



DEMOCRACY AT WORK

FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

ACTION GROUPS

We are on the brink of a larger mass movement ready to demand alternative solutions to capitalism. This movement can be successful if we all take part in actions that:

- 1) EDUCATE others about alternative solutions that change the foundation of our economy, and**
- 2) SUPPORT democratic workplaces structured to empower workers at every level.**

It takes the action and voices of everyday people to influence policy, politics and culture. As part of a d@w Action Group, you are jumping on the frontlines of this movement within your community. Every action, no matter how small, brings us closer to a better and stronger economy that works everyone.

The movement for economic democracy starts here!

This packet is meant to provide suggested guidelines for anyone interested in starting a d@w Action Group. While we hope most groups follow the packet as a means of achieving the goals of our mission, we expect every group will differ in structure depending on variables specific to their location and members, and encourage cooperative input from all active participants.

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ABOUT

Thank you for interested 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.

Why start a group?

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

What is Democracy at Work?

Democracy at work (d@w) is a 501(c)3 non-profit that conceives, creates and distributes materials designed to inform and educate the public on why democratizing the workplace creates a strong foundation for a better economy in which workers are empowered.

What are d@w Action Groups?

d@w Action Groups are independent, locally-based and supporter-managed groups which allow d@w supporters and the public at-large to connect, congregate, discuss, socialize and participate in collective actions that further Democracy at Work's mission and vision.

What do d@w Action Groups do?

d@w Action Groups use materials created by Democracy at Work and outside sources to:

- 1) **EDUCATE themselves and others about alternative economic solutions.** Through the review, research and discussion of relevant materials, active members should expect to further develop their understanding of major economic concepts as well as develop their ability to explain these economic concepts *in their own words*.
- 2) **SUPPORT existing and upcoming democratic workplaces in their area.** Knowing is half the battle. Active groups members will strive to actively promote and encourage the development of democratic workplaces (worker cooperatives, WSDEs, etc) in their area.

Support provided to d@w Action Groups

Democracy at Work hopes to support and promote independent d@w Groups by:

- Providing the **counsel of an organizing staffer** for virtual support and guidance;
- Providing **one geotargeted email blast per month**, to promote a local event or updates;
- Allowing **posting of local events on the main calendar** of the Democracy at Work website;
- *Unfortunately, we are not a foundation and cannot provide any direct financial support.*

GROUP STRUCTURE

This page contains a set of guidelines meant to promote the growth and maintenance of a successful and active d@w Action Group. While we encourage groups to follow the structure below, as your group grows it may be necessary to alter the structure to fit the needs of your participants; in which case please feel free to do so.

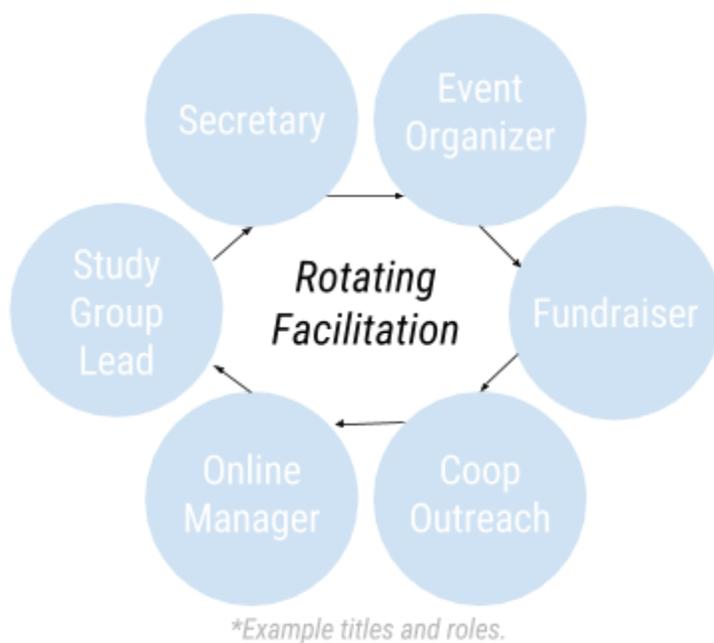
Our Environment

We strive to create an environment in which all who are interested and willing to help in the development of the group are welcome to participate. We welcome new attendees regardless of when they first attend or their level of understanding about the material.

