FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT USING THE CHAPTER VIRTUAL COMMUNITY PLATFORM

1. **What is the "Virtual Community" Platform?**
    The virtual community (VC) is a website created for each ONS chapter to share information with local chapter members. Features of your VC include a chapter member directory, event calendar, discussion forum, and resource areas to archive your newsletters and other chapter materials. Chapters can customize certain features to meet their needs, and add whatever resources they wish to share with their members. Each chapter should have a designated virtual community administrator to manage their site, and additional board members can also be granted administrator access as well. Each month ONS adds any new members to your chapter member directory. The chapter VC administrators can then see who these new members are by looking in the directory. Additionally, chapter VC admins should use the virtual community as the method of communicating with your chapter members. There is an Announcement feature that allows you to quickly and easily send email messages to all of your chapter members.

2. **How do I use my chapter's virtual community?**
    Locate your chapter on the [chapter map](). You will find the virtual community link listed underneath your chapter's name. Once you are on the site, please click the Log In button in the upper right hand corner. You will then be prompted to enter your ONS username and password. Please make sure that you are using your username to log in. If you never created a username with ONS, then you should enter your email address.

3. **How can I see who my chapter's members are?**
    You can see your chapter members by logging into the virtual community and going to the chapter directory. All members are listed in that section. Some members may opt to be hidden from the directory, and only chapter administrators will be able to see the information for that member. If a chapter admin would like to print out their membership list, they may do so by going to the chapter directory and clicking "export membership data". Once that page opens, they should click finish. The admin will then be prompted to download a link which will turn the list into a printable Excel spreadsheet.

4. **How do I communicate with my chapter's members?**
    Chapter admins can communicate with the chapter members by logging into the VC and going to the Announcements page. Once there, click "post new announcement." On the next page, you should enter your email subject in the subject box. You should type the content of your email into the HTML content box. Once you have correctly entered all content, click "finish" and the announcement will be sent to all chapter members (except those who have chosen to unsubscribe). Please note that announcements are sent as soon as the finish button is pressed. It is important to make sure that all information is accurate before clicking finish. If you would like to contact an individual member, you must go to the directory and click on the member's name. Once you are in their profile, you can click "email this member" to send an individual message.

5. **Are we required to use the virtual community to communicate with our chapter members?**
    Yes, using the VC is the designated way to reach all of the chapter members who should receive your chapter emails. This system has been set-up to provide you with the most up-to-date member information, and a quick and easy way to communicate with your chapter's members, while

complying with ONS's privacy policy and Federal anti-spamming laws. Per the latter, it is required by law that ONS members have the ability to opt-out of receiving emails whenever they would like, including messages from ONS as well as their ONS chapter. The Announcement feature gives members that opportunity.

6. **Why can't I see members' email addresses?**
   As noted above, ONS and its chapters must comply with existing privacy policies and the U.S. CAN-SPAM Act. In a nutshell, CAN-SPAM is a law that sets rules for commercial email and gives recipients the right to have you stop emailing them. ONS, and chapters as components of ONS, are required to comply with this law. That is why we have provided you with the VC platform, whereby you will always have access to the most recent member data and the ability to easily communicate with your members, but without disclosing individual email addresses that could inadvertently be used in a manner contrary to policy and law.

7. **When we managed our own member lists there was no problem with us seeing and using individual email addresses, so what has changed?**
   Under the previous chapter membership model, individuals were given the choice of adding local chapter membership to their national ONS membership. In that scenario, individuals were therefore voluntarily providing your chapter with their email address, hence implicitly opting-in to receiving your chapter emails. Under the new model that took effect in July 2013, all ONS members are now automatically members of their local chapter as part of their national membership. That structure changes the nature of the commercial relationship between chapters and their members, thereby triggering the need to comply with the CAN-SPAM law.

