

"The irony of the modern market is that it can get a spare part from across the world, but a neighbor still might not know that the mechanic with the skills to fix the car is right next door." – Donnie Maclurcan, Offers and Needs Market Creator

What's an Offers and Needs Market (OANM)?

The Offers and Needs Market (OANM) is a joyful, guided process where groups come together to discover and exchange their passions, knowledge, skills, resources, and needs.

The OANM unearths and shares the diverse forms of wealth we all have, and reminds us that so much of what we need for a good life is already within our grasp. Whether for free, barter, or a set rate, people offer and need things like tech help or some extra produce.

Participants have found work, housing, new friends, a richer self-identity, and even a renewed trust in their community. Each exchange builds a connection, more connections create meaningful relationships, and the collective relationships strengthen communities – and maybe even create new ones.



General Context

The OANM, like [asset-mapping](#), is a way to practice Asset-Based Community Development as you focus on what resources (a.k.a. “assets”) a group already has. It's a simple, playful, and cheerful way to highlight what people can already do, and provides a positive way to short-circuit the “But we don't have any resources!” narrative. The emphasis is on sustaining a mindset of what you can do to help and get helped right now.

A Few Examples:

- A local business has an incoming supply of extra pallets and some neighbors need wood to create furniture for a homeless shelter. Match!
- A person knows many people in creative agencies and a freelancer is looking for their latest work connection. Match!
- A spreadsheet enthusiast loves teaching people simple ways to use Microsoft Excel and another person needs to learn how to use Excel for work. Match!

How an OANM Creates and Helps Communities

- **It builds and enhances** personal or group connections. Knowing who's doing what, who has access to what, and who knows who are vital for getting things done.
- **It creates new possibilities** for co-created action that none of us can do alone.
- **It's just plain fun and useful.** Who couldn't use a new accountability buddy, creative pro, or ukulele player in their life? (All real examples among thousands more.)
- **It allows for rapid feedback on creative, business, or other projects.** Having a few folks give you sincere, real-time input on your offers can be life-changing.
- **It reduces waste.** When someone else's surplus or gift can become another's resource, fewer precious commodities like time go to waste.
- **It increases community ownership and commitment** since it requires active participation and shifts the group narrative to what's abundant from what's scarce.
- **It builds confidence** to ask for what you truly need and own the gifts you're meant to share.
- **It's a simple, fast, and inexpensive way to resource a movement** because it focuses on what already exists – people's hidden or underused gifts.
- **It honors the best of gift, barter, and commercial exchanges.** Why settle for only one type of market when you can have three in one?



"I love Offers and Needs Markets! It's so much bundled into one: community-building, vulnerability, sharing resources, owning up to our own depths, and the generous use of sticky notes. We all inherently want to help, so giving and receiving with an intentional, organized process allows us to contribute and gain without it feeling transactional. This is just genuine and heartfelt." – Aja Marsh, Offers and Needs Market participant

Housekeeping Notes

Acting upon these housekeeping notes makes for a better and more valuable experience for everyone:

- You only need to share what you're comfortable with.
- The OANM is both a community-building and trust-building exercise. Everything we do here assumes everyone has the best of intentions and that nobody's offering is available in unlimited quantities. In other words, *what we offer each other shouldn't be and won't be exploited.*
- There's wisdom in the gift economy, bartering, pay what you can, conventional commercial market, and other forms of exchange. Why limit ourselves to one when we can have the best of each?
- Go beyond what you think people might expect you to say are your gifts. The more specific the gift, the more likely it will be unique ... and potentially of even greater value to the group.
- Writing down an offer or need comes with implicit permission for participants to contact you about it during the real-time market or in the future. *Don't write it down if you don't want someone asking about it.*
- If you want to move yourself between Zoom breakout rooms and not wait for your facilitator to do it for you, use the Zoom desktop client or mobile app, version 5.3 or higher.

