



**Canadian** Centre for Diversity and Inclusion  
Centre **canadien** pour la diversité et l'inclusion



# Employee Resource Groups:

Toolkit for Diversity and Inclusion Practitioners.

July 16, 2015



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## About the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

CCDI is a unique national charitable organization that has quickly become the trusted advisor on issues related to Diversity and Inclusion, and Human Rights and Equity management within Canada's workplaces.

Originally called the Canadian Institute of Diversity and Inclusion ("CIDI"), CCDI was founded in 2013 with one goal: to help employers create inclusive environments that are welcoming of all people. We help employers, business leaders, and human resources ("HR") and diversity & inclusion ("D&I") practitioners effectively address the full picture of diversity within the workplace by providing innovative and proven strategies, research, tools, and educational supports with the goal of improving the overall inclusivity of their workforce.

In 2014, the then CIDI entered into a joint operating relationship with the Canadian Centre for Diversity ("CCD"); a 65+ year old charity with a focus on the elimination of bullying, bias and discrimination in Canadian High Schools. As of April 2015, CIDI and CCD have merged to form the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

Over the past two years, we have seen tremendous growth having signed more than 70 Employer Partners as of the publication of this report. Clearly the uniqueness of our approach and the value of our products, services and educational events are working for Canadian employers.

The CCDI's *Places of Work* mandate contains six key areas of expertise include the following:

- » **Partner Support.**  
Supporting our individual members and employer partners on their D&I journey. Providing engaging, productive networking and promising practice sharing events where business, HR and D&I professionals come together to share and learn.
- » **Education.**  
Relevant, effective learning for leaders, management teams, Diversity Councils, Employee Resource Group leaders, HR and D&I professionals, and all people.
- » **Knowledge Repository.**  
A centralized eLibrary of D&I research, data, tools, videos, articles, and promising practice information, exclusively available to CCDI members.
- » **Research Reports and Toolkits.**  
Cutting-edge exclusive reports and toolkits that contribute to the Canadian conversation on diversity and inclusion.
- » **Legislative Support.**  
Providing practical experience to help employers with compliance related to current and future D&I related legislation (Employment Equity Act, AODA, etc.).
- » **Consultancy.**  
Practical, credible, and sustainable consulting services specific to D&I in Canada provided by a team of subject matter experts with decades of experience delivering D&I work inside organizations.

To learn more about CCDI, please visit our website at [www.ccdi.ca](http://www.ccdi.ca)





## Founding 25 Partners.

CCDI is a member-supported organization, providing services to both individual members and Employer Partners. We would like to acknowledge the exceptional support and dedication of our Founding 25 Employer Partners.



For more information on becoming an Employer Partner with CCDI, please contact us or visit [www.ccdi.ca](http://www.ccdi.ca).





## Introduction.



We are pleased to present our fourth CCDI toolkit, *Employee Resource Groups: Toolkit for Diversity and Inclusion Practitioners*, which provides the history and business case for

Employee Resource Groups (“ERGs”), as well as practical suggestions and strategies for implementing and managing Employee Resource Groups in your organization.

So often at the CCDI, we are asked by employers: “what can we do to create a more inclusive environment?”

Certainly we recommend examining your organization to determine what are the major issues or challenges to inclusion. We have already provided resources to accomplish that in our first two toolkits: the toolkit for creating a diversity business case and the toolkit for creating a diversity strategy—both available for free to the public on our website.

Once you have a strategy, operationalizing that strategy involves implementing structures, programs and initiatives to support your strategic goals. Many organizations have found that implementing Employee Resource Groups is a practical way to support your inclusion strategy while providing opportunities for employees to connect.

At our Community of Practice events, we engage participants in brainstorming challenges and identifying practical solutions to overcome resistance or resource issues, operationalize their strategies, and leverage important initiatives like Employee Resource Groups to ensure success. At our December 2014 Community of Practice events, we did just that regarding ERGs. The input of participants at our events was instrumental in the creation of this toolkit.

**A note about verbiage:** As in our previous toolkits, we recommend that you customize your verbiage so that it will be meaningful and valid in your organization.

**Diversity and Inclusion or “D&I”:** For ease of reference, throughout this report, we will refer to “D&I” – with the understanding that we mean diversity and inclusion or human rights and equity in an organization. If human rights and equity is the more appropriate term in your organization, by all means, use it.

