

CREATING AND COMMUNICATING HARVARD CLUB/SIG VALUE PROPOSITION

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This document was developed by the 2019-2020 Creating and Communicating Value Proposition Committee led by Co-chairs Aleksandra Drecun MPA '10 and Gautham Reddy AB '85; and HAA Liaisons Sara Aske and Lindsey Kelley.

1. INTRODUCTION

Harvard alumni Clubs and Shared Interest Groups (SIGs), communities based on geography and interests (or identities), respectively, are engaged in fostering mutually beneficial relationships among Harvard University, its alumni, and its students. The HAA Creating and Communication Value Proposition Committee provides Clubs and SIGs with these guidelines to identify and evaluate their value propositions, based on their missions, values, and the need to attract and retain members.

The overall goal of this initiative is to inspire and empower Clubs and SIGs to question, create, replicate, iterate and innovate in their efforts to grow and strengthen the Harvard alumni community. With that aim, the Committee has developed suggested strategies for best practices for developing a value proposition and communicating information.

2. (RE)DEFINING VALUE PROPOSITION

A value proposition can be defined as an innovation, service, or feature intended to make an organization attractive to its constituency. Clubs and SIGs should delineate what they are doing that is unique and brings value that its constituency cannot obtain in any other way.

The following list of questions should allow Clubs and SIGs to brainstorm and (re)define a value proposition that is most suitable to their constituents and communities. This approach may be taken at any time, and we suggest it is applied regularly, at least biennially. It is strongly recommended to use it when drafting the plans and presentations for the new Club/SIG leadership elections, when members should be informed on the proposed programs and goals, as well while drafting the annual plans for Club/SIG activities.

The **first question** relates to **WHO**. We suggest you ask yourselves if the Club/SIG provides appropriate and sufficient benefits to its multiple stakeholders, which may include:

- Members (at various tiers)¹
- Non-members (potential members)
- Family members (including widows and widowers)
- Friends of the Club/SIG
- Harvard University
- Harvard students
- Community at large

¹ Each Club/SIG must define the requirements of being a member and should create a way of analyzing or understanding the membership.

The **second question** is about **WHAT**. You should make sure that your Club/SIG engages its members in different kinds of programs and activities, which may include:

- Professional networking
- Enhancing social and personal connections
- Intellectually stimulating programs and life-long learning
- Cultural programs
- Caring and sharing (mentorships, interviewing, supporting fellow alumni, etc.)
- Gratitude and initiatives to give back / Community service
- Supporting scholarships or internships
- Leadership role in the community and leadership opportunities to send people to Harvard
- Building links with Harvard Alumni communities regionally and internationally
- Club and SIG collaboration
- Local chapters for SIGs
- Supporting young alumni and students
- [Harvard Ambassadorship](#)
- Maintaining connections with Harvard University
- Faculty Speaker events
- Building links with peer institutions

Finally, the **third part** of this exercise is **HOW**. You should (re)evaluate whether your Club/SIG plans and implements its activities based on the following principles:

- Transparency
- Diversity, inclusion, and belonging
- Engagement and leadership opportunities for community and fellowship
- Innovation
- Promoting [Harvard values](#)

In accordance with the mentioned suggestions and principles Clubs and SIGs should have in mind that a **strong value proposition**:

- Provides structure to an organization's mission and goals.
- Is clear, unique, realistic, simple, understandable, impactful, sustainable, aspirational, and economically feasible.
- Should evolve over time, and it is worth revisiting it regularly.
- Can differ depending on presence/absence of membership fees, cost of event, and geographic layout or distances.
- Can differ based on region and country.
- Provides a key differentiator by providing alumni opportunities that they cannot access by themselves.

Taking this into consideration, **when developing and communicating the value proposition**, Clubs and SIGs should:

- Seek ways to reach each group of stakeholders and consider how to connect with them.
- Assess which particular programs or benefits are addressing which target audience.
- Engage those who may not previously have been involved in Club/SIG activities.

