



SOCIETY FOR HOSPITALITY
AND FOODSERVICE MANAGEMENT

AFFINITY GROUP TOOLKIT

SHFM Diversity, Equity
and Inclusion Council

Quick start guide for starting and developing
a sustainable Affinity Group Program

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AFFINITY GROUP RESOURCE

WHAT ARE AFFINITY GROUPS?

Affinity groups are a collection of people with a particular interest that is common between them. This interest alignment allows for a growth of network, support and community to develop that can be leveraged for the greater good of the organization.

WHY HAVE AFFINITY GROUPS?

Affinity groups can form connective tissue for team engagement. These groups can bring people from across large organizations together in situations that may not have been present otherwise.

These groups can be structured around any common cause, status or understanding. Commonly, groups are affiliated with ethnic status, gender empowerment or service affiliation.

GETTING STARTED

WITH A NEED

Starting your affinity program will require a good plan and a whole lot of motivation. The 4 Step Process is outlined below.

- Socialize your idea with potential members or group stakeholders
- Coordinate working sessions to develop mission, values, bylaws and charter
- Get approval to communicate and start recruiting

STEP 1: DEVELOP A GROUP CHARTER

Having a documented set of expectations, ownership and intentions will help grow an Affinity Group structure in a sustainable way.

- This document should be something that evolves as the groups grow and mature.
- This document should be agreed to on a regular basis to intentionally return group members to reevaluate their cause and intention
- This document should be readily available for group members to evaluate
- Charter Structure – It's important to lay out the critical needs for the group. An example of that could be below. Make sure to identify key bottlenecks to enhance the capabilities of the program.
 - Purpose and Mission
 - Name
 - Structure
 - Leadership Roles and Expectations
 - Membership Roles and Expectations
 - Measurements and Bylaws

STEP 2: DEVELOP GROUP GOALS

Without committed goals, a gap in success can develop. Having socialized and agreed to organizational targets is critical to sustained support and approval for the mission of the group.

- Create a sense of belonging for coworkers
- Create a space for coworkers to connect
- Provide opportunity for coworkers to connect where they may not have previously
- Provide an engagement opportunity for coworkers to be seen and heard
- Support the stated mission of the group

STEP 3: DEFINE GROUP SUCCESS MEASUREMENT

Being able to measure success is a critical component of Affinity Group success and will ultimately lead to longevity and perceived value derived from the group. Setting up and agreeing to objective success metrics is an important step. Examples of these metrics can be:

- Total members
- Membership engagement
- Events held
- Communications presented
- Total organizational impressions
- Survey responses

STEP 4: RECRUITMENT AND INCLUSION

Recruiting passionate and involved individuals to participate in group activities and communications is the most important step to having an Affinity Group that is impactful and can be solvent as leadership changes. Having robust recruitment strategies is a must for a succession of impactful engagement over time.

- Leadership circles should remain small, nimble and impactful during development process
- Email recruitment campaigns
- Leverage internal networks to build participation
- Passionate people attract passionate people
- Create open space for dialog, questioning and evolution

EXAMPLES OF AFFINITY GROUPS

The type and specific nature of groups can be as wide as you have interest levels. Understanding goals and outcomes is critical for the groups to attract enough participation to remain active as leadership of the group evolves. There is no one way for groups to be structured, but the need to be impactful is vital to those who participate. Examples of groups can be below but are not limited to:

- Veteran Status
- Race Based
- Culture Based
- Workplace Based
- Gender Based
- Age/Generation Based
- Specific Job Function Focused
- Leadership Focused

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

WATCH OUT FOR

There are a several risks to call out when starting an Affinity Group program, most of which can be avoided with the appropriate level of communication from the start. Creating structure at the beginning of the program development will help. Utilizing your resources within your organizational structure if available are critical to your long-term success.

- <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/legal-and-compliance/employment-law/pages/affinity-groups-risks-rewards.aspx>
- The use and exposure associated with social media (trolls are everywhere)
- Alienation of coworkers who do not feel included
- Legal concerns around potential discrimination

SOURCES

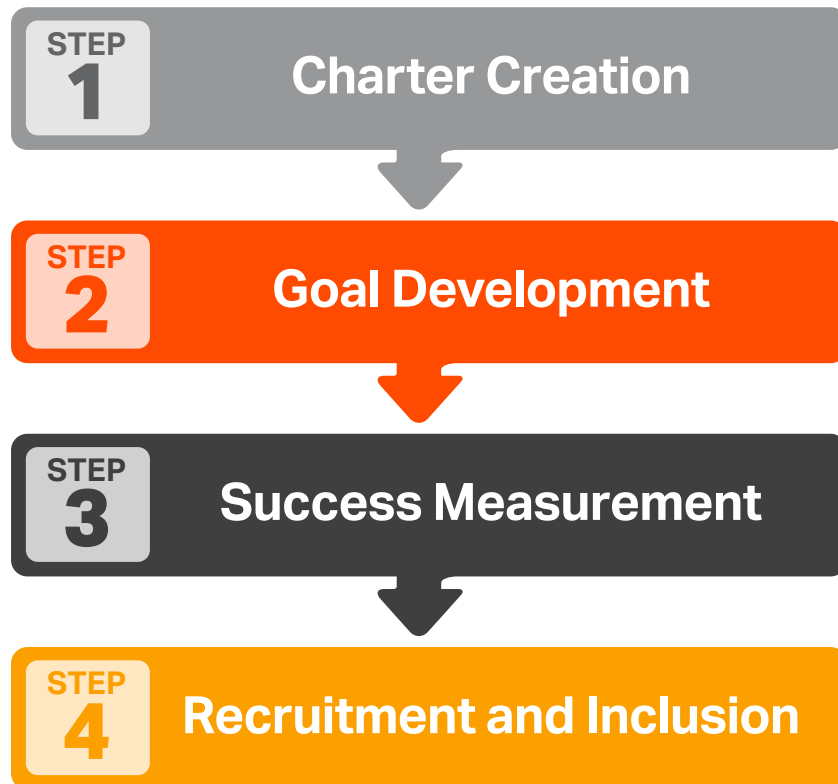
SHRM Article on Legal Risk within Affinity Group <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/legal-and-compliance/employment-law/pages/affinity-groups-risks-rewards.aspx>

