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Introducing Rethinking Economics

Rethinking Economics is an international network of students, academics and professionals building a better economics in society and the classroom.

Through a mixture of campaigning, events and engaging projects, Rethinking Economics connects people globally to discuss and enact the change needed for the future of economics, to propel the vital debate on what economics is today and to build a new movement of engaged, diverse economists.

Where we’ve come from

The idea that economics as a discipline is narrow, inward-looking or broken is one that has been present for over four decades. Rethinking Economics is the latest generation trying to change it.

Undeniably, students of Rethinking Economics and similar student movements were influenced heavily by the events of the global financial crisis - that shook not only the global economy, but the foundations of economics itself as well as growing global inequality and a climate in collapse.

Today’s Rethinkers went to study economics hoping to understand why the financial crash happened; how we can stem inequality; how to move towards a greener economy. The reality was a narrow, dispassionate exercise in some fairly basic calculus, coupled with a requirement to perform multiple-choice exams twice a year. Theory was not applied to the real-world, students worked with hypothetical apples and oranges rather than real case studies, past economic events were ignored and, perhaps most importantly, the theory that had led to the surrounding economic chaos was being imparted as if it were a gospel, with no opportunity to evaluate its validity.

Rethinking Economics was born to change this.
What we believe in

Our vision is of economies around the world that function within our planetary boundaries and place wellbeing at their centre. They are economies in which human needs such as a thriving culture, healthcare, housing, education, water, nourishing food, utilities and transport are met for all.

What is our role in all this?

Rethinking Economics’ purpose is to build a diverse movement of people who challenge, interrogate and renew the practice, teaching and application of economics.

We work to build up, create and empower economic influencers who will help in the creation of economies around the world which serve people and planet. These influencers will be equipped with the skills they need to overcome the challenges of the 21st century. They will be able to think critically and creatively, whether they be economists, academics, business-leaders, teachers, or policy-makers. They will be open-minded, adaptable and able to recognise the strengths and limitations of different economic ideas. They will be able to communicate economic ideas to non-economists and therefore be accountable to the people they serve. They will be made up of a diverse group of people from different class, racial and gender backgrounds.

We do this by working to achieve our three main goals:

1. Reform of university economics education

We push for an economics education that is real-world, critical and pluralist. This means one in which different schools of economic thought are taught to ensure that the assumptions of each are clear. It is one in which economics is taught in context, alongside history of economic thought and economic history. It is one in which economics is embedded in the real-world and looks at real-world problems and data. It is one in which economics is taught in conjunction with other social sciences, such as ethics, politics, philosophy, history and sociology.

2. Diversify the people who study and practice economics

To achieve economies that serve all of society, economic influencers need to be representative of the societies they serve. We will therefore work to create pathways for more women, people of colour and people from a range of social classes to enter the economics discipline. We will campaign to amplify the voices and influence of those in the Global South. We will work to ensure that the economics they are learning is inclusive of their specific social and regional experiences.

3. Create an international community of Rethinkers

Rethinkers are people who share our vision and values. We know that effective movements grow from strong communities. To ensure that people working towards our vision are not working in isolation, we will create safe, accessible places for people to come together. We will strive to build communities that inspire and promote the people and ideas within them, allowing for debate, collaboration and the development of ideas.

What’s wrong with economics education?

- A Lack of Pluralism Economics Perspectives are like maps, which try to explain our economy by simplifying it. They help us understand the world but become dangerous when we forget that individually they don’t show us the full picture. Recognising that there are different ways to study the economy is absolutely necessary for a good, quality education.
- A Lack of Real-World Application Lectures and tutorials deal with abstract theoretical models based on hidden and far-fetched assumptions, and students are rarely, if ever, asked to use real world data.
- A Lack of Critical Thinking Students are expected not to question the models they are presented with in lectures and tutorials. This is poor preparation for the workplace, where professional economists must approach policies and data with a skeptical eye.

- It’s not an Economics for Everyone In order to create economies which serve people and planet, we need to involve people from across the planet in economics. Marginalised groups within our societies, including women, the working classes, and the Global Majority living in Africa, Asia and South America, are underrepresented in the discipline. Other diverse voices, such as from the LGBTQI+ community, people with disabilities and many more besides, are also going unheard.
- Lack of Empowerment Diversity enriches economics, allows us to see problems from new angles and produce new answers, involving the people who will be affected by economic theories and policies. Considering diversity forces us to consider the power and politics at play within the economy, as in the school of feminist economics. It allows marginalised groups to take ownership of economies designed against them, as in the movement to decolonise economics.

How we organise and build a Rethinking community

Rethinking Economics is an international network of students, academics and professionals. We are a diverse and global organisation that operates using consensus-based decision making. This ensures we remain volunteer-led, diverse and inclusive.

