

# Ethical Business Plan

## 1.A. Company Name

Macroblock

## 1.B. Long-Term Vision Statement

### 1.B.1 Goals:

Our company aims to create a varied game engine that provides enough creative assets that our user base has no need to look elsewhere. We'd like our user base to have the tools to create games that represent themselves as well as their most outlandish ideas. Our customization options will reflect any user or character idea, while allowing for expansive map creation, setting adjustments, and overall note taking. We want to create new game designers with our company, inspiring and encouraging any newcomers who are interested in beginning.

### 1.B.2 Idea Origination:

There are lots of already-existing game engines that focus on simplifying the game development process and minimizing the necessity to code from scratch. However, due to the complexities of game development, these engines must make decisions regarding the degree of simplification and accessibility they hope to achieve, and many of them focus on just one genre or set of genres to tailor their functionality towards. As a result, any one engine's method of simplification won't apply well to all types of games that a developer might want to create.

RPGMaker is an example of a specialized engine that simplifies RPG development by providing a lot of premade tools and assets for developers to use. The game engine we make will build off of this idea, extending easily-navigated UIs and premade options to many different genres of games instead of just one, without sacrificing any ease of use or accessibility.

### 1.B.3 Purpose/Values/Mission:

Macroblock is working to develop an accessible and multifaceted game engine designed to encourage creators to stop worrying about where to start, and simply start creating. We want to foster both a culture of innovation and welcoming to the community at large. Our values include amplifying marginalized voices, including diversity in both our hiring practices and our created digital assets, and filling the current creative needs that we see unfulfilled or underrepresented in video-game creation today. Our product will open the door to game designers, storytellers, and curious players alike, so that they have a head start in creating their next, or first, game. Our mission is to offer an intuitive user interface, optimized controls and creation space, all to pave a road to creation through the use of our engine. Our assets will be published with the idea that anything that our users can imagine, they can create.

### 1.B.4 Key Questions:

What is the biggest need we see the gaming community facing today?

How will we continue to prioritize our fundamental values in our practices? In our outreach?

What are ways we can foster a welcoming community of acceptance and respect, especially to the benefit of underrepresented or marginalized creators?

## **1.C. Strategy with Ethical Impacts AND Ethical Safeguards**

### **1.C.1 OKR 1**

#### **Strengthening Engine Versatility with High Quality Graphics & Assets**

##### **1.C.1.1 OKR 1 Objective and Key Result:**

Macroblock will maintain a growing database of assets and a sleek, modern engine design in order to ensure the ongoing relevance and quality of clients' customization options. Key results include increasing the amount of available assets, bringing in new artists, and doing design experiments with the engine interface. Accomplishing these things will prepare Macroblock to expand its selection of genres and increase the engine's versatility.

As modern technology improves and video game capability expands, players look forward to higher quality graphics, mechanics, and gameplay. Indie developers and gaming companies must continue to seek out more advanced tools in order to cater to these interests.

Both developers and players can range anywhere from young (16+) to old, amateur to professional, low income to high income. While the engine will benefit a wide variety of stakeholders, it's especially important to ensure accessibility for low income, amateur, or younger clients.

##### **1.C.1.2 OKR 1 Metric(s) with Experiments:**

In a quarter, we will hire 10 new artists. This involves creating the available positions on social media, job hunting sites like LinkedIn, and our company website. Responsibilities will include modernization and upkeep of assets, creation of new assets, collaborative and innovative participation in design discussions, and participation in graphic design experiments. Candidates' portfolios and ability to emulate preexisting styles will be the most important factors to consider. We should also employ an onboarding process that both seamlessly integrates artists into team discussions within the first week, and provides tools for them to continue to maintain a productive relationship with the team.

Also in a quarter we will create 240 new graphic assets and 40 new sound assets. We will aim for about 125 2D sprites, 60 3D models, and 55 extra graphics such as textures, interfaces, etc. Sound assets will include about 10 songs and 30 sound effects. This entails holding creative discussions to determine our needs, packaging assets into the default engine or a separate asset pack, and quality checking the new assets. Assets successfully integrated into the engine should have a cohesive and appealing style that matches their genre.