- Offer an opportunity for people to engage in a way they previously could not.
- Target a range of demographics and include all age groups and schools, using platforms and channels appropriate for the specific target groups.
- Approach graduates from Harvard College and all Harvard schools, centers and other institutions, as well as from executive education programs (based on the Club/SIG bylaws).
- Consider creating some events that are for members only and others that are open to all.
- Consider using pulse surveys, retrieving data to drive priorities and programming and creating a record of the choices and the reasons for these choices.
- Engage individuals in special-access events offering a unique opportunity to the Club/SIG members.
- Share and co-design programs with other Harvard Clubs and SIGs.
- Include formats other than in-person meetings. As situations evolve, communication will evolve.
- Communicate the value propositions to increase the connection to Harvard.
- Understand that each organization has a different definition of success; therefore, the mission, bylaws, engagement approaches and communication channels should be customized for each Club/SIG.

In that sense, **value proposition communication strategies** should include:

- Conveying why, what, and how.
- Sharing digital content regionally or internationally or across Clubs/SIGs.
- Connecting via social media.
- Keeping the website updated.
- Making it easy to participate (using PayPal, and other on-line payment methods, automatic renewal of fees, etc.)
- Using HAA eEVENTS to publicize Club/SIG activities.
- Using active members as ambassadors to the community.
- Reaching out to specific alumni segments, including various age groups.
- Consider getting in touch directly with eligible members.
- Using personalized and targeted communication.
- Directly approaching friends to recruit new or lapsed members.

3. VALUE PROPOSITION EXAMPLES

In order to inspire your discussions, we share with you two Value Proposition samples:

Harvard Club of Northeast Ohio

The Harvard Club offers members the opportunity to connect with Harvard alumni in our area, with Harvard University, and with our local community through a range of different events. By becoming a member, you will receive discounts on a wide array of activities that include networking, social, academic, cultural, and community service events in Cleveland.

Harvard Club of France

- The Harvard Club of France represents the rich diversity of Harvard, federating our alumni across schools, nationalities, age groups and interests.
- Both global and local, we support the visibility of the University in France and the visibility of local alumni in Cambridge, enriching the University with a distinctly French perspective.
- Committed to Education, Leadership, Innovation, Culture and Social Responsibility, we organize a range of content driven events and social activities, to inspire, engage, connect and celebrate.
- Open and inclusive, we invite the leadership contribution of all alumni, and work to assure continual renewal, so that our leadership fully reflects the diversity of the alumni we serve.

Harvard Alumni in Wine and Food SIG

Proposition when SIG was founded: Connect alumni professionals in the industry to students who are looking to “break in” to this non-traditional career path.

Proposition now/evolved: To provide thoughtful programming around what we eat and drink.

Harvard Arab Alumni Association (HAAA) SIG

HAAA is a regional association that welcomes any Harvard alumnus with an interest in the Arab world. HAAA seeks to bring Harvard to the Arab world and to bring the Arab world to Harvard to nourish honest and necessary debate about critical issues concerning the Arab world. We seek to demystify stereotypes long held about the Arab world and to build bridges between Harvard University and the Arab world by bringing the creativity, diversity and prowess of Harvard University to the Arab world and the richness and heterogeneousness of the Arab world to Harvard University.

4. HAA INITIATED PROGRAMS AND OTHER AVAILABLE RESOURCES

As a reminder, we also want to draw your attention to top **HAA initiated programs**, according to the alumni feedback, that include:

- Global Networking Night
- Harvard Prize Book
- The Game: Harvard v. Yale Viewing Parties
- Welcome to Your City

You can find more on these and other HAA activities at: <http://officerslounge.clubs.harvard.edu>

Finally, while (re)evaluating your value proposition, you might also want to have a look at what your colleagues, Harvard alumni from all over the world, are engaged with in their Clubs and SIGs. As you may know, many of them regularly organize cocktail events and happy hours for club members and guests, Harvard-affiliated speaker’s programs, annual gala dinners for holidays, mixers with other universities alumni clubs, Scholarships Award ceremonies, community work, and many more interesting and innovative activities. More on that you can find at HAA Clubs and SIGs web pages, listed here: https://alumni.harvard.edu/community/clubs-sigs/clubs-#club_10796.

Hope you will enjoy the suggested process and find it helpful in your work. We wish you success, joy and fulfillment along the way.