

EEO PLAN | STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION | POST HIRE

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS AS A POST HIRE RETENTION STRATEGY

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee resource groups (also known as affinity groups) have emerged as a promising practice for many companies and institutions in creating and sustaining a more diverse and inclusive environment. Studies show that nearly ninety percent of companies who have ERGs assisted in creating a welcoming environment in the onboarding and retention efforts of their employees.

ERGs are typically constructed around similarities that employees share such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation amongst other protected groups. The contribution of ERGs to the DEIA efforts of an institution are vital. However, there must be a conscious effort not to alienate certain populations that necessarily may not qualify, as this may be deemed discriminatory.

Below are some impactful strategies to ensure ERGs are furthering the DEIA efforts of an organization:

- Establish a mission statement and yearly goals for ERG.
- Define leadership and commitment of members of ERG.
- Ensure alignment of district and or campus EEO goals
- Partake in efforts of mentorship, commencement, graduation, professional development, and other activities that impact campus climate.
- Cultivate cross collaborative efforts with other ERG's.
- Engage students, larger community, and campus leadership to support efforts that contribute to creating a sense of belonging.

[\[SHRM. Are Employee Resource Groups Good for Business? August 25, 2016\]](#)

This guidance sets forth a framework for a **two-year pilot** to establish San Mateo County Community College District Employee Resource Groups (ERGs).

II. PURPOSE OF EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

ERGs are voluntary, District-recognized groups of employees that promote a diverse and inclusive workplace that is aligned with the District's mission, values, and goals, foster personal and professional growth for participating employees, and aid in a sense of belonging in the institution.

ERGs are typically formed by employees around a common interest or similarity that employees share, such as race, ethnicity, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, military/veteran status, and other protected characteristics. Many California community colleges have authorized the establishment of ERGs.

ERGs, meetings, and ERG-sponsored events must be open to all employees, including those who share the protected characteristic at issue, as well as those with a willingness to learn more about different backgrounds and/or cultures. ERGs provide a forum for employees to connect and share common experiences and support, and they play a role in creating a workplace climate that contributes to institution-wide diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) efforts.

III. WHAT ACTIVITIES MUST EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS AVOID?

ERGs may not have religious, political, commercial, or other outside agency interests. Further, they may not seek to address matters within the jurisdiction of bargaining representatives, such as work hours, pay, benefits, work assignment, and other conditions of employment. SMCCCD will not recognize ERGs that have as a purpose to oppose other groups or to engage in activities that result in such opposition, or that promote division, harm, violence, exclusion, abusive conduct, or unlawful activity.

IV. HOW ARE EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS FORMED?

As noted, ERGs are organizations formed by employees and their operations and are not dictated by the District. Employee membership and participation is voluntary. Based on policies and practices of other California public agencies (e.g., [Monterey County](#), [LA County Public Works](#), [City of San Jose](#), [San Diego State University](#)), the formation of ERGs at SMCCCD will proceed as follows:

- Employees proposing to form an ERG must complete an application to the college President's office for preliminary approval. District employees may join any ERG. The application covers the following points:
 - PART I
 - Purpose of the ERG (e.g., providing mentoring, career support, networking, or continuing education; providing cultural awareness and DEIA education; and providing management with input regarding how to improve DEIA efforts).
 - Mission of the ERG including a description of how the ERG's mission is aligned with the Board Goals, District's Strategic Plan, the colleges' Education Master Plans, The EEO Plan and/or related District or college mission and values.
 - **PART I** of the application will be routed to the President of your campus (or the Chancellor if from the District Office) for preliminary approval.

Notification of preliminary approval or denial will be sent by the President or Chancellor.

- PART II
 - Once an ERG receives preliminary approval by the college President, within 90 days after receipt of preliminary approval, the ERG must create a charter of the ERG and submit for review and approval to the college President, Chief Human Resources Office, and the Chancellor. The charter must, at a minimum, specify the ERG's primary audience, resource requests, the leadership structure, officer selection process, duties, terms, meeting frequency, updated mission statement, annual goals with expected outcomes, and any other such matters that further the goals of the ERG.
 - **PART II** of the application s routed for institutional review and approval by the college President, Chancellor, and Human Resources. Notification of approval or denial will be sent by HR.
- ERGs, as they are formed, must check in with the college President after the first six months to determine its effectiveness and discuss whether improvements are needed.

V. WHAT SUPPORT IS AFFORDED TO EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS?

The District offers a range of supports for approved ERGs but does not offer direct financial support.

- Recognition as an official volunteer organization.
- Use of facilities for ERG meetings and other activities where available.
- Assignment of an employer-provided email address and access to a webpage.

ERGs can work with the SMCCC Foundation to raise funding for support and activities.

VI. FURTHER LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

While ERGs can be useful tools for attracting, supporting, and retaining employees, there are legal pitfalls to be considered, including the following:

- Avoid unequal treatment of ERGs. To avoid claims of discrimination, we must ensure equal treatment of ERGs in terms of funding, access, facilities, recognition, application, etc.
- Avoid unequal treatment of individual employees. SMCCCD permits employees to participate in ERG activities during work hours, however, employees must obtain supervisor's approval prior to attending ERG meetings and events. SMCCCD's work

requirements take precedence over ERG activities during work hours. Participation in ERGs shall not exceed 7.5 hours per month.

- Avoid discriminatory conduct. All ERGs are open to all employees who are interested in advancing the goals of the ERG.
- Avoiding interference with respect to collective bargaining. As suggested above, an ERG do not displace employees' exclusive bargaining representatives and ERGs cannot attempt to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment for ERG members or to attempt to represent employees in connection with employment matters.

VII. LINKS TO PART I AND PART II APPLICATIONS

PART I: https://smccd-czqfp.formstack.com/forms/affinity_group_request

PART II: https://smccd-czqfp.formstack.com/forms/affinity_group_request_copy