Local Groups

Local organising, taking place communities all around the world, is the lifeblood of our network. Students self-educate themselves by putting on events, lobby their departments for education reform and work to increase the diversity of those studying economics.

- Speak to membership@rethinkeconomics.org about how we can support your local group.
- A list of our Local Groups can be found on our website: www.rethinkeconomics.org/re-groups

National and Regional Networks

In a number of countries, Local Groups have come together to form National or Regional Networks. These work to support local groups, to forward our campaign on more public level and to demonstrate wider society the need for change.

National Networks are currently operating in:

- Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, Sweden, United Kingdom
- De América Soy is a continental network operating in South America.

Rethinking Economics Support Team

Running a global network is hard work, and students have other commitments; our small team carry out day-to-day tasks that keep us ticking over. Based in Manchester, United Kingdom, the Support Team support the Rethinking Economics network by providing support and advice to groups of all levels; running trainings both online and in person and organising international gatherings of Rethinkers.

- Get in touch with the RE Support Team at info@rethinkeconomics.org
- See who is on the RE Support Team here

Trustee Board

As a registered charity, we have a small board of trustees comprised of past and present organisers, economists and professionals. They ensure our network continues to perform our charitable remit and remains financially viable. Most often, however, you can find them mucking in with one of our projects.

- See who is on the Trustee Board here

Communicating in the global Rethinking Economics network

The global Rethinking Economics network communicates on the platform Slack.

- Get signed up and get involved!
- Sign up to the RE Slack Space here
- Learn how to use Slack here
Why local groups are important

Rethinking Economics is a global network of students, academics, and campaigners. Rethinking Economics is its members. Members are the driving force behind everything that Rethinking Economics does and have been foundational to the successes we have had in reforming economics education.

The majority of members are associated with university institutions either as students or academic staff. We believe that our strength as a campaign lies in our network and the support that we provide to one another. We believe the most effective way to make the change we want to see is through collaboration and cooperation rather than individual action. As such, we encourage students to network within their universities and regions and build the power and support to make change possible.

Objectives of Local Groups

Raising awareness and organising for change

Local groups should raise awareness of the campaign to reform and diversify economics education among students, academics, and members of the public through their events and campaigns.

Lobbying your universities

Local groups should work with academics and course leaders at their universities to promote an economics education that is diverse in content, that is pluralist, that instils critical thinking and that relates to the real world.

Building a community of critical economists

Local groups should work to expand your knowledge of economics beyond the limits of most university curricula and in doing so build themselves into future economists ready to engage with the world around them.
Our Local Group organising values

- Volunteer-led: We are run on a get-stuck-in and get-involved basis.
- Diverse: We incorporate and are open to a diversity of people, methods and ideas.
- Inclusive: We strive to actively include people from different groups and creating a welcoming environment for people from all backgrounds. We try to use clear language, and aim to provide education at all levels of access.
- Respectful: We respect everyone’s ideas and their right to voice them.
- Engaged: We are relevant to the real world and take seriously our current political, ethical, and ecological crises.
- Local: We support local initiatives by networking local groups together to make them stronger.

How the network supports local groups

Rethinking Economics connects people globally to discuss and enact the change needed for the future of economics. We are also committed to actively supporting our organisers to enact change on a local level. We learn from one another at regional skill shares and international gatherings, offer our members the opportunity to attend events on behalf of the network, and have a pot of funding so students can put on their own large-scale events.

- Skill Sharing and Training: Within our network is an abundance of learning and skills. The network offers skill sharing opportunities within regional hubs so that member groups can get together and learn from one another. Funding is available for transport to these skill sharing days. We also host international meet-ups.
- New Opportunities: Our events are designed to be accessible for everyone – we therefore provide travel bursaries and free tickets as well as other support for all of them, wherever possible. We are also committed to supporting organisers attend third-party events on behalf of Rethinking Economics.
- Local Group Funding: Rethinking Economics has a pot of money specifically to provide financial assistance for local member groups to help them with putting on local events and running projects. The finance committee will work with each local group to help produce an application and also help groups explore other potential funding options.
- Regional and International Gatherings: Rethinking Economics recognises that our strength is in our network. We organise a number of regional and international gatherings for Rethinkers throughout the year. They are a chance to share skills, meet other Rethinkers and strategise about our campaigns.
Local organising is the lifeblood of our network. Students self-educate themselves by putting on events, lobby their departments for curriculum reform, and bring economics as it should be to schools and communities.

Starting a Local Group at your university allows you to find and meet other people that want to discuss and rethink economics and also build a platform to make change there.

Starting a group doesn’t need to be a difficult task. This guide together with the support of the RE International team and the Rethinking Economics network will show you how to get started.

