

*APPLIED ACTIVITY:***CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING (CR) GROUP****Purpose:**

Consciousness raising (CR) groups were an integral part of the women's liberation movement and continue to serve as a potent and effective way for organizing, learning, and building community in LGBTQIA2+ circles. The purpose of facilitating CR groups is to bring people together in an informal setting on a weekly or biweekly basis to discuss human rights, intersectional social justice, and political topics. Forming an intergenerational CR group will create bonds, connections, understanding, and knowledge pertaining to topics that require activist work across the span of many generations.

**Facilitation recommendations:**

- The group should be casual in nature.
- Meetings should reoccur on a regular basis depending on the organization (e.g. weekly, biweekly, monthly).
- Virtual and in-person meetings are both effective
- Create a collaborative document where CR group members can suggest and vote on various topics.
- Focus on one topic per meeting.
- Consider planning a topic series, where one topic is the subject of discussion for several meetings in a row.
- Limit the meeting size to 20 people maximum. If more people are interested, consider creating two groups, and divide participants into preferred topic areas.
- Limit the meeting to an hour, so it can accommodate most peoples' schedules.

**What you will need:**

- Community participants
- A meeting space (physical or virtual will do)
- Community co-written rules and guidelines
- Shared spreadsheet for contributing topics and agendas for upcoming meetings

## Directions:

1. Create a Google Form that is designed to collect information from interested participants. On the form, ask:
  - Name
  - E-mail address
  - “What motivates you to participate in our CR group?”
  - Would you prefer weekly, biweekly, or monthly meetings?
  - “What days of the week and times of day work best for your schedule?”
  - “What topics of discussion would you like to engage with? (option to do multiple choice, if there are already a limited number of topics selected)”
2. Spread the word!
  - Email the Google Form to staff, interns, volunteers, and community members.
  - Post the form to social media pages and invite community members to fill out the form if they are interested in joining.
  - Set a deadline for responding.
3. Follow up with one or two more reminders before the deadline.
4. Crunch the data.
  - Once each participant has responded, analyze the most frequently requested topic area of discussion.
  - Based on the answers, decide upon the frequency of meetings and the date and time of each recurring meeting.
5. Secure a space.
  - Prepare the virtual or physical meeting room. For virtual meeting rooms, Zoom and Jitsi are both great options, although Jitsi has a better privacy policy.
6. Draft the community guidelines and rules, and invite others to participate.
  - Create a collaborative document where other community members can leave comments contributing to the guidelines and rules.
  - Include guidelines such as: please don’t speak over others; don’t offer unsolicited advice to people; no one person should dominate the conversation; be respectful at all costs, etc.
7. Invite attendees to the first meeting, via e-mail.
  - Share the meeting date and time for the first meeting.
  - If the meeting will take place virtually, include the meeting room ID, link, and password.
  - Ask for RSVPs.

8. It's time to host the first meeting!
  - Gather in the designated meeting place.
  - Begin with brief introduction of the group's mission and the topic of the day
  - Take turns introducing oneself briefly (share name and involvement in the organization. 30 seconds each)
9. Start the conversation!
  - Tips for keeping the conversation flowing and on topic:
  - If someone has not spoken in awhile, another member can engage that person to see if they would like to contribute. Some folks are not as forthcoming as others, so it's up to the group to create an atmosphere of inclusion.
  - Designate a moderator at the beginning of the meeting. Whenever there is a lull or a moment when the conversation should be redirected to remain on topic, the facilitator can ask a question or spark a new thought to keep things on track.
  - Keep holding respect and practicing deep listening throughout the meeting.
10. Continue to host meetings, and in the process, encourage members to submit feedback for improving the community atmosphere.