

Affinity Groups

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HBA maintains a defined set of affinity groups that address the needs and deliver value to subgroups within our membership population. Affinity group participation is a member value add. Effective setup and leadership of these groups are critical to their success.

HBA's affinity group policies define how new affinity groups are established within the HBA and how, when, and why legacy affinity groups are discontinued.

Policy users

This policy should be adhered to by all HBA members and HBA leaders, including chapter and affiliates board members, regional directors, COE presidents, regional council members, global committees and their chairs and affinity group committees, and volunteers.

Definition of an affinity group

Affinity groups are self-forming communities of HBA members who connect through a common interest, focus or need associated with their career and professional development. Affinity groups provide additional value for members from professional networking, development and career support with a specific specialty or focus. Affinity group participation as either a volunteer is limited to HBA members.

Affinity groups offer a variety of ways to be involved and engage including: virtual communities for discussion and dialogue; in-person or virtual events focused on group-specific information and education; networking and development opportunities for members within their HBA chapter and/or local geography; platforms for members to share and expose their work and accomplishments.

HBA members have the exclusive opportunity to participate in one or many affinity groups based on their individual professional needs. HBA members can move in and out of the groups per their individual professional needs. Any HBA member can attend any affinity group event, regardless of their being a registered member of the affinity group. To be a member of an affinity group, members must belong to the respective HBA community.

Affinity group operations

Affinity groups are self-managed in accordance with HBA operating policies and procedures and under the guise of a global committee chair, who sets overarching strategic direction and priorities for group and facilitates collaboration and coordination across the regional groups. The global committee chair works directly with a member of the HBA senior staff to ensure alignment of the group's activities with HBA's mission, values, and priorities. The primary HBA staff contacts for global affinity group chairs include HBA's Senior Manager of Member Programs.

Established affinity groups are led by a global AG chair volunteer leader who sits within the Global Affinity Group Committee 'reporting' to the global committee chair. The global AG chair forms and manages their own volunteer committee and ensures compliance with HBA central operating policies and procedures.

Affinity groups may offer programs or events providing specific information, education, and/or access to relevant industry leaders related to their specific focus.

Affinity group events are planned and executed at the global level by the affinity group volunteers under auspices and guidance of the affinity group global chair and AG director of education and events. Events must adhere to all HBA event policies.

Established affinity groups

Established affinity groups are shown on HBA's website www.hbanet.org/affinity-groups. Communities that are in the formation stages are added to that website page once they are approved, branded, and announced.

Establishing new affinity groups

Every affinity group first begins as a community. The HBA will establish affinity groups where there is sufficient member interest within that community. At least 200 members in a community must demonstrate an interest in order for an affinity group to be considered for global status.

New groups must move through four stages of formation to ensure there is both member interest and leadership capacity for the group to be successful. HBA staff work with interested members through these stages of formation.

Groups which successfully complete the formation stages must present an action plan for the affinity group to the HBA Senior Manager of Member Programs. HBA staff leaders make the final determination on the affinity group status and will establish the official affinity group name.

HBA's Senior Manager of Member Programs will also:

- coordinate the launching of the new affinity group
- coordinate the announcement of the new group across the HBA membership
- introduce the new affinity group global chair to the global committee chair and committee.

Formation stages for new affinity groups

Affinity groups must complete the following four formation stages:

Establish interest: HBA members interested in forming an affinity group connect and discuss the opportunity with other members to assess level of interest. These members are encouraged to use the HBA community and HBA newsletters to create awareness and identify interest in the new affinity. Arranging informal networking and/or meet-up sessions helps build awareness and interest.

Designate a leader: at least one group member must agree to act as an interim group leader for the affinity group and work with group members to create goals and objectives for the group. This leader works with HBA Senior Manager of Member Programs for training and best practices regarding affinity groups.

Organize an affinity group event: the interim group leader, along with a few volunteers, coordinate the planning and execution of a group event – virtual or in-person – to assess and demonstrate member interest in the affinity. This event committee, works with their regional marketing committees, to promote the event and work among themselves to plan and execute this event according to HBA event policies.

Present affinity group proposal: Once there are 200 members in the community, the interim group leader, along with some group members, as appropriate, will prepare and submit a proposal for establishing the new affinity group to the HBA Senior Manager and global affinity group committee chair.

Proposal should include:

- the goals and objectives of the group
- recommendations for a group name
- recommendations for the group leader and identification of committee members
- an action plan for the next twelve (12) months describing thoughts and ideas for group events and member experiences

- a summary of the inaugural group event

Terminating affinity groups

HBA maintains a defined set of affinity groups that address the needs, and delivers value to, subgroups within our membership population.

Once established, affinity groups will continue as sanctioned groups as long as the following criteria are satisfied:

1. The affinity group should have at least 200 active members participating in at least three regions. "Active" is defined as individuals attending events, working on affinity group committees, and supporting/engaging in group discussion via the HBA online community.
2. Affinity group leaders are actively participating in their group's committee meetings.
3. There are at least five (5) volunteers on their leadership team.
4. Each affinity group must offer at least two (2) affinity group events per year, in-person or virtually, to group members in the region. These events can be an 'HBA event', planned and executed by HBA members or done in partnership with a region or chapter which shares the affinity group focus.
5. HBA affinity group events should at the least break even financially.
6. The HBA online community for the affinity group should demonstrate frequent, relevant dialogue among affinity group members (target goal - at least one post a month).

Affinity group participation and performance will be assessed periodically. Affinity groups that fail to meet fifty percent (50%) of the stated criteria will be put into probationary status and are at risk to be dissolved.

The probationary period can extend up to six months. While in the probationary period affinity group leaders will be encouraged to work with HBA Senior Manager of Member Programs to address group shortfalls. If at the end of the six-month (6) probationary period, the affinity group participation and performance have not improved, the affinity group will be dissolved.

Affinity group governance

HBA Senior Manager of Member Programs is responsible to establish and appoint global chairs for each affinity group. Global chairs are generally appointed when there are three (3) or more affinity groups up and running¹. The global chair sets overarching strategy and priorities for their affinity group and facilitates collaboration and coordination across the regions. The global chair works directly with the HBA Senior Manager of Member Programs to ensure alignment of the group's activities with HBA's mission, values, and priorities and is a participating member of the global affinity group committee.

Affinity group global chairs are approved and appointed by the HBA Senior Manager of Member Programs in collaboration with the global affinity group committee chair.

Compliance tracking

Affinity group membership counts and affinity group event performance for each region will be reviewed annually by HBA. Additionally, the affinity group global committee chair will be asked to provide qualitative assessments of affinity group performance. The quantitative and qualitative data will be used to evaluate affinity group compliance with continuation criteria.
