REFCL program, its impact, and the challenges it poses. In discussing impacts of the REFCL systems on unplanned outages – and that faults identified by REFCLs are designed to trigger outages - AusNet's Jeremy Lee acknowledged that there was room to improve intelligence on why REFCL faults were occurring and to make the system smarter to reduce its impact on customers.

Part 5: Planned outage communication

Topics	Discussion points
Improvements to unplanned outage communications	AusNet's Jennifer Turner shared customer feedback, improvements and ongoing efforts, especially related to electronic customer notifications and leveraging the CRM for better communication. Senior Communication Specialist Monica Daniel discussed regulatory compliance requirements, accommodating customer preferences through various communication channels, and the need for inclusive and readable language. Participants expressed their support for the work AusNet has completed and is undertaking to improve planned outage communications. Discussion Discussion covered a wide array of issues. There was consensus on the need for better communication with customers regarding planned and unplanned outages. This included the timing and duration of outages, as well as the reasons behind them. The suggestion of expanding notifications and communication to people who were not account holders received support from panel members. While it was difficult to identify clear points of agreement on other issues, themes and ideas that were discussed included: • That customers often seek information through social media and local communities rather than official channels. • The importance of recognising the unique needs of different customer segments, with a focus on proactively understanding and addressing their requirements. Concerns are raised about the impact of planned outages on businesses,

including the interaction of equipment with electricity supply and the need for information on equipment preparation.

- Specific examples were provided regarding customer issues during planned outages, such as power quality problems. The conversation highlights challenges in engaging different customer segments, such as large businesses, and the importance of understanding their specific requirements. Two-way communication, customer relationship managers, and proactive engagement with customers and communities were emphasised as means to address various challenges and provide more effective information.

This section of the meeting concluded with a discussion regarding how different types of outages are defined, the importance of educating customers, and compensation as a result of outages. AusNet agreed to share a definition of an outage, including any details of outage durations.

Part 6: Other matters, close & next steps

Topics	Discussion points
Close	• AusNet's thanked everyone for their time and contribution to the rich discussions. The slide pack outlined details of upcoming meetings as follows: Customer Experience Wednesday 22 Nov 2023 FQ2 – [b] Unplanned outages Electricity Availability Resilience #2 (Joint network forum – Optional*) Monday 11 December Investment planning approach briefing*

Action items			
Action	Assigned to	Status	Due date
AusNet to investigate costs to maintain the Cann River line as an evidence point, and with the view to exploring more innovative solutions that require less ongoing maintenance, while still ensuring network reliability.	R&E Team	open	11 Dec
AusNet to investigate what data is available regarding a correlation between outages and appliance malfunctions in rural areas.	R&E Team	open	11 Dec
AusNet to share rigorous definition of outages, including details of duration within these definitions.	R&E Team	open	11 Dec

*SP&C Team – Strategic Planning & Customer Team

^ R&E Team – Research and Engagement Team

Reg Team – Regulation Team

Customer Experience + Electricity Availability | Combined meeting | 18 October

Add a comment under the respective question by clicking and then typing. To assign your name to a comment, please register for a Padlet account. Use the 'heart' button to vote.

Customer Experience + Electricity Availability | Combined meeting | 18 October

ENGAGEMENT28 10/16/23 6:31AM

Add a comment under the respective question by clicking and then typing. To assign your name to a comment, please register for a Padlet account. Use the 'heart' button to vote.

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Section 2 - Planned outage context

ENGAGEMENT28 10/13/23 6:52AM

Do any members have their own experiences of planned outages to share?

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helen828 10/16/23 4:43AM

Slight tangent in terms of outage type but as a UE customer on the Peninsula we participate in the Summer Saver program aimed at demand management to avoid outages. The comms around these events are pretty good - plenty of advance notice (24hrs+) via SMS when they want us to power down, regular comms in the lead up (eg in 1 hour turn off your A/C between say 2 and 5) and then when the event is over they let us know and also SMS the value of the reward for participating in the event.

jnumford842 10/16/23 10:04AM

I can share an experience on the impact of planned outages. Timing can be everything.

nottle 10/17/23 2:29AM

I have not received an AusNet planned outage txt since Oct 2019

kieran71 10/17/23 6:32AM

how many outages have you experienced in that time, Jeff?

nottle 10/17/23 10:21PM

Notifications by txt from AusNet of 7 unplanned outages since that time

Anonymous 10/17/23 11:26PM

I receive planned outage notices via text and mail. If I could opt out of the mail I would, but would like to have 2 phone numbers (myself and husband) on the list in case I'm not home. We have overhead powerlines and had a number of planned outages, mainly during the week which would be my preference as it only impact myself wfh.

ENGAGEMENT28 10/13/23 6:54AM

Do they (panel members' experiences) align to those captured on the previous slides? Are there any we haven't captured?

