



# HOW TO ORGANIZE A LOCAL GAY/LESBIAN SPORTS GROUP

Presented by the Federation of Gay Games Membership Committee  
584 Castro Street - #343  
San Francisco, California 94114 USA

Updated November 2018

For information or comment, please contact the Federation of Gay Games  
Membership Committee via [membership@gaygames.net](mailto:membership@gaygames.net)

## HOW TO ORGANIZE A LOCAL GAY/LESBIAN SPORTS GROUP

Games Can Change the World. Beginning with yours.

Start a Gay/Lesbian Sports Group in your own home town. It's easier than you might think.

Greetings from the Federation of Gay Games Membership Committee. This guide has been prepared to address the many queries we receive from individuals and groups from around the world seeking ideas and guidance on how to organize a gay and/or lesbian sports group at the local level.

Global change begins with local change. The quadrennial Gay Games offers a highly visible beacon of hope and inspiration to gay and lesbian athletes, artists and friends from around the globe. For positive change, Inclusion, and a fair chance to achieve personal bests in sport. Art. And life.

This is what the Gay Games and Gay Games Movement are all about.

Yet real change and opportunity always begins at home, wherever home is. A great way to improve your own life, plus the life of your community, is to build opportunities for healthy friendships, camaraderie, teamwork and pride through active participation in organized sport.

Many of the concepts contained in this guide are as helpful to organizing an arts group as they are to a sports group. Yet, our aim here is specifically to suggest ideas on how to start a lesbian/gay sports group. It's a work in progress. We invite your ideas and suggestions. And we fully recognize that what works in Seattle or Santiago...might not in Singapore or Sierra Leon.

It's important to note that many of the ideas contained in this guide do NOT address the unique challenges of trying to organize a lesbian/gay sports group in extremely homophobic societies where repression, fear, and secrecy are everyday realities. We invite your ideas and stories, especially if you have experiences in this area.

Starting your own sports organization often means starting with yourself. But help is all around you, even in your own community. We hope you'll find the enclosed ideas useful and motivating. Much will depend on your own creativity. That's part of the fun.

Good luck. Know that when you create opportunities for inclusion, participation, and personal best in your own community with organized sport, you're doing more than just changing your community. You're changing the world!

## HOW TO START YOUR SPORTS GROUP,

### **Begin with yourself.**

Perhaps the single most important step you can take to begin your sports group is to actually do your sport -- even if you do it alone or do it with a non gay/lesbian group. You'll make a lot of good connections and learn much about important things like local sports venues, local tournaments, local sources for coaching and equipment, and more. All of these you will appreciate knowing -- especially when you form your first gay/lesbian group or team.

### **Start Small.**

Invite your gay/lesbian friends to join the team you already belong to, even if it's not specifically a lesbian or gay team. Slowly, you might invite one or two others to join, and pretty soon your "non lesbian/gay team" is starting to actually have a significant sub-set of lesbian/gay team members. Eventually, you may have enough lesbian/gay team members to occasionally split off and form your own little team, but still play with the bigger team until one day your gay/lesbian group is ready to be on its own.

### **Think "Multiple Sport."**

Sometimes it's hard to find enough athletes to form a single-sport team, but easier to find a general group of gay/lesbian athletes who each do different sports. Such a group could occasionally meet and form the beginnings of a local gay/lesbian sports information and recruiting network. A runner might know a soccer player. A soccer player might know a skier. A tennis player might know a swimmer. By forming a "multiple sport group," you're uniting a group of people who share the simple enjoyment of sport, and in the process creating a powerful network for finding more lesbian/gay people who enjoy or would enjoy participating in sport.

### **Play Straight**

While it's wonderful to have gay or lesbian sport competitions to participate in, that's not always possible locally, at least in the beginning. So consider creating your own team to compete in non gay events. At least you'll get to enjoy your sport, and your gay/lesbian team can get some much needed practice. You decide how "out" you want your team to be. The most important thing is to participate.