**Employee Resource Groups or ERGs:** These groups go by different names in different organizations: affinity groups, employee network groups, business resource groups, internal support networks, etc. For ease of reference, throughout this report we’ll refer to all such groups as ERGs.

We hope you enjoy and find value in our fourth Toolkit.

We look forward to bringing you more tools and resources as we move forward with engaging dedicated professionals across Canada in developing the solutions to our biggest inclusion challenges.

Thanks.

Michael Bach, CCDP/AP  
Founder and CEO  
Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion  
July 16, 2015.





## Acknowledgements.

This report was compiled by Cathy Gallagher-Louisy, Director of Knowledge Services, and Thomas Sasso and Laura Armenio, Research Assistants at the at the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion. However, like many of our previous toolkits, significant portions of this report were derived from a collaborative effort. CCDI would like to thank everyone who participated in our Community of Practice events during December of 2014. Their participation and input were essential to the creation of this toolkit.

### Employer and Individual Participants.

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- |                                                        |                                                  |                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Accenture                                            | • Empower The Truth Consulting and Coaching Ltd. | • RBC                                |
| • Alberta Child and Family Services                    | • Enbridge Pipelines, Inc.                       | • RCMP                               |
| • Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour            | • ENMAX Corporation                              | • Region of Peel                     |
| • Alberta Health Services                              | • EY Canada                                      | • Shaw Communications                |
| • Art Gallery of Ontario                               | • Global Learning Inc.                           | • Stantec                            |
| • Bank of Canada                                       | • HP                                             | • Shell Canada                       |
| • Borden Ladner Gervais LLP                            | • Husky Energy                                   | • Sobey's                            |
| • City of Calgary                                      | • Hydro Ottawa                                   | • Sodexo Canada                      |
| • CBC                                                  | • IBM Canada                                     | • Spectra Energy                     |
| • Children's Aid Society of Toronto                    | • inter:Face Training and Consulting             | • TD                                 |
| • Compass Group Canada                                 | • Loblaw Companies Limited                       | • TELUS                              |
| • ConocoPhillips                                       | • Louise Sauvé-Dubois Consulting                 | • Top Career Strategies              |
| • Culture Connect                                      | • Manulife                                       | • Toronto Police Service             |
| • Dentons Canada LLP                                   | • Morrison Hershfield                            | • Toronto Public Library             |
| • Deloitte Canada                                      | • NorQuest College                               | • TransCanada                        |
| • City of Edmonton                                     | • OrganicTan Edmonton                            | • Upper Canada District School Board |
| • Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC) | • Ottawa Police Service                          | • University of Alberta              |
|                                                        | • Prospect Human Services                        | • WBE Canada                         |
|                                                        |                                                  | • Workplace Fairness Alberta         |
|                                                        |                                                  | • Workplace Institute                |
|                                                        |                                                  | • York Regional Police               |





# Developing this Toolkit.

## The Methodology.

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Like CCDI's previous toolkits, the contents of this document are crowd-sourced—in part, derived from a collaborative effort with input from over 90 professionals across Canada. We gathered their input through our Community of Practice ("COP") events held in Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, and Ottawa during December of 2014.

However, for this toolkit, we have interwoven information gathered from multiple sources.

First, at the CCDI signature event **D&I: The UnConference** held in Toronto in June 2014, Michael Bach and Susan Rogers hosted a half-day session called *ERG Bootcamp*. Thomas Sasso, a summer Research Assistant with the CCDI, attended the session and then produced a report called *ERGs in Canada*.

The report *ERGs in Canada* contained background information and promising practices for structuring and implementing ERGs within organizations, and was provided as a pre-read document to participants prior to our COP events in December 2014—to prepare them for discussing ways to leverage ERGs.

CCDI's COP events bring together D&I, human resources ("HR") and Human Rights and Equity professionals, as well as people in other functions who are dedicated to improving the inclusivity of their organizations. Participants come from public sector, non-profit, and private sector employers, and represent almost every major industry in Canada.

