

PPM 492: Affinity Groups

Responsible Officer:	Executive Director Human Resources
Responsible Office:	Human Resources
Issuance Date:	04/01/2021
Effective Date:	04/01/2021
Last Review Date:	Not applicable (initial issuance of policy)
Scope:	All UC ANR employees

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**Note: For links to referenced documents see
Section VI, *Related Information*, below.**

I. POLICY SUMMARY

- A. The purpose of this section of the Policy and Procedure Manual for the University of California (UC) Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) is to establish requirements for affinity groups within UC ANR. The policy is intended to provide guidance for employees who wish to form and maintain such groups.
- B. Affinity groups at UC ANR create community among employees, provide opportunities for networking and development, and support UC ANR’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. The primary focus of affinity groups at UC ANR is to help advance inclusive excellence throughout the organization.
- C. Unlike employee organizations (unions), affinity groups do not exist, in whole or in part, for the purpose of dealing with the University concerning grievances or labor disputes or representing members in their employment relationship.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Affinity Group:** An affinity group is an institutionally-supported, employee-led voluntary association of employees drawn together by a common identity, common interests, shared characteristics, or life experiences. Affinity groups provide opportunities for people to connect with other people who share aspects of their identity, especially in situations in which aspects of their identity are in the minority or are marginalized. Affinity Groups may also be referred to as “Employee Resource Groups” or “Constituency Groups.”

III. POLICY TEXT

A. Affinity Group Requirements

- 1. Affinity groups must be formed voluntarily, and individual employee membership and participation in such groups must be voluntary.
- 2. Membership of affinity groups may be open to all UC ANR employees (an “open” affinity group) or may be limited to a specific group population (a “closed” affinity group) as shown below.

Open Affinity Groups	Closed Affinity Groups
May receive UC ANR funding for activities that are open to all UC ANR employees.	May not receive UC ANR funding for “closed” activities (however, activities open to all UC ANR employees could potentially receive UC ANR funding).
May use UC ANR resources such as space, email, etc.	
UC ANR employees may attend meetings during working hours.	

- 3. The mission and purpose of affinity groups should be congruent with the mission, values, and strategic priorities of UC ANR.
- 4. Affinity groups must adhere to UC policies.

B. Formation, Recognition and Approval

1. The successful formation of an affinity group typically requires the identification and commitment of a small nucleus of dedicated and interested employees. It takes commitment from these individuals to ensure the group organizes itself in such a way as to guarantee continuity.
2. For any affinity group to be officially recognized by UC ANR, it must request and gain approval by the UC ANR Vice President. In order to be recognized as an affinity group at UC ANR and to receive support from UC ANR administration, affinity groups must apply to Human Resources, and provide:
 - a. The name of the organization.
 - b. The names, departments, and contact information of the principal officers.
 - c. A copy of the official statement of purpose (charter) describing how the group will operate, how often they intend to meet, officers/functionaries and their specific roles, and so on. See Appendix I for a template charter.
3. UC ANR reserves the right to reject any groups that violate UC ANR policies and procedures, and/or that are not aligned with UC ANR's mission and values.
4. Once the affinity group is approved, Human Resources will review this information with group leadership annually to confirm that each affinity group continues to be active.

C. Prohibitions/Suspension/Dissolution

1. Affinity Groups are prohibited from the following:
 - a. Forming or evolving for the purpose of opposing other groups;
 - b. Forming or evolving to promote political or religious positions;
 - c. Participating in any collective bargaining activities (i.e., salary, work hours, benefits, or any other term or condition of employment); and
 - d. Seeking remedies for individuals.
2. UC ANR reserves the right at any time to suspend or dissolve any affinity group, or to remove an affinity group member from a leadership role, for the following reasons:
 - a. Failure to meet the requirements set forth in this Policy and Procedure Manual section,
 - b. Taking any action detrimental to the University,
 - c. Any unauthorized or improper use of UC ANR's name, stationary, non-profit status, etc.,
 - d. Violation of the UC ANR Principles of Community,
 - e. There is no longer interest in maintaining this group by group leadership and/or constituents.

D. UC ANR Management Support

UC ANR management support of approved affinity groups may include:

1. Recognizing and encouraging affinity group activity and officers and exchanging information of interest.
2. Allowing a reasonable amount of time on pay status to be devoted to legitimate affinity group activities by officers and members.
3. Allowing affinity groups to use UC ANR facilities, supplies, and equipment (telephone, meeting rooms, computers, etc.) at no cost.
4. Promoting affinity group activity through employee newsletters, websites, New Employee Orientation, and other communication channels. UC ANR provides multiple tools to help employees and employee groups organize and promote activities to their colleagues. Affinity groups are expected to follow Guidelines for publicizing events and activities at UC ANR.
5. Funding appropriate operating expenses. Examples of appropriate expenses eligible to be funded include:
 - a. Food and refreshments for events open to all UC ANR employees.
 - b. Reimbursement for travel expenses and fees for speakers at events open to all UC ANR employees.
 - c. Supplies, equipment, and marketing material to promote group activities open to all UC ANR employees.

UC ANR funds intended to support affinity group activities may not be used for activities not open to all UC ANR employees, nor for personal gain, nor to directly support outside organizations, scholarships or charities.

Reimbursement of expenses is coordinated by Human Resources in accordance with UC Business and Finance Bulletin BUS-79: *Expenditures for Business Meetings, Entertainment, and Other Occasions*. Affinity groups are expected to notify Human Resources in advance of incurring expenses to confirm the expenses are appropriate and funding is available.

IV. COMPLIANCE / RESPONSIBILITIES

- A.** The Vice President – Agriculture and Natural Resources has the authority to recognize or withdraw support from affinity groups. The Vice President is also responsible for designating a position to administer and implement this policy at UC ANR.
- B.** The Executive Director Human Resources is responsible for the administration and implementation of this policy at UC ANR.

V. PROCEDURES

Not used – see item III, *Policy Text* above.

VI. RELATED INFORMATION

- [BFB-BUS-79: Expenditures for Business Meetings, Entertainment, and Other Occasions](#)
- [2019 Advisory: Prohibition on Political Campaign Intervention](#)
- [Restrictions on the Use of University Facilities and Resources for Political Activities](#)
- [UC ANR Staff Assembly](#)
- [UC ANR Academic Assembly Council](#)
- [UC ANR Principles of Community](#)
- [UC ANR PPM Section 492, Affinity Groups, Appendix I, UC ANR Affinity Group Charter Template](#)

VII. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A. Why are affinity groups prohibited from forming or evolving to promote political or religious positions?

As a State instrumentality, UC must remain neutral on political and religious matters, in accordance with Section 92000 of the California Education Code. As a result, no affinity group may engage in political or religious activity, including but not limited to seeking to advance a political position or candidate, or to convince other employees to adopt or adhere to a particular political or religious position or viewpoint.

VIII. REVISION HISTORY

Not applicable (initial issuance of policy).