

Employee Resource Groups Program Guidelines

I. Purpose

The County of Monterey recognizes that Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are successful mechanisms for the County to improve the leadership development process as well as to help ensure alignment between the County's business, equity, and inclusion strategies. The purpose of these Guidelines is to define authority, responsibility, accountability, and procedures for the formation and operations of the County of Monterey Employee Resource Groups.

II. Definitions

Employee: all persons employed by the County of Monterey, including but not limited to managers, supervisors, department heads, frontline staff, elected officials, appointed officials (including commissioners), interns, and volunteers.

Employee Resource Group: County-recognized, employee-run groups based around protected groups to promote equity values and strategic efforts of the County while also fostering personal and professional growth for County employees. ERGs are formed around protected groups and improve retention and promotion by providing a stronger sense of community within the County.

ERG Participant: non-member employees with approval from their supervisor to attend an ERG activity during work time.

ERG Regular Members: any employee with approval from their supervisor may become a member of an ERG. Membership is granted by an employee's supervisor for a minimum of six months and up to one year. Membership may be renewed after the term expires.

Executive Committee Members: the organizing body for an ERG. The size of an executive committee and the roles of its members are designated in the approved ERG charter. (e.g., chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer, etc.).

Executive Sponsor: Y-Unit employee, either Department Head or Assistant Department Head who acts as an advocate and ally for an ERG. In some circumstances and at the discretion of the CRO, a non-Y-unit employee may serve as an Executive Sponsor.

Protected Group: categories such as race, color, national origin, ancestry, veteran or military status, disability, age, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity, or any other category recognized law.

III. Background

The County of Monterey believes in treating all people with respect and dignity. The Board of Supervisors expects that all County employees foster a supportive working environment that celebrates the diverse county in which we live and serve. As part of this expectation, the Board

of Supervisors directed the Civil Rights Office to develop programs such as ERGs, which are aligned with diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Monterey County Civil Rights Officer or their designee in the Civil Rights Office (CRO) has direct management, oversight authority, and responsibility for the policies, rules, and procedures for all County-sponsored ERGs.

The Board of Supervisors and the County Administrative Office shall ensure the Civil Rights Office has all authority and budgetary support and staffing to successfully implement this program.

IV. Policy

The County of Monterey is committed to supporting the growth and development of workforce diversity through fostering the development of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). It is the County's expectation that participation is supported by executives and managers to the greatest extent possible in order to promote an organizational culture that values inclusion, equity, and diversity.

ERGs promote equity and social justice, foster employee engagement, strengthen workplace effectiveness, improve leadership abilities, and enhance personal and professional growth within Monterey County.

ERG activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Contributing to employees' professional development;
- Identifying workforce engagement barriers and solutions;
- Helping the County with strategic planning, recruitment, employee development, and diversity awareness;
- Hosting events that give members and employees the opportunity to network and develop skills, in such areas as career development, business education, resume writing, or stress management;
- Sponsoring events, seminars and conferences with Civil Rights Officer's or their designee's approval;
- Representing the County at job-fairs, internship fairs, or similar events;
- Taking on special initiatives and projects; and,
- Celebrating cultural, educational, and other special events.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Civil Rights Office

The Civil Rights Office (CRO) oversees the administration of the ERG program. As such, the CRO is a resource to provide support and guidance as necessary in support of all ERGs.

County Committees and Commissions

As appropriate, ERGs will present to County Committees and Commissions. County Committees and Commissions will provide insight and recommendations to ERGs to better align activities and goals with the Monterey County Equal Opportunity Plan.

Executive Sponsor

Each ERG must have an Executive Sponsor. The Executive Sponsor must allocate time to support ERG organizational needs, provide consultation to ERG executive committee, and ensure all strategies and goals are aligned with the Equal Opportunity Plan (EOP). Executive Sponsors are expected to be active in the group as an advisor, but not involved in the day-to-day operations and do not hold decision-making roles within the group.

Managers/Supervisors

Managers/Supervisors provide approval for employee ERG participation. Each meeting or activity during work time is subject to additional approval by the supervisor/manager. Managers and Supervisors are expected to encourage and support employee participation in ERGs, while ensuring operational demands are met.

ERG Executive Members

ERG Executive Members act on behalf of the group. This includes but is not limited to serving as the group contact for employees who are interested in joining, as well as serving as a liaison with management and/or senior leadership. ERG Executive Members are also responsible to request assistance from the Civil Rights Office or Executive Sponsor, as needed.

V. Procedure

ERG Formation

Members must complete the application process and agree to create a formal charter to be a recognized ERG. The formal charter will identify executive committee size and roles, in addition to group goals, in support of advancing goals within the Monterey County Equal Opportunity Plan. The ERG must consist of a minimum of three members. After submitting application materials, the CRO will have exclusive authority to approve or deny the application if it does not meet the goals outlined in these Guidelines. Once an ERG is approved, the CRO must renew the group status annually.

Membership Eligibility and Participation Approval

Membership in an ERG is voluntary and open to all regular employees. County temporary employees are eligible to participate at the discretion of their supervisor. To truly embrace diversity and inclusion, employees are encouraged to join groups not reflective of their race, color, gender, sexual orientation, disability, veteran's status, or other protected characteristic.

Employees interested in becoming a member of an ERG will obtain supervisor approval. The supervisor will re-evaluate and renew the employee participation approval as needed. Copies of the employee participation form may be kept as part of the employee's professional development plan.

Additionally, all employees must have an ERG participation approval by their supervisor before participating in any work-time ERG activities. ERG membership and/or participation will not be approved if the organization's operational needs are not met, there are employee performance concerns, and/or ERG attendance puts the employee in overtime status. ERG members are expected to make every reasonable attempt to provide at least two weeks' notice to their supervisor or manager for approval to attend an activity during work hours.

Work Time

ERG executive committee members may spend up to five hours monthly on ERG-related activities, subject to supervisor approval. Other ERG members may spend up to two hours per month on ERG-related activities, as approved by their supervisor. Additional hours shall be approved by the employee's supervisor.

Structure and Operation

ERGs must form an executive committee, which functions as an organizing body for the group. The executive committee is responsible for annual reporting, complying with all applicable policies and procedures, and setting meetings and activities supporting the ERG mission and goals. ERGs also develop the roles and responsibilities of the executive committee beyond what is required in these guidelines.

Meetings and activities must be open to any County employee who has approval and wishes to attend. ERGs will track attendance at all meetings and activities.

Agendas are required for all activities and meetings during work time. Agendas must be disseminated in advance of the scheduled meeting. Any ERG activities that are strictly social must be scheduled during non-work time (e.g., lunchtime).

Prohibited Activities

Per County policy and procedures, ERGs are prohibited from engaging in political or religious activities. The CRO will revoke approval for any ERG found to violate these prohibitions.

In compliance with the County Nondiscrimination Policy, ERGs may not discriminate because of any protected category when determining membership or participation eligibility.

The Civil Rights Office may terminate an employee's membership and/or participation approval in an ERG for violating any County Policy during participation in an ERG or ERG activity. Additionally, an ERG may be discontinued due to low membership (less than three members), inactivity for a prolonged period, inability to demonstrate sufficient achievement of ERG group goals, inability or unwillingness to comply with the requirements of the ERG Guidelines, or any other reason identified by the Civil Rights Office as opposed to the interests of the County of Monterey.

Review of Guidelines

These Guidelines were last reviewed on January 29, 2024, and shall be reviewed no less than every two years.