### **Go Away**

Still, the chance to meet and play with fellow lesbians and gays in your own sport is often the most satisfying and enriching. If your community does not currently provide these opportunities, go away, find out about lesbian and gay sport tournaments in nearby cities, or even distant regional cities. If you

do a little research on the internet, you may be surprised what you find. Perfect excuse for a vacation with friends: your teammates!

### **Create Your Own Competitions**

If you have enough people to play, create your own fun tournaments. Change the rules to accommodate fewer players, or nonregulation venues. Anything that gets people together in a fun and supportive environment is a step in the right direction.

- Finding Coaches and Venues.
- Find retired coaches.
- Use existing municipal recreation programs.
- Network with people who work in schools and universities.
- Let teammates take turns coaching.
- Find a coaching book for your sport and learn to also be a coach.

### **Seek Assistance**

Seek assistance from The Federation's Sports Committee.

### **Establish an organization and share the responsibilities.**

After starting your sports group, you may want to take it to the next level by establishing an organization. By doing so, you can increase the chances that your sports group will continue into the future even if you or some of the other founders eventually depart.

By establishing an organization, you also increase the number of people who can help to accomplish the collective needs of your group. A functioning organization can accomplish much more than any one individual.

### **Reasons for establishing an organization:**

- So your group will continue into the future
- To organize and spread the work among more individuals
- To gather and keep friends who share a common interest
- Access to training partners and other expertise
- To promote continued health and well-being in your community
- To provide continuing recreational and competitive opportunities for gays and lesbians in sport

### **Getting Started**

- Call a Meeting - Use publicity tools -- refer to "Publicity: Who, What, Where, When and Why" for ideas.
- Host in a safe supportive place -- Potential participants will be more likely to attend if they feel comfortable. Consider libraries, coffee houses, personal homes, church meeting rooms, schools, community centers.

- Two or three meetings can get things started – It's not necessary to have a large group. In fact, starting with a small group can be easier.
- Attempt to have gender parity – Consider the advantages of including both men and women equally in your group. It breaks down community barriers, increases the talent pool, widens your outreach possibilities, and increases your possibilities for the future.
- Establish group leadership: Captain, Treasurer, Administrator, etc. – Start with the basics. Someone to be responsible for your finances (a Treasurer). Someone to handle correspondence and group communications (a Secretary). Someone to call meetings, propose agendas, and promote team involvement (a Captain). The names of the titles can change, and the exact job descriptions can change, but establishing a simple understanding of “who does what” can reduce the burden on any one individual and increase the sense of “group ownership” and responsibility.
- Delegate – If you feel like you're doing all the work yourself, try recruiting other members of the group to help you.
- Establish Purpose and Goals – It's a good idea to write down and agree upon a purpose for your group, and some specific near-term and long-term goals. For example, a purpose might be “to create and promote soccer participation opportunities in our community.” Some near-term goals might be “to grow from enough players to have one team, to enough players to have two teams,” or “to play our team in three local tournaments this year.” A long-term goal might be to “participate to the Gay Games,” or “participate in a regional lesbian/gay sports tournament.”

## RAISING FUNDS

### Set Your Goals And Be Realistic

The topic of “fundraising” is always an issue with organizations. A good way to approach the subject is to first identify what you need to raise money for, and why. You may need equipment to play your sport. Your team may need uniforms, or want new ones. Maybe you publish and distribute a newsletter and flyers and need funds to pay for them.

It's important to remember that raising funds can be a difficult effort. Often, a good alternative is to lower your need for funds in the first place, then only raise money for the “extras.” Often, many basic things can be paid for by the members of your team or organization. You may need to collect monthly dues from members, or collect money from the members every time they play in order to rent a facility. Every situation is different.

You have to prioritize. Do the few things that can bring you the biggest benefit first. What are your biggest needs? Understand how much these items will cost, and how much can be paid by your members versus how much needs to be raised from other sources. Make sure there is agreement in your group about these goals and priorities. Members are more likely to help raise funds if they are included in the decision-making process.

