Pre-Proposal: Developing a Comprehensive Social Media and Communications Strategy for MDAnalysis

1. Background:

The MDAnalysis project is an open-source Python library dedicated to manipulating and analyzing data from molecular simulations, particularly focusing on molecular dynamics. As the project grows, so does the need for effective communication channels to engage with its diverse community of users and contributors. Despite the success of past outreach efforts, there remains a challenge in ensuring inclusivity, accessibility, and maximizing engagement across various platforms.

2. Problem Statement:

The overarching question we aim to address is: How can we develop a comprehensive social media and communications strategy to effectively engage with the diverse MDAnalysis community while promoting inclusivity and accessibility?

3. Overall Goal:

The goal of this project is to develop a robust social media and communications strategy tailored to the needs of the MDAnalysis community. This strategy will prioritize inclusivity, accessibility, and engagement across various platforms to enhance communication and foster a sense of community among users and contributors.

4. Initial Recommendations:

a. **Platform Selection:** Based on the examination of existing MDAnalysis communication channels, it's evident that platforms like GitHub Discussions and Discord are already active. Leveraging these platforms for developer-related discussions and real-time interactions can be fruitful. For broader announcements and updates, a combination of Twitter and LinkedIn can be effective due to their reach and ability to target both scientific and general audiences.

b. **Content Tailoring:** Different platforms serve different purposes. GitHub can be utilized for technical discussions and issue tracking, while Discord can facilitate real-time chats and community building. Twitter can be used for short updates and announcements, whereas LinkedIn can host longer-form content targeting professionals in the field.

c. **Engagement Strategies:** Implementing engagement strategies such as regular Q&A sessions, community showcases, and contests can encourage active participation and interaction. Encouraging user-generated content like tutorials, blog posts, and case studies can also foster a sense of ownership within the community.

d.   **Enhancing Accessibility and Inclusivity:** To ensure accessibility, all communication platforms and materials should be optimized for screen readers and other assistive technologies. Inclusivity can be promoted by actively seeking feedback from underrepresented groups and ensuring diverse representation in communication materials.

5. Objectives:

a. Conduct Community Surveys (2 weeks)

- Action: Develop and distribute surveys to MDAnalysis users and developers to understand communication preferences.

- Deliverable: Survey report summarizing findings and preferences of the community.

b. Develop Social Media and Communications Strategy (4 weeks)

- Action: Analyze survey data to identify preferred communication channels and develop a comprehensive strategy.

- Deliverable: Social media and communications strategy document outlining platform selection, content strategy, and engagement tactics.

c. Implement Newsletter Setup (2 weeks)

- Action: Establish setup for an email newsletter based on feedback received at the 2023 MDAnalysis UGM.

- Deliverable: Functional email newsletter system ready for deployment.

d. Launch and Monitor Strategy (ongoing)

- Action: Implement the developed strategy across selected platforms and continuously monitor engagement metrics.

- Deliverable: Regular reports on engagement metrics and adjustments to strategy based on feedback and analytics.

e. Promote Accessibility and Inclusivity (ongoing)

- Action: Implement accessibility features across all communication platforms and ensure diverse representation in communication materials.

- Deliverable: Accessibility guidelines document and regular audits of communication materials for inclusivity.

f. Proposed Timeline:

➢ Weeks 1-2: Conduct community surveys.

➢ Weeks 3-6: Analyze survey data and develop a social media strategy.

➢ Weeks 7-8: Implement newsletter setup.

➢ Weeks 9-12: Launch strategy and monitor engagement metrics, while promoting accessibility and inclusivity.

By achieving these objectives within the proposed timeline, we aim to develop a comprehensive social media and communications strategy that meets the needs of the diverse MDAnalysis community, fostering engagement, inclusivity, and accessibility.