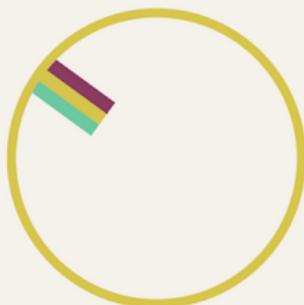




SGP Circles: Policy & Guidelines



Society of
Gender Professionals

SGP Circles Policy and Guidelines

Purpose

SGP's Geo and Thematic Circles, established by SGP members, provide an avenue for members who share issue or geographic interests and/or expertise working in gender to collaborate, learn from each other, share resources, and advance gender equality in their communities. SGP Circles will also help shape the direction, goals and focus of SGP based on members' interests and objectives.

Circles support SGP's mission to:

- Promote the development of intersectional gender expertise for professional practice
- Strengthen connections between gender theory, policy, and practice
- Promote member collaboration, network-building, mentoring, and leadership
- Foster the production and dissemination of applied gender research
- Provide a platform for the exchange of gender information and resources

This handbook provides guidance on initiation, participation, and maintenance of Circles.

Formation

Membership in Geo and Thematic Circles will be open to all SGP members. Participation is voluntary.

New Circles will be established based on the expressed interest of SGP members. Members can establish a new Circle by submitting a simple proposal to the SGP Interim Circle Committee through the form provided by SGP on its website. Instructions for submission will also be made available on the SGP website.

Once a proposal is received by the SGP Interim Circle Committee, the proposal will be reviewed by the committee to ensure alignment with SGP's mission and that the needs are not already being addressed through an existing SGP Circle, in which case collaboration rather than duplication will be encouraged. If determined that the proposal is not in line with SGP's mission, the SGP Interim Circle Committee will work with those who submitted the proposal to adjust it as needed.

If the Committee agrees the proposal is in line with the SGP mission and there is demonstrated interest by at least one other member, the Interim Circle Committee will:

- Announce the proposal to all SGP members so that any interested member can join
- Work with the individual(s) who submitted the proposal to develop a brief work plan
- Provide support for startup, including access to initial needed resources such as:
 - o SGP Circle Roles and Responsibilities
 - o Sample SGP Circle Agenda
 - o Sample SGP Circle Community Agreement
 - o List of 3 Critical Questions

- o Important links: SGP Circle Meeting Notes Form, Photo Uploader, Circle webpage

Membership

Any interested SGP member can register and join an SGP Circle. SGP members are welcome to participate in more than one Circle.

Registration

After agreeing on Circles and their co-leaders for the pilot phase, registration to join a Circle will be available online through the SGP website.

Shared commitments

Any member who expresses interest in joining a Circle should share commitment to the SGP mission and values, as well as the following principles:

- Seek to actively learn from, and share with, other members of their Circle
- Deconstruct hierarchical and vertical leadership styles by promoting fluid, horizontally accountable relationships within Circles
- Seek out diversity in membership (i.e. age, gender, race, class, geographic location, language(s) spoken, expertise level, and other experiences)
- Recognize that individual's experiences and relationships within Circles will be shaped by their own age, gender, race, class, geographic location, language(s) spoken, and other identities and/or experiences
- Actively seek to counter one's own privilege, (i.e. language spoken, location, gender identity, etc.), by giving voice and leaving space for those who may not share a common language, location, experience or other privilege with others in the group
- Acknowledge the pervasiveness of socio-political structures that privilege individualism and hierarchical power, and work to not let these tendencies influence Circles over time
- Prioritize the benefit of the SGP members and community they comprise
- Maintain inclusivity of the group by renegotiating community guidelines and objectives over time

Advocacy and Lobbying

Due to our status as a non-profit charity in the United States, members are not allowed to engage in political lobbying activities on behalf of the organization.

Accountability

SGP is accountable to Circles and agrees to:

- Provide an online platform for Circle formation, knowledge management, resource sharing, and other needs
- Have an Interim Circle Committee to assist with Circle needs (see below for specific expectations of this Committee)
- Share findings from semi-annual and annual reporting to other Circles

Circles are accountable to SGP and agree to:

- Annually provide a self-reflective update on:
 - What was achieved by the Circle over the past year?
 - Which of the previous year's activities is the Circle most proud of, and why?
 - What worked particularly well for the Circle over the course of the year?
 - What did not work particularly well, and how were/are these challenges being addressed?
 - What is the Circle most looking forward to in the coming year?
- Semi-annually respond to 3 critical questions:
 - What do you need for your professional growth as gender specialists?
 - What gender research questions are you seeking answers to?
 - What feminist action is needed in your community?
- Provide account of budget spent, if applicable
- Communicate with the Interim Circles Committee as needed to respond to any questions, needs, and suggestions

Circles are accountable to other Circles and agree to:

- Collaborate when there is opportunity for cross-Circle activities or promotion
- Share lessons learned on what has worked, and has not worked, within their Circle
- Seek to support, not duplicate, the objectives and activities of other Circles