### Things For Which You Might Need to Raise Funds

- Equipment
- Uniforms
- Venues
- Travel
- Registration and Participation Fees

### Sources of Funds

- Local Business Sponsors, e.g., gay bars -- If your community has a network of established businesses that cater (at least partially) to your lesbian and gay community, find out who the owners of these businesses are. Approach them about helping to raise funds. Be creative. Ask them to pay for specific items, and offer to put their name on those items. For example, add the logo or business name to your uniforms if the business is helping to buy uniforms. Sponsors like this can also help pay for newsletters, advertisements, etc.
- Businesses That Advertise In Gay Publications -- Look in publications that reach your community, like gay newspapers or magazines, and see who advertises in them. These advertisers may also be willing to support your fundraising efforts. It's better to suggest a specific way to contribute. For example: “Will you sponsor our Tournament Program for X amount of money, and we'll print your name on our Program?”
- Government Funding -- In most communities it is difficult to obtain government support for openly gay/lesbian organizations. If you have friends or contacts in government circles, inquire about what opportunities might exist. If your city has a Department of Parks and Recreation (or equivalent) you can at least find out about access to low-cost sports venues, and existing municipal programs that can provide structure and perhaps even coaching for your sport. Examples: a city-sponsored soccer league you could join and form a team for, or a public Masters Swimming program you could join for a very low cost just to get started. While this is not strictly fund raising, it can be a good way to lower your costs so you can raise funds for other needs.
- Social Issues Organizations, e.g., Amnesty International -- There may be human rights organizations in your community or country that can offer financial support or advise. Find out what their programs are and how they might help. Local YMCAs and YWCAs,

for example, can be good resources for low-cost facilities, coaching, and networking. Schools can also be helpful, especially for low-cost facilities.

- **Closeted Wealthy Donors** -- Along with other people in your organization, brainstorm “who knows who.” Perhaps members of your group each know one or two wealthy individuals who can be approached to make a donation to your cause. This requires personal networking and discretion. Often wealthy individuals will support courageous efforts by organizations such as yours to improve the lives of gays and lesbians. Appeal to their sense of altruism. Point out the empowering and liberating aspects of open participation in organized sport, not to mention the healthy team-building skills sport fosters.
- **Team Involvement** -- There are many ways to raise money by getting your teammates involved. Brainstorm ideas that make sense for you. Collect prizes from supportive businesses and have all your teammates sell raffle tickets for chances to win. Hold a car wash with your team in a good location and get paid for washing cars. Organize a group “garage sale,” collecting things to sell from everyone in your organization and keeping the proceeds for your team. Organize a “team night” at a local bar and charge a small admission at the door as a donation -- have everyone on your team show up in their sports uniforms and have fun distributing information about your team. Even though many of these kinds of fund raisers don’t raise large amounts of money, they can be fun “team-building” ways to get your group together for the good of the organization off the playing field, and can help publicize your group and make it visible to your community -- which is important for recruiting additional team members, and for raising more funds in the future.

## **PUBLICITY: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, AND WHY**

There are many reasons your organization will need to publicize its efforts. You might be holding a fund raiser at a local bar and want to let your community know about it. You might be recruiting new team members and need to get the word out. You may have participated in a tournament and want to spread the news.

Your community may be served by a newspaper, magazine, or other publication that specifically targets the gay/lesbian/transgender community. If so, then contact the editor of each publication and find out how you can publicize your new group.

Do you have a photo of your team? Can you write a photo caption including your team’s practice times plus a phone number people can call for more

information? Can you write a short story about your group and submit it for publication? Make sure your story covers all the basics: who your group is, what it’s about, where it meets, when it meets, and why it meets. Provide a phone number, email address, or other method of contacting your group, too.

