

Designing the Employee/Business Resource Group

Employee resource groups (ERG) are groups of employees who create an alignment in their workplace with a foundation of shared characteristics or life experiences. ERGs are generally based on providing support, enhancing career development, and contributing to personal development in the work environment. These groups typically have some shared characteristics such as:

- Gender identity
- Ethnicity
- Shared interests
- Religious affiliation
- Socioeconomic Background
- Sexual orientation
- Age, parental status, or other demographic characteristic

Since ERGs are almost always employee-led, they can be launched by anyone in your organization, however, need leadership support to be a formal program. There are typically, informal communities of people within companies that want to transition into more formal employee resource groups but have not put the structure in place. Whether you already have these informal communities in place and you want to formalize them, or whether you're starting your group from scratch, you can use this information to help you launch your ERG (also known as Business Resource Groups - BRG).

Why have a ERG?

Along with business leaders and organizational decision-makers, ERG work in partnership to establish a safe space and environment for employees, who share a common identity, to voice their thoughts and concerns about how the company culture is serving their shared identity and others within the organization. Many ERGs are made up of underrepresented employees who want to support one another in building their community and are willing to work collectively to improve their work environment.

ERGs today provide many benefits to the employees and the organization:

- They foster a sense of belonging and acceptance.
- Enhances the employees experience, therefore impacts retention
- Helps to sustain an inclusive company culture
- Connects employees through common causes or interests
- Allows for the expression and promotion of cultural experiences



- Provides support and resources for promoting fair policies and practices for all employees.

To design any ERG there are a few steps that need to happen:

Step 1: Determine if there are employees who are interested

Because of affinity bias, many who have shared characteristics or life experiences tend to align themselves together socially. However, generating enough interest in creating an ERG to make your efforts worthwhile. You can also suggest your company solicit interest in their upcoming culture survey, or conduct an employee pulse survey.

Step 2: Get Executive buy-in

Now that you've established interest, solicit a few potential members for help in developing a strategy to get executive buy-in. Just as with other components of the DEI journey, executive sponsorship is key. Identify a leader who has shown interest and support, and schedule a meeting with her/him. Explain the group's purpose and share both qualitative and quantitative data from recent employee experience surveys, focus groups or 1:1 discussions to demonstrate there is an internal desire and need for such a group. It's ok if you don't have all the information solidified at this point, but there are a few pieces of information you should be ready to share:

- The structure of the ERG (leadership of ERG, how many members)
- Roles and Responsibilities
- A modest budget to get you started
- How you plan to communicate and encourage participation
- Benefits to the ERG members and to the organization
- The support you'll need from the executive sponsor



Also, create a plan with Human Resources to inform staff, including new employees, to help encourage membership by making it easy to know about and sign up for the ERG. HR can also be utilized to talk to employees as they exit the company to gather information about people's experiences while at the company.

Step 3: Establish the mission and goals of your ERG

Once you have identified people to help begin your ERG and have solidified executive sponsorship, now it's time to develop your mission and goals, starting with short-term, and then including long-term goals. It's time to develop your mission and goals, let the questions on the next page guide you.



1. What does your group want to do to create an inclusive environment at your company?

2. What are the values of your group?



3. How can we differentiate ourselves from other groups at the company?



4. What are short-term and long-term goals align with the organization's mission?

A few examples of ERG goals are:

- Raise awareness and knowledge about the cultural issues and concerns ERG members face and serve as a vehicle to increase cultural competence within [Name of the Organization].
- Provide opportunities for education, personal growth and offer ERG employees access to leadership development and mentoring.
- Establish programs that align with the mission of your ERG.
- Provide ongoing support of recruitment, retention, and advancement efforts.
- Build a culture that fosters inclusion.
- Host activities to support the above goals

Step 4: Develop the ERG Charter

On the next page is a sample Charter for an Employee Resource Group.

Please note that this is a sample charter for you to customize for your company's needs.



MISSION STATEMENT: The [ERG name]/s mission is to work to further the mission and values of [Name of Organization] while simultaneously representing the interests of [ERG Name], and support [ORGANIZATION's] overall diversity and inclusion goals. We plan to do this through initiatives such as: [list activities]

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE: Listing roles and responsibilities and an attached org chart (See ERG Roles and Responsibilities document):

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- Executive Champion/Sponsor
 - Chairperson
 - Co-Chair
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary/Administrator
 - Marketing/Communications

MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE:

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY - Membership in the ERG is available to all DOE employees. The ERG shall record names and locations of all members. All members are eligible to chair committees, become candidates for elected office, and vote in ERG elections.

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS - There shall be regular meetings of the ERG on a date and place to be designated by the Employer Leader. This meeting shall be held at a specified location and announced to members of the ERG. The ERG shall send a notice of each regular meeting to each member of the ERG.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

ERGs support [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME]'s commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion. The minimum suggested Roles & Responsibilities in the ERG are:

ROLES:

- ERG Executive Champion
- ERG Chairperson - The overall lead for the ERG who manages the group and is responsible for communications, activities, and frequency of meetings.
- ERG Bookkeeper - The bookkeeper is responsible to provide accounting of their expenses to HR at the end of the fiscal year.
- Administrative Support: To assist with meeting minutes, and other documentations
- Members: Support diversity and inclusion and serve as a resource when needed; share knowledge, raise cultural awareness and act as a bridge across cultural issues and improving cultural competence at [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME]

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Share best practices and learnings with other ERGs
- Serve as champions for diversity and inclusion at [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] and help identify opportunities to enhance inclusion.
- Identify best practices throughout the organization and get those communicated as broadly as possible for others to consider using.
- Comply with all policies, guidelines, and rules.



Step 3. *Begin the formation of the ERG*

Any group seeking to form a formal ERG should identify and submit the following to the DEI council (use the space below to document your responses):

- Proposed name of the ERG

- A brief description, including an overview of the goals of the organization

- The mission statement that demonstrates how the group’s mission aligns with that of the organization.

- Convening members (minimum of 3 people for a small organization) who will support the initial leadership and growth of the ERG

- Benefits to the participants of the ERG

- The Executive Champion for the ERG

- The initial ERG Charter (see Charter example)

- Initial activities:



Step 6: Begin the formation of the ERG

The ERG should be jointly guided by the DEI leadership/council in your organization, with self-guidance from the ERG members and the group's Executive Champion (EC).

THE DEI team should provide support and guidance for the ERG and serve as an advocate for their programs, projects and activities. They will assist with the approval of budgets, events, communication and more.

The Executive Champion provides guidance and input on the group's strategic direction, activities and initiatives. The ERG and the Executive Champion will determine how "hands on" the EC will be regarding meeting attendance, decision making, and the support needed.

Members of the ERG may serve as ambassadors and champions of their resource group and participate as follows:

- Membership in BRGs is on a voluntary basis.
- Any employee is eligible to participate as a member of a BRG if they are in agreement with furthering its mission and self-identify with the group's formation.
- Commitment to spend X number of hours a month on ERG activities. This will be determine when the initial group convenes and discusses goals and objectives and creates an action plan for the ERG.
- Determine (thru discussion with your EC and HR) if the ERG member will need manager approval for participation (because of the time required to participate during work hours).
- Ensure that you solicit employees at all levels of the organization, including leaders who are a part of the community of people the ERG serves.



For more information about the structure of the ERG, please reference the ***“ERG Roles and Responsibilities”*** document.