At the ERG-focussed Community of Practice events in December 2014, participants were separated into groups and asked to brainstorm on the following topics:

- "ERGs Are..."
- "ERGs Are Not..."
- "ERGs Should Include..."
- "ERG Pain Points"
- "ERG Solutions"

The participants at the COP events came up with fantastic ideas which were analyzed and summarized by Laura Armenio, CCDI Research Assistant.

Thus, this toolkit combines our best insights and information from several stages of data collection. We hope you find it useful.





# Background on Employee Resource Groups.

## History of Employee Resource Groups.

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The first Employee Resource Group was established by Xerox in the 1960s in Rochester, New York in response to the race riots occurring around the United States<sup>1</sup>. The CEO of Xerox met with Black employees to discuss how Xerox could better serve and support them and developed an advisory council to continue the consultation process. Through this venture, Employee Resource Groups emerged.

In time, these groups were imported into Canada through multinational corporations that were headquartered in the United States, and from grassroots efforts to increase visibility of certain diverse populations within the Canadian workforce.

Much of the work that has been done around ERGs originally emerged from an American context. In

some cases, the structure and focus was originally transferred into the Canadian workplace without much consideration for the unique qualities of the Canadian historical perspective, or the employment and social environment that may differ from the United States<sup>2</sup>.

In many organizations, work was done to “Canadianize” the focus and structure of ERGs. In recent years, many Canadian employers in all sectors have come to see the benefits of Employee Resource Groups within their organizations and have developed unique approaches to establishing and managing ERGs. As such, ERGs have become a valuable structure in Canadian workplaces.

## Purpose of ERGs.

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Employee Resource Groups may serve many purposes, depending on the organization, its focus, structure, sector and/or industry.

Their primary purpose is to provide groups of employees with a formal structure within the organization to support their unique needs as it relates to specific personally identifying characteristics, including visible and invisible identities or qualities.

For some employees, the opportunity to create communities at work is particularly engaging. This is important for employees of equity seeking groups (who may have been historically excluded from

traditional networking opportunities), employees whose personal lives or identities pose specific challenges, or those from communalistic cultures which place a high value on community.

While ERGs provide an opportunity for community building within organizations, they can also provide opportunities for development and networking, recruiting, or feedback, among other benefits to the business.

Additionally, when leveraged appropriately, ERGs provide an avenue for all employees to learn more about specific diverse groups<sup>3</sup>.

## Types of ERGs.

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Employee Resource Groups can be developed based on any personally identifying characteristic. Many ERGs have emerged within the Canadian context to focus on specific groups of employees. While not an

exhaustive list, at the CCDI, we have been able to identify the following types of ERGs that have formed within Canadian organizations:

- Aboriginal or Indigenous.

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<sup>1</sup> “Diversity at Xerox,” *Xerox Corporation* (2008),

<sup>2</sup> “ERGs: Come of Age: The Evolution of Employee Resource Groups” Lyon Change Consulting (2011): 28.

<sup>3</sup> “Aboriginal Peoples: Practices in the Area of Aboriginal Employee Networks,” *Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion* (2013): 6,





- Cultural.
- Faith-based.
- Inter-generational.
- International (e.g., newcomers or immigrants).
- Language-based.
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer and other gender or sexual minorities (LGBTQ+).
- New hires.
- People with Disabilities.
- Ethnic communities.
- Retirees or those transitioning into retirement.
- Single parents.
- Special parents (parents of children with special needs).
- Veterans.
- Working parents.
- Women.
- Younger employees/millennials.

## Allies

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There is considerable debate over allies' participation in ERGs.

An ally is someone who does not self-identify as a member of a specific group, but who supports inclusion for members of that group. For example, a straight person who supports LGBTQ+ equality may be referred to as an ally, or a man may be an ally to a women's group.

In many organizations, allies are permitted and encouraged to join and participate in any ERG. In other words, people who do not self-identify as a member of that particular group are invited and encouraged to join identity-specific ERGs.

In fact, it is considered a best practice by many D&I professionals to actively encourage the participation of allies within ERGs, recognizing that individuals may support a group's mission, even though they do not personally identify with the ERGs specific diversity characteristic<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, many organizations have found that ally involvement in ERGs provides

cross-cultural learning and other opportunities for connection and development.

