This guide is primarily intended for city elected officials who wish to form a caucus that can be recognized by the League of Oregon Cities (LOC). It serves as a reference which outlines:

• The purpose that the caucus serves within the LOC;
• The benefits of being a recognized caucus of the LOC;
• The process for recognition of a caucus by the LOC Board of Directors;
• Ways the LOC may support a caucus;
• Ways a caucus can support the LOC; and
• Resources that may be helpful when creating a caucus.
In December 2020, the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) Board of Directors (Board) amended its Bylaws to allow the organization the opportunity to formally recognize caucuses which are comprised of local government officials in Oregon.

**Purpose**

The purpose of recognizing caucuses was twofold. First, the Board found that caucuses can enhance the work of the LOC by addressing the unique needs of the organization’s members. Second, caucuses allow local government officials an opportunity to express themselves and share best practices.

The LOC Board specifically noted that caucuses, if formed, could make recommendations to the Board to:

1. Promote positive and effective relationships among city officials of underrepresented affinity groups, their communities, political leaders, and the LOC;

2. Build and increase capacity of city officials of underrepresented affinity groups to engage in and serve in local government;

3. Serve as a resources to the LOC Board in the formulation of its policy agenda; and

4. Equip and advance city officials of underrepresented affinity groups to serve in positions of leadership on the LOC Board.

**The Benefits of Being a Recognized Caucus of the LOC**

If a caucus is formally recognized by the LOC Board, it gains the following benefits:

1. A designated staff liaison who will ensure the caucus complies with Oregon’s Public Meetings Law; and

2. The opportunity for one of its members to serve on the following LOC committees:
   - Equity & Inclusion Committee;
   - Budget Committee;
   - Bylaws Committee;
   - Finance Committee;
   - Conference Planning Committee; and
   - Nominating Committee.
Process for Recognition of a Caucus

Eligibility Requirements.

To be recognized as a caucus, a caucus must meet the eligibility requirements of Section 25(B) of the LOC Bylaws. Specifically, the caucus must be:

1. Composed of local government officials;
2. Be formally organized under a constitution or bylaws, or both;
3. Have first received a positive recommendation for recommendation as a caucus from the LOC Equity & Inclusion Committee; and
4. Be formally recognized by the LOC Board of Directors.

Application to Executive Director.

Assuming the caucus is composed of local government officials and has been formally organized under its own constitution and/or bylaws, it may then apply to the LOC for formal recognition. Applying for formal recognition is accomplished by submitting a letter to the LOC Executive Director, along with a copy of the caucus’s constitution and/or bylaws. The letter is to include the caucus’ name, statement of purpose, list of its current members, and contact information for those leading the caucus (president, chair, etc.).

Upon receipt of the required letter and accompanying constitution and/or bylaws, the LOC Executive Director will work with the Equity & Inclusion Committee to schedule a meeting whereupon the caucus can formally request the Equity & Inclusion Committee’s positive recommendation for formal LOC recognition. Scheduling this meeting could take anywhere between 30 – 60 days.

Equity & Inclusion Committee.

The Equity & Inclusion Committee will review a caucus’ request for formal recognition during a publicly noticed meeting. Caucus leaders should attend the Committee meeting and provide the Committee with remarks as to how the caucus serves the purposes outlined in Section 25 of the LOC Bylaws. Committee members will be provided an opportunity to ask questions of caucus leaders and may discuss the request at their leisure. When the Committee believes it has all the information it needs to make a decision, it will, via a vote, decide whether it wishes to provide the caucus with a positive recommendation of support.

If the Committee provides the caucus with a positive recommendation of support, the Executive Director will ensure the caucus’ request for formal recognition is placed on the next regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting, provided the positive recommendation is submitted to the Executive Director at least 14 days in advance of the next regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting.
Board of Directors.

The LOC Board of Directors will review a caucus’ request for formal recognition during a publicly noticed meeting. Caucus leaders should attend the Board meeting and provide the Board with remarks as to how the caucus serves the purposes outlined in Section 25 of the LOC Bylaws. A representative from the Equity & Inclusion Committee will be asked to provide the Board with the reasons behind the Committee’s positive recommendation of support.

Board members will be provided an opportunity to ask questions of caucus leaders and any representatives of the Equity & Inclusion Committee present during the meeting. The Board may also ask the Executive Director for an opinion on formal recognition of the caucus.

When the Board believes it has all the information it needs to render a decision, via a vote, the Board will decide whether it wishes to formally recognize the caucus.

If the Board formally recognizes a caucus, the Executive Director will assign an LOC staff liaison to the caucus. The assigned liaison will coordinate with the caucus’ leadership within 30 days of being assigned to the position.

**Ways the LOC May Support a Caucus**

It is important to note that Section 25(C) of the LOC Bylaws specifically states that caucuses are to be “self-supporting and are not subsidized by the LOC.”

The staff liaison assigned to the caucus is only responsible for the following actions:

1. Providing public notice of all caucus meetings in which a quorum is present;
2. Taking minutes and records of all caucus meetings; and
3. Any other tasks necessary to ensure the caucus, as a public body under Oregon law, complies with Oregon’s Public Meetings Law. The tasks referenced herein are intended to be solely limited to ensuring compliance with Oregon’s Public Meetings Law – tasks performed by LOC staff are intended to be routine and administrative in nature.

If the LOC has available resources, as determined by the Executive Director, and the Board has given its specific authority to do so, LOC staff may provide additional services to caucus, but those services are to be provided on a reimbursement basis. This means, that should the caucus require additional staff assistance than that which was described in the prior paragraph, and the Executive Director believes staff has the capacity to provide additional assistance, and the Board believes it is appropriate for staff to provide that additional service, the caucus will be billed for the additional staff support.

It is important to note that LOC’s role in helping local officials create a caucus is limited. The LOC can only provide two types of assistance to a potential caucus. First, LOC will allow any group of local government officials interested in forming a caucus the ability to place an article
in LOC’s weekly electronic newsletter, *the Bulletin*. Second, LOC staff can make its Zoom accounts and conference lines available to local government officials who wish to discuss and potentially form a caucus (LOC staff who attend these meetings will attend solely to host the meeting, they cannot provide substantive assistance in the development of a caucus).

**Ways a Caucus May Support the LOC**

In recognizing caucuses, the LOC hopes that in addition to the LOC supporting the caucus, the caucus can in turn support the LOC, specifically, a caucus may:

1. Provide a forum within the LOC community in which members with a particular interest may meet to address concerns and share information vital to the membership and the success of the LOC;

2. Seek solutions to concerns and issues raised by members of the caucus and the membership at large that can be brought to the relevant LOC committees or the Board itself;

3. Disseminate LOC resources on policy initiatives, training opportunities, and other LOC resources to members of the caucus and the entire LOC membership at large; and

4. Communicate to the Board any suggestions for improving the caucus and its relationship to the Board.

**Resources That May be Helpful When Creating a Caucus**

For those persons wishing to create a new caucus, there are two resources that may helpful in the endeavor. First, because the LOC staff cannot assist in drafting a caucus’ constitution or bylaws, those interested in creating a caucus may wish to connect with already established caucuses both in Oregon and in other locals to review their governing documents as a starting point. Second, because there is no guarantee that LOC can or will be able to provide a caucus with any financial support, some caucuses have found it helpful to get a federal tax identification number, which is often done through incorporation as a nonprofit. The [Non-Profit Association of Oregon](https://www.nonprofitassociation.org) has several helpful resources and guides that may be worth reviewing when persons are considering creating a caucus.