

d@w Local Groups - An Introduction

Thank you for your interest in starting a d@w group in your city, community or campus! We are on the brink of a larger mass movement ready to demand alternative solutions to capitalism. We believe this movement can be successful if we are willing to work toward a solution that supports and empowers workers in their respective enterprises. This is why we have developed an opportunity for those interested in leading this movement, to organize and mobilize toward this goal.

Who we are...

Democracy at Work (d@w) is a non-profit media creator and curator most well-known for *Economic Update with Richard Wolff*. We also advocate for workers self-directed enterprises (WSDEs) and other democratic workplaces as a key part of evolving from the current model of capitalism to a new and better economy.

What we do...

We conceive, create and distribute materials that are critical of capitalism and are designed to inform and educate the public on why democratizing the workplace creates a strong foundation for an economy in which workers are empowered. We support an environment in which social movements advocating these ideals can thrive.

Why start a Local Group...

The movement starts with you! It takes the action and advocacy of everyday citizens and community leaders to make this a reality; as an active leader of a d@w Local Group, you are jumping on the frontlines of this movement within your community.

What is in this packet...

This packet contains the following:

- **Introduction** (what you're reading now)
- **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQs)
- **Guidelines and Expectations**
- **Ethical Guidelines**
- **Application Process**

d@w Local Groups - FAQs

What are d@w Local Groups?

d@w began supporting Local Groups in 2016 at request of listeners of *Economic Update* who wanted to do more in their community. In essence, they are designed and operated to provide a space for people to come together, learn and share knowledge of worker cooperatives, engage with their community, and participate in the broader cultural shift towards a more just economic system.

While each local group operates independently and with their individual goals and projects, all work towards fulfilling the same mission statement:

At Democracy at Work - XYZ (d@w-XYZ), we endeavor to further our parent organization's purpose, that is, raising awareness and generating a positive social and cultural shift towards Worker Cooperatives. Worker Co-ops are a way to reorganize our workplaces in a truly democratic fashion, where decision-making power and wealth are shared equally. Through promotion, education, and connection with local organizations, we aim to be a hub in XYZ that advocates for and facilitates the transformation of our economic system.

Our parent organization is the national non-profit, Democracy at Work, a media creator and curator which advocates for worker cooperatives. d@w expanded its activities in 2016 by supporting the formation of local groups such as d@w-XYZ.

Why are there local d@w groups?

Our country is large and diverse, and each area faces different challenges when it comes to making this cultural shift. Localized approaches are important to pushing wider change, and these groups help with that. Our groups exist primarily to:

EDUCATE: Local Groups are a space for people to learn about worker ownership and self-direction of enterprises as a cure for capitalism. We encourage the groups to engage in self-education as well as educate others who are interested in learning more about co-ops. They also learn and share the details of their city and state; what co-ops exist, what co-op incubators and developers exist, what are the specific assets and challenges of their area, etc.

CONNECT: Local Groups reach out to the co-ops, incubators, developers, and allies in their community. In our view, worker cooperatives offer a solution to many intersectional problems. Therefore, finding and connecting with other activist groups in one's area not only helps the movement for co-ops but for many other related social and economic issues.

SUPPORT: Support comes in many forms. Through self-education and connection to one's community, these groups come to learn how to best support this movement in their area: general education about co-ops, being a megaphone for existing co-ops, advocating for general co-op friendly policies, becoming a hub to connect co-ops and other social justice groups and more.

But what do they actually do?

d@w Local Groups . . .

1) **host public monthly meetings** which in general offer education on worker cooperatives, Marxism, and more. This is in the form of presentations, discussions based on readings, guest speakers, workshops, etc. These are also a social space for people to come together and enjoy each other's company.

2) **connect to their local community.** Co-ops have many intersectional effects and many other groups efforts are in line with the goals of co-ops. The groups find those intersections so that these efforts can support each other and build stronger community networks. They also connect with their local co-ops, amplifying their voices, services and efforts. They also connect with local incubators and developers to help potential co-ops find the development assistance they need.

3) **engage in outreach** to introduce the idea of worker cooperatives to as many people and groups as possible through presentations, tabling, and more.

4) **create media** such as podcasts, videos, graphics, blogs, presentations and more.

5) **run themselves with cooperative principles.**

Can these groups help me get a specific piece of legislation passed that would help worker cooperatives?

No. d@w is a 501c3 non-profit which allows us to advocate for general policies but restricts us from being able to lobby for specific legislation. d@w Local Groups operate under those same restrictions. That does not mean that you cannot tell a group about your piece of legislation, but they will not be able to support your efforts as a d@w Local Group activity.

How do I find a Local Group in my area?

All official groups are listed on our Local Groups page with forms of contact, and all of their announced public monthly meetings are listed on the d@w Event Page.