However, not everyone agrees that this is a best practice as it must be handled carefully. While the support and involvement of allies can be important, in the process of developing or recognizing allies, it can never be at the expense of limiting the voices of those who face marginalization or discrimination. The potential exists for allies to "take over", and in effect, instead of supporting members of equity seeking groups, the allies may then end up further contributing to their marginalization.

It is a difficult dynamic to moderate, but an important piece for employers, and individuals who identify as allies, to understand.

For more discussion on allies, please see the CCDI report *In and Out - Diverging Perspectives on LGBT Inclusion in the Workplace* available on the CCDI website. [www.ccdi.ca](http://www.ccdi.ca)

## Unique Considerations.

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Characteristics of the organization may have positive or negative impacts on the ability of an ERG to function effectively. Within the Canadian context several significant factors have been identified<sup>5</sup>.

These include:

- Organizational Culture.
- Geographic decentralization (organizations with multiple regional locations).
- Industry or sector differences.

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<sup>4</sup> "Allies 'Come Out': LGBT Allies Are Changing the Face of Workplace Diversity and Inclusion," *Jennifer Brown Consulting* (2011): 3.

<sup>5</sup> "Canada Business Network: Market Research and Statistics," *Statistics Canada* (2015).



- Private-sector versus public-sector organizations.
- Regionally, nationally, or internationally operated or managed organizations.
- Rural versus urban locations.
- Size of the organization (in terms of population, resources, and critical mass of employees).
- Unionized or non-unionized workforces.

The mission and structure of ERGs may be shaped by these parameters.

An organization that exists in multiple small locations could potentially have more difficulty engaging with

their ERG members in contrast to an organization that functions in a single, large location<sup>6</sup>.

As a result, organizations have adapted by allowing ERGs to connect either virtually or in-person. These factors may also impact the frequency of interactions between ERG members, and the types of activities or goals the ERG sets for itself.

In our experience working with dozens of employers at the CCDI, we have seen that ERGs can operate successfully under a number of different models when these circumstances are taken into consideration in the planning, implementation, and management of ERGs.

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<sup>6</sup> Christopher Geren, "Why Employee Resource Groups Need Support," Web Long Post (2015).





# Value of Employee Resource Groups.

## Value to Organizations.

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ERGs are present in many large organizations. For those employers that don't currently have them, or for those who are trying to maintain or increase funding and resources for ERGs, it may be necessary to demonstrate the value ERGs can provide.

Employers have reported many benefits to enabling ERGs, including:

- Greater commitment, engagement, and satisfaction from their employees.
- Higher external application rates for open positions and greater retention levels of employees that engage in ERGs.
- A shift in the public image of the organization (e.g., caring employer).
- Improvement to the perceived inclusiveness of the organization.
- Greater competitive advantage for attracting talent within the sector or industry.
- More connections to diverse community stakeholders, and improved development of community presence<sup>7</sup>.
- A more personalized workplace in which employees are able to engage their work with their whole identity<sup>8</sup>.

Further benefits to organizations were articulated by participants in the CCDI COP events in their brainstorming sessions around what “ERGs Are”. These can be broadly grouped into 3 categories: Community and Ally Building, Business Strategy Alignment and Innovation, and Engagement, Inclusion and Retention.

### Community and Ally Building:

- Community Building—creating sub-groups with common interests.

- Corporate Citizenship—creating an internal network that engages the community in unique and innovative ways.
- Engaging allies to support equity-seeking groups.

### Business Strategy Alignment and Innovation:

- ERGs' initiatives can be developed to align with business or organizational goals.
- ERGs as focus groups—formalized information source for organization.
- Deliberate innovation through ERGs—engaging different groups or perspectives to develop innovative solutions to organizational or business challenges.
- Input from ERGs to support business development in different communities.
- Connections with local and/or international suppliers and/or business partners.

### Engagement, Inclusion, and Retention:

- Can be leveraged specifically for referrals and recruitment.
- Help with internal engagement/retention within organization.
- Tool to add value to employee experience.
- Providing opportunities for all employees to learn about or engage with diversity and inclusion initiatives through ERGs hosting cultural celebrations or learning events.

The literature and the input of diversity and inclusion professionals across Canada clearly show that ERGs can support a number of important business and organizational strategic objectives.

