

Support for Local I-O Groups: Results from the Hub and Spoke Alternative Session

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Many SIOP members belong to grass-root, local I-O groups designed to bring like-minded colleagues together to socialize, network, and learn. The SIOP Local I-O Group Relations Committee hosted a Hub and Spoke alternative session at the Chicago conference to learn how SIOP can support the needs of these groups. In this session, members represented the “spokes” when they join one of four “hubs.” Each hub was designed to listen to member needs based on one of four stages of a group’s development: start up, new, mature, and reviving.

This article provides a summary of this innovative session. This article is not intended to be an exhaustive list of recommendations; rather, our goal is to share the results of the session and build momentum for future idea exchange. We invite you to contact us with your ideas by reaching out to your regional representative listed at the end of this article.

Start Up Hub

Look Before You Leap: Starting a Local I-O Group

Start up groups involve one or more individuals who want to get a group off the ground. Individuals in these groups are trying to find like-minded people, host a first meeting, and decide on the group’s format. Naz Tadjbakhsh and Michael Chetta hosted this hub. Below are questions raised in this hub along with proposed solutions brainstormed by the participants.

What is “Step 1” for starting a group?

- **Create a clear purpose statement.** Creating a purpose statement and supporting plan is step one for starting a group because when the founding members are forming the grassroots local I-O group, prospective members need to clearly understand why the group is meeting in order to make a connection.
- **Foster a connection.** Founding members are asking people to enlist into a collective vision; prospective members need to believe in the group’s underlying purpose to make a decision to join. Once people are emotionally connected to the purpose statement and believe in the “cause,” it is up to the founding members to deliver on that purpose and use it as a guiding compass for increasing its followership and building the momentum.
- **Watch Simon Sinek’s TED Talk, “How Great Leaders Inspire Action.”** This video provides a simple, yet powerful framework (The Golden Circle) for creating a purpose statement.
- **Review the Local I-O ToolKit.** The [Local I-O Toolkit](#) is available on the SIOP website and describes how define, organize, launch, and maintain a local I-O group.

Does it cost a lot to start a new group?

- **There are many ways to prepare for and host an event at low cost.** You can create beautiful flyers using [Canva](#) to post on social media, and purchase affordable snacks and beverages from Costco. If you can't find a meeting space for free, meet on a slow night at a restaurant (e.g., Monday, Tuesday or Thursday) to get the best rates.

Note: Even when leaders of local I-O groups spend a lot of money on refreshments in hopes of attracting people to events, the refreshments may be left untouched—even during dinner time! If you attract people who align with the group's purpose and maintain that ethos at your events, attendees will show up regardless of refreshments or costly event marketing. These followers can potentially be identified as future successors to sustain your group's long-term activity.

New Group Hub

Accelerate: Building Your New Group's Momentum

New groups are those who have recently started and are looking for ways to increase stability. Groups in this stage are usually refining and clarifying their purpose and roles and are addressing logistics decisions. Brooke Allison and Donna Sylvan facilitated a discussion about issues facing new groups. Participants in this hub discussed concerns about membership, meetings and leadership.

Refining Meeting Purpose

- **Local I-O groups exist to fulfill needs that may not be met elsewhere in the I-O community.** For many, their local group is a space to connect with current, former, and future colleagues. Other opportunities include collaboration, prospects, partnerships, and continuing education credits.
- New groups continue to explore the extent to which the purpose of their program is networking, professional development, or some combination. New groups are encouraged to create charters and constitutions (or bylaws) that result in guiding principles. With a clearly-defined purpose, decisions follow about group structure and who to include as members.

