

Five Tips for Forming an Affinity Group

1. **Start where you are.** Can you think of five people who might want to form an affinity group? Congratulations, you're half-way there! Bring those five folks together for dinner to talk about reaching five more. Can you think of three, or just one? That's okay! Do the same thing – have dinner and begin brainstorming. You never know where your conversations may lead.
2. **Take action early on.** Once you have a group, get out of the house! Carpool to a rally, foreclosure blockade, or community garden “work day.” Or do something social – attend an educational forum, go hiking, or even go bowling! (It beats bowling alone.)
3. **Learn about small group decision-making.** As your group continues to meet, you will inevitably encounter differences of opinion. Decide how you will resolve these differences, such as through the consensus model. Try to include someone with small group facilitation in your group, or ask a few members to learn facilitation skills.
4. **Go beyond politics – bring your “whole self” to meetings.** What are the roots of our political commitments? What values and personal experiences motivate us? Create space to share your stories. Create space for your non-political selves as well. What are your jobs, passions, interests, hobbies?

For parents, bringing your whole self to a meeting may mean bringing your kids! Invite kids to eat with the group, and then set up a kid-friendly video in the next room, find a babysitter and “pass the hat” to pay him or her, or take turns watching the kids.

5. **Meet over a meal.** There's something magic about food. Try to meet at someone's home over a potluck, or rotate meal duty.

Resources for Affinity Groups

- A Guide for Your First Meeting - <http://bit.ly/Lenede>
- A Guide to Consensus Decision-Making - <http://wri-irg.org/node/5139>
- Affinity Groups and Spokescouncils - <http://wri-irg.org/node/11059>
- The Resilience Circle Curriculum – Email info@localcircles.org for a free copy