
Starting a New Networking Group

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Networking groups are a great way to connect and exchange best practices. If you don't know what a networking group is, please take the time to read our FAQ document.

If you are thinking of starting a new networking group, RAILS has put together this short guide. For more information, please contact [Dan Bostrom](#), RAILS Member Engagement Manager, 630-734-5152.

1. Make sure that the group you want to start doesn't already exist!

You can search for existing networking groups in the [RAILS Networking Group Directory](#).

2. Ensure that you have the support of your managers and administration.

If you're planning on holding regular meetings, you'll need to make sure that the time is approved as part of your workday. Before starting a group, we suggest meeting with your manager/director to discuss the potential demands of being a member or convener.

3. Start looking for people who might share your common interest

After you've established that a group for your topic does not already exist, you will want to find others who can help you. We strongly suggest using [existing RAILS email lists](#) to look for potential collaborators.

For example, if you work at a public library and your interest is in meeting with other public library workers, the best place to start would be by putting out a message on the RAILS Publics email list (publics@list.railslibraries.info). Please note that you must be subscribed to this list to send a message.

4. Once you've found people willing to help you, it's time to talk specifics.

With a small group of willing collaborators, your group should discuss a few important details:

- What is the name of your group?
- How often will your group meet?
- How will your group communicate?
- Who will lead your group and act as a convener?

These are fundamental details that are common to all RAILS networking groups. You can still change your name, meeting style, communication channels, and convener at any time, but it's important to define these at the beginning so that people have an idea of what you are about.

5. Now that you've got your group started, you'll want to become an official RAILS networking group.

Being an official RAILS networking group simply means that your group has a listing in the [RAILS Networking Group Directory](#). Please note that this requires L2 login information.

This is the place that other library workers will find more information about your group. Once you've added that information, please reach out to [Dan Bostrom](#), RAILS Member Engagement Manager, 630.734.5152.

6. At this point, your group can apply for any of the benefits eligible to RAILS networking groups.

Your group should start planning your first meeting. To do so, you can apply for a Zoom license and add your event to the L2 calendar. All of these are benefits available to official networking groups.

For more information on benefits of being an official networking group, please see the [Support for Networking Groups page](#) on the RAILS website.