The Prep Checklist

If you want to participate in this event, you *must* do a few steps at least one day before the market begins. If you don't, showing up will be a waste of your time and drain energy from the event itself.

Required Steps at Least One Day Before the Real-Time Market Begins

- | |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Add your offers and needs in this Google Sheets template or a unique form linked in the event description for this specific OANM. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Add a reminder to your digital or physical calendar so you remember to show up for the real-time part of the market. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If you used the Google Sheets template I provided, email me the link so I can combine your items with your fellow participants. |

Optional Steps

- | |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> If you want to move yourself between Zoom breakout rooms and not wait for me to do it for you, use the Zoom desktop client or mobile app, version 5.3 or higher . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reflect on the prompts for breakout room time . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Browse the official Offers and Needs Market site . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Browse real examples of offers and needs from my past OANMs for inspiration. |

Creating Offers

We always begin with Offers because they're almost always easier for people to think off and symbolic that we've come together to be generous. Offers are typically things that come from your heart (caring about children or the environment), head (knowing creative writing), hands (cooking or carpentry), or connections (the groups or associations you and your family belong to). But really, they can be anything you want.

- **Head examples:** "I know a lot about tiny houses and will speak with people who want to know more" or "I can show you how to create an efficient podcasting workflow."
- **Heart examples:** "I'm passionate about animal rescue centers and willing to volunteer to help animals in distress" or "I nerd out about spreadsheets and would enjoy helping you craft yours."
- **Hands examples:** "I know how to do major plumbing jobs and often help people in my city with their smaller plumbing tasks" or "I can teach you how to design your own logo."
- **Connections examples:** "I can introduce you to people in the permaculture movement" or "I'll sponsor your membership in [insert desirable organization]."

Pro tip: Think as broadly as possible about what you might offer others – personal, professional, on behalf of an organization, or otherwise. From services (assisting with grocery shopping) to passions (tennis buddy) to knowledge (how to use Twitter) to physical resources (a used printer) to introductions or leads (connections with graphic designers) – just about anything is fair game.

Where to Put Your Offers

You have a choice between [this Google Sheets template](#) or a unique form linked in the event description for this specific OANM.

How to Complete Each Offer

You'll find tips about what to put into each component of an offer into the spreadsheet template or form. :)

Required Columns

- **Your Name.**
- **Offer Description.** Be concise!
- **Availability.**
- **Method of Exchange.**
- **Contact Details.**

Optional Columns

- **Location (If Relevant).** The default is "Online" since we're running this OANM online. Add some combination of town/city, state/province, and country if your offer is only relevant to people in a specific geographic area (e.g., Minneapolis, MN, USA).
- **Expiration Date.** Write nothing if your offer is good indefinitely. If you'd like your offer to expire after a certain amount of time, add a specific date in ISO 8601 International Standard format: YYYY-MM-DD [Year-Month-Day of the Month]. Example: 2016-12-30.

Creating Needs

Needs work almost the same way as offers except that availability is replaced with urgency.

What are you working on, seeking, or what kind of support do you require that someone else might be able to provide? You can think in terms of head, heart, hands, and connections again – just don't limit yourself to those categories if it doesn't feel right to you.

- **Head example:** "I want to self-publish my first book, but I have no idea where to start."
- **Heart example:** "I need a coach who can help me understand which passion to pursue first between meditation, business workflows, and slow travel."
- **Hands examples:** "I'd like to create a simple website for my new hobby" or "I want to build a shed in my backyard."
- **Connection example:** "I play guitar and want to meet a drummer and cellist to form a virtual band."

Where to Put Your Needs

You have a choice between [this Google Sheets template](#) (switch to the Needs tab) or a unique form linked in the event description for this specific OANM.