There isn't a Local Group in my area. Can I start one?

If there isn't a group in your area, yes, you can absolutely apply to start one.

First, we ask you to read through the **Guidelines and Expectations for d@w Local Groups** to get a more specific understanding of this responsibility.

If you'd like to apply, then please fill out the **Application Form for a d@w Local Group**.

I have a question that this FAQ doesn't address. Who should I ask?

Please direct your question to Liz Phillips, the d@w Public Engagement Manager: liz@democracyatwork.info.

d@w Local Groups - Guidelines & Expectations

Democracy at Work (d@w) is a non-profit media creator and curator which advocates for worker cooperatives as a means to achieving a more equitable society. Our educational focus is reflected in our Local Groups, where we encourage willing volunteers to educate and engage with their community to discuss (1) what is wrong with capitalism as an economic system and its impacts on our society, (2) how and why transition to an economic system based instead on worker coops is part of the solution needed, and (3) how and why d@w local groups are themselves means to achieve that transition.

In this document:

Mission Statement
Local Group Goals
Support from d@w
Expectations and more
Boundaries
Terms of Participation

Mission Statement...

As a d@w Local Group, you will work under the following mission statement.

At Democracy at Work - XYZ (d@w-XYZ), we endeavor to further our parent organization's purpose, that is, raising awareness and generating a positive social and cultural shift towards Worker Cooperatives. Worker Co-ops are a way to reorganize our workplaces in a truly democratic fashion, where decision-making power and wealth are shared equally. Through promotion, education, and connection with local organizations, we aim to be a hub in XYZ that advocates for and facilitates the transformation of our economic system.

Our parent organization is the national non-profit, Democracy at Work, a media creator and curator which advocates for worker cooperatives. d@w expanded its activities in 2016 by supporting the formation of local groups such as d@w-XYZ.

Local Group Goals...

As a Local Group, you will have the following 3 goals:

- 1) **Education.** You'll be providing a service to help people learn about co-ops by:
 - a. Holding public Monthly Meetings that are education based.
 - b. Giving presentations to other groups, orgs, schools, churches, etc.
 - c. Amplifying the voices of your local co-ops in related events.
 - d. Trying to get lesson plans spread to teachers and schools.

- 2) **Help to build / participate in a network in their communities** of orgs with related goals. This happens from introducing yourself to other groups, caring about their issues, asking them to care about yours, and then promoting and supporting each other's efforts, particularly when interests collide.
 - a. Co-ops have many intersectional effects. Find where co-ops fit into other org's goals (ex. Public banking, re-entry community)/
 - b. If you want people to show up to your events, show up to theirs, either as individuals, or representing your d@w group where appropriate.
 - c. Document your connections along the way! Photos, blogs, videos, etc.

- 3) **Being a part of the "cultural shift"**. Help normalize the ideas that drive co-operatives:
 - a. All the education efforts mentioned above
 - b. All the networking efforts mentioned above
 - c. The creation of media that spreads your thoughts, opinions, and efforts even farther: Podcasts, Videos, Photos, Essays, Memes, Infographics, Pamphlets, Flyers, etc.

Support from d@w...

As a Local Group, you will receive the following support from d@w:

- 1) We will list your group on the national d@w website.
- 2) We will post your monthly meeting events to d@w website.
- 3) We will send a localized email blast promoting your next monthly meeting.
- 4) We will provide meeting guidelines / lesson plans / educational tools in digital form as available.
- 5) We will provide personalized group logo and d@w group email.
- 6) We will provide advice and coordination from Public Engagement Manager (PEM).
- 7) We will promote your groups and share your projects in addition to the monthly meetings (photos/videos of groups in action, etc) per PEM approval.

Expectations and more...

As a Local Group, you will be required to meet certain expectations. For those that want to do more, there are other things that we'd like to see you do.

In short, we expect 4 basic things from your group:

- 1) Public Monthly Meetings.
- 2) Good communication with the Public Engagement Manager (PEM).
- 3) Efforts to connect with your community.
- 4) Organize and run your group with cooperative principles.

In this section, we have **bolded what will be expected of you**, and underlined what additional things we'd like to see from you that aren't mandatory.