Most importantly: d@w groups are a safe place to ask questions. Everyone who attends will have a different level of understanding when it comes to economics, capitalism, social justice, and organizing. The goal is to learn how to develop each other's understanding of these subjects as our groups grow.

Group Structure & Roles

We encourage 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.



We discourage language and behavior that may discriminate anyone on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and age for the purposes of maintaining a productive and cooperative atmosphere.

Keep in mind, not everyone who attends may be equipped with the appropriate language, terminology or understanding of what constitutes a "safe space." Corrections of this nature should be based on good faith: trust that the person did not mean to offend, but do ask the person to correct their behavior via a private conversation away from the group. Allow room for mistakes so we can learn from them.

Roles and titles should be fitted to the skills and interest of groups members, as well as the necessity of the group!

We encourage 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.

ONLINE

We want to encourage those involved in groups to use any of the numerous free online tools as a way of organizing and keeping in touch with members. Feel free to use the platforms or tools you are already comfortable with, or designate someone else in the group who is more comfortable with online tools to take the realm. The information below provides some helpful starting points, but feel free to take your online presence where you would like them to go. Sky's the limit!

Contacting your Members

Keep a list of your members. An Excel or Google Spreadsheet serves this purpose well when you are getting started; save a list of your member's names, emails, phone and title/role (if any), and any other information you think may be helpful, such as interests. *Suggested tools:* [Google Drive \(sheets\)](#)

Email your members regularly. Email your list at least once a month to announce any upcoming meetings, update the group about news, or follow up on any group projects being worked on. Make sure your members know your group is still active! *Suggested tools:* [Google Contact Group](#), [MailChimp](#)

Creating a Online Page

Have an online presence for your group. Having a website or social media page allows future members a place to learn more about your group. Use your page as a way to get others excited about getting involved! *Suggested tools:* [Facebook groups](#) (more below), [Meetup](#), [Wordpress](#), [Weebly](#), [Wix](#)

Facebook Groups. We highly encourage Facebook Groups (as opposed to pages) as a collaborative organizing tool because they allow any member to post and upload photos/documents available to other members within the group. It also provides a place for to exchange ideas during all hours of the day. Think of your Facebook group as your virtual clubhouse that's open 24/7! *Read:* [Facebook group basics](#)

Here are five tips on setting up and maintaining your group's online presence:

- **Make your group searchable.** When using a social networking platform, avoid "private," "hidden" or "secret" settings. You *want* people to find your group.
- **Invite friends you already have.** People are more likely to join when they are invited by someone they know. Go through your friends and email list and invite people you think may be interested. Tell them what you are doing and why you want them to join. You may be surprised who becomes interested! Then, message your new members and ask them to to do the same with their lists.
- **Make sure something is posted at least once a day.** Feel free to share things from the Democracy at Work website, FB page, or anything related to the subject matter you find interesting.
- **Encourage current members to engage.** You may be doing all the posting at first, but eventually others should feel comfortable chiming in. Don't be afraid of asking people directly (via Facebook chat/message or even email) to respond to a poll, make a comment or post something themselves. Most will be happy to comply. Encourage their actions by liking or replying back to their comments!
- **Don't get discouraged about size.** All groups start out small and grow slowly. Focus on keeping those who are part of the group engaged with your website or group page. Quality, not quantity

MEETINGS

Collaboration is key to a successful group that performs successful actions. We encourage meetings to occur at least once monthly, in person or virtually. This helps everyone get to know each other face-to-face and develops a stronger sense of community between d@w supporters in a specific area.

Holding Meetings

Hold a Meet & Greet. Great for first meetings! Get to know new members' interests and motivations.

