

Oral History Association: FAQs on OHA Caucuses

Preamble:

Since the Oral History Association (OHA) added the caucus--defined in our Bylaws as “a formally-recognized group within the membership, one defined by a shared identity, interest, or other criteria”--as another way for like-minded members to connect with each other, there have been questions about how they work. *Note:* To learn more about our caucus system, see the applicable Bylaws section below.

Until, or if, the by-laws change to further define & refine an OHA Caucus, the following FAQs exist to better help members understand our Caucus system. If what follows doesn't answer a member's question, please contact the [OHA Executive Office](#). And, at the bottom of this [OHA webpage](#), one can see our current caucuses.

FAQs:

1. The Basic Questions

a. What is a caucus?

A caucus is a formally-recognized group within the membership, one defined by a shared identity, interest, or other criteria.

b. How is it different from a Committee?

The biggest difference is a Caucus has no formal responsibilities vis a vis the OHA, meaning it need not submit materials, such as meeting minutes or bi-yearly reports to OHA's Council.

c. How can I start a caucus?

A member in good standing with nine other members submits a request for recognition, which should list those members' names and as the Bylaws state: “a succinct description of the defining composition of the [proposed] caucus.”

d. How & when do I join an extant caucus?

As far as how, reach out to the chair or co-chairs and ask to join. Under when, unlike the committee there's no formal time to request to join a Caucus, so an interested member should reach out to that Caucus chair or co-chairs at any time.

e. Do I have to be an OHA member to be in a Caucus?

Yes. But, a caucus can hold virtual conversations and invite broad participation. So, attendees to those might not be members, but the folks that plan and facilitate them are.

f. Can I be in more than one caucus?

If a member's “interests, concerns, and needs” align with more than one Caucus, then yes!

2. Questions about caucus leadership

a. Who leads a caucus?

While a caucus, in general, exists as an entity with less formal leadership structures, OHA Caucuses do require a chair or co-chairs. And to quote the Bylaws here: [Chair/co-chairs] should be selected by the caucus members on an annual basis and in a manner agreed to by a majority of those participating.”

b. What do chairs or co-chairs do?

Much like a committee chair, caucus leader(s) work with their members to decide on the number & type of meetings each year. They also submit the list of members to Council before each Annual Meeting.

- c. Is caucus leadership compensated for their service?

As with committees, caucus leadership are not compensated for their service.

- 3. How does a Caucus interact with Council? With the Executive Office?

- a. Within the OHA what rights/powers do Caucuses have?

As the Bylaws state: "caucuses will be advertised within the Association and its membership. They will also be given meeting time within the program of the annual meeting." Like committees, caucuses can bring up issues and work with Council on how to solve them.

- b. Can I get an official OHA letter noting my Caucus service?

Caucus chairs or co-chairs can get a letter from OHA regarding the leadership.

- c. Can a caucus ask for funding? If so, how?

Even though not specifically in the Bylaws, Council has and will accept & review funding requests from Caucuses like they do for committees.

- d. Does a Caucus need to report to Council each year?

From the Bylaws: In order to maintain formal status, each caucus must submit the name of up to two co-chairs and a roster of current members before each annual meeting. Note: As of Council's October 2025 meeting, Council will appoint one member to check in with each Caucus several times a year, to see if any Caucus has questions or issues that Council needs to address.

- e. What does Council expect from Caucuses?

Other than the aforementioned list of members and name of chair/co-chairs, caucuses are not expected to provide anything to Council. However, when Council is working on an issue that falls within the expertise of a Caucus, Council commits to inviting a Caucus to consult on that issue, as much or as little as that Caucus would prefer. If the issue becomes beyond an immediate need, then a working group could be created to work with Council to address that issue.

- 4. Questions about caucus meetings

- a. How often do they meet? And how are those meetings scheduled? Structured?

It's up to the Caucus to decide the answers to all these questions.

- b. If I join, do I have to attend their meeting at the Annual Meeting?

No, like our committees, one doesn't need to attend the Annual Meeting to be a Caucus member.

- c. How does a Caucus request space to meet at the Annual Meeting?

Caucus leaders should look to each year's "Call for Meeting Space" form announced well before each Annual Meeting. If the Caucus wants to meet in-person at that Meeting, then they should fill out & submit that form.

Section 16 of the Bylaws (Caucuses):

16. The OHA is defined by its mission and governance documents, but also by the interests, concerns, and needs of its membership. One of the ways these shape the Association is through our caucuses. A caucus is a formally-recognized group within the membership, one defined by a shared identity, interest, or other criteria. The

goal of a caucus is to foster community and inclusivity while creating mutually-beneficial relationships within the Association.

Caucuses are created by members according to their own initiative and interest. Council formally recognizes a Caucus upon their request and in accordance with the goals of the Association. In general, a request for recognition should be made by at least ten (10) members in good standing and include a succinct description of the defining composition of the caucus. Once recognized, caucuses will be advertised within the Association and its membership. They will also be given meeting time within the program of the annual meeting.

Caucuses have no formal responsibilities to the Association but, as recognized and valued segments of our community, the OHA welcomes their voice, advocacy, and contributions toward strengthening the work of the Association.

In order to maintain formal status, each caucus must submit the names of up to two co-chairs and a roster of current members at the end of each annual meeting. Chairs are responsible for convening the caucus and maintaining formal status. They should be selected by the caucus members on an annual basis and in a manner agreed to by a majority of those participating.