**Six easy steps to starting a local group**

Want to start a Local Group at your university? Get started by following these six easy steps:

1. Get in touch with membership@rethinkeconomics.org to introduce yourself and start the process.
2. Find a core team of at least four organisers who are committed to starting the group. Agree when you’re going to meet as a committee.
3. Fill in the RE affiliation form and read and agree to the Rethinking Economics Vision and Purpose and the ISIPE Open Letter.
4. If there is one, get in touch with the national/regional hub near you.
5. Register as a student society at your university (If applicable)
6. Plan your first event. Don’t forget to upload it to the Rethinking Economics website by filling in this form!
7. At your first event, make sure you speak to everyone in attendance and encourage them to get involved in the group.
Getting a core team of organisers together

It can feel like sometimes you might be alone in your frustration with your economics education. Well, we can tell that is almost certainly not the case! Students all around the world in unformed, narrow economics curricula have said the same thing: something needs to change. The likelihood is that things are no different at your university.

What’s the key to finding people that share your concern? Speaking to them! This means spreading the word among your friends but it also means speaking to the people that sit next to you in lectures, doing shout-outs at the end of seminars and posting on student forums. This stuff can be scary and can appear difficult to get right but it is really important.

We recommend that there are at least four initial organisers to start a group. Why is this? While you will receive a lot of support in setting up a Local Group, there can be a lot to do in the first few months. More organisers will allow you to share tasks so that no one person is overloaded.

Registering with your university

It is important to register your local group with your university. This will give you legitimacy in the eyes of your economics department and the university administration. In some cases, it will also give you access to financial support for your group.

Not all universities have a process of affiliation. If yours does not, we’d still recommend that you get in touch with your university administration to confirm your plans.

- If your university requires a letter of commendation, please get in touch at membership@rethinkeconomics.org and we will be able to provide it.

How to run your first event

Your first event is a chance to launch your new local group, spread the word about the campaign and to raise its profile, both inside your university and out.

Topic and format

For your first event, it is essential that you introduce your audience to what Rethinking Economics is and demonstrate to them why they should get involved.

You might want to invite sympathetic academics to the event to let them show support for the campaign, you might want to have a more open, discursive format and allow those attending to discuss the problems that they see in their curriculum or you might want to host an interesting film.

We would also recommend that you come up with some ice-breaker questions to get people talking to one another. Ask them to turn to the person next to them and ask:

- How did they hear about Rethinking Economics?
- What do you do your economics education to look like?
- Why do you want to join the Local Group here?

Pragmatics hints and tips:

Booking a room - Make sure you book the right venue for the type of event you’re hosting.

The further in advance you can confirm an event the better as it gives you more time to plan.

If you are hosting a panel discussion, the back room of a pub might be a bit cramped but likewise, an informal introduction to Rethinking Economics for a few new organiser and the campaign would feel a bit strange in a lecture hall. Book somewhere that reflects the style of event you’re hosting, how many people are attending. Always make sure that the venue is accessible.

Date and time - When you host your event may depend on when your speakers are available but remember to also think about your target audience.

Students may be able to attend events on a Wednesday afternoon but if you also want to attract members of the public it’s best to stick to outside normal working hours. Put yourself in your prospective audience’s shoes – would you want to attend a lecture on a Monday morning or late on a Friday evening?

Contacting Speakers - Do this as soon as you know what kind of event you want to host and when, people are busy and need plenty of advance notice.

When inviting speakers, make sure that you are inviting a diverse range of people. The lack of diversity within economics is a huge issue, we need to running and planning events that reflect the change we are trying to make in the discipline. For example, make sure that you are not organising panels or events that are comprised solely of male voices.

Advertising - Use whatever channels you have to tell people about your event! Facebook, twitter, Instagram, email, posters, stalls, interactive TV screens. It is best not to put posters and Facebook events up too far in advance as posters can get taken down and people may forget. It is best to start advertising 3-4 weeks before an event and step up publicity on social media in the week before.

- Advertise an event on the Rethinking Economics website here

The Event itself

Introducing yourselves - At the event make sure you introduce your group and let people know how they can get involved or how to find out about future events. What sure that you gather people’s emails at the beginning of the session so that you can get in contact with them later.

- Find an introductory presentation to introduce Rethinking Economics at your opening meeting here

Facilitating - If your event is one that requires a chair or a facilitator, whoever is doing this should make sure they have introduced themselves to all the speakers before the event and discussed the format of the event.

If speakers have a limited time to speak (e.g. each person on the panel has ten minutes to present before opening up to the audience for questions) agree with the speaker beforehand how you are going to signal to them that their time is nearly up and when it’s time to move on, otherwise you run the risk of them talking for hours! A tap on the desk or a handwave if you are easy to see is often enough.

Make sure that you end the event with a call to action - what are you asking the audience to do when they leave the room? This could be as simple as following you on social media, signing up to a campaign you are starting or to tell their friends about the campaign.

- Find an example email sign-up sheet here

Evaluation

What went well? What could have been done better? This doesn’t need to be a long meeting; it could just be a five-minute debrief straight the event while it’s fresh in your mind.