A fully detailed and all-encompassing process on how to build an affinity program
https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/sites/diversitybestpractices.com/files/import/embedded/anchors/files/diversity_primer_chapter_10.pdf

How NASA Does It –
https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/erg_guidance_7-17-13.pdf

APPENDIX A

AFFINITY GROUP QUICK START STEPS



APPENDIX B: PDCA CYCLE

The PDCA cycle is an iterative, integrated management method used in business for the control and continuous improvement of processes and products.

PLAN

Recognize an opportunity and plan the change. Establish objectives and processes required to deliver the desired results.

DO

Test the change, carry out a small-scale study or test. Perform the objectives from the previous step.

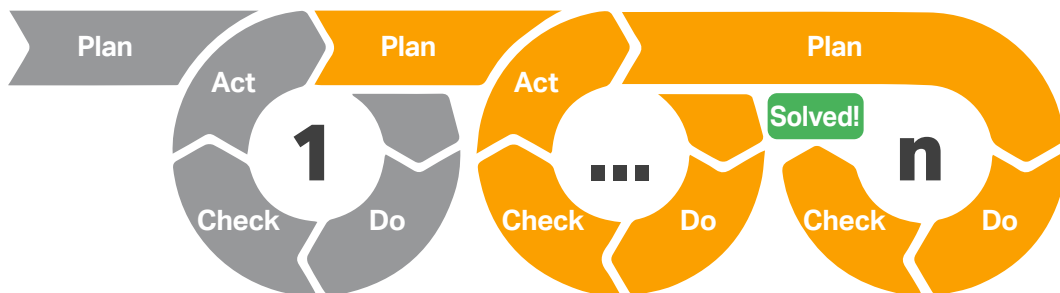
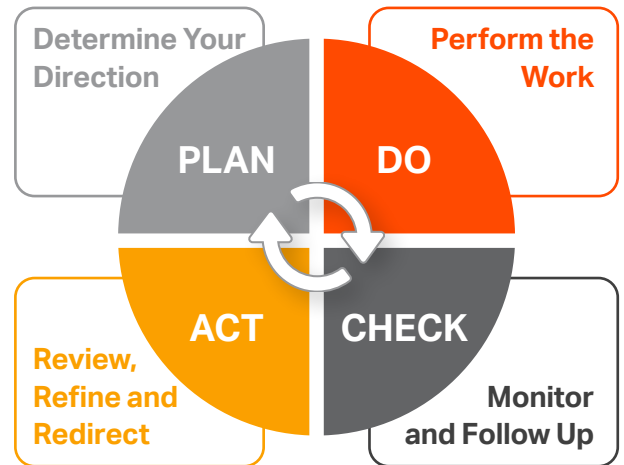
CHECK

Review the test, analyze the results and identify what we've learned. Data is compared to the expected outcomes to see any similarities and differences. The testing process is also evaluated to see if there were any changes from the original test created during the planning phase. If the data is placed in a chart it can make it easier to see any trends if the PDCA cycle is conducted multiple times. This helps to see what changes work better than others, and if said changes can be improved as well.

ACT

Take action based on what you learned in the study step. If the change did not work, go through the cycle again with a different plan. If you were successful, incorporate what you learned from the test into wider changes. Use what you learned to plan new improvements, beginning the cycle again.

Root causes of such issues are investigated, found and eliminated by modifying the process. Risk is re-evaluated. At the end of the actions in this phase, the process has better instructions, standards or goals. Planning for the next cycle can proceed with a better baseline. Work in the next do phase should not create recurrence of the identified issues; if it does, then the action was not effective.



PDCA IN ACTION FOR AFFINITY GROUP CREATION

- The Group should be open and inclusive to membership and strive to be accepting of all interest levels.
- Group leadership should engage the community it supports through constantly striving for feedback and input from the group.

Plan – Building Structure – Group Definition

- Establish group structure, support and clearly articulate expectations.
- Define group structure through completion of a charter that details leadership and membership roles and duties.

Do – Communicating Intention

- Discuss and understand impact intended.
- Organize intended outcomes for socialization.
- Develop plans to engage membership.

Check - Follow Through and Iteration

- Put in the work to engage members and create community.
- Execute coms to create awareness and attract attention.
- Create event that drives buy in and creates sense of action.
- Learn and create.

Act – Analysis and Evolution

- Assess outcomes, celebrate success, and evaluate effectiveness.
- Return to intended outcomes, repeat for continued success, solve for deficiencies.

