



SFDPH Affinity Group Q & A

What is an Affinity Group?

Affinity Groups or Employee Affinity Groups (EAG) are recognized, voluntary, employee-led groups that are designed to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion. Affinity Groups have a declared focus on a declared group of staff, generally an identity group that faces barriers to inclusion (e.g. women, racial groups, LGBTQ, or other classes recognized an anti-discrimination policies). Group members with similar background come together to share thoughts and experiences, develop strategies for advancement, celebrate culture and community, and create opportunities for staff to connect and get to know one another.

How are Affinity Groups formed under this policy?

This DPH-wide policy lays out parameters for departmental support of affinity groups, and shares San Francisco City and County guidance around group purpose and activities. The Office of Health Equity will approve the charter of each affinity group. The only requirements are stated in the application. DPH staff have requested affinity groups be formed as a means of addressing unmet needs for social, professional, and cultural connections to staff with similar background and experiences. Many groups have already formed unofficially or under divisional policies. Those groups would need to apply under this policy if they are seeking official recognition.

How is an affinity group different from a support group?

Support groups are generally focused on mental health and wellness for people who may need support around a specific issue. While one may receive support in affinity groups, its purpose is broader.

Who may participate in an Affinity Group?

Any and all SFDPH staff who affirm the affinity group's charter, whether they are members of the community of focus or not, may participate in and/or be a member of an EAG. Per the Affinity Group Policy, membership in the EAG is open to all staff who wish to be associated with the EAG and who affirm the EAG's charter. Membership cannot be denied, delayed or deterred. As stated earlier, affinity group activity that takes place during your work period must be approved by your supervisor. There is no maximum number of affinity groups you may participate in.



Am I required to participate in Affinity Group activities?

Affinity groups are voluntary and led by employees rather than DPH management. You may participate in the activities of an affinity group with your supervisor's approval during your work period. Overtime, Compensatory Time, or other wages/premiums are not authorized for the sole purpose of participation in EAG activities. There is no professional benefit to participation other than skills or experiences gained from participation in the group. Preferential treatment by management based on group membership is not allowed.

I have been meeting in an affinity group in my department. Do I need to have the Office of Health Equity (OHE) approval to continue to meet?

No, however the existing affinity group will not be listed as an official DPH affinity group without going through the registration process. An un-recognized affinity group may not be eligible to use city resources or be included in official activities.

What support will the DPH provide for the affinity groups?

The Office of Health Equity has set aside limited funds for Affinity Group support. Affinity groups may request funding during announced funding periods for events, speakers, or other activities through application from the Office of Health Equity. Funding is not available for additional staffing or for materials (e.g., T-shirts) but may be used for incentives (e.g. awards for group contributions). Should funds be spent prior to approval/denial of the application, OHE cannot guarantee reimbursement.

Do I need approval from my supervisor to participate in affinity group activities?

Yes, if affinity group activities, including, but not limited to preparing for or planning activities/meetings, take place during your work period. While on work-time, staff are subject to CCSF and SFDPH policies. This includes anti-discrimination policy, respectful behavior, and other standards (most are outlined in the employee handbook).

Equity Champions, who have preapproved hours for equity activities, may use those hours to fulfill logistical or leadership needs of the Affinity Group (attendance alone is not a Champion activity).