Responsibilities of the SGP Interim Circle Committee

- Manage communication tools and knowledge management tools
 - Set up group Google drives or other means for institutional knowledge management
 - Monitor website to ensure all Circles are listed
- Guide budget management, if necessary
 - Provide advice on budget/spending if applicable
 - Provide advice/brainstorm options if budget needed
- Respond to queries and requests of groups
- Monitor annual reporting and share findings within Circles
- Provide support in conflict mediation
- Raise visibility of the objectives and accomplishments of Circles to the rest of SGP
- Act as a liaison with the SGP Communications Team to highlight the work of the SGP Circles

Note: The SGP Interim Circle Committee can be reached at info@genderprofessionals.org

Lifespan

During the pilot phase, Circles will have a 6-month lifespan. At the end of 6 months, members should consider whether they want the Circle to continue, change in any way, or cease, based on the interest and capacity of its members. Following the 6-month pilot, there will be an updated version of this handbook to guide its sustainability plan.

Circles Guidelines

Once a Circle has been established, below are considerations to guide each Circle in establishing the appropriate practice within each unique context of needs and interests.

Objectives

Each Circle should collectively establish the objectives of the Circle. While initial priorities and focus-areas may have been outlined when developing a proposal for a Circle, the specific objectives of each Circle will vary based on members' needs. Questions to consider in order to establish key objectives include:

- *Why was this Circle started?*
- *What are the core needs of our community? (3 Critical Questions)**
 - *What do you need right now for your professional growth?*
 - *What gender research questions are you seeking answer to right now or struggling with?*
 - *What feminist action do you feel is needed right now in your community or sector?*
- *What does each person hope to gain from participating in this Circle?*
- *What does each person hope to contribute while participating in this Circle?*
- *How often do we want to revisit our objectives to make sure they still represent group needs?*

*these questions should be answered biannually

Leadership Structure

Circles should strive for collaborative and non-hierarchical leadership structures. It is natural, and necessary especially in the beginning, for certain people to take ownership of certain tasks and help establish a group, but once the pilot phase is over, all leadership roles in the Circle will rotate for each meeting. During the pilot phase, SGP members can lead no more than one Circle.

For the pilot phase, each Circle will have two co-leaders. Note the following restrictions on leadership:

- 1) Geo Circle- At least one co-leader must be a native of the country in which the Circle is taking place.
- 2) Issue Circle- At least one co-leader must be from the global south.

Following the pilot, these guidelines will be updated to reflect conditions for rotating leadership.

During the pilot period, co-leads will be testing distributive leadership practices, and are encouraged to read [Leadership groups: distributed leadership in social learning](#) by Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, which provides useful context. Wenger-Trayner propose identifying groups who take on various roles needed within a community who then work collaboratively toward their objectives. The number of people, and who, does each role is an evolving process and designed around community needs. Potential roles identified in the

guide are listed below, though these may not all be the relevant needs for Circles and will be evaluated at the end of the pilot period:

- *Community agreement facilitators*: Facilitate review of community agreement at least once a year
- *Welcomers*: Welcome members and share details of upcoming meetings
- *Host*: Meeting facilitator. For geo-circles, host meetings at your home or another location.
- *Reflective observers*: Reflect on the process of circle meetings and activities
- *Community keepers*: Weave the social fabric; make sure everyone in the room is heard and amplify marginalized voices
- *Agenda activists*: Drive the learning forward; set the meeting agenda and make sure it reflects circle objectives
- *Documenter*: Take notes on the meeting and record action points, using the SGP's online meeting report form
- *Photographer*: Take 2-3 photos of the group and submit to SGP using its online meeting report form

Functions

What practice looks like in each Circle and how it changes over time will be unique to each community. Below are examples of potential Circle functions, though this list is not meant to be exhaustive:

- Exchange knowledge and resources relevant to the group
- Host training opportunities
- Establish mentorship opportunities
- Facilitate collaboration on projects and research
- Share strategies for dealing with challenges
- Develop new tools and strategies for working within the specific group context
- Share research methodologies
- Develop and share advocacy strategies
- Plan local events

Questions for consideration in defining functions include:

- *Based on our Circle's stated needs and objectives, what key activities are needed to meet these?*
- *Are the key activities needed to meet our objectives the same for everyone, or do the strategies for meeting our objectives vary by geographic location, etc. (specific to Issue Circles)?*
- *What key resources (technologies, expertise, budget, etc.) are needed to carry out these activities?*
- *What is the capacity of membership to carry out these functions?*
- *What support do we need from SGP to carry these out?*
- *How frequently do we want to carry these functions out?*
- *What shared leadership needs do we have in order to carry these out? Are these needs being met by the current Circle roles?*

Communication

Critical to the success and momentum of a Circle is routine and accessible communication between members. Questions for group consideration include:

- *What should the primary language or languages of group communication be?*
- *What communication tools are our community members already using and comfortable with?*
- *What is the best mode of communication for our group needs and context?*
 - *Technologies to explore could include Google groups, Whatsapp, Line, etc.*
- *What are potential barriers to using this form of communication that must be acknowledged and strategized around?*
- *Does this communication mode choice take into account the diversity of experience and membership according to each person's location, position, age, gender, race, and class?*

Routine Meetings

Routine engagement is key to establishing a rhythm within the Circle that maintains momentum and allows for boundaries and objectives to remain fluid based on the expressed changing needs of the community. Some groups may meet only virtually; others may have some members who meet in person and others who join from other locations.