Refining Membership

- **Frequently membership is grouped into two categories:** professional members and student members. Professional members may include people employed in academic, consulting, and corporate positions. Do they need a degree in I-O psychology and, if so, what level? Can someone with interest in applying I-O principles to the workplace without a degree in I-O psychology be a member? For student members, considering field of study, graduate vs undergraduate status, and type of enrollment (full time or part time) are often considered. Will dues be required to maintain membership? How will we monitor membership and collect dues?
- **New groups must identify and connect with potential members.** The personal networks of the founders and current members are great resources. Utilizing I-O graduate programs and consulting firms, corporations and other businesses that tend to employ individuals with I-O backgrounds is also possible. Some use social media to attract and inform others about their group, create their own websites to share information, or utilize preexisting websites, such as a university's website, to host group information. Leveraging participant's social networks to connect with speakers is also key. Groups often collect and use feedback from members to identify answers to common questions about group programming, relying on those members for content. Surveying is common practice, though there are multiple ways to collect feedback beyond member surveys.

Refining Meeting Logistics

- **Frequency and method.** Many local groups meet annually, some biannually, others weekly. A new group's charter and call-to-action will inform how often the group should meet and exchange information. Groups also identify and vary meeting locations to accommodate participants. Given the pressures of time and distance, some new groups leverage virtual options to get together. Other new groups will find it easier to meet at restaurants or informal gathering areas, whereas groups hosting high profile speakers of psychology may choose more formal venues.

Refining Leadership Roles

- **New groups often rely on one person or a small group of people to get started.** Regardless of formal structure, leadership is required to maintain and build the group's momentum. Sharing responsibilities is one way to get others involved as volunteers and build commitment and support of the group. Groups may also have formal structures that build succession into leader roles; leadership responsibilities and succession strategies are typically documented in the group's bylaws and role descriptions. As local group leaders are typically volunteers with a passion for I-O psychology, group leadership is encouraged to take succession seriously and have plans in place to avoid disruption to agenda, programming, and engagement when leadership transitions.

Mature Group Hub

If You Build It, Will They Keep Coming?

Mature groups have typically been around for at least 5 years. Individuals who belong to a mature group are fortunate to have some history and routines that keep the group going. They may also be suffering from routine fatigue! Pete Rutigliano and Ginger Whelan discussed challenges for mature groups with members of several established local I-O groups and identified ways to address these issues.

How do you keep leaders engaged? One of the biggest challenges for any group is sowing the seeds for future leadership so that the burden isn't left to one or two enthusiastic leaders; and to avoid issues if a leader is called away due to family situations or job changes.

- **Prep one—work one.** Create a one-year term limit for the leadership role and have one person serve as the leader elect.
- **Board rotation.** Create a standard rotation so that each board member only performs one role a year. Make transitioning the rotation a ceremonial dinner celebration where the baton gets passed. This ensures that there is always someone to train the incumbent and coverage is facilitated in the case of life events and a loss of a leader.
- **Make it easy to meet.** Host the board meeting after a regularly scheduled meeting. Schedule your meetings for the year to get them on everyone's calendar.

How do you help new members feel included? Being around for a long time can make it harder for new members to fit in. Suggestions for mature groups to break down this barrier are to:

- Have current board members welcome and learn about new members
- Invite speakers to dinner after the meeting and invite everyone to join
- Ask if there are any new members and have them introduce themselves at each meeting

What type of members should we include? While you should define membership based on purpose of group and meet the needs of its members, the following ideas were raised at this hub and spoke table.

- **Student members.** Many groups invite students to attend by offering an individual discount or by encouraging professors to bring a group of students. Students offer new perspectives while providing a membership pipeline through colleges and universities.
- **Academic or practitioner?** We can promote a balance of science and practice in our profession by balancing these perspectives in your group's mix of members.
- **More heavy on the scientist side?** Reach out to local work and organizational consultants to present in your classes. Invite practitioners to review a research proposal. Create a joint SIOP presentation.
- **More heavy on the practitioner side?** Meet with the faculty from a local university or college and inquire about I-O or related courses. Invite faculty and students to your meetings. Charge students less to join if you have a membership fee.

How can we maintain member engagement? Creating a group can be fun in the beginning but become a bit stale over time after the initial glow wears off. Some ideas this hub discussed to increase engagement included:

- Discuss strategies to ensure member engagement at the end of each board meeting.
- Have board members wear name tags or ribbons that describe their roles.
- Make it easy for new members to meet people and feel like they belong.
- Check in with new members after they have attended their first meeting.
- Periodically survey members to identify better days and times for the meetings.
- Get creative with meeting topics by asking other local I-O group leaders what they do.
- Encourage new members to take on a committee role to get them involved.

