



# Creating Terms of Reference for your Employee Resource Group



# What is an Employee Resource Group (ERG)?

**An Employee Resource Group is a voluntary, employee-led group for employees who share common identities, characteristics or backgrounds.**

ERGs help to foster an inclusive workplace by creating this safe space for colleagues. These networks promote professional development, improve equity within the workplace and help to identify and address barriers across a variety of characteristics – for example gender equity, women’s health or menopause groups.

Some organisations use different names for their ERG such as affinity groups, employee networks or EDI networks.





# What to consider when setting up an ERG?

## Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference are important as they give clarity and structure to the group by setting shared expectations. It helps protect the group and its members whilst helping the wider organisation understand what the ERG is – and isn't!

Without a proper Terms of Reference, groups often have confusion about the scope of the group and what is within their remit. It helps focus their goals and outputs and give proper recognition to their contributions.

Set out a clear purpose, objectives, who can join the group and key details that those considering joining would want to know.

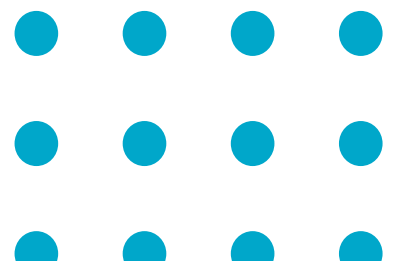
## Leadership and governance

### Chair/Co-Chairs

It is useful to appoint a Chair, or Co-Chairs, of the group to help maintain structure and keep the group on track to achieve its objectives. They provide leadership, set regular meetings and their agenda, as well as being the main point of contact for the group.

### Executive Sponsorship – or leadership support

Having a senior leader advocating for the group often provides resource, budget and opportunities within the wider organisation. It highlights that the organisation takes the ERG and its objectives seriously, and can increase impact across the organisation.





## Recognition of contributions to the group

ERGs are voluntary groups, so it's important that those who want to be involved are supported by their managers and recognised for their contributions during the annual review process. Chairing, or taking responsibility within the group, can be a great development opportunity supporting colleagues in gaining new skills that can be utilised elsewhere in their work.

## Evaluation and reporting

Impact is key. Ensure the group holds themselves accountable to action by regularly reviewing outputs and celebrating achievements.

Regular feedback from members can help to inform continuous improvement, and ensure activity remains relevant and effective.

Examples of this include sharing updates on the intranet or creating an 'EDI Year in Review' report that captures all of the great things your organisation does, including the work of ERGs. Some organisations share quarterly impact summaries with their senior leaders, or sponsors of the ERG as well as sharing case studies or presenting at Town Halls so that all colleagues are kept up to date.

## Meaningful action

Set out achievable but meaningful activities. This could include:

- » Raising awareness with events, talks or panel discussions both in-person or held online to reach a wider audience.
- » Policy reviews or advocating for new policies where gaps may arise.
- » Surveys, listening exercises, or feedback sessions which are shared with senior leaders to drive organisational change.
- » Campaigns, both internal and external, linked to awareness days or organisational priorities.



# A draft example of Terms of Reference for your Employee Resource Group (ERG)

## Purpose

*Create a clear purpose for the group, so that it is understood why the group exists. Colleagues may join with different expectations, so this helps give direction through a shared purpose.*

### **For example:**

The purpose of the [ERG name] is to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive space for employees who identify with or are allies of [community/identity/theme]. The ERG aims to contribute to a more inclusive organisational culture by amplifying voices, fostering belonging, and supporting the organisation's wider Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives.

## Objectives

*Set out clear objectives for the group so that everyone is aligned on what they are working towards.*

*This will look different for each ERG depending on the purpose.*

### **Example objectives:**

- » Provide a forum for peer support, shared experiences and networking.
- » Influence organisational policies, support and culture through lived experience insights.
- » Support awareness-raising and education initiatives across the organisation.
- » Align activities with the organisation's EDI strategy and values.



## Scope

*This helps to further develop the purpose by setting clear expectations and accountability for the group's contributions to the workplace.*

*Scope of the group should set clear boundaries.*

The [name of ERG] operate in an advisory capacity, and do not replace formal HR processes or decision-making structures. The group will collaborate with relevant areas of the organisation to:

- » Make recommendations based on lived experience and support needed needed
- » Support internal campaigns
- » Work with other ERG's and stakeholders on intersectional projects.

## Roles

*State who the group is open to. We advise that you make it clear that the ERG is open-to-all and voluntary. This is a good opportunity to outline expectations for members too.*

Our employee resource group is open to all colleagues, including allies. We expect all members to engage respectfully, maintain confidentiality, and uphold organisational values.

*Reiterate culture and behaviours here that are relevant to the group and wider organisation.*

*Outline the leadership/governance structure within this section too.*

## Chair/Co-Chairs

The [name of ERG] will appoint a Chair, or Co-Chairs, who will be responsible for setting an agenda for each meeting, chairing discussions and organising future meeting dates.



## Executive sponsor

Clearly outline how the executive sponsor will support the group. What their role/responsibilities are.

Our Executive Sponsor will support the ERG by:

- » Providing and maintain budget for activities
- » Advocating for the group at all levels to increase internal engagement
- » Attending meetings

*If you have a wider EDI team, or individual whose role is to support EDI, you can also include them here so that it's clear what wider support is available within the organisation.*

The Head of EDI will support the Chair as required.

## Attendance and contribution

The group will aim to meet every [insert appropriate amount of time], for approximately one hour.

There is an expectation that group members will contribute constructively and volunteer to support tasks between meetings to help meet the objectives set. If members are unable to attend meetings, or can no longer dedicate time to the group's activities, they should let the Chair know.

## Privacy and confidentiality

The privacy and confidentiality of individuals involved in the Network are of utmost importance. Members will not share any personal information shared within the group but may share general themes of discussions and the group's collective progress and activities.

