



# CITY OF MADISON AFFINITY GROUPS

SEPTEMBER 2022

## Overview:

- The City of Madison supports our employees in participating in Affinity Groups that are in alignment with our City's Vision – Our Madison: Inclusive, Innovative, and Thriving and our Values: Equity, Civic-engagement, Well-being, Shared Prosperity, and Stewardship.
- The creation and support of Affinity groups directly supports our value of equity and being committed to fairness, justice and equal outcomes for all.

## What are Affinity Groups?

- Affinity groups are voluntary, employee-led groups that are organized around social identities, marginalized groups, and life experiences. This can include, but is not limited to: race, ethnic, and/or cultural background, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other marginalized groups. Affinity groups can also be intersectional with a focus on more than one social identity.
- Affinity groups can provide brave spaces for people with shared identities to discuss concerns, hopes, and experiences they navigate in the workplace and in the community.

## Who can participate/join?

- Permanent full time and permanent part time staff.
- Staff whom have received support for participation from their direct supervisor.
- Staff whom are committed to the goal/purpose of the Affinity group.
- Some Affinity groups may have informed Allies. Affinity groups center the lived experience of the Affinity.

## What is the time commitment?

This will be determined by each Affinity group, but most meet on a monthly basis for 1-1.5 hours per month. Staff can anticipate close to 15 hours per year, while leads can anticipate closer to 25 hours per year to prep for meetings.

## Can employees participate during work hours?

Yes. Staff can take reasonable time from their normal work duties to participate as long as their department's work needs and own work performance are met. It is expected that communication will occur between staff and their direct supervisor around their involvement and impact on work load. If urgent work matters arise, participation may need to be modified to meet department needs. Attendance at these functions outside of work time is allowed, but will not be considered paid time.

## Where and What Type of Support can Affinity Groups receive?

- Department of Civil Rights - Equity and Social Justice Division and Human Resources -Organizational Development.



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- Before creating an Affinity group, email Kristy Kumar, DCR Equity and Social Justice Division Manager ([KKumar@cityofmadison.com](mailto:KKumar@cityofmadison.com)) and Anne Nowak, HR-OD Manager ([ANowak@cityofmadison.com](mailto:ANowak@cityofmadison.com)). They will:
  - Provide support in starting up a new affinity group
  - Share suggestions on outreach
  - Answer questions and serve as thought partners
  - Support setting expectations and communication with employees and leadership
  - DCR will keep track of what affinity groups are available
- If interested in submitting a funding proposal for Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJI) Professional Development funds, email Kristy Kumar, DCR Equity and Social Justice Division Manager ([KKumar@cityofmadison.com](mailto:KKumar@cityofmadison.com))

## General Guidelines to participate in Affinity Groups

- Supervisors are expected to be flexible and supportive of staff who wish to attend Affinity Group activities.
- Individuals are expected to discuss with your supervisor your desire to participate and/or lead an Affinity Group (you do not need to specify which one), the anticipated amount of time, commitment, and impact on work load. Provide suggestions on how you will ensure department's work needs and your own work performance are met and obtain supervisors support. Reach out to Anne Nowak and/or Kristy Kumar for further guidance if you are concerned about obtaining supervisor approval.
- Unless otherwise stated, everything discussed in your affinity group should remain confidential amongst its members.
- Affinity groups should not be expected to take on the responsibility of agency wide equity and inclusion work, but provide an intentional space where employees choose to gather and discuss such topics if they wish to. If your affinity group is interested in discussing recommendations for the agency on equity and social justice, please reach out to [resji@cityofmadison.com](mailto:resji@cityofmadison.com).
- We recommend co-creating group agreements which are set and honored by each Affinity Group.
- Create and maintain a confidential and anonymous feedback loop (example: SurveyMonkey).
- Think inclusively when communicating and inviting new members to a group and how you will provide continuous communication.
- Consider inviting senior leadership to a planning meeting as an ally and sponsor if your group is interested in advocacy and policy. If you have questions on who to reach out to, email Kristy Kumar and/or Anne Nowak.

## Benefits of Affinity Groups

- Identity development
- Promote employee engagement and development
- Increase representation of social identities and marginalized groups in the work place
- Generate innovation, creativity, care, and joy
- Build a framework of support and sense of belonging through development of peer support networks
- Increase cultural awareness and cultural humility
- Increase employee productivity and retention