

Operational Policy

Policy title:	Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) policy		
Policy number:	OHA-010-011		
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Approved:	Kris Kautz, COO Oregon Health Authority		

Purpose

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is committed to supporting the growth and development of workforce diversity through fostering the development of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). ERGs promote diversity and inclusion within OHA; foster and strengthen workplace effectiveness and leadership abilities; enhance professional development; and promote career growth and success within OHA.

Description

This policy establishes the requirements for the creation of OHA recognized ERGs that support the agency's diversity, inclusion and equity activities.

Applicability

This policy applies to all OHA staff including employees, volunteers, trainees, interns, externs, and contractors.

As keepers of the public trust, all agency employees have a responsibility to comply with state and agency policies, administrative rule, and state and federal law. The agency takes this responsibility seriously and failure to fulfill this responsibility is not treated lightly. Employees who fail to comply with state or agency policy, administrative rule, or state and federal law may face progressive discipline, up to and including dismissal from state service.

Policy

1. OHA recognizes the Employee Resource Group (ERG) Program as a critical initiative to support the growth and development of a diverse workforce.
2. OHA shall allow full time employees to use up to eight hours per month of work time (non-overtime) to attend ERG meetings and participate in ERG activities.
 - a. Managers shall work with part-time employees interested in participating in ERG's to calculate a prorated amount of time they can spend on ERG activities, for example, a .5 FTE position (20 hours per week) would be eligible for up to four hours per month.
 - b. Managers or agency point persons shall work with volunteers, trainees, interns, externs and contractors interested in participating in ERG's to identify an appropriate

way to participate in ERG activities, while meeting their employment and contract obligations.

3. When using work time to participate in ERG activities, employees shall request prior approval from their manager in order to allow managers time to ensure adequate staff coverage.
4. Managers shall approve employee requested time for ERG participation unless the operational needs of the agency or department cannot be met without the employee's attendance during the requested time.
5. Managers shall allow employees on trial service to participate in ERG activities unless there is a business need that prevents it.
6. Managers shall use standard leave policy, process and criteria for responding to employees who request to use work time beyond what is allowed by this policy.
7. Members of an ERG are responsible for:
 - a. Determining how it will be organized.
 - b. Selecting officers and recruiting inclusive membership.
 - c. Setting meetings and activities including frequency, location, purpose and content.
 - d. Securing an executive sponsor (see 9 b for guidance);
 - e. Developing and maintaining a contact list for members.
 - f. Facilitating communication among members.
8. ERGs shall not enroll individuals to its membership who are not current employees, interns, externs, volunteers or contractors of OHA.
9. In order to be recognized by the OHA Office of Equity and Inclusion Division (OEI), each ERG shall:
 - a. Complete an application process that includes having a formal charter, member roles, goals, and rules which establishes a sustainable structure and its relevance to the business of the agency. ERG Charters must be reapproved every biennium.
 - b. Secure and maintain an executive sponsor, who is either the OHA Director, a division director, or an executive manager who reports directly to the OHA director or a division director. ERGs may seek an exception from OEI for an executive sponsor who does not meet this criteria.
 - c. Agree to coordinate with the agency's efforts to promote diversity issues including, but not limited to, serving on the agency's Diversity Leadership Team.
 - d. Maintain at least five active members and meet at least once a calendar year.
 - e. Submit an annual report to OEI by June 30th of every year.
 - f. Allow all OHA staff to participate in ERG meetings and activities, as long as they are supportive and an ally to the mission of the group.
 - g. Ensure that the group is governed by current employees.
10. The ERG's executive committee may engage in due process, such as a majority vote, to prevent individuals from participation, whether members or participants, if the individual violates ERG rules, or demonstrates disruptive, disrespectful, or unprofessional behavior.
11. ERG events may be open to community members who are not affiliated with OHA, including employees from other state agencies, and clients, consumers, and patients who receive OHA services.
12. OEI shall provide support to ERGs, including:
 - a. Consultation to individuals seeking to start an ERG.
 - b. Reviewing, providing feedback and managing the process to approve or deny proposals to form a new ERG.
 - c. Providing technical assistance to officially recognized ERGs.
 - d. Reviewing the Annual Report submitted by each ERG.
 - e. Identifying any deficiencies that preclude recertification for the following year.

- f. Determining whether the ERG will be re-certified for the next fiscal year.
 - g. Connecting interested ERG members with interested members of OHA executive leadership.
 - h. As available, providing funding to support ERG activities.
 - i. Facilitating a Diversity Leadership Team that is made up of ERG members and executive managers to provide consultation around advancing OHA's Affirmative Action Plan goals.
 - j. Facilitating connections with similar ERGs in other organizations to support ERG success in OHA.
- 13.** The ERG's executive committee or OEI may discontinue an ERG by providing a letter describing the reason(s) for ending the group's activities.
- a. When the receiving party has reviewed the letter, it may accept the decision or request a meeting to allow for a more comprehensive discussion before accepting the letter.
 - b. Reasons for discontinuation may include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Actions or conduct that reflect negatively on OHA.
 - ii. Lack of an executive sponsor or executive committee structure.
 - iii. Low membership (less than five) or inactivity for a prolonged period.
 - iv. Discrimination against or exclusion of interested members.
 - v. Inability to demonstrate sufficient achievement of ERG group goals.
 - vi. Inability or unwillingness to comply with the requirements of the ERG Policy.
- 14.** State law prohibits public employees from engaging in certain political activities while on the job during working hours.
- a. An ERG designed around prohibited political activity, including but not limited to, the topic of political candidacy and political measures, whether for or against, will not be approved by the agency.
 - b. An ERG may not engage in political activity, including but not limited to, seeking to advance a political position or candidate, or to convince other employees to adopt or adhere to a particular political position or viewpoint.
- 15.** Federal and state law prohibits government from the establishment of religion. Governments must pursue a course of neutrality, favoring neither one religion over another nor religion generally to non-religion.
- a. An ERG may not be organized for the purpose of advancing or opposing any religion, religious viewpoint or belief.
 - b. An ERG may not engage in religious or worship activity.
 - c. This section should not be interpreted to interfere with any individual employee right or religious accommodation that is permissible by law and policy.

References

[OHA Affirmative Action Plan \(2017-2019\)](#)

[Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity \(AA/EEO\) data](#)

Related Policies

[DAS 50.010.01, Discrimination and Harassment Free Workplace](#)

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Policy history

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Keywords

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), workforce diversity and inclusion, affirmative action, equal employment opportunity, employee retention and promotion

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