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<sup>7</sup> “Aboriginal Peoples: Practices in the Area of Aboriginal Employee Networks,” *Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion* (2013): 6.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Geren, “Why Employee Resource Groups Need Support,” *Web Long Post* (2015).





## Value to Individuals.

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The benefits and reasons employees participate in ERGs have shifted over time. In the past, many ERGs formed to address the negative experiences some employees were experiencing in organizations. While stigma and discrimination towards diverse populations in the workplace is still an important factor in many organizations, employees may engage in ERGs with other motives related to participation.

Motives are no longer related solely to addressing or avoiding the negative, they increasingly have to do with the positive benefits of being involved in ERGs<sup>9</sup>.

Some prominent benefits of ERGs to employees, identified in the literature and by COP event participants, include:

### **Fostering Community and Engagement at Work:**

- The ability to gain social and professional support.
- Fostering and developing internal and external professional networks.
- Discussions around similar topics or experiences to better manage situations.

- Establishing a collective voice when approaching management about issues or concerns.
- Creating a sense of community and belonging within the organization—especially important for underrepresented groups and individual from community-oriented cultures<sup>10</sup>.

### **Leadership and Professional Development:**

- Leading an ERG provides leadership development opportunities.
- Increased access to organizational leaders.
- Assisting with career development.
- Accelerated success through coaching or mentorship.
- Identifying, or being identified as, a rising star within the organization.
- Networking opportunities—both inside and outside of the organization.
- Sources for formal and informal learning.

When properly executed, ERGs provide significant benefits to employees.

## Important Defining Characteristics of ERGs.

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Participants at our COP events were asked to also list what “ERGs Are Not”. These are important considerations to take into account if you are considering implementing ERGs, or if you wish to better leverage the ones you already have within your organization.

### **ERGs Are Not Exclusive:**

- ERGs do not exist to fulfill individuals’ agendas.
- ERGs should not create insiders and outsiders.
- ERG leaders are not the sole owners of organizational inclusiveness.
- ERGs are not siloed. There should be structures in place to connect them to each

other and to organizational goals and strategies.

### **ERGs Are Not a Clique or a Social Club:**

- No proselytizing.
- Not mandatory.
- Not just window dressing or tokenism.
- Should not promote stereotypes (e.g., Tupperware party for women’s group).

These pitfalls can occur when ERGs are not properly implemented or managed, when there are insufficient or no guidelines or structures to support them, or when they are not linked to organizational strategies and objectives.

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<sup>9</sup> “Survey on Total Compensation (ERG),” *Institute De La Statistique Quebec* (2015).

<sup>10</sup> “Welcome to Canada. Now What? Unlocking the Potential of Immigrants for Business Growth and Innovation,” *Deloitte* (2011): 20..





## Barriers or Limitations.

Although there are factors that lead to success, there are also factors that create barriers or limitations to the efficacy of Employee Resource Groups. These barriers are primarily financial or operational<sup>11</sup>.

- **Financial:** Many ERGs struggle to obtain or maintain organizational funding (or sufficient funding) to fulfill their goals and missions. Not only does limited financial resources hinder the ability of the ERG to function, it creates a perception that there is less value given to the ERGs' presence. This may result in ERGs having to discuss alternate methods of financing their operations, such as fundraising or membership dues, both of which are controversial practices.
- **Operational:** Employees within the ERG may struggle to know exactly what they are allowed to do, and how much autonomy the organization grants the ERG. Alternatively, maintaining engagement from the membership of the ERG can be a struggle, particularly if there is doubt regarding appreciation of the work performed by the ERG from the employer.
- **Measurement:** Many organizations have difficulty measuring the outcomes of ERGs and demonstrating their success and value to the organization. This is often because the appropriate resources or mechanisms surrounding measurement tools are not established by the employer or organization.

## Challenges that ERGs Face in Canadian Organizations.

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In addition to the challenges identified above, participants at our COP events were asked to brainstorm "ERG Pain Points". Through this exercise, several groups identified or expanded on a number of the challenges they have faced with regard to implementing, operating, and managing ERGs within their organizations.

*It should be noted that inadequate budget was the most common barrier to ERG success identified by our COP event participants.*

### Buy-In: Management and Leadership:

- Executive Level Support—lack of senior leaders' involvement and support.
- Resistance from middle management—lack of strong engagement and support from management for employees to lead or participate in ERGs.

