

Working at Cornell

WAGS

Workforce Affinity Groups

Guidelines & Expectations

Updated February 20, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Workforce Affinity Groups (WAGs) are volunteer employee-run connection groups for faculty and staff based on shared interests, not identity. All WAGs are open to participants regardless of their race, sex, or other protected status. A Cornell WAG supports [Cornell's values](#), follows Cornell's policies like [Policy 6.4 - Prohibited Bias, Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual and Related Misconduct](#), and provides a sense of community. It helps employees to thrive and feel they belong professionally and personally. Participating in a WAG helps you connect to a passion or purpose beyond your job role... *"Any person, Any passion!"*

Viva Engage is the platform to build a WAG community. By joining a WAG on Viva Engage, you agree to read and follow the rules, terms, and conditions set forth below in the WAG Guidelines.

Do you and a colleague have an idea for a WAG? **Fill out a [WAG Application](#) to get started!**

WAG LEADER EXPECTATIONS

- Must be a full-time, benefits-eligible employee in good standing with the university.
- Commit to the thoughtful development and visibility of the WAG.
- Maintain the alignment of the WAG with the university's values and commitments.
- Engage fellow WAG members to encourage a welcoming environment.
- Monitor the posts and comments on the WAG's Viva Engage platform.
- Support the membership by following Cornell University's [Skills for Success](#), [Core Values](#), and the [University Policy 4.6: Standard of Ethical Conduct](#).

- Do not make statements in your official Cornell capacity or on behalf of Cornell University.
- Do not bring shame, embarrassment, or ridicule upon Cornell University or colleagues.
- Should you decide to organize an event (virtual or in-person), take your time to make it safe and high-quality so that it can energize your community.
- Be considerate and respectful of all people and property.
- Utilize all resources and tools available through [Risk Management](#), such as waivers and preferred vendors for in-person events.
- Seek guidance and provide regular updates to the Director of Workforce Engagement on events, activities, and any concerns.
- Refrain from unacceptable behavior, including intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, derogatory, stalking, photographing, or recording an individual against their wishes, and disrupting talks or other events.
 - Harassment may include offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity/ethnic origin, age, religion, disability; inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in public spaces; inappropriate physical contact; and unwelcome sexual attention.
- Immediately notify the Director of Workforce Engagement about any concerns related to unacceptable behavior.

WAG MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

- Must be a full-time, benefits-eligible employee in good standing with the university.
- Be considerate and respectful of all people and property.
- Support the leadership and your colleagues by following Cornell University's [Skills for Success](#), [Core Values](#), and the [University Policy 4.6: Standard of Ethical Conduct](#).
- Do not make statements in your official Cornell capacity or on behalf of Cornell University.
- Do not bring shame, embarrassment, or ridicule upon Cornell University or colleagues.
- Refrain from unacceptable behavior, including intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, derogatory, stalking, photographing, or recording an individual against their wishes, and disrupting talks or other events.

- Harassment may include offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity/ethnic origin, age, religion, disability; inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in public spaces; inappropriate physical contact; and unwelcome sexual attention.
- Immediately notify the WAG leader and/or the Director of Workforce Engagement about any concerns related to unacceptable behavior.

FOUNDATION OF HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

- **Shared Interests and Values** - The members seek out this community because of a shared respect for the activity or interest.
- **Clear Expectations** - The community members are clear on how they will behave and treat others, as noted above in the WAG MEMBER EXPECTATIONS. They will not demean, devalue, or dismiss people for their experiences, lack of experiences, or difference in interpretation of those experiences.
- **Community Understanding** - One of the great pleasures of being part of a community is that the members feel seen and understood without explaining nuances or intricacies. The members trust that people are doing their best and assume positive intent.

BASICS FOR STARTING AND GROWING A COMMUNITY

#1: Welcome Participants

- Write a message that serves as official recognition and welcome into the community. Clearly define your expectations of behavior. Provide follow-up messages that extend invitations often, i.e., social gatherings or special events to help newcomers fully engage in the group.

#2: Host a Signature Event and Activities

- Create an inclusive and safe special activity or event, in person or virtually, that generates enthusiasm among the community for the shared interest. This may be reoccurring or one-time only.
 - Utilize all resources and tools available through [Risk Management](#), such as waivers and preferred vendors for in-person events.
 - Be considerate and respectful of all people and property.
 - Be mindful of your surroundings and of your fellow WAG members.
 - Develop a plan to address anyone engaging in unacceptable behavior, including their removal. Anyone asked to stop engaging in alleged unacceptable behavior is expected to comply immediately.
 - Everyone (WAG members and guests) should be respectful and maintain a safe event with civil and rational discussions and actions.

