

BACKGROUND

What is an Equity Caucus?

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Purpose

The equity caucus model is designed to create a space for demographically and culturally similar AMAPCEO members to build community, support other members, and establish solidarity in both life experiences and participation in the union. The model works to provide information about participation within AMAPCEO. Equity caucuses also seek to offer role models and mentorship opportunities for members from traditionally underrepresented identity groups.

The equity caucus model is ideal for cultivating recognition, support and understanding for diverse constituency groups with the ultimate result of AMAPCEO becoming “a more diverse organization” (Equity Committee Terms of Reference).

Our goal in establishing equity caucuses is to provide opportunities for capacity building, to include diverse voices, to increase representation of traditionally underrepresented members, and to foster equity.

What is an equity caucus?

Although there are numerous definitions of the term, for our purposes, a caucus refers to a sub-group of the AMAPCEO membership based on a common identification. Caucuses provide spaces for different equity-seeking groups to meet separately. Participation is voluntary and grounded in self-identification; that is, each member will be encouraged to join whichever caucus(es) they self-identify with.¹

What are the AMAPCEO Equity Caucuses?

AMAPCEO has identified eight equity caucus which are referred to as the following:

- Aboriginal Caucus;
- Asian, Arab and Latino Workers Caucus;
- Black Workers Caucus;
- Disability Caucus;
- Francophone Caucus;
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Caucus;
- Women’s Caucus; and
- Young Workers Caucus.

The equity caucuses were named and determined by the Equity Committee after considering our specific membership needs, the findings of the 2012 diversity focus groups and the [diversity survey results](#), along with the Ontario Human Rights Code prohibited grounds for discrimination, and other models established by unions.

Importance

The 2012 AMAPCEO survey results found that, for different community, cultural and demographic groups, identification matters for their participation in the Association. Specifically, the survey demonstrated that our differences have meaning for our willingness to be involved in the union. Results of the survey also found that various community, cultural and demographic identifications actually decrease willingness to participate in the Association. Further the results indicated that our demographic diversity as a whole is not being reflected in our volunteers—and thus our leaders—because of real or perceived barriers to meaningful participation; this is something we believe undermines our strength and collective.

Although there is no simple fix to this problem, an equity caucus model provides additional spaces of support, mentorship and common community for diverse AMAPCEO members. The model is one step in acknowledging that this problem exists, and at the same time signals a deep commitment to correct it.

Be an Ally

There is an important role for allies to play in building equity in AMAPCEO. Allies are members who support equity work but are not self-identified members of equity caucuses. In recognizing the need for safe, affirming and inclusive spaces for our equity-seeking membership, any member who wishes to support a caucus group, but is not part of the demographic group that caucus is based in, can create an ‘alternate ally group.’ For example, disability justice issues can be forwarded by people without disabilities, but this does not mean that these people are necessarily desired or welcome in the Disability Caucus.

AMAPCEO members that identify as workers without disabilities but who are concerned about accessibility and inclusion could start an Alternate Ally Group. This Alternate Ally Group would have to submit an application and get support from the equity caucus they wish to work with. The goal of this is to welcome supportive individuals into the caucus structure without undermining the intended purpose of equity caucuses. Alternate groups exist only as ally groups to the caucuses and, therefore, will not have the same status as caucuses.

ⁱ For example, a mixed-race or mixed-ethnicity member may choose to attend multiple or different caucuses, depending on their own personal self-identification.