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chrisharvey11 10/16/23 3:05AM

My experience is closely aligned to the data. I agree that the accuracy of start time & expected duration is improving. It's great to get updates as the outage proceeds. When there is a situation where the outage is prolonged because "the work is taking longer than expected" eg. SP feeder last week, does this trigger a 'lesson learnt' type review to capture & systemise learnings and improvements?

helen828 10/16/23 4:48AM

Slide 21 - I would be interested to see the correlation between the "drivers of satisfaction". I suspect if you do one of the actions it will have a positive impact on others

jnumford842 10/16/23 10:06AM

Slide 22. The customer comments indicate that outages often end earlier than notified. Are planned outage times overly generous in communications so that the outage ends earlier than expected?

jnumford842 10/16/23 10:25PM

Slide 17. In FY22 we had over 7,000 planned outages, averaging 22 outages affecting 1,327 customers per day. Does this average about 60 households per outage? At what point does it become not feasible to consult customers on a planned outage?

nottle 10/17/23 2:11AM

Not sure it ever becomes not feasible to consult on planned outages.

Section 3 - minimising the number of planned outages

ENGAGEMENT28 10/13/23 6:57AM

S41. Regarding levers, please share any out-of-the-box ideas you may have!

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chrisharvey11 10/16/23 3:16AM

I come from a place of relentless pursuit of avoidance of both planned and unplanned outages through a proactive equipment reliability approach. Additional upfront costs to 'build-in' both reliability and longer asset life can be more than offset by savings in downtime costs & improved customer satisfaction. Didn't see this philosophy on your list.

helen828 10/16/23 5:05AM

Chris you are spot on - it would be great to see a costed scenario which might also vary over the assumed time

Anonymous 10/17/23 11:27PM

It would be great if they could bundle the outage work- I would prefer a longer outage than more frequent ones.

ENGAGEMENT28 10/13/23 6:57AM

S42. Are there any other approaches you can think of?

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chrisharvey11 10/16/23 3:16AM

See above

S43. Collaboration Question | What do you think of the current frequency and duration of planned outages?

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chrisharvey11 10/16/23 3:24AM

Good to see a downward trend in both duration and frequency of planned outages. There are too many long unplanned outages...hence good to see 'worst served customers' approach.

helen828 10/16/23 5:17AM

Question around slide 19: is the CSAT increase from 7.3 to 7.8 statistically significant? (ie what is the variability around those means?) Same with Slide 20 - could we please see the variability around those means? - so while there appears to be a trend I just want to confirm that it's not sample variability

nottle 10/17/23 10:16PM

Good to see the direction of CSAT trend subject to Helen's comments

S43. Collaboration Question | How do you think AusNet should approach planned outages in EDPR 2026-31?

Why do you think this and what are the trade-offs of this decision?

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chrisharvey11 10/16/23 3:27AM

I'm a big believer that organisations get innovative when they need to chase a standard. So, I'd suggest a planned outage standard with an incentive for AusNet to find better ways to reduce duration & frequency.

helen828 10/16/23 5:20AM

Planned outages need to involve the impacted communities - and probably one size does not fit all. Also need to understand the reason for the Planned outage - maybe doing a little more now reduces or extends the time for the need for another outage (e.g. vegetation management - frequent light prunes or less frequent larger prunes)

nottle 10/17/23 10:25PM

Planned outages impact communities on a case by case basis and impact can vary significantly at different times of the year

Anonymous 10/17/23 11:24PM

Agree, depending on the community the planned outage schedule may need to take into account specific community needs.

Section 4 - Timing & scheduling of planned outages

S53. Collaboration Questions | What do you think of the current scheduling approach, and AusNet's performance?

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chrisharvey11 10/16/23 3:31AM

I'm generally OK with the approach. Good that essential services and industrial customers get the opportunity to influence timing. Weekend work will sometimes be the best option, even though more costly, eg. along major roads.

jmumford842 10/16/23 10:07AM

Slide 48. 8am is the morning peak. It appears to me that starting a planned outage at 8am is mainly for AusNet's benefit.

jmumford842 10/16/23 10:07AM

From the information provided, I am unsure if the needs of Small business are adequately being considered.

nottle 10/17/23 10:45PM

Sensitive customers on slide 47 is quite narrow and should include other sensitive sectors

Anonymous 10/17/23 11:23PM

I don't think the general public have any line of sight of the outage schedule and the why. I think this would be a good message to get out to the community.

S53. Collaboration Questions | How do you think AusNet should approach planned outages in EDPR 2026-31?

Why do you think this and what are the trade-offs of this decision?