Post-Event Social - Events are a great opportunity for people to get to know each other, when you’ve got a load of people with a common interest in one place it’s a wasted opportunity not to do something social afterwards. If your event is near a pub, bar or coffee shop invite speakers and attendees to carry on the conversation.

Post-Event Follow-up - A few days after the event, remember to email everyone that attended to thank them for coming and to give them further details on how they can stay involved. Maybe there were some people that expressed an interest in helping on specific areas? Reach out to them directly to continue the conversation and get involved in your organising.
Growing Your Group

Why attract new members?

Rethinking Economics’ strength is our members. Local Groups should always be looking to attract new organisers to increase their activity and to strengthen their campaign.

Rethinking Economics has a constant turnover of members. Exams, graduations, and new jobs can make it become difficult for people to continue their commitment. It is therefore really important that all of our campaigns and events that we run works to expand our capacity and attract new members.

New members will also bring new perspectives, outlooks and ways of doing things. They can shake up how your Local Group runs for the better.

We want to build diverse groups that reflect the diversity of our universities and wider society. Make sure that you are reaching out to potential new members from all backgrounds.

Identifying your base

You should always be trying to grow your group. Start by identifying who you are trying to target, we call this your ‘base’. For example, you ask yourself:

› Who do you want to join RE?

› Is there a segment of your local student population who aren’t involved in RE, who you would like to engage with?

› Why have they not engaged with the group previously? (Is it representative of them? How have you tried to engage them previously?)

› What would make them aware of your group?

› What are the values you share with your base? What can you do to raise their awareness for them?

Think about these questions to help identify groups that would be interested in joining Rethinking Economics and you should approach.
Make sure it is easy to join

If we want people to join our campaign, it’s important to make it as easy as possible for them to join. Always bring sign-up sheets to your events. Email lists are a crucial way of keeping people up to date on what you’re doing. Also encourage people to sign-up to the Rethinking Economics International newsletter. If it’s easier, you can send email lists via email to membership@rethinkeconomics.org and the team there can upload them. You’ll be able to use these lists to advertise to a wider audience.

Always follow up on contacts that you make at events quickly while their excitement is still fresh! If someone joins the group with a new interest or an idea for a new activity, encourage them to take it on (provided that is, it doesn’t go against Rethinking Economics’ values).

→ Find an example email sign-up sheet [here](#)

Engaging new members

When new members do get involved in Rethinking Economics, always ensure that you welcoming and include them from the very start.

A member of your committee should have a 1-2-1 with the new member to understand their motivations to be part of the campaign and to appreciate what they would like to do at your Local Group. This is a useful opportunity to give a brief introduction to how your group works and what your Local Group is doing. When new members join your organising meetings, make sure to do a round of introductions of everyone in attendance.

New members will often come with ideas for activities or projects. Provided they don’t go against Rethinking Economics values, encourage them to take them on. New members are a great source of inspiration and can inject new life into your Local Group’s work. Don’t be resistant to it!

Running a Rethinking Economics Stall

Lots of universities have an induction week at the start of the new academic year (depending on where you’re organising, these could be called Freshers’ Week, Orientation week, Welcome week). This is an opportunity for new students to find out about what’s going on at the institution as well as for old students to reacquaint themselves.

This is an absolutely key time to attract new organisers, with so many other opportunities to compete with, you need to make you make lifelong Rethinkers of the people that are interested! Running a stall at your universities fair is a great way of doing this. Your university doesn’t have anything like this? Well, the tips are the same for running a really great stall anywhere.

→ Learn tips on how to run a Rethinking Economics stall [here](#)

Using Social Media

So, you’ve gathered a keen group of individuals to form your committee and you’ve just run your first event. Attendances have been good, but haven’t really grown in the past few weeks; it’s time to bring your message to new audiences online!

Social media is a key way to get your message out and to raise the profile of your work; spending time maintaining these accounts can make all the difference to the success of your group. You can find some of our recommendations below.

→ Learn how to utilise social media [here](#)

Networking in your area

Running events in collaboration with other groups is a great way to raise the profile of your work and to attract new audiences. Have a think about other campaigning or academic groups – be they student or public – that relate to economics. There’s a lot isn’t there! Try to learn more about what they do, maybe some of your aims match up or maybe you could run a join event with them!

Using Local Media

Using the local press can be a great way to raise the profile of your campaign activity and to generate some steam behind your work. If you’re hosting a public conference, why not try to get a slot on local radio. If you’re running a campaign to increase the diversity of your reading lists, the local newspaper might be interested?

→ Find out how to write a press release [here](#)

Video Content

So often economics, pluralist or otherwise, is a subject dominated by written text, this can get very dull. Whether it be on your website or social media, we’ve found that posts containing a video perform far better than those without. Some of the most popular are recordings of local group events - those who couldn’t make it can catch up with your guest speaker or topical debate.