Reviving Group Hub

No More Denial: How to Revive Your Group With the Vitality it Deserves

As we have worked with different local groups, we have identified that some groups are declining or struggling to continue. In this hub we covered issues related to group viability, revival, or in need of a serious makeover. Peter Scontrino and Anna Erickson led this hub. Participants in this group spent the majority of the time discussing ways to keep their local group healthy and inoculate themselves from the need to be revived.

How do we address leader fatigue?

- **Have a succession plan.** This is particularly a challenge when one person has been a strong leader for a number of years. When the strong leader left, the local group often dissolved. A succession plan could include a transition from president elect to president to past president.
- **Have a board of directors.** The board of directors provides broader ownership and also can be linked to the succession plan. The board would also play an important role if a leader/president needs to resign.

How do we keep meetings fresh?

- Knowledge sharing and continuing education as well as socialization.
- Local groups that offered training sessions as well as socialization seemed to be more successful. The I-O psychologists who have continuing education requirements could earn some of these at local meetings.
- Providing a speaker list. Local groups often struggle to find topics and speakers. If SIOP provided a list of speakers, this would have value for local groups.

- Have broader sharing of information across local groups. It would be helpful for having a space where local groups could share information about speakers, resources, and activities that they have done.
- Link to local I-O university programs. Many local groups have found that local faculty rarely participate in their local group meetings. Some groups have collaborated with their local university to co-sponsor programs and to involve graduate students in local meetings.

Our local group may be past saving. Now what?

- **A fresh start.** If your group has been in active for a while, it may make sense to start again. Consider starting a new organization under a different name, with a redefined purpose and audience.
- **Learn from the past.** Before you begin, it may be wise to investigate the reasons for failure of previous groups. Reach out to previous local group members, even if they if they've moved away. Find out what worked, what didn't, and why the group floundered. Consider refining the purpose, changing meeting frequency or location, rotating leadership roles, or creating a more inclusive membership requirements to improve the likelihood of success for the new organization.
- **Set a strong foundation.** Once you're ready to begin, use the tips above to create a more sustainable organization going forward. Make sure your new group includes a strong vision and purpose, a committed board to help launch and guide the organization, and a plan for succession and sustainability for the future.

Resources for Your Local I-O Group

We learned a lot about the needs of local groups based on their stage of development. Below is a list of current resources provided to SIOP members to support the needs of your local group. Check the Local I-O Group Relations webpage on the SIOP website for some of the great ideas created in the Hub and Spoke Session in the future!

- **Ad Hoc Local I-O Group Relations Committee.** Our mission to help grow and maintain communities of professionals who share an interest in promoting the science and practice of psychology to the world of work and organizations. We do this by facilitating the sharing and distribution of best practices for local groups in the US and internationally.
- **SIOP Conference Committee Zone.** Please come visit us at the next conference to find out what new things are happening!
- **Tools on the SIOP website.** Find the following resources on the SIOP webpage under "Resources" and "Local I-O Groups and Related Organizations."
 - **Calendar.** A calendar showing local group meetings around the country.
 - **Local I-O Group List.** A list of local I-O groups to help you find a group new you.
 - **ToolKit.** A Toolkit was created to help local groups think through how to define, organize, launch, and maintain a local I-O group.
- **Regional representative.** If you would like more help, please contact one of the following representatives for your state or province!

Local I-O Group Relations Committee. Back row: Michael Chetta, Lynda Zugec, Peter Scontrino, Donna Sylvan, Anna Erickson, Naz Tadjbakhsh. Front row: Brooke Allison, Ginger Whelan, Sharon Glazer

Local I-O Group Relations committee members Ginger Whelan, Naz Tadjbakhsh, and Anna Erickson promoting the SIOP regional representative program at the Chicago SIOP conference, 2018.

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