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jmumford842 10/16/23 10:09AM

There needs to be clear communication about outages including why? There needs to be community consultations about the timing of outages. The burden of outages needs to be shared by AusNet and Customers and by customer segments v customer segments. (Residential, Business large and Business small)

S56. Collaboration Questions | How should planned outages following extreme weather events be approached* in EDPR 2026-31?

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chrisharvey11 10/16/23 3:34AM

In the aftermath of an extreme weather event, I'd be amazed if AusNet had the capacity to manage the fall out plus planned work. I support the need to defer work. I assume you'd redirect resources onto system re-establishment to minimise stranded resource costs?

ENGAGEMENT28 10/13/23 7:03AM

S56. Collaboration Questions | Do you think planned outages should be suspended for affected customers (impacted by extreme weather events)?

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chrisharvey11 10/16/23 3:35AM

Yes.

jmumford842 10/16/23 10:10AM

Yes, Maybe. The solution to this question is to better manage the unplanned outages during extreme weather so that they are less traumatic on customers.

nottle 10/17/23 10:49PM

Yes. limited perceived benefit to a community of a planned outage following a stressful extreme weather event

ENGAGEMENT28 10/13/23 7:04AM

Are there other things AusNet could do that aren't suspending planned outages, to minimise the impact of the outages on customers in these circumstances (i.e., extreme weather events)?

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helen828 10/16/23 5:29AM

Key seems to be effective, timely and accurate communication with customers as per earlier slides. I've seen Powercor's MERV (mobile emergency response vehicle) and the positive impact of such a vehicle attending an EWV so people can charge their phones, get accurate info from the power company and even make a coffee! It also means the company comes to the customer rather than the other way around

nottle 10/17/23 10:51PM

The presence of a MERV would be practical and reassuring

helen828 10/17/23 11:21PM

PowerCor also now has VERA joining MERV on the road!

Section 5 - Planned outage communication

ENGAGEMENT28 10/13/23 7:05AM

S71. Are there any other approaches to communication of planned outages you can think of?

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pianglilian 10/17/23 6:30AM

Customers who are not account-holders should be able to receive communications on planned and unplanned outages. Connection form and/or electricity invoice can include instruction on how to sign up (or opt out) to receive communications. It would be even better if they can select a language. The messages will have to be translated into at least a few major languages (e.g. Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, etc.)

pianglilian 10/17/23 6:39AM

For major outages, AusNet should consider broadcasting in the affected area(s). I have seen a mobile provider broadcasting (presumably from a cellular tower) although I was only visiting the area that was far away from home. Visitors (e.g. guests staying in Airbnb) also need the information.

Anonymous 10/17/23 11:21PM

Text message is great- is there an opportunity for them to send to more than 1 person?

ENGAGEMENT28

10/13/23 7:06AM

S72. Collaboration Questions | What do you think of the current communications for planned outages?

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chrisharvey11

10/16/23 3:04AM

The .txt pathway works for me. It's good to get multiple, staged messages as the outage approaches as I'm prone to forgetting!

jmumford842

10/16/23 10:11AM

Allow customers to provide 2 (or several) email addresses and text numbers

nottle

10/17/23 10:55PM

I agree that allowing customers to nominate further contact details would be most beneficial

ENGAGEMENT28

10/13/23 7:06AM

S72. Collaboration Questions | How do you think AusNet should approach communication of planned outages in EDPR 2026-31?

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chrisharvey11

10/16/23 3:38AM

I support the ideas you have in train. Asking customers to define their communication pathway is key. My mother for example can't use a mobile phone or computer and nearly blind. The notification therefore needs to go to a family member but this isn't currently set up.

nottle

10/17/23 11:08PM

Customers nominating preferred communication option is being used more frequently by business in many sectors

Is there anything else you'd like to raise?

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helen828 10/16/23 5:34AM

I believe AusNet has evaluated various aspects of its comms etc associated with planned and unplanned outages. I commend AusNet for this and hope that the learnings and insights help improve the customer experience when subsequent events occur

jmumford842 10/16/23 10:13AM

Unlike unplanned outages, planned outages allow AusNet and the community / customers to plan. To do this, AusNet needs a good understanding of the communities that make up the Network. There is an opportunity for AusNet to build an understanding of individual communities within the Network so that they can effectively manage and fairly share the burden of planned outages. This would allow AusNet to develop tailored solutions to individual communities. This would also raise the profile of AusNet and improve future engagement.Are we considering electronic options to communicate and interact with customers on All outage issues? Notifications, surveys on timing preferences, reasons for planned outages, details of unplanned outages, etc.I note Slide 61 Develop self-service digital preference option.

jmumford842 10/16/23 10:19PM

What role for the CRM in providing opportunities for improving outage communications?

Anonymous 10/17/23 11:19PM

A dedicated community engagement team that visits all areas would provide fantastic insight to each communities issues and they would gain a deeper understanding of each community