→ Find tips on how to create video content [here](#)

Building a Website

Nowadays the most traditional means an individual will use to learn more about your group, is also the most adaptable format to convey your message; you can add a blog and a photo blog to WordPress, which you just can’t do with Facebook!

Create a page at rethinkeconomics.org: The easiest way of getting yourself on the web; your group will instantly be viewable through our world map plug-in, affiliated with other local groups around the globe. You will receive one-on-one support to create blog content, advertise events, upload photos and videos; all of which will be viewable on our international and national pages, exposing you to a very wide audience!

→ Update or set up your Group page by emailing membership@rethinkeconomics.org

Create your own independent website: This is far more time-intensive (and can be quite expensive) so before you start, make sure this project suits the needs of your group. Programmes like Wordpress are commonly used to make basic websites and have free options available.

→ Simple tutorial: youtube.com/watch?v=OYnH5vsBb5M

→ Some examples from other RE local groups: post-crasheconomics.com

Using the Rethinking Economics Branding

The groups in our network go by many different names and don’t follow a set format. We think this perfectly encapsulates the breadth and diversity of our movement.

In order to build a better sense of community and affinity, we encourage group to use the Rethinking Economics logo where possible and to include the following in their social media descriptions:

‘A member of the Rethinking Economics network @rethinkecon’

You can access and download Rethinking Economics materials via the RE Google Drive which your local group email address will be granted access to.

→ Learn how to use the RE branding [here](#)

New groups will have the opportunity to be sent promotional resources from June every year. If you would like to print off your own Rethinking Economics resources, you can download them here:

→ ‘What is Rethinking Economics?’ Leaflet

→ Posters

→ Stickers
In order for a group to remain healthy and sustainable there are three main internal decisions that your committee needs to make.

**Ask yourself:**
- What responsibility is delegated to who?
- How are we going to communicate?
- How are we going to make decisions?

**Delegating responsibility and assigning roles**

Different RE local groups divide their organising differently depending on the work that they’re doing. However, key to the success of running a local group is spreading the labour between a number of different committee members rather than having all of the responsibility on one or two organisers. Here are some examples of roles that are used in Local Groups:

**Chair:**
- chairs committee meetings, leads on Local Group strategy and responsible for the smooth-running of the committee

**Secretary:**
- takes minutes, books rooms and keeps the records of the Local Group’s decisions

**Treasurer:**
- keeps Local Groups budget in check, finds funding opportunities

**Media Officer:**
- in charge of social media and liaises with the student and local media

**Events Organiser:**
- runs series of events throughout the academic year

**Curriculum Reform Campaign Officer:**
- leads on campaign to reform economics curriculum

**Diversity Campaign Officer:**
- leads of campaign to promote diversity within the discipline

**Academic Staff liaison Officer:**
- responsible for setting up meetings with economics department staff
Cruically, all of these suggestions above are just that: suggestions. Don’t be afraid to create roles that fit the skills of the organisers you have and the activity that you have planned for the year. For example, you wouldn’t elect a conference organiser, if you’re not planning a conference! By splitting your activity into tasks and roles, this will help you spot any holes you might have in the team.

Usually remember that just because you set up in one specific way or inherit pre-existing committee structures from ex-students above you, doesn’t mean you have to stick with it. Always be open to re-examining your internal structures and systems to make sure they’ll really working the best for everyone involved.

Communication

How is your group going to keep in touch? How will you discuss and respond to queries or problems as they arise?

It is absolutely key for local groups to agree on how and when they’re going to communicate. We would recommend that your core team meet at least every 2-3 weeks so you can update each other on upcoming campaigns or events.

In between meetings, use a platform for discussion like Slack or messaging service like WhatsApp to keep in contact and to use if any quick decisions need to be made.

Democratic Decision-making

A question that often arises when ‘decision-making’ in Rethinking Economics is whether local groups should be flat or hierarchical. Should there be an elected ‘Leader’ or Chair or should no one in that position of authority?

In actual this question misses the mark slightly. Different Local Groups that have been successful and sustainable have used different types of internal organisation. The common link between them all has not been whether they are flat or hierarchical but rather that everyone is aware of their function and that they feel that they have a say in the direction of the local group and are able to contribute to decisions.

Leadership with your Local Group

Building-up open, accountable leadership is an important part of our network.

But what do we mean by this?

Leadership is about taking on responsibility for the work of your as whole rather than just having an awareness for your own individual role. Leaders work to build the conditions where by everyone can contribute and grow your campaign. Here’s a really good description of how we conceptualise leadership by the academic Marshall Ganz:

“Leadership is accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty. Leaders accept responsibility not only for their individual “part” of the work, but also for the collective “whole.”