How to Complete Each Need

You'll find tips about what to put into each component of an offer into the spreadsheet template or form. :)

Required Columns

- **Your Name.**
- **Offer Description.** Be concise!
- **Urgency.**
- **Method of Exchange.**
- **Contact Details.**

Optional Columns

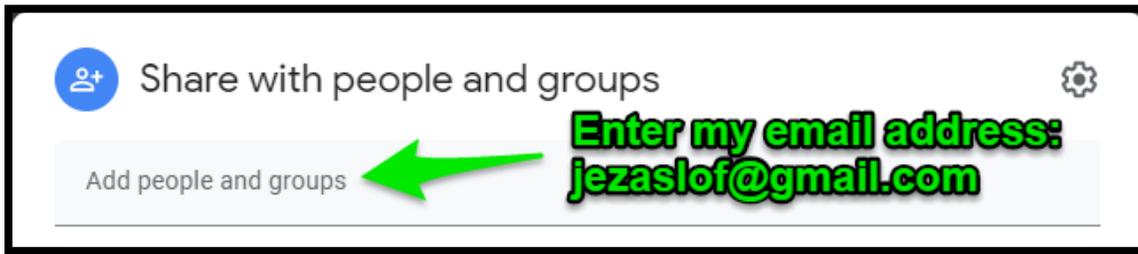
- **Location (If Relevant).** The default is "Online" since we're running this OANM online. Add some combination of town/city, state/province, and country if your offer is only relevant to people in a specific geographic area (e.g., Minneapolis, MN, USA).
- **Expiration Date.** Write nothing if your offer is good indefinitely. If you'd like your offer to expire after a certain amount of time, add a specific date in ISO 8601 International Standard format: YYYY-MM-DD [Year-Month-Day of the Month]. Example: 2016-12-30.

Sending Offers and Needs to Me (24+ Hours Before the Market Opens)

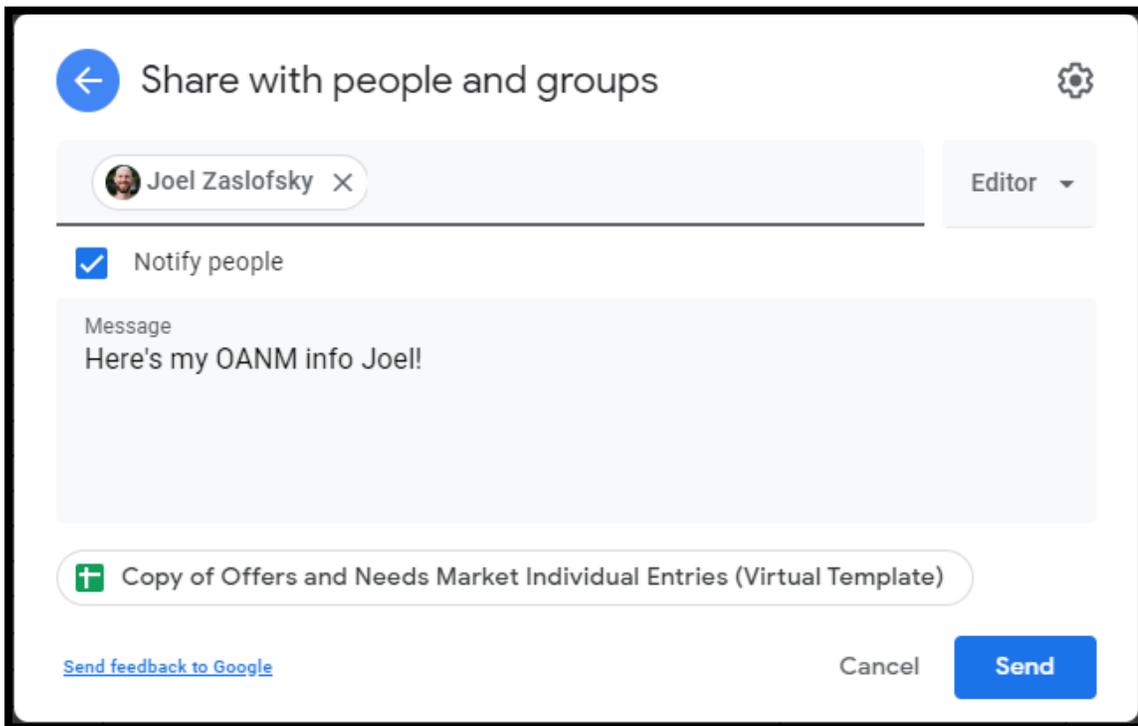
If you filled out the forms for *both* your offers and your needs then I already have what I need from you.

