



Five Steps to Starting a PASS Local Group

Are you interested in starting a PASS Local Group? Read through this five-step guide to get a sense of what is involved in setting up a new PASS Local Group.

1. Consider the Basics

- **Is there already a PASS Local Group in your area?** – [Visit the PASS Local Groups page to search for existing Local Groups in your area.](#) If there is already a PASS Local Group in your area, reach out to them directly to learn about how you can get involved. PASS requires a minimum driving distance of one hour between the meeting locations of two different PASS Local Groups.
- **Do you have the time to make this PASS Local Group a success?** – Your PASS Local Group will require you to dedicate time on a consistent basis. Time will need to be put aside for managing your online presence, promoting your events, planning meetings, securing speakers and sponsors, and reporting to PASS HQ.
- **Will I be able to get some help from other local data professionals?** – Starting a new PASS Local Group is a great way to engage with your local community of data professionals. Getting other community members involved will lead to more contacts, ideas, and resources to help support your PASS Local Group.

2. Set a Meeting Place and Time

You will need to secure a regular venue for your meetings. Ideally, you should try to meet at the same place and time on a consistent basis. Consider the following:

- **How much will it cost for your venue?** – An ideal space will be inexpensive (or free!) – the lower the cost, the less fundraising you will have to do. Some PASS Local Groups find that their workplace has office space that can be rented or provided in-kind for meetings, whereas others seek out other spaces in their community, such as meeting rooms in local libraries or community centers.
- **Where is the meeting space located?** – Your meeting space needs to be easily accessed by your members. Is the space easily accessible by public transportation? Does it have adequate parking? Consider the location of your membership – If your PASS Local Group is serving an entire city it may be best to have your meeting space in the central area of the city, whereas if your PASS Local Group is serving a neighborhood, area or region make sure your meeting space is in a suitable and expected location.

- **Does the meeting space have all the necessary facilities?** – Ensure your meeting space has all the necessary amenities, such as high-quality internet connection, and audio-video equipment.
- **When will you meet?** – Most PASS Local Groups aim to meet monthly. Set your meeting time so that it avoids competing with cultural, sporting or social events. **PASS Local Groups must hold a minimum of four meetings per year** and report these meetings in the PASS Group Dashboard to maintain active status with PASS.

3. Get the Word Out

- **Tap into your network** – Reach out to your professional network to help spread the word about your PASS Local Group and your upcoming meetings.
- **Reach out to your members** – Encourage everyone who attends your meetings to join your PASS Local Group through your website. PASS provides Local Groups with a tool to reach your group members by email. Contact your members to let them know about upcoming meetings, PASS news, or other relevant updates.
- **Web and Social Media Presence** – You will need to create an online presence for your PASS Local Group. PASS provides free web hosting and a Content Management System for PASS Local Groups. We also recommend setting up Twitter, LinkedIn and/or Facebook accounts for your PASS Local Group.

Each PASS Local Group will take a slightly different approach. Take a look at some PASS Local Group websites, such as the [Capital Area Central Texas User of SQL Server \(CACTUSS\) Local Group](#) or the [Cincinnati Professional Association of SQL Server \(CincyPASS\)](#), to get a sense of what information to include and how you can organize your website.

Note: If you already have an established web presence through tools such as Facebook or Meetup, you can continue to use these platforms.

4. Secure Speakers for your Meetings

Your PASS Local Group meetings will include one or more delivering a presentation on a subject area of interest to your members. Consider the following as you begin planning your meetings:

- **What subject would you members be interested in?** – Is there a subject area, technology or issue that data professionals in your local area would find engaging? Are there emerging technologies that your local community would be interested in learning more about? Consider what your membership would benefit from when thinking about speaker topics. For ideas on speaker topics, browse other PASS Local Group pages to see what topics their speakers cover.

- **Who do you know who could present?** – Think about who in your network could speak on a subject area. Do you know any local experts? Consider reaching out to experts outside of your immediate area – they may be willing to travel to your area to deliver a presentation.
- **Plan your meetings and speakers well in advance** – You should line up your first few speakers and topics early. As you start to publicize the group, you will want your prospective attendees, sponsors and future speakers to see that your new PASS Local Group is in it for the long haul.
- **Build speaking capacity among your membership** – PASS Local Groups aim to support the growth of local speaker capacity. Presenting at a PASS Local Group Meeting is a great way for an individual to build their public speaking skills. Many individuals who present at the annual PASS Summit began by speaking at PASS Local Group events. Remind your members to think of topics that they could speak on and encourage them to pitch their topic ideas to you for future meetings.

5. Secure Sponsors

If your meeting space will cost you money or if you would like to serve refreshments at your meetings, you may need to secure one or more sponsors. Consider the following when thinking about sponsors for your PASS Local Group:

- **Who are my potential sponsors?** – Potential sponsors may be local consulting organizations or vendors that sell data-related tools, as well as organizations where you have contacts from your professional network. Look at the websites of other PASS Local Groups to get an idea of the types of organizations they have as sponsors.
- **How do I reach out to potential sponsors?** – Consider your process of seeking sponsors as a community engagement exercise; it's a great way to get the word out about your PASS Local Group and your activities, as well as learn about the work that local companies are doing. Start by reaching out to your contacts to ask if they would be interested in learning more about your new PASS Local Group and how it can benefit the local community of data professionals. By dedicating time to connecting with local organizations, you will build the reputation of your PASS Local Group, which will make seeking sponsors much easier as your group becomes more established.
- **Sponsors can provide in-kind and monetary support** – An organization that does not have the budget to directly sponsor your PASS Local Group may be able to provide meeting space, promotional or marketing support, or other in-kind support. Consider what your PASS Local Group needs to be successful and think of creative ways to meet those needs.
- **What are some examples of sponsorship models?**
 - **Ongoing Sponsorship** – Some sponsors may provide regular payments to support your PASS Local Group. You may provide recognition for this sponsor on your group's website, social media channels, and e-newsletters, as well as guaranteed time to speak at meetings.

- **One-Time Sponsorship** – This model may be used if you are hosting an event outside of your regular meeting schedule that requires additional resources, such as a larger venue space. This may also be useful if you are sourcing a speaker from outside of your local area and need to cover travel expenses. In this case, consider the subject area your meeting is covering and think of potential sponsors who work in that area.

PASS wants you to be successful. You are our direct connection to the local community. We will share your enthusiasm and provide help wherever possible.

Please take some time to consider these five steps before reaching out to the PASS Community Team at communityteam@pass.org to learn more about setting up a new PASS Local Group.