“Crucially, leadership does not mean executive power or authoritarian rule! It means caring about big picture rather than controlling it. There is also nothing to say that leadership needs to be limited to one person or position.”

→ Read more about the theory behind leadership by academic Marshall Ganz here

What do to when times are tough

All local groups go through their ups and downs and have their difficulties. In this situation the most important thing to do is to not stay silent about it. The answer may be in this manual but if not, get in touch at membership@rethinkeconomics.org or attend a Monthly Organisers’ Call and we will work with you to get it back on its feet again.

No problem is too small so please get in touch if you have worries or need any advice.

It’s when times are tough that leaders in groups are at their most crucial. It’s essential for leaders in times of difficulty to step up and ensure the obstacles can be overcome.

Handing over to new organisers

Sadly, at some point you will leave the Rethinking Economics Local Group you are involved in. It is very important that you ensure that there are new members to take the places of those that are leaving the groups to ensure that your amazing work continues.

You should always be looking out for potential new Rethinkers who can join the campaign and this is the same for leaders. As new members join your group you might notice people who have the skills and qualities that make them good leaders. Encourage them to get involved with your group and grow their skills so that things can they be handed responsibilities when organisers move on.

Elections

Elections shouldn’t be an afterthought that are cobbled together in the final week of the year, they need to be prepped and planned.

Do:

→ Advertise for the new committee election meeting well on your communications channels. Use as at opportunity to tell more people about your society

→ Encourage previous members of the committee to continue on in more senior roles

→ Find new committee members in years below you. You don’t want to have a group made up of final year students - what will happen when they all finish?

→ Ensure that you encourage a diversity of people to apply. One of the problems with economics is its lack of diversity; we don’t want to recreate these same problems in our campaign

→ Host the meeting a term before the outgoing committee leaves. It useful for an experienced pair of hands to be around if the new organisers have any questions

Don’t:

→ Leave elections to the last minute. The sustainability of your group is key!

→ Avoid or delay the meeting. It’s really important that our groups are always renewing and bringing in new organisers!

→
Campaigning in a Local Group

So, your first event was really successful and you’ve elected an amazing new committee for the year ahead. What’s next? Successful Rethinking Economics Local Groups do two things to ensure that our campaign has an impact.

- Make sure our activities are purposeful and strategic
  This means ensuring that everything that we do is working towards the overall objectives of our campaign (see p. 6) and also that they fit into the objectives of our Local Groups (see p. 9).
- Make sure our activities build our support base
  This means ensuring that we are always thinking, whatever activity we are doing, how we can increase the people engaging with and joining our campaign.

**Why do we campaign?**

We often talk about ‘changing economics for the benefit of society’, in fact, it is central to our charitable purpose. This is because as an international network we know that economics, both as practiced in society and taught in the classroom, has the power to contribute positively to the world around us. An economics that is open, relevant and for everyone can help solve the pressing issues we face today.

Unfortunately, there are many who are invested in an economics that is narrow and inward looking. Many of those are in positions of academic or political power and they want to maintain the educational status quo. This is why we need to use lots of different strategic levers to prompt change and why Rethinking Economics is a live and growing campaign rather than just an academic discussion.

Also, when our campaigns goals are achieved, it is important that we work to defend and build on these successes.

**Kickstarting your group**

We want local groups to celebrate the reformed economics education that we are working to create. It’s an amazing way to explain to new people what our campaign is and get them involved, and also gives us an opportunity to provide space for the learning and culture that we don’t experience in the classroom.
Here are some ideas for events and activities that you can do to kickstart and sustain your group:

**Reading Group**

Reading or discussion groups are a good way to explore ideas that you don’t get chance to in your tutorials and lectures. Reading groups do require more work, both for the person chairing and for attendees, so be prepared for this! A good book to start with is the Rethinking Economics Reader, you could discuss a different chapter each month.

- Find resources to run reading groups here

**Run a Rethinking Economics Workshop**

Rethinking Economics has some amazing workshops for you to run. Learn about different schools of economic thought in the Pluralist Toolkit or discuss what your curriculum should look like in What does an economist look like?.

- Find more information on how to run Rethinking Economics workshops here

**Film Screening**

There are a wide range of documentaries, films and dramas about economics and economic issues, ranging from short to long, serious to funny. A film screening requires the least amount of planning and is an accessible way of reaching out to lots of different people.

You can just show a film but arranging a discussion for after the screening on a particular idea or event that is explored in the film will get people talking to each other. Why not appoint somebody from your group to chair the discussion and prepare a list of questions about the film?

- Find film suggestions here

**Invite speakers to your society**

Many academics are members and allies of the movement to change economics education. Why not invite some of them to speak at attend your society? You could invite Kate Raworth to speak about Doughnut Economics or Steve Keen to speak about Post-Keynesianism. Running lecture series’ can also provide amazing examples of what you could be learning about when lobbying your department to change the curriculum.