- 1) **Expect: Public Monthly Meetings.** These are educational in nature, open to the public and monthly. Other than that, we won't micromanage your meetings. You can follow provided lesson plans or use them as guidelines to develop your own. They could be like the following:
 - a. Share articles / videos ahead of time and discuss them.
 - b. Watch videos in the meeting and discuss them.
 - c. Give presentations. Use the d@w presentation provided and / or develop your own: types of co-ops, history of co-ops, co-op case study, co-ops in other countries, etc. Film if possible.
 - d. Invite a guest speaker to present / host workshop such as:
 - Someone from a co-op in your area.
 - A co-op incubator, developer in your area.
 - Someone who can teach skills necessary to worker co-op owner-members: financial literacy, horizontal hierarchies.
 - Someone from a fellow activist group that also works towards social / economic justice.
 - We would like: presentations like these to be filmed if possible to be shared on social media, or used in other ways to be discussed with the Public Engagement Manager.
 - e. Get interactive from time to time:
 - Have a cooperative board game playing session.
 - Create / Lead exercises in horizontal hierarchies
 - f. We would like: these meetings to be held in spaces that can welcome as many people as possible. For example, a meeting in a bar could prevent an underage person from attending, so would not be advised for these public monthly meetings.
 - g. We would like: these to be educational but also social. Help people feel welcome by:
 - Allowing time for people to socialize.
 - Organize to have snacks available such as coffee and cookies.
 - Have a literature table for people to peruse.

2) **Expect: Good communication with Public Engagement Manager (PEM).**

- a. **Expect:** Ample notification of upcoming monthly meetings to allow time for event posting and email blasts (No less than 1 weeks in advance).
- b. **Expect:** Summaries after monthly meetings. Even a quick email with a paragraph telling the PEM how it went.
- c. **Expect:** Alert the PEM of your ideas/plans to connect with other groups and how (this is to make sure your efforts fall in line with the national goals, and to see if we can help you in any way (i.e. further promotion)).

3) **Expect: Efforts to connect with community**

- a. **Expect:** Efforts to find and know who your local Incubators, Developers, co-op specific attorneys, financial planners, etc are. People will ask you for these connections so be as ready as possible to help them.
- b. **Expect:** Efforts to find and know who your local co-ops are (in all categories). People will ask you where the co-ops in their city are and you should be ready to tell them.
- c. **Expect:** You to make yourself available to your community through online communication:
 - **Expect:** To use and regularly check your d@w group email. Build your own localized mailing list with this email (to only be used for d@w purposes and never shared with another organization).
 - We would like: You to create other web presences such as on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. You must notify the Public Engagement Manager (PEM) of all of your online profiles.
- d. **Expect:** Always be clear about what you are.
 - You are a proud assemblage of volunteers who work to further your parent organization's purpose to promote worker cooperatives.
 - You represent d@w-XYZ. Besides support of worker cooperatives, you cannot speak on behalf of the national org, but only for your own volunteer Local Group.
 - As a group, you are not an incubator or developer and unless your personal experience allows you to do so, you cannot give genuine legal or fiscal advice.
- e. We would like: You to seek out and follow through with ways to present the arguments for and the existence and potential of worker co-ops to other groups / institutions / people. Use presentations (provided, drawn from "Economic Updates" and the rest of our media productions and/or make your own) to speak to churches, schools, social organizations, public meetings and rallies, media interviews, etc.
- f. We would like: You to make your own content (videos, podcasts, blogs, graphics, flyers, pamphlets, etc).

- 4) **Expect: Organize and run your group with cooperative principles.** Your meetings will be open to people who are interested in learning and not participating, but they will be run and developed by your “core leadership”: you and the people you start this group with. It is this leadership that we expect to be run cooperatively.
- Expect:** Shared, cooperative leadership. We discourage the hierarchical model of traditional groups and titles (President, Vice President...) in favor of one that promotes horizontal decision making and functional roles to members. Roles and titles should be fitted to the skills and interest of groups members, as well as the necessity of the group.
 - Expect:** Rotating facilitators for meetings, to the degree each person is comfortable. This provides opportunities for everyone to take part in visible leadership and develop a stronger understanding of the subject matter by leading a group discussion.
 - We would like:** to encourage you to keep space open for new people to take leadership roles. Many people who attend meetings will not be interested in taking larger roles, but for those who want to do more within your group, we encourage you to help them find a space to do so. We have noticed more success and stability from groups with more people in their “core leadership”.



This figure offers one example of how you could self-organize in a cooperative fashion.

Boundaries of d@w Local Groups...

Due to a few different reasons (lack of resources, legal restrictions, etc) there are some realities that Local Groups must work around. There are also some boundaries that we have decided to draw based on our experiences with these groups and our desires for them to succeed in their previously stated goals.

1) Local Groups will not receive funding from d@w.

- We hope to be able to provide printed materials in the future, but as of yet there is no foreseeable date that that could begin

2) Local Groups cannot engage in lobbying / electioneering.