- All attendees (WAG members and guests) must refrain from engaging in unacceptable behavior and report any issues to the WAG leaders/event hosts.

#3: Tell the Story

- Sharing your WAG's story is how members and future members learn the values of the WAG and how to express them within the WAG community. Include how the WAG founders were inspired to form the community.
- The purpose of the WAG must be regularly communicated so members can understand the WAG's objective and identity.
- Design a logo that represents the overall WAG identity and reminds everyone of the values, identity, and commitment to their community. **Do not misuse Cornell's name or branding as stated by [University Policy 4.10, Use of Cornell's Name, Logos, Trademarks, and Insignias](#).** Work with the Director of Workforce Engagement on all images.
- Provide members opportunities to share their stories. This helps members feel that they are seen and understood.

#4: Honor the Diversity of Skills and Knowledge

- Respect and support each individual's journey within the WAG (e.g., novice, intermediate, and expert). Allow members to enter and serve in capacities aligned to their skills and knowledge.

LEARN MORE ABOUT VIVA ENGAGE

- [Watch the Microsoft Video about Viva Engage](#)
- [Additional Information on Viva Engage from CIT](#)

WAG GUIDELINES FOR USING VIVA ENGAGE

Microsoft Teams Viva Engage is the platform for all WAGs. It is sponsored by the Division of Human Resources and Cornell Information Technologies. WAG leaders and members are responsible for keeping it a safe, professional, collaborative, and up-to-date space for all employees. You must comply with our WAG Guidelines and Cornell's [core values](#) and [policies](#).

Add value to your WAG with each post. Be aware that anyone may read your posts. Think about how your comments might be read by others, especially as conversations aren't face-to-face. Make what you mean clear, so nothing is received in a way it wasn't intended.

Keep it kind and professional. Always remember that Viva Engage is an online workspace. Feedback and opinions are welcomed, but please be polite and constructive in your comments. We should be respectful and maintain civil and rational discussions. Do not use exclusionary, discriminatory, or offensive language.

Share information and resources responsibly. Do not post or comment about any restricted or confidential information on Viva Engage. The university does not permit comments that sell products or that promote commercial, political, or other ventures. Do not give medical advice. Share reliable, peer-reviewed articles from reputable sources. Do not share posts from within the WAG's Viva Engage to other platforms. (For example, no forwarding or re-sharing to public social media).

Understand that content is not reviewed, verified, approved, or endorsed by Cornell University. Users are responsible for the content they upload and should avoid contributing anything violating any Cornell policies. Please ensure the information and resources you share are accurate and up-to-date.

All activities on this platform are subject to monitoring by the Division of Human Resources, Risk Management, and University Counsel to protect Cornell assets, maintain confidentiality and integrity of information, prevent malicious activities, and detect violations of Cornell policies and procedures. Failure to comply with Cornell policies or procedures may result in disciplinary action. Cornell University reserves the right to remove a WAG leader or WAG member from the WAG permanently, without recourse, at our sole discretion.

A post or comment can be removed without prior notice if the WAG Leader deems it to be inappropriate or goes against the guidelines. Cornell University reserves the right, but assumes no obligation, to remove any inappropriate comments.

Disclaimer: The views expressed on the Viva Engage platform are those of the individual contributors. They do not and should not be construed as representing the views of the Workforce Affinity Groups (WAGs) or Cornell University. Cornell University makes no warranty, guarantee, or representation as to the accuracy or sufficiency of the information posted on the Viva Engage platform or shared at events, whether posted or stated by a Workforce Affinity Groups (WAGs) leader, member, or any third party, and Cornell assumes no responsibility or liability regarding the use or misuse of such information for any purpose. Cornell disclaims any responsibility to maintain copies of any information posted on the Viva Engage platform or to ensure that such information is deleted. Unless specifically stated otherwise, Cornell does not endorse, approve, recommend, or certify any information, advice, guidance, product, process, service, or organization presented or mentioned on the Viva Engage platform or at events, and information from the Viva Engage platform or at events should not be referenced in any way to imply such approval or endorsement. NEVERTHELESS, CORNELL UNIVERSITY RETAINS THE RIGHT TO MONITOR POSTED INFORMATION AND REMOVE MESSAGES OR MATERIALS IT BELIEVES DOES NOT COMPLY WITH THE TERMS OF THESE RULES OR ARE NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE WORKFORCE AFFINITY GROUPS (WAGS) AND CORNELL UNIVERSITY.

As Cornellians, we must create and maintain a respectful workplace for all employees. Cornell's [Core Values](#), [Equal Education and Employment Statement](#), and other [policies](#) remain in effect during all interactions.

Please have fun creating an engaging and responsible community.