If you used the Google Sheets template I provided then I'll need you to email me the link so I can combine your items with your fellow participants. Here's how to get me your info with minimum effort for both of us:

1. Starting with Step 2, [use this how to share files from Google Drive help article](#). In the "Add people and groups" field, enter my email address: **jezaslof@gmail.com**.



2. Leave the "Notify people" box checked, write a custom message in the "Message" box if you want, and then press the "Send" button.



Note: If you've converted the Google Sheet template into another program like Excel or LibreOffice, send an email to jezaslof@gmail.com with a link to where you've stored it online. I prefer a link to an online location instead of an email attachment because an online link will give me your latest and greatest info in case you decide to add, edit, or delete after you think you're done.

The Real-Time Market

With all that effort you just put into sending me your offers and needs (thanks!), you might be wondering:

"What's the purpose of the real-time market if everyone does all this stuff in advance?"

First of all, I'll combine all your offers and needs with every other participant's offers and needs, polish them up nice and shiny, and give all participants access to them at the start of the real-time market.

But we don't want our heads to be buried in a spreadsheet the whole time! **The real-time portion of the overall process allows us to:**

- Learn context about our offers and needs and make matches on them in a direct, human-to-human way.
- Practice being courageous with our gifts (Imposter Syndrome, be gone!) and vulnerable enough to ask for what we need.
- Take action on potential matches without the distractions of normal life pulling us away from unique opportunities.
- Embrace the spirit of Asset-Based Community Development as you reflect both inward and process outwards with other generous, brave people.
- Provide a spotlight for each participant to highlight specific offers or needs so the whole group has awareness of them.

Real-Time Market Overview

Here's the overview of how the real-time action will go:

- Brief housekeeping to help you maximize your mindset and matches for the market.
- Breakout rooms of 4-5 people to discuss or refine key offers.
- Breakout rooms of 4-5 people to discuss or refine key needs.
- Spotlight time for each participant to highlight specific offers or needs to the whole group.
- Quiet time to browse everyone's bountiful offers and needs *or* inviting participants you have a potential match with into a private breakout room.
- Reflection time on the experience.
- Planning your next steps as a result of the OANM.

Prompts for the Breakout Rooms

It's nice to know a little about your fellow breakout room participants before getting into the depths of each person's offers or needs. Feel free to reflect or journal about these prompts I'll give you to open up each breakout room session.

Please be brief!

- **Offers prompt:** What's one of the most meaningful offers someone has made to you and why?
- **Needs prompt:** Describe a time when asking for something you needed seemed easy. Why was that?

Want More Context?

The [official Offers and Needs Market site is right here](#). My process is a bit different than theirs, but the spirit is the same and there's some great context waiting for you there.

Want to See More OANMs Happen?

Once you've completed the real-time part of your overall OANM experience, you might want to have one happen for another community or group you belong to. Contact your facilitator for details, learn how to run one of your own at joelzaslofsky.com/oanm, or [send a note to Joel Zaslofsky](#) so he can provide you with the resources you'll need.

And if you want to go even deeper, consider and answer some modified questions from Peter Block's book, *Community: A Structure of Belonging*.

- What gift have you received from another in our OANM? (Get specific)
- What has someone in your community done today that has moved you or been valuable to you?
- How did someone in your community engage you in a way that had meaning?
- What gift do you have that nobody knows about?
- What are you grateful for that has gone unspoken?
- What is the positive feedback you receive that still surprises you?
- What is the gift you have that you don't fully acknowledge?