Panel discussions are a great way to make sure you have a good balance of opinions and backgrounds between speakers and are an effective way of presenting a wide range of perspectives in one event. Also, rather than an academic speaking just about their area of expertise, panel discussions facilitate debate between speakers as well as the audience.

Some local groups have also arranged a series of lectures and workshops as part of an alternative course module. Whatever you invite and whatever they discuss, always make sure that the focus ties back to our campaign for curriculum reform.

- Learn how to run a great speaker event here
- Find our database of sympathetic academics and speakers here. Please add to this database!
- Find out how you can organise an alternative module at your university here

**Kickstarting the campaign at your university**

We don’t just want Rethinking Economics to be a talking shop, we try to work and campaign to make a better economics education a reality. These activities involve us convincing people of the need for our campaign.

Here are some steps to take to start building the campaign at your university:

**How to build successful campaigns**

Whatever campaign action that you decide to prioritise, there are some general rules of thumb to think about if we want to build campaigns that are successful.

- Find our resources to run reading groups here

The diagram below shows the lifecycle of a campaign or action that a Local Group might run:

Here’s an example of how this might look in practice:

1. **Pick an issue**

The economics department at a university is planning to reform its economics curriculum for the first time in a number of years. They have indicated that they might remove the module on History of Economic Thought. The department have not shown any indication that they will open the process to consultation. The Rethinking Economics Local Group at the university have recognised as a significant issue and agree that they should campaign for a new economics curriculum that retains the History of Economic Thought module but also goes further in introducing further pluralism to the course.

2. **Map out the issue**

The Local Group run a Power Mapping session with their committee. They identify the key academics in the department that they need to convince of their demands. They also identify allies at the university that could potentially be supportive of their campaign. These include economics students unhappy with the narrowness of their curriculum or academics from other disciplines and departments that support a more diverse economics curriculum.

- Learn how to Power Map here

3. **Plan your activity**

The Rethinking Economics group decided to do a number of things. Firstly, they want to build a constructive relationship with the economics department so they plan to arrange a meeting to raise their concerns and try to find solutions. If that does not result in the changes they want, they plan to run a student survey to demonstrate the desire for change at the university as well as running a series of events to highlight the need for change.
4. Delivering your campaign
The meeting with academic staff is cordial but they remain resistant to the key requests of the Rethinking Economics group, including to retaining the History of Economic Thought module. In response, the Local Group run a student survey which demonstrates widespread unease about the proposed changes. The series of events and workshops with economics students and professors from other departments draws widespread attention and raises the profile of the campaign. As a result of these actions, the academic staff agree to including the Local Group and the economics student population in the consultation process.

Demonstrating the need for change
Research and write a curriculum review
We’re telling universities that there is a systemic problem with the way economics is taught, but to back up this claim we need to equipped with a body of evidence that proves that the syllabus is narrow, uncritical and irrelevant to the real world. A curriculum review is a very effective way to demonstrate to academic staff the scale of the problem and many groups have run them across the RE network at either a university or national level.

Make the change
Get involved in student democracy
Getting involved in student democracy and decision-making at your university is a great way to build support for the campaign but also have a voice in academic decision-making.

Organising Online
Extenuating circumstances may lead to a situation where your campaigning, organising and events cannot take place in person and need to be conducted online. The resources below give guidance and support on how this can be done when times are difficult.

5. Evaluate
The Local Group are very happy with the success of the campaign and what it has achieved. They do note that some of the events were less attended than others. After making a note of why think that was, they agree to change their format in the future. The Local Group then decides the new issue to focus on is to ensure that the History of Economic Thought module is retained.

Building blocks of a successful campaign
The benefit of campaigning with Rethinking Economics is that we can draw upon the ideas, experience and practices of our wider network. Below are some activities and initiatives that have been widely used by our network and tips on how you can recreate them:

Understanding your environment
Survey Economics students
An important first action is to get the perspective of other students on your economics course. This will provide useful evidence when raising problems with your department; it will raise new issues in your education that you hadn’t thought about; and it will help generate interest for your local group and the Rethinking Economics campaign. It is a really useful way of understanding what the picture is like at your institution but when the results are in, it can also be a really powerful tool to justify the need for changes to your curriculum.

Mapping support at your university
In any campaign, it’s really important to think beyond just who you are trying to convince to make change and think about all the different players that could be affected or have an opinion on our campaign. By doing this we can start thinking about who shares our concerns and who has the power to make change and think strategically about how to work with or convince them to support Rethinking Economics’ aims.

Speaking to your economics department
In our local groups, ultimately, we are working to change the way economics is taught and practised. Who better to talk to than the people that set the courses themselves? You may have mapped your support at your university and found academics that are supportive of your aims; however, often academics may be critical of our goals.