8. **Some of our members are not receiving the chapter announcements sent from our VC. What should they do?**
   If members are not receiving your announcements, they should first check their ONS Profile to ensure that the email address shown in their Profile is correct, and that they have not unsubscribed from receiving email messages. If a member has opted to unsubscribe from receiving emails, they can contact chapters@ons.org to get added back onto the mailing list. If the member is subscribed and are not receiving emails, the emails are likely going into the member's junk folder, or being blocked by their service provider's firewall. Please instruct the member to check their SPAM filter and to add postmaster@lists.readyportal.net to their address book. If members are having trouble receiving emails at their place of employment, it may be necessary to have them contact their network administrator to get postmaster@lists.readyportal.net added to the "whitelist" so that emails will be delivered to their inbox.

9. **I posted a message on the announcement page but an email was never sent out to our members. Why?**
   When posting on the announcement page, it is important that you click on the "Post New Announcement" option. The announcement must be added to the virtual community that way and will be sent as an email when you click finish. If you add content to the page, but do not click post new announcement, this will only add the content to the virtual community, and will not generate an actual announcement.

10. **How long does it take for new members to get added to our virtual community?**
    New members are added to the virtual communities once per month. The new member import will take place at the beginning of each month.

11. **How can I see who the new members are?**
    All new ONS members will be added to their chapter's virtual community each month. Admin's have the ability to contact those new members and welcome them to the chapter. To do so, the admin should log into the VC and go to the admin wizard in the orange admin tool bar. Next, scroll to the bottom of the VC and on the right hand side go to the "For Membership Directory and Request Moderation Use Only" section. Underneath the stop sign, there is an option that says "send notification for newly imported members." Please click on that option, and you will be provided with the names of all newly added members. It is important to make note of who those members are, as they will be removed from that section. After you take a look at the members who have been recently added to the VC, click "next page." This will take you to the notification message page, where you can customize the welcome message that you would like to send. Once you are done, click "next page" and select your notification option. From there, click "finish" and your welcome message will be sent to those new members. The members' names will be removed from this section once the welcome message has been sent.

12. **How often is the membership information in our chapter directory updated?**
    Membership information, including expiration and join/renewal dates, are added to the VC during the monthly VC update, which will take place at the beginning of each month.

13. **A chapter member accidentally unsubscribed from the announcements feature. How can they get added back onto the mailing list?**
    Please have the member contact chapters@ons.org and we can make sure they are added back onto your mailing list.

14. **Why aren't our members receiving emails when we post an event on the calendar?**
    ONS has not automatically subscribed any member to the calendar. Members can opt to subscribe if they wish to receive emails when events are posted on the calendar. In order to do so, they should log into your chapters virtual community and go to the calendar page. They should then click the subscribe option and enter the email address that is associated with their ONS Profile. Also keep in mind that if you wish to share a calendar item with all members of your chapter, you can do so via the Announcement feature.

15. **As a VC admin, can I see who is and is not subscribed to chapter announcements?**
    Yes, first you must log into your chapter VC. Next, go to the announcement page and click "Manage Subscriber List." The subscribers will all be listed there, but you can also search for members. To do so, click the "Advanced Subscriber Search" option. You can search by a members name or email address. If you search for a member and no subscribers appear, this means that they are not subscribed to receive chapter emails.

16. **How can we print a membership roster for our chapter?**
    VC admins can print the membership list by logging into the VC and going to the chapter directory page. Next, click the option that says "export membership data." Click finish on the next page and then select download link. This will open your membership list as an Excel spreadsheet that you can print. **Note:** If you open your membership list and do not have dates displaying in the expiration date column, it is due to a setting in Excel. To get the correct dates, you should right click your cursor at the top of that column. Next, click format cells and select "date" in the category section. Once you click ok, the dates will now display in that column.

17. **The information on our chapter virtual community is not up-to-date. Who is responsible for editing our VC?**
ONS updates the membership information in your chapter directory. The chapter is responsible for updating the general content on the VC. Most chapters have a designated VC administrator who is responsible for managing the VC, but it is fine to select board members to maintain the VC as well. You can find the operations manual in the virtual community section on the chapter leader [resource page](#).