### ERG Structure and Logistics:

- Budget—limited or none.
- Lack of succession planning for ERG leaders.

- Not enough recognition of ERG leaders' contributions.
- ERG leaders' contributions not connected to performance management/performance objectives.
- ERGs not acknowledged for successful initiatives that contribute to the organization.
- Logistics—limitations due to geographically dispersed structure of some organizations.
- Lack of resources.
- Lack of formal structure.
- Tensions between meeting the needs of the organization versus the individual ERG leaders.
- Engaging unions and non-union employees with different schedules, requirements and employment structures.

### Awareness and Communication:

- Awareness Campaigns—overcoming the view of ERGs as a social club instead of a

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<sup>11</sup> "A Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups," *Employer Assistance and Resource Network* (2011): 3, [http://asklearn.org/docs/erg\\_toolkit.pdf](http://asklearn.org/docs/erg_toolkit.pdf).



business support and developmental component.

- No clarity around business case for ERGs: lack of communication around why ERGs are important; lack of linkage to the organization's priorities such as talent, business development, etc.
- Resistance to changing the conversation from: 'ERGs take time from "real job"' to 'ERGs and ERG leaders are going above and beyond to contribute to strategic organizational priorities.'
- Lack of knowledge about purpose and importance of engagement.
- Lack of understanding of concept and vision of ERGs.

**Membership Engagement and Retention:**

- ERG leadership fatigue—some ERG leaders get burned out.

- Challenges attracting, engaging, and retaining ERG members.
- Pushback from members because of time commitment and effort required.
- Lack of recognition of contributions of ERG leaders and members.
- For long-established ERGs, challenges with innovating and providing new experiences and opportunities. (i.e., not the same potluck every time there's a "themed" month.)

Many of these concerns and challenges can be addressed by taking measures to set up ERGs for success. As we have seen, when managed well, ERGs can provide real tangible benefits to the organization and its employees.





## Setting Up ERGs for Success.

Although no formula exists to guarantee success, there are a number of strategies that have been utilized to promote positive outcomes. From the literature<sup>12</sup> and from our experience at the CCDI, along with input from our COP event participants, we offer a number of strategies if you are implementing ERGs for the first time, or wish to formalize their existence, refresh them, or expand them to other groups or other areas of your organization.

### **Formal Structures and Budget:**

1. Employers should establish formal structures, such as guideline documents or policies, which stipulate the procedures for creating, managing, and operating ERGs with the organization.
2. Each ERG should establish goals and missions that direct the agenda and actions of the group. Every ERG should have some goals that align with organizational priorities. It is important to balance social with business goals developed for the ERG.
3. Each ERG should have an Executive Sponsor to provide support for the group and its mission. A best practice is for the Executive Sponsor to be from a different group than the identity of the ERG (i.e., a non-parent as Executive Sponsor to a Working Parents group). This provides opportunities for mutual learning.
4. Organizations should provide financial support to ERGs. Not only will this allow the ERG flexibility to engage with their mission using financial resources, but it also illustrates to the employees that the organization values the work performed by the ERG.

5. Membership in ERGs should be open to all employees regardless of whether they self-identify as a member of the targeted demographic.
6. Depending on size, complexity, or geographic distribution of members, ERGs may be encouraged to utilize co-chairs and/or subcommittees to facilitate the accomplishment of goals. This will engage more employees in the management of the ERG, and protect against employee burnout which may occur when one individual is tasked with all the leadership responsibilities of an ERG.

### **Communications and Synergies:**

7. Organizations should support the communication of the existence of the ERGs, and also support the communications by the ERG about its activities to the larger employee base through internal communications methods (e.g., intranet, emails, memos, posters, desk drops, leadership meetings, town hall meetings, etc.)
8. Employers should engage and connect ERGs with their diversity and inclusion, talent management, social responsibility, and community involvement strategies.

When ERGs are authentically developed and given resources to operate and fulfill their mission, employees within the organization will be more likely to engage with the group, to the benefit of all employees and the organization as a whole.

## Provide Environment and Structures to Ensure ERG Success.

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This section lists some additional great ideas captured during our COP events when participants in multiple cities were asked to brainstorm what “ERGs Should Include” and “Solutions to ERG Pain Points”.