Lastly, we will release 3 experimental user interfaces for the engine itself. This is to encourage innovative new solutions for navigating game development, and to keep up with changing trends in graphic styles. With more creative discussions, Macroblock will arrange new interfaces with cohesive and intuitive designs. Then, design prototypes can be implemented and tested for functionality. The UI can be further evaluated in a separate quarter.

##### **1.C.1.3 OKR 1 Ethical Impact(s)/Issue(s):**

Many ethical impacts involve the quality and usage of the engine's assets. If we offer support for genres or assets that concern mature topics, we risk exposing them to younger developers or players. Also, game developers might use our assets to create offensive or inappropriate media, which may then be held against us. In *Zeran v. AOL*, for example, even though AOL hadn't directly created the offensive advertisement which concerned Zeran, Zeran still attempted to sue for it [1]. As new cases continue to challenge the protections of Section 230 of the CDA, we should be extra careful to avoid the associated financial and ethical risks [2].

Other risks depend on the control we exercise over our assets. Without proper precautions, rival companies or game engines may take our assets under the guise of free creative use. The rights of

company artists are also important. The company fully controls distribution of assets, so we must ensure the artists are compensated and credited. Game developers should be properly informed about these terms so they don't use assets unfairly.

Stakeholder	Financial Risk	Privacy Risk	Conflicting Interest Risk	Violation of Rights Risk
Company & Asset Artists	High	Low	Med	Med
Indie Developers	Med	Low	Low	Low
Game Dev Companies	Low	Low	Med	Low
Players	Low	Low	Med	Low

For the company, financial risks are high due to the big investment of creating an engine. Our employees will be relying on their salary, and income depends on engine sales. However, very little personal information is involved outside of professional identification (for example, artist credits). In terms of conflicting interests, the company prioritizes accessibility and ease of use, while some stakeholders may not desire more competition in the game development market. Lastly, the company's rights regarding the assets they own may be at risk depending on what terms we establish.

The largest financial risk for indie developers regards the pricing of our content. Indie developers may have lower budgets, and the income they receive from completed games will be critical. There is little privacy risk, however, since the only data we may need is age, and this is generally accessed indirectly. Conflicting interest risk is also low because accessible game development especially benefits independent developers, although we may be competing with other engines. Finally, the only potential violation of rights risks are related to privacy risk, which is already low.

Risks for companies are similar to the risks for indie developers. However, financial risk is much lower; companies typically have larger budgets, so the cost of our engine would be less important. Also, privacy risk is low since, even if sensitive data collection were to occur, large companies are not very personal entities. Risks related to conflicting interests are more substantial. Our goal statement applies most immediately to independent developers; working out usage terms with large companies will require care. Besides, many companies may not prefer to use an engine. However, there are no violations of rights directly related to engine development.

Those who play games won't face much risk. The price of our engine may have an impact on released games, so end users may suffer indirect financial risks. Developers are more likely to interact with players' personal data than the company, so there isn't much privacy risk. Conflicting interest risk is medium because players desire high quality games which developers want to make. A good game engine should help, but since we mainly prioritize accessibility, some balancing may be required. Finally, development of the engine shouldn't directly involve any violations of players' rights.

#### 1.C.1.4 OKR 1 Ethical Safeguards:

Base engine content will be restricted to age appropriate assets. Any content that involves mature topics will be distributed in separate T-rated or M-rated asset packs that require age verification to access. This can be performed using already-existing verification systems, for example, if the engine is purchased through Steam; otherwise, age must be manually verified with every attempt the client makes to access a mature content pack. Different verification systems are used widely with mixed results, so Macroblock should use the least intrusive methods when possible (for example, with an email), and age data won't be used for any other reason [3].

