

## Employee Resource Group FAQ

### **Q: What is an employee resource group ERG?**

**A:** An Employee Resource Group (ERG), sometimes known as a Business Resource Group (BRG) is a company-supported network where employees with shared identities, experiences, or goals can socialize and advocate with and for each other. Common focuses include networking with employees with shared experiences/backgrounds across departments, providing professional development opportunities, and advocating for resources or initiatives relevant to the group.

### **Q: How is an ERG different from an affinity group or club?**

**A:** Whereas clubs primarily exist for social support, ERGs exist to increase resources and opportunities and provide community and structural support while validating employees' lived experiences. ERGs are invested in improving your workplace by supporting your employees' goals, building a more inclusive culture, and providing resources for those involved. Affinity groups were the original ERGs, first created by Xerox in the late 1960s to discuss and mitigate discrimination faced internally by black employees. Affinity groups and identity politics are inextricably linked and provide a place for community in service to the employee and not the corporation. An ERG is a "grown-up" affinity group as it is sanctioned by the organization - well resourced and supported and more aligned with organizational goals. ERG's may decide to participate in particular company processes like having a representative available for introduction during employee onboarding or providing feedback for the DEI council.

### **Q: What kinds of groups are appropriate for ERGs?**

**A:** ERGs should exist to meet one of three needs:

- To support historically underrepresented/underserved voices and address needs of those particular groups.
- To support a population whose shared experience your company would like to share and support.
- To consider the access and experience of those of a shared experience within your partner, client, and business network.

Some common affinity-based ERGs are groups for women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ employees, parents, veterans, and those with disabilities.

### **Q: Are ERGs open only to those who identify with a particular community?**

**A:** While the voices of those who identify as members of the represented community should be centered and drive the ERG's priorities, the ERG should be open to all those who are interested in creating change at an organization—including those looking to be allies.

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### **Q: What work do ERG groups engage in?**

**A:** Though structure, budget, and organizational support should be provided by the company, an ERG's areas of focus should be decided by its members and in alignment with the organization's business objectives. Some groups may wish to focus on creating resources and integrating awareness of particular topics company-wide. Others may focus on affirming and providing resources for those within the group. In-group wellbeing, professional development, and advocacy for company resources and policies may be differently prioritized by each ERG. Again, these groups exist to support historically underrepresented / underserved voices, populations whose shared experiences interact with your company's mission, and the needs of those you do business with/for. The activities of the groups should align with the groups' overall goals.

### **Q: Why should my company have ERGs?**

**A:** ERGs can improve employee engagement by providing safe spaces for employees to connect. Employees may use ERG resources and/or networking to further their professional development and to improve relationships across departments and levels. This may ultimately assist in employee retention and may entice more applicants to apply to your company.

### **Q: Should our ERGs interact with our DEI council?**

**A:** Yes! We believe that ERGs and DEI councils can and should support each other. The DEI council can utilize ERG members' insight when planning events or suggesting initiatives and goals. The council may use their budget to assist an ERG event if the expense also aligns with the DEI council's mission. All groups should routinely share projects and offer opportunities to support each other. New employees may be introduced to the ERG and DEI council leads and offered opportunities to participate in these groups. ERGs may have feedback on increasing diversity in the hiring pool or employee mentorship, advancement, and education interests.

### **Q: What is the difference between an ERG and a DEI Committee or Council?**

**A:** DEI Committees or Councils exist to provide a forum for discussion and ideation for furthering diversity, equity and inclusion at an organization, usually partnering with leadership to provide support on specific DEI initiatives / goals. A DEI Committee or Council typically takes a more broad approach, whereas an ERG is typically focused on the needs and desires of a specific population.

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### Q: How much should be allocated towards funding an ERG?

**A:** The amount of funding for ERGs should be a point of discussion when developing quarterly and annual budgets with a designated department (People Operations, HR, DEI, etc.). Depending on the type of organization (i.e. nonprofit, private sector) and the resources available, this is a question best answered on a case-by-case basis.

As a general rule of thumb, the funding per ERG should entail *three elements*:

- Whatever compensation is going to be paid for the ERG lead
- An established budget for programming such as invited speakers, trainings, and community partnerships/sponsorships
- A modest monthly budget for other smaller expenses
- Enough money to buy lunch or food for a meeting 2-3x a year

For example, let's say you had an ERG for parents at your company. Your company has 100 people, and historically, about 30 have identified themselves as parents.

Your budget might look like this:

\$2500 payment to ERG lead

\$200/mo = \$2400 for random expenses, events, admission fees, etc.

\$1000 x 2 = \$2000 to be able to buy lunch for the whole company 2x a year for major events.

So your budget for this particular ERG would be \$6900.

All of the factors above are malleable, so this is just a rubric. Holistic has developed an [ERG budget calculator](#) that you can use to calculate value.

### Q: Who is responsible for leading an ERG and/or how much involvement should come from our HR department?

We strongly believe an ERG should be employee-led as an opportunity for employees to feel acknowledged and supported by their employer. That being said, a designated department (People Operations, HR, DEI, etc) or liaison within that department should be responsible for ensuring adequate resources, space, and attention are given for ERGs to launch and sustain themselves. The involvement from these groups should be defined early on, and is highly dependent on employee engagement, organizational culture and familiarity with DEI at the organization. This particular area is one where Holistic is available to provide guidance.