*It should be noted that in order to be successful, multiple groups of participants mentioned that having a budget was essential for ERGs’ success.*

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<sup>12</sup> “Starting An Employee Resource Group,” Pride At Work (2015), <http://prideatwork.ca/get-involved/become-a-workplace-advocate/starting-an-employee-resource-group2/>.





**Create Organizational Accountability:**

- Articulate the business case and organizational benefits at leadership team and unit managers meetings.
- Articulate the value proposition for leaders' involvement.
- Link to organizational strategic priorities.
- Articulate core competencies of ERG leadership or involvement to increase motivation and credibility.
- Include info about ERGs in new employee onboarding process.
- Add ERG leadership and involvement to year-end evaluations or performance reviews.

**Logistics and Organizational Resources:**

- Have ERGs create a charter or mission and vision which aligns with organizational objectives.
- Ensure a specific person or a team in the organization is responsible to guide and oversee ERGs and ERG budgets.
- Provide a budget for each ERG with guidelines for spending, approvals, etc.
- Ensure local, national, international representation and involvement.
- Create chapters within the organization.
- When multiple chapters are created, ensure opportunities for connecting and sharing, e.g., quarterly conference call of ERG leaders.
- Create a resource Centre—online or physical—to provide access to resources needed by ERGs.

**Measurements:**

- Track the numbers of employees impacted by ERG events and initiatives.
- Create measurement tools to measure the impact, not just the numbers of people attending ERG events.
- Ensure that ERG measurements are part of diversity scorecard or overall organizational scorecard.
- Add questions to employee satisfaction/engagement surveys regarding involvement in ERGs or participation in ERG events.
- Conduct surveys of ERG leaders and members.
- Link ERG involvement to human resources and talent management metrics to show development of ERG leaders and members.
- Track recruitment or referrals through ERGs.
- Measure community impact of ERGs.
- Capture business development opportunities created or referred by ERGs.
- Track social media and/or traditional media mentions of ERGs and their activities.

**Engaging Stakeholders:**

- ERG's should seek input from organizational leaders and employees to get buy in and to solve issues.
- Create joint events by connecting different ERGs together, or connect with HR, recruitment, talent management, CSR, community involvement, etc. to pool resources.
- Connect to Employment Equity initiatives.
- Enhance client engagement by connecting to ERGs in your client organizations

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**Leveraging ERGs.**

Our COP event participants came up some fantastic ideas and examples of things ERGs have done in their organizations. Here's a list of some of the best ideas.

**Great Ideas for ERG Initiatives:**

- Host an ERG Day for recruitment of ERG members or promotion of ERGs.
- Conduct social experiments (i.e., wear traditional dress to see reactions.)
- Connect with international or community organizations for guest speakers or ideas for engagement.
- Create events in partnership with clients or industry associations.
- Facilitate personal conversations with a champions to engage executive leaders and executive support.





**Employee Resource Groups:**  
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- Create and share video recordings of ERG events or interviews featuring ERG leaders, members, or executive sponsors.
- Create a mentorship program for ERG members with other areas of the organization.
- Use internal networks to arrange meet and greets.
- Leverage internal or external social networking technology to share information about upcoming events and initiatives and/or past successes.





## Conclusion.

Our mandate at the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion is to assist Canadian employers in creating more inclusive workplaces.

We hope that the ideas, strategies and tactics we have provided in this document are valuable and useful in helping you implement and/or leverage Employee Resource Groups in your organization.

While the benefits of ERGs have been well documented by some organizations, much of the information is anecdotal or limited to specific organizations, and there is a lack of formal national research on ERGs in Canada. Further, as many employers are not measuring the impacts to the organization of supporting and operating ERGs, it is difficult to compile that information.

As ERGs continue to be employed by organizations, there is a growing need for evidence-based decision making to guide the future development, management, and utilization of ERGs. This will benefit both organizations and employees as greater clarity is established in terms of ERG best practices, standards, and outcomes.

We strongly encourage employers who have ERGs to ensure they are using multiple metrics to measure the impact and value of ERGs for their employees and their organization as a whole.

If you have great stories to share about your ERGs, please contact us at the CCDI. We would love to hear about them.





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