Also, to avoid inappropriate usage of the existing assets, terms of use will be established. Users must agree before they can download the engine. A reminder about these terms will also appear whenever the user is exporting their game as a finished product. Terms include such expectations as: default assets should only be used in projects created within the engine; assets will be explicitly attributed to the artists that made them, which will be a feature automatically incorporated into the engine; and assets should not be used in derogatory or offensive media. Any game created within the engine isn't a reflection of the company itself.

## 1.C.2 OKR 2

### Building Brand Recognition through Social Media and Marketing

#### 1.C.2.1 OKR 2 Objective and Key Result:

Macroblock's marketing team will connect with and uphold a strong and engaged community of creators that collaborate with us to refine our engine, in order to build a trusted brand in the game development scene. Macroblock will maintain a strong, authentic online presence that builds traction and recognition leading up to, and following, the launch of our first engine. We'll utilize the gaming community as a means of collaboration, listening to their reactions, and staying connected to what they're looking for. Our customers will be game designers who are looking for easy ways to begin, and we will reap the added benefit of engine tweak suggestions / general feedback while also utilizing the internet audience of these multiple online game designers. The gaming community is filled with youth and adults alike, of all ages, all orientations, all races - which is why the decision of who to collaborate with is one that must uphold our values of pushing boundaries and advocating for inclusion. Early game designers who we work with will provide valuable reactions to the quality of our engine (asset loading, asset quality, etc.). These responses will directly affect the direction taken by our development team, and keep our future endeavors focused on what is actually wanted by our clientele and extended audience. Some key results we're looking to establish include **distribution of our product to 30 recognizable / innovative game designers** per quarter for content creation using our game engine. Their use of our engine will serve as two streams of data: Data from game creators during their process, and data from the end players. We'll target Epic games creators, and pay them flat rates for their streams (ie. \$250 for a 6 hour stream), etc. Additionally, By the end of Q2, we're looking to have a **sustainable social media presence** utilizing the feedback of our target and extended audiences. Following Q2, and following bug fixing / engine tweaks that relate to our customer surveys, we seek **approval for uploading our engine to Steam and Itch.io**.

#### 1.C.2.2 OKR 2 Metric(s) with Experiments:

We'll be measuring total follower growth (goal: 50,000 by end of Q2), engagement rate (likes, comments, and shares), and video retention (average watch time per video). We'll be running tests on three video formats to identify which yields the highest retention and engagement: Reels demonstrating quick engine features [30 seconds], showcasing creator projects in development (collaborations) [30-60 seconds], and game commentary over previously created games [30 seconds]. Each format will be posted weekly for 3 weeks across TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube Shorts. Using the provided media's analytics, we'll compare average retention rates, share ratios, and like / comment interaction percentages, at the end of the trial period. Additionally, we'll host game jam events that utilize themes to target different asset packs our team has created and different creators alike: contests with specific game formats or themes (Halloween / Spooky Game Jam, and contests with specific requirements for the creators entering (LGBTQ+ creators focus). With these events, alongside the use of our streamer collaborations, we're looking to see constant traffic to our social media pages.

#### 1.C.2.3 OKR 2 Ethical Impact(s)/Issue(s):

Our partnerships with public creators will have a limited amount of control on our part, due to the nature of our genre-spanning product. With creators operating in online environments, how do we avoid being associated with misconduct? A sponsored streamer creating content that does not fit our CoC (Code of Conduct) could devalue our platform, lose us trust in the larger community, and cause backlash against our brand, being that we are the ones who provided the assets. The precedent set in the case of San Fernando Valley v. Roommates LLC confirms that platform providers can be held partly responsible when they contribute to or facilitate intolerable content. Given this risk, how do we choose who to work

with? Additionally, our product will include age-restricted asset packets, meaning our advertising must reflect this as well. We cannot advertise mature themed packs in ways that target young users. Our target audience for each advertisement is going to be crucial.