Questions for group consideration include:

- *With what frequency should the Circle meet based on needs and objectives?*
- *What is the availability and capacity of group members?*
- *Where are group members located? Are in-person meetings or virtual meetings most appropriate?*
- *If virtual meetings are appropriate, what is the best technology to use to facilitate these meetings, based on group location, connectivity, and preference?*
 - *Technologies to explore could include Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp, and other platforms relevant to the context of the group.*
- *Based on the location of membership, what time of day should meetings occur? Should meeting time fluctuate (i.e. if meeting monthly, one month meet in the morning, and the next in the evening, etc.) in order to not privilege one time zone?*
- *Are there any childcare needs? Can they be accommodated?*

Knowledge Management

Information Storage and Sharing

The production and recording of knowledge is key to feminist theory; knowledge is one way in which hegemonic structures can be deconstructed in order for egalitarian communities to be created. Knowledge management is not just about technology, but is a practice that in

¹ Nhengu, Dudziro. *Feminist Knowledge Management*. 2011. World Pulse.
<https://www.worldpulse.com/en/community/users/chibairo/posts/17598>

itself is widely debated. In developing a means for knowledge management, Circles should consider multiple components: knowledge itself (the data and resources), management of knowledge (the way the knowledge can be stored so that it can be used accurately and efficiently) and the sharing of knowledge (the accessibility of the knowledge).²

Questions for consideration include:

- *What kind of information (data, resources, toolkits, etc.) exist within our group?*
- *What language(s) are our resources in? Does this impact the way we organize file storage?*
- *How do we want to manage this information so that it is accessible to everyone regardless of where they live?*
- *How can we improve the efficiency and ease of accessing this information based on the way we store it?*
- *What resources do we need from SGP in order to effectively achieve these goals?*
- *What technologies exist that can help with this?*
- *How do we want members to be able to add new information?*
- *How do we encourage everyone in the group to take shared ownership of knowledge management?*
- *Do we need individuals who specifically take on this task within the group?*
- *How have others managed their knowledge? Potential useful resources include:*
 - Cultivating communities of practice: a guide to managing knowledge. By Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William Snyder, Harvard Business School Press, 2002.
 - [Knowledge management is a donut](#): shaping your knowledge strategy with communities of practice. By Etienne Wenger. Ivey Business Journal, January 2004.

Reporting and evaluation

At the end of the 6-month period, Circles must reflect on activities and submit a self-reflection on successes and challenges of the group, as detailed in the policy section above.

Questions for group consideration include:

- *Do we want to check in on group progress, opportunities, and challenges with greater frequency than an annual basis?*
- *Are the successes and challenges the same across membership? Do they impact people equally? If not, how do we capture this in the report?*
- *Are there other mechanisms we want to have internally to improve our accountability to each other?*
- *What were experiences with community agreements?*
- *What were experiences with rotating leadership roles?*

² <https://www.worldpulse.com/en/community/users/chibairo/posts/17598>

- *What were experiences with the three critical questions?*
- *Do Circles take on activities that require a budget? What are these?*

Budget

During the pilot period, Circles will not receive funding. For the time being, Circles cannot fundraise independently but this is subject to change upon further review by SGP legal advisors.

Circles may eventually have a small operating budget based on membership dues, which can be used to support the operations of the group. If specific activities require additional budgetary support (hosting an event, collaborating for research, etc.), the Circle should consult with the Interim Circle Committee in order to discuss needs and strategize potential funding options. Questions for the group to consider include:

- *What activities may require budgetary support?*
- *Where does the group want to prioritize spending? Are there any activities the group is not comfortable investing money in?*
- *How will the group finalize a decision to spend funds? Will voting be required, and if so what level of approval must be met in order for funds to be spent?*
- *If additional budget is needed for an activity, what resources to people know of which may be available (outside small grants, other donations, etc.)?*
- *Is the group interested in raising funds through other fundraising efforts if needed?*

Dealing with Inter-group Conflict

Allowing for disagreement within a Circle can help maintain diversity of perspectives and improve inclusivity of all ideas. If at any point conflict escalates to the point of becoming unmanageable, or members feel that the mission and tenets of SGP Circles are not being upheld, members should reach out to the SGP Interim Committee on Circles for support in mediating the situation.

Questions for the group to consider regarding conflict mediation include:

- *What strategies can the group use to encourage and celebrate diversity of opinion?*
- *How do we allow for difference of opinion while still working toward shared objectives?*
- *What are issues specific to our Circle which may be perceived as sensitive, offensive, or exclusionary and how we can we work to be respectful of everyone while upholding SGP tenets around these areas?*
- *In what ways can we interact with each other to promote respect and consideration?
Ex: one person speaks at a time, etc.*