

YMCA GLBT Affinity Group

January 20, 2010, Webinar Chat FAQ

Is there a way to connect with this affinity group via social networking?

Yes, YMCA GLBT has a group you can join on LinkedIn. If you don't already have a LinkedIn profile, it's easy to join: <https://www.linkedin.com/reg/join>. The group name, with an awesome rainbow icon you can add to your profile (thank you, Richard Clegg!) is simply YMCA GLBT.

At which level of YMCA employment are the members in the affinity group? I ask because I believe that participation is supported based on the level of those who are promoting it within the organization. For example my YMCA does not have senior leadership representing a GLBT interest, and, working for the corporate office, I am the most visible GLBT staff member. I think that CEOs, Ops VPs, and Executive Directors who encourage this movement would be more supported by the Association versus a program director level. Make sense?

Yes, this makes sense. Knowing this is part of why we have secured Chuck Collins as our Executive Champion (CEO of the YMCA of San Francisco) . We continue to work on a second Executive Champion from a smaller YMCA in the South or Mid-West so that we can represent the range of member associations as they work within their communities. Our Membership Committee and communications strategy to support outreach will emphasize the need to have members in roles of influence.

The Open and Affirming YMCA checklist presented by the Resource Committee is a great start. Is there a way that it could be more than "all or nothing" for those communities that have farther to go in terms of their policies and attitudes?

This is an excellent point. A number of people on the call noted that the continued work on this checklist could be modeled after Y-USA Best Practice tools and self-assessments, using the levels of foundational, thriving and exceptional. For example, take a look at the general Diversity and Inclusion Best Practices Link on Yexchange (userid ymca, password 9622):

http://www.ymcaexchange.org/front/Ymovement/national_planning/downloads/YMCA_Diversity_and_Inclusion_Best_Practices.pdf

The draft checklist draws from HRC resources: <http://www.hrc.org/issues/workplace/cei.htm>

Comments for the Resource Committee about the checklist or any other needed tools can be sent to Amy White, awhite@seattleyymca.org or (206) 382-4924.

Not to go negative, but has there been any discussion about this new affinity group with YMCAs or YMCA professionals who will be resistant to these practices? Just to see what the other side is thinking?

Yes, this is on the Communications Committee's radar and work plan. In keeping with our own knowledge around "Listen First," we would like to queue up relationship-based conversations with individuals whose involvement or past comments might indicate a resistance to what our Affinity Group hopes to advance in the movement. If anyone has suggestions of "naysayer" groups they have encountered or outspoken individuals, send a quick email to the Communications Committee via Monica Elenbaas, monica.elenbaas@ymca.net or call toll free, 1-800-872-9622, ext. 8134.

Has the Membership Committee done any work on a chapter system?

This is a great suggestion that has been passed onto the Membership Committee. Since we are new and starting small (under 70 members as of this call), there is lots of room to grow.

What if I have feedback after the call?

Send an email to info@ymcaglb.org or post your question/idea on the YMCA GLBT Group on LinkedIn.

Closing thought – not a question, but an inspiring comment from the chat on our first Webinar!

“I think that the direction and growth...the look...of this Affinity Group will be a different journey than others. GLBT is something that can be hidden and culturally have a history of feeling shamed, so our building may be different. I cannot tell you how excited I am about your work and dedication.”