Stakeholder	Financial Risk	Privacy Risk	Conflicting Interest Risk	Violation of Rights Risk
Main Users	Low	High	High	High
End Users	Low	Low	High	Low
Distribution Companies	Low	Mid	Low	Mid
Development Team	Mid	Low	Mid	Mid
Content Creators / Collaborators	Mid	Mid	High	Low

Financial risk is low for our major stakeholders, aside from our internal teams who are staking their income on company success, as well as the creators we wind up collaborating with, as time spent on our product is time taken from other potential routes of income. The privacy risk is highest for our main users, who will be trusting us with their data (age, email address) as well as the distribution of their “intellectual property” (the games created). Collaborators will also be sharing methods of contact with us, as well as posting personal insights and views on our product. This is a mid-privacy risk. When it comes to conflicting interests, the only stakeholder who isn’t at risk is the distribution platforms we use to send out our game engine. Main users and content creators both face high risk in this category - due to the variety of similar products for them to use, and their own interests being the heaviest contributing factor to this decision. Our internal development teams have a mid conflict of interest risk, dependent on their treatment at our company (time taken, pay rates, overall quality of the work environment). Overall, the potential for violation of rights is Highest for our main users, medium for our internal teams and distribution networks, and low for the end-game players as well as those our marketing team collaborates with.

#### 1.C.2.4 OKR 2 Ethical Safeguards:

Our company will conduct thorough background checks regarding online history as content creators in the gaming community, as well as thorough checks of their online activity throughout their account’s presence. Following this background check, our company will establish clear agreements with detailed expectations for behavior and content, referencing our **Code of Conduct** to define “acceptable use” of our assets (on stream, on social media, etc.). This CoC will outline the following items: MacroBlock’s **Core Values** (*creativity without barriers, inclusivity, community wellness first*), **Unacceptable Content** or the promotion of any topics within its section (*hate speech, discriminatory or harmful content, misrepresentation of the company brand, etc*), **Ethical Conduct** (*no soliciting information from streams / social media followers, no discussion of or suggestion of mature topics online, upholding our core values*), **Collaborator-Team Relations** (*frequency of check-ins, trust between parties for reasonable expectation of results, monitoring of collaborator parties’ online activities*), **Commitment to**

**Response-Driven Results** (*prompt addressing of user-survey responses AND collaborator concerns, alongside watching out for the next “need” in game creation*). Rovio Entertainment Ltd. utilizes a similarly outlined [Code of Conduct](#) for their staff. Breaking MacroBlock’s Code of Conduct will result in termination of any contract between Macroblock and collaborating parties. Like touched on above, we will routinely monitor streamers and collaborators to ensure they are upholding said agreement. We will also communicate our commitment to these values to our audience, through social media posts detailing what we believe to be “Valuable Assets” in members of our community at large.

To ensure ads with mature content don’t target those unsuited to view it, our marketing team will pay close attention to the rules of rating that are outlined by the **North American Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)**. Ads will avoid targeting age groups below 18, as well as restricting mature content ads to adult users (21+). **To encourage equal opportunity** in our outreach, we will have a quota of community members to invite to work with: 15 recognizable names with over 20k followers, and 15 under 20k followers, as well as prioritizing 3 small creators every quarter (one a month, all up and coming creators). This helps advance our goal of making this space accessible to creators large and small. **No collaboration decisions will be made based on race, gender, or age.** If, following an investigation, it is found that misconduct of this kind has been committed on our side, the offending party will be fired promptly. This is not something our company is built on, nor something we’ll tolerate. **With advertising:** Asset packages that are marked “T (Teen)”, “M (Mature 17+)”, or “AO (Adults Only)” will only target social media users with the appropriate ages, starting at 14 for T, 17 for M, and 21 for AO. Our asset packages will be distributed on the same platforms as our main engine, meaning that said distribution engines will check ages before allowing download. As far as our own website and servers go, non-users will only be able to access assets not marked by these ratings.

**1.C.3 OKR 3**

**1.C.3.1 OKR 3 Objective and Key Result:**

**1.C.3.2 OKR 3 Metric(s) with Experiments:**

**1.C.3.3 OKR 3 Ethical Impact(s)/Issue(s):**

Stakeholder	Financial Risk	Privacy Risk	Conflicting Interest Risk	Violation of Rights Risk

**1.C.3.4 OKR 3 Ethical Safeguards:**