Encourage rotating facilitators for meetings. This provides opportunities for everyone to take part in visible leadership and develop a stronger understanding of the subject matter by leading. Not everyone will be comfortable facilitating a full meeting right away; suggest running a portion of a meeting, or assign responsibility to different sections each meeting.

Take photos and have fun. Post your photos on your online page and show off your group meeting!

Meeting Virtually

When necessary, meet virtually. When your group can't meet in person, or when your group is too spread out to make in-person meetings possible, consider meeting virtually. Video chats where people can see each other make for a stronger experience. *Suggested tool:* [Google Hangout](#), [Skype](#)

SAMPLE AGENDA

DATE: 05/15/2017, 7-9PM

TOPIC: List topic of meeting ("*d@w-ABC May Meeting: Supporting coops in our city*")

GOAL: Write out the goal of your meeting in a sentence ("*Create a list of projects and assignments for supporting coops here in Anytown, USA.*")

- **Grace Period (10min)** - Get settled in. Privately introduce yourself to new attendees!
- **Welcome (5min)** - Introduce topic/goal above, read through agenda. State meeting rules, if any, and welcome anyone to ask questions.
- **Introductions (15min)** - Go around the room: have attendees state their names, where they are from and what brings them to today's meeting.
- **d@w Content (10min)** - Watch/listen/read a new piece of d@w content as a group. Recommend: listen to a recent *EconoMinute/WIN Short* on YouTube, or print a recent relevant article to read during this time.
- **Content Discussion (15min)** - Ask someone to summarize the piece in their own words. Ask if anyone has questions. It may help to have one or two questions prepared beforehand.
- **Break (10min)**
- **Project Brainstorm/Overview (20min)** - Brainstorm or review a new or current project that helps the group advocate for worker coops and/or promote d@w locally.
- **Assignments (10min)** - Ask for volunteers and assign roles/assignments for tasks due before the next meeting.
- **Socializing (15min)** - Schedule time at the end for people to socialize, enjoy snacks (if any), help clean up, or just get to know each other!

TAKING ACTION

Part of building a movement is taking what you've learned to your community. There are several actions you can take to help support democratic workplaces in your area; use the list below as a starting point, and brainstorm with your group to discover more:

Suggested Actions

Hold educational events/meetings

- Flyer or table at a local event;
- Host a movie screening at someone's home or in an appropriate public place for a film promoting alternative approaches to economics. Leave time for a short, casual group discussion afterwards;
- Set additional meeting dates (or reserve part of your main meeting time) to hold a study group on books supporting alternative views to economics;
- Write a "Coop Profile" article about a coop near you. Contact our organizer for questions;
- Invite special guest speakers to your meetings to start discussions on alternative approaches to economic organization. Contact our organizer for a list of speaker suggestions (will vary by area);

Support worker co-ops in your area

- Start a database of worker cooperatives in your city;
- Create and distribute a local "approved store list" and encourage people in your neighborhood to shop and support these stores;
 - **Not near a worker co-op?** Organize a scheduled shopping carpool to your nearest worker cooperative;
- Support legislation at the local and state level on bills related to worker co-op support and development;

Research local coop development in your area

- Direct those interested in starting a worker coop to: institute.coop
- Research the state and local laws surrounding worker cooperatives;
- Aware of a local business in which the employees and/or the employer is interested in transitioning their business model into a worker cooperative? Email us: info@democracyatwork.info

On or near a student campus?

- Encourage students to start a student d@w group on their high school/college campus;
- Petition for a course on Marxism/Marxist Economics at your college;
- Petition for a course on Coop Development & Management at your Business/trade school;
- Petition for a revised Economics curriculum at your high school;
- Find out how to [start a student co-op](#) on your campus.

Other ideas?

- Brainstorm other actions with your group members. *Email new and innovative ideas to the organizer and have it added to this list!*

Questions? We are available to answer any questions you may have about d@w Action Groups. Please send questions, comments or feedback to our organizer: betsy@democracyatwork.info