Making simple photocopied flyers and posting them around your community can also be effective. Include a picture or drawing of your sport to get attention. Make sure the flyer contains all the basic information: who, what, where, when and why, plus a contact telephone number. Post your flyers at bulletin boards often available at:

- Social Issues Centers
- Lesbian and/or Gay Bars
- Sports Venues
- Gay Coffee Shops
- Gay Bookstores
- AIDS Centers
- University or School Athletic centers
- Local Sport Publications

Today, the internet offers important opportunities to publicize your efforts via e-News Groups, social media, mail groups, e-mail, etc. Internet access is often available and affordable at Internet Cafes for those individuals who do not have their own technology. It can be completely free at many public libraries. Also, check for internet availability and access at local universities or school systems. Once you have access to the internet, you can easily obtain a free e-mail account and address for your group via online services such as [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com).

## **KEEPING EVERYONE INFORMED STARTS WITH KNOWING WHO “EVERYONE” IS.**

Effective communication plays a key role in helping any organization succeed. Lesbian/gay sports groups are no exception. The best way to understand your communications needs is to start by understanding who your audiences are.

Examples include:

- Existing Team or Group Members
- Potential Team or Group Members
- Financial Supporters and Potential Financial Supporters
- Other Gay/Lesbian Sport Groups Near and Far
- Other Non-sport Gay/Lesbian Organizations
- Volunteers

In the beginning, often the most important audiences are current team members and potential new team members. Later, financial supporters, volunteers and other audiences may need to be considered. Once you know whom you're trying to reach, you can select communications vehicles to reach them, such as:

Telephone Trees – When information needs fast distribution, recruit two or three teammates to each telephone four or five different people on your list of telephone numbers. It's a fast way to reach 15 or 20 people.

Newsletter – Creating and publishing a simple newsletter can be an effective way to reach many different kinds of audiences. The most basic newsletters deliver current information to your existing teammates and other people who have expressed an interest in participating with your group. Make sure your newsletter minimally includes:

- How to Contact Your Organization for More Information
- Practice or Meeting Times With Descriptive Addresses
- Statement of Group Purpose

Newsletters are also an effective medium to display business sponsors or business advertising as a means of rewarding financial supporters.

E-mail Lists – If many of your group members have access to e-mail, maintaining up-to-date e-mail lists can be a highly effective method of keeping your various audiences well informed. You can potentially have separate lists for group members, media, supporters, etc., and perhaps one large list with everyone in it.

Web Site – A simple web site can be created and maintained by your organization. Perhaps you can find someone who is skilled at creating sites, or you can visit sites such as <https://www.networkforgood.com/nonprofitblog/how-start-website-your-organization/which-walk-you-step-by-step-through-the-process-of-creating-your-own-simple-site>. Similar to a newsletter, you'll want to be sure your site conveys, minimally, your statement of purpose, practice or meeting times with location addresses, and how to contact your organization for additional information. Make sure to include your web site address (URL) in all your other communications so people know how to find your site.

Social Media Accounts – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are just some of the tools available to tap into to boost your communications and get the word out about your organization.

Other Groups – If you know of other groups in your community that already have effective communications vehicles (such as a web site or existing newsletter), see if you can insert news about your own group in their

publication -- especially if their organization reaches some of the same kinds of people you need to reach.

## YOU HAVE FRIENDS, THEY CAN HELP.

What does it cost to go to the Gay Games? Is there financial help? Is there a gay/lesbian multi-sports festival in your region? What sport and cultural events will be included in Gay Games II in Hong Kong? Is there a lesbian soccer team near you? How have other organizations like yours raised funds? So many questions. So many places you can turn to for answers. Here's a partial resource list.

Federation of Gay Games  
<http://www.gaygames.org>

Federation Membership Committee  
[membership@gaygames.net](mailto:membership@gaygames.net)

Gay Games 11 – Hong Kong 2002, November 2022  
[www.gaygameshk2022.com](http://www.gaygameshk2022.com)

Team DC  
[www.teamdc.org](http://www.teamdc.org)

Team Sydney  
[www.teamsydney.org.au](http://www.teamsydney.org.au)

## OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Amnesty International – a worldwide campaigning movement that works to promote all the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards.  
<http://www.amnesty.org/>

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) - a worldwide federation of national and local groups dedicated to achieving equal rights for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people everywhere.  
<http://www.ilga.org/>

