Connecting to Begin a Community Energy Project

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INTRODUCTION
To begin a renewable energy project, a person or group must have the necessary resources and knowledge. This can include information on costs, policies, funding sources, financial incentives, etc. Users need a central place to connect with others for advice about beginning a renewable energy project, while also having easy access to data about existing projects. To resolve this issue, a social media platform has been integrated into a website with data on existing projects.

BACKGROUND
The US Community Energy Project was started by Dr. Klein in 2014 with the collection of data on over 6,300 renewable energy projects across the country. The creation of the website for the project began in 2016 with a database-based, searchable website to allow users to have easy access to the data. The website now includes a social media platform to connect users in creating a better environment.

OBJECTIVES
‣ Investigate what makes a social media website successful;
‣ Implement a social media platform into an existing site;
‣ Connect users to one another and provide access to new data;
‣ Enable search for targeted information and interest groups.

APPRAOCH
‣ Effective social media websites have been found to:
  - Contain tailored content to targeted users [1];
  - Allow for expression of identity [2];
  - Facilitate direct communication between users [3].
‣ The project website incorporates best practices:
  - Resource page provides tailored content to users;
  - Profile page allows for users to express themselves;
  - Integration of Yet Another Forum.NET (YAF.NET), an open source forum software, facilitates communication between users.

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REFERENCES