- Lobbying is the act of attempting to influence the actions, policies, or decisions of officials in their daily life, most often legislators, members or regulatory agencies.
- Electioneering is advocating for an individual candidate to be elected into an office.
- Due to d@w's 501c3 status, we cannot lobby for specific legislation, but can only promote general policies, and electioneering is strictly prohibited. Local groups are also beholden to these restrictions.
- You as an individual can still do as you please by yourself or with another group, but you cannot engage in lobbying work as a d@w group.
- If lobbying is what you are interested in doing, we can recommend working with Democratize the Enterprise (democratizetheenterprize.org), and we can put you in touch with them.

3) Co-ops should be your main focus (especially worker co-ops).

- That doesn't mean you can't also talk about other issues, especially those related to economic and social justice, but worker co-ops must be your main pitch to your community.

4) We ask that you work locally.

- We strongly believe that local efforts are what will give the lasting strength to this movement. Focus on your city first, and your state second.
- If opportunities for collaborations across state lines arise, please confer to the PEM before moving forward.

5) Always be clear about what you are.

- You are a proud assemblage of volunteers who work to further your parent organization's purpose to promote worker co-ops.
- You represent d@w-XYZ. Besides support of worker cooperatives, you cannot speak on behalf of the national org, but only for your own volunteer group.
- The local group does not share the national org's non-profit status. If someone wants to donate to your group be clear that it will go to your group and not the national org, and that you do not share the national org's 501c3 status so their donation to your group is not tax deductible.

Terms of Participation for d@w Local Groups...

To become an officially recognized d@w Local Group, you must first go through the **Application Process** (listed below). If applicants are approved, they must sign d@w's **Terms of Participation** document which outlines the relationship between the group and d@w.

Approval gives you your group status for 1 year. After 1 year, there will be a yearly review before renewal.

As a d@w Local Group, you must follow and enforce the **Ethical Guidelines** (listed below).

Group status can be rescinded at any time should ethical guidelines be broken or required expectations not be met.

Questions?

Don't hesitate to reach out to the Public Engagement Manager: Liz Phillips - liz@democracyatwork.info

Thank you...

for your interest in taking a larger responsibility to push for a more equitable society in your city!



d@w Local Groups - Ethical Guidelines

The goals of d@w are based in equality and justice, and thus we require all leadership of d@w Local Groups to follow and enforce the following ethical guidelines. We ask that you stay aware that your words and actions will represent the ideals of 'economic justice for all', and Democracy at Work as a whole.

In order to preserve the integrity of our goals and honor the relationships we build, we do not tolerate:

- Sexism
- Racism
- Ageism
- Ableism
- Homophobia
- Transphobia
- Religious bigotry
- Verbal or physical abuse
- Any other forms of hate speech, condescension, harassment, intimidation or discrimination.

Instead, we would like to emphasize the following principles of behavior:

- Active listening.
- The welcoming of different viewpoints.
- Prioritizing the voices of people who have not spoken yet.
- Recognizing that no one knows everything, not even you.

Because your meetings will be public and often attended by people who have not been there before, we recommend that you read through the Ethical Guidelines at the beginning of your meetings.

Should a problem arise in your meeting, do your best to calmly tell the person that their words or actions are in conflict with these guidelines and give them the chance to cease and or apologize. If that doesn't resolve the issue, you can calmly ask the person to leave the meeting. Should the issue expand from the meeting, you can always reach out to the Public Engagement Manager for advice or assistance.

Have any thoughts or suggestions for this document? Please send to liz@democracyatwork.info

d@w Local Groups - Application Process

We are thrilled that you would like to apply to start a d@w Local Group! Our groups exist for the reasons listed below:

EDUCATE. In others words, groups are a space for people to learn about worker ownership and self-direction of enterprises as a cure for capitalism.

CONNECT. In our view, worker cooperatives offer a solution to many intersectional problems. Therefore, finding and connecting with other leftist groups in your area will help not only their cause, but also yours as a d@w group.

In essence, by launching and consistently operating a d@w group, you help create a positive cultural shift toward workplace democracy and worker ownership in your community.

Please note...

We aren't necessarily looking only for seasoned activists or organizers. Such **experience is by no means a requirement** and enthusiasm is highly valued!

Here is a how the Application Process will work...

- 1) You read the **d@w Local Groups – Information Packet** document.
- 2) You fill out the d@w Local Group Application Form and send it to the Public Engagement Manager, Liz Phillips at liz@democracyatwork.info
- 3) Within 1 week of your submission, the PEM will respond.
- 4) If your application moves to the next step, the PEM will schedule a video call to get to know you more, talk about your city and your ideas of how to get started.
- 5) Within 1 week of your video call, the PEM will respond to let you know if you've been approved as a group, and send you the **Terms of Participation** document to sign.
- 6) You will then receive your email and logo, and be added to the website. You schedule your first meeting, the PEM lists your group and meeting on the website calendar and sends a localized email blast to your area.

Then you're off!