Learn how to write a campaign strategy here
Learn how to write a curriculum review in our resource bank here
Find example curricula in our resource bank here
Learn how to map support for your campaign here
Learn how to map support for your campaign here
Learn how best to approach academic staff here

Find the 2017 Cambridge Pluralist Economics Society Survey here
Learn how to tackle common objections to our campaign here
Learn how to organise remotely here
Finance and Fundraising in your Local Group

While a lot of the work that Rethinking Economics Local Groups do requires only time and energy, we can’t escape the fact that sometimes we need to raise funds to run key projects and campaigns.

In this section we’ll discuss how to seek through a variety of different avenues from members to sponsors, from grant bodies to your university. We’ll also look at how to keep good records of expenditure. It’s best practice to keep track of where and how you’re spending your money. This allows you to make sure you’re spending the right amount; it is often a key stipulation of receiving money from certain places as well.
Funding your local group

Here are some suggestions for how you could raise money for your local group:

**Speak to your University or Student Association**

In some universities, if you register your group with the University, you can claim a stipend, sometimes per semester, sometimes per year. This amount can vary hugely university to university. Sometimes it depends on your membership numbers. If so, push as many people to join your mailing list, even if you’re not entirely sure they are going to become an active member.

It is also worth approaching your Economics department to see if they might be able to financially support your work.

Sometimes universities have specific funding pots that can be accessed by students at the institution. If you think your event might bring in younger school students, members of the general public, or attract old alumni, then let your University know. They might be interested in supporting you to run it!

→ Find out more about how to speak to your department here

**Charge fees for membership or events**

By joining your local group, members will receive new skills, opportunities and be part of an amazing international campaign. What’s not to love? To compensate for this amazing experience, you could ask members to make a small financial contribution to your group. Many of our groups already do this and find it a very effective, sustainable way of raising funds.

Alternatively, at the very least make sure you ask for donations at the end of any events!

**Grant-Funding**

There are lots of grand-funding bodies that fund either students, young campaigners, heterodox economics or even a mixture of them all. Finding the one that best suits your work or project can require research.

Grant-funders also tend to support specific projects or events – like conferences or publishing a new book – rather than the general costs of an organisation. It is important to think carefully about what you are applying for and whether it is the best funder for this project. Also, be aware that process of applying can take many months so be sure to take lots of time to prepare and wait for a response. Funders can have stipulations on who can apply, don’t waste time on things for which you are not eligible!

→ If you are going to write a bid, please get in touch at membership@rethinkeconomics.org so we can give you some key support.

→ Learn how to write a funding bid here

**Run an online Crowd Funder**

Crowdfunding is a great way of fundraising online, by asking lots of people for a very small amount. Crowdfunding tends to be promoted through social media and the internet. If you have a lot of online engagement, crowdfunding allows you to capitalise on this to reach a much wider pool of people.

→ Learn how to run a crowdfunder here

**External Sponsorship**

If you are running a large-scale event or even just if your local group has a large pool of members, you might be able to attract external sponsorship. Potential employers, academic organisations or local businesses may want to pay you to advertise themselves to your member through anything from prominently featuring their logo to speaking at one of your events. This method is particularly applicable to raising money for at a Rethinking Economics conference.

→ Learn how to use external sponsorship, to raise money for your conference here

**Ask for donations**

Make sure that you always have a bucket at events that you run. All of that loose change can add up!
Useful Reading for Rethinkers

→ Read the full Rethinking Economics recommended reading list [here](#)

**Introduction to Pluralist Economics**

*Rethinking Economics: An Introduction to Pluralism*
Created and edited by a team of international student volunteers. Each chapter introduces a different school of thought and is authored by an academic at the forefront of that field.

*Economics: The User’s Guide, Ha-Joon Chang, Doughnut Economics, Kate Raworth*
Also check out her animated shorts! 7 videos outlining each chapter -> [youtube.com/watch?v=Mkg2XMTWV4g](#)

**Research from the student movement**

*ISIPE Open Letter, 4th May 2014*
Written by students from around the world, dissatisfied with their economics education.

*The Econocracy, Joe Earle, Cahal Moran and Zach Ward-Perkins*
Overview of the RE campaign, it’s link to wider society, and evidence with curriculum reviews of 7 UK universities.

*Mapping Pluralist Research, J. Christopher Proctor*
Thorough and extremely useful overview of student research over the last decade into economics teaching.

*Thinking Like an Economist, Rethinking Economics Netherlands*
Compilation of Dutch curriculum review with useful introduction to the Rethinking Economics campaign

**Leadership and Organising**

*Leading Change: Leadership Organisations and Social Movements, Marshall Ganz*

*Learning from Obama*
You don’t have to agree with Obama to recongise his strength as an organiser. This article has some useful lessons that can be translated to our campaign

**Communications**

*Framing the Economy Report, NEON, NEF, PIRC*
The RE network is extremely grateful to all of those that make our work financially possible.

Thank you.