



ALF Silicon Valley Affinity Group

DIY: Do-It-Yourself Guide

Steps and questions to consider if you are interested in working with other Senior Fellows on a shared interest.

What is an ALF Affinity Group?

Senior Fellows, driven by a common interest or goal, come together in affinity groups. Joining an affinity group is a great way to build your network and connect with like-minded Senior Fellows who want to engage in deep dialogue and find solutions to problems in our communities and beyond. Current affinity groups include:

- LGBTQ+ Affinity Group
- San Francisco & East Bay Senior Fellows
- San Mateo County Senior Fellows
- Sustainability (environment/climate)
- Racial caucuses: AAPI Caucus, ALF Black, La Comunidad for Justice, Equity & Inclusion (Latine/a/o/x Senior Fellows), Anti-Racist Learning Circle (white identifying Senior Fellows)
- Reflecting Life's Journey

Consider starting an affinity group

1) Clarify your interest and purpose

- What is your interest? What's the issue, opportunity, or challenge? How does it relate to ALF's ultimate goal: Courageous, diverse networks of cross-sector leaders are working towards an equitable and thriving Silicon Valley.
- What is your goal? Do you want to create:
 - a learning community to gain knowledge and understanding?
 - a group to collaborate on a project or take collective action?
 - a group primarily to bring people together around a shared interest and/or to bring people together from different perspectives?
- Staff can help you think this through



2) Explore who else might be interested

- Search in ALF Connect for keywords related to your interest
- Ask staff for input and connections (allyson@alfsv.org)
- Consider reaching out to seniors. Fellows with diverse perspectives and skills, ranging from big ideas, facilitation, coordination, etc.
- Are you able to find enough people who are interested in participating? - If you find fewer than 10 interested Senior Fellows, you could start through conversation with them to explore if together you could identify enough people (at least 10 to start an affinity group)

Creating a structure to start and sustain an affinity group

3) Who will provide leadership for the group? Shared leadership can provide an inclusive approach for the group and a manageable workload for the leaders. Current affinity groups are led by 2 to 6 leaders. More leaders means more time needed to coordinate and more people to share the load, including:

- Developing a framework / proposed purpose for the group
- Planning agendas & facilitating meetings
- Taking notes and sharing updates
- Completing [this form](https://forms.gle/dXft7TbCAZ79CwB27) after each meeting (<https://forms.gle/dXft7TbCAZ79CwB27>) - Scheduling
 - Consider how often you would like to meet, e.g., quarterly, monthly - What are some good times to be accessible for diverse Senior Fellows? Morning, afternoon, or evening? Weekdays or weekends?
 - Staff can assist with scheduling polls, etc., if needed (Allyson@alfsv.org)
- Engaging existing and new members, including turn-out for meetings and additional check-ins for input, as needed
- Periodically and continuously evaluating the group process and making adjustments as needed (e.g., who's missing? Is the energy and commitment of the group sustaining, growing, or waning?)



4) How will you communicate and coordinate the work?

- Staff can help create a group on ALF Connect (Allyson@alfsv.org)
- Who will send out meeting reminders and updates between meetings? - Leadership teams of many current groups use running Google docs for keeping shared notes and planning, drafting and confirming agendas and plans
- Leadership teams also use spreadsheets of Senior Fellows/Fellows to identify, recruit, and engage others (and track RSVPs and participation and coordinate who will reach out to whom)
- Some groups use JamBoards for brainstorming and organizing ideas both during meetings and between

Not ready to start an affinity group? Consider other options

Have a conversation with a staff member to consider if a single session might be a better fit (at least to start) (Allyson@alfsv.org)

- **Dialogue session** - If you have an interest you are exploring and wrestling with, you could invite a small group of Senior Fellows to participate in a dialogue session using ALF [dialogue guidelines](#) and practices. Staff could help you identify and invite Senior Fellows and possibly facilitate the dialogue, as availability and capacity allows.
- **Power circle** - If you are looking for input and potential partners for a project you have already defined or developed, staff could help you identify a small number of Senior Fellows - from different perspectives and sectors - to invite to learn from you, share their input, and possibly share connections and resources to help advance your project.



Want to plan an event for the network? (either hosted by an affinity group or a team of Senior Fellows) **Some guidelines**

- 1) **Scheduling** - Set the date as far in advance as possible - at least 4-6 weeks. Check with staff to pace with other ALF events (Allyson@alfsv.org) and check with others to consider potential competing events in the broader community context.
- 2) **Venue** - Ideally, a Senior Fellow will host in their home or workplace (or a community space they reserve). Senior Fellows appreciate the opportunity to get to know each other by visiting other Senior Fellows' places. Choose a location with the greatest appeal and the fewest barriers to participation for the target audience.
- 3) **Expenses** - ALF's budget is limited, so please check with staff early in your planning process (Allyson@alfsv.org) if you would like to explore ALF assistance with expenses. ALF may be able to provide a few bottles of wine from our donated supply, if that might be appropriate.
- 4) **Promotion & turn-out** - The primary method of promoting events is through email invitations and personal follow ups. If an affinity group is hosting an event for the network, you can start by sharing with your affinity group email, and you can work with a group members to help with outreach, including:
 - Contact the staff point person for your affinity group or event (Allyson@alfsv.org) for assistance setting up an event registration and communicating out to the network via the relevant channels.
 - Invite your own classes
 - Ask speakers/moderators to invite their classes and other affinity groups they're connected with. You can ask staff for assistance with this, if needed. (Allyson@alfsv.org)
 - Reach out to Allyson (Allyson@alfsv.org) for sharing with Class Champions

who can then share with their classes

- Search in ALF Connect for other Senior Fellows with shared interests to invite
- Send invitations and reminders, balancing promoting the event with overwhelming people with emails