

Operational Policy

Policy title:	Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) Policy		
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Approved:	Kris Kautz, COO Oregon Health Authority		

Purpose

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is committed to achieving health equity by supporting the development and growth of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). ERGs are voluntary, employee-driven groups that promote diversity, equity and inclusion within OHA that support community building, mentorship and learning opportunities; serve as a communication channel among staff and executive leadership; inform OHA and division-specific strategic initiatives; and are an internationally-recognized best practice to retain and advance a diverse and inclusive workforce. In recognition that ERGs are a resource for employees as well as to OHA, it is important that the agency engages with ERGs in a manner that is respectful, inclusive and meaningful.

Description

This policy establishes the requirements for OHA-recognized ERGs that advance the OHA strategic plan goal of eliminating health equities in Oregon by 2030.

Applicability

This policy applies to all OHA employees, including full time, part time, limited duration, temporary service employees, represented service, management service, executive service, and unrepresented service.

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, development, advancement and retention of a diverse and inclusive workforce.
2. OHA shall engage with ERGs in a respectful, inclusive and meaningful manner, by complying with federal, state and agency policies as well as using strategies including:
 - a. Engagement efforts that are multi-directional and mutually beneficial, supporting an open exchange of information.
 - b. Allocation of sufficient time and resources to support meaningful participation.

- c. Engaging with each ERG in their preferred way to ensure approaches are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
 - d. Ensuring that meetings and events are universally accessible by providing language access services such as American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation and Communication Access Realtime Translation.
3. OHA shall allow employees to use work time on activities led by OHA-recognized ERGs.
- a. Full time employees who are ERG members may use up to eight hours per month of work time (non-overtime) to attend ERG meetings, travel to and participate in ERG activities.
 - b. Full time employees who are ERG officers or leaders may use an additional eight hours per month (up to 16 hours total) to conduct ERG business on behalf of OHA. ERG officers and leaders are defined as:
 - i. Those who work with OHA ERG program staff to establish the group or submit the application before a charter is developed.
 - ii. Individuals who are elected as officers or leaders and serve on the ERG's executive committee, as memorialized in the ERG's charter (refer to 11C below).
 - iii. Liaisons or representatives of the ERG who coordinate outreach and communication activities at the Oregon State Hospital.
 - c. Managers shall work with part-time employees interested in participating in ERGs to calculate a prorated amount of time they can spend on ERG activities. An ERG member who holds a .5 FTE position would be eligible to use up to four hours per month of work time.
 - d. The work time allotment represents the maximum monthly hours available; however, each OHA employee shall work with their manager to seek approval for using work time on ERG activities.
 - e. Managers or OHA point persons shall work with employees interested in participating in ERGs to identify an appropriate way to participate in ERG activities, while meeting their employment obligations.
 - f. When using work time to participate in ERG activities, OHA employees shall request prior approval from their manager in order to allow managers time to ensure adequate work coverage.
 - g. Managers shall approve employee requested time for ERG participation unless the operational needs of OHA or the work unit cannot be met without the employee's attendance during the requested time. Managers and employees alike may contact the OHA ERG Program in the Equity and Inclusion Division for guidance.
 - h. If an employee is routinely prevented from using work time for ERG activities, the individual may talk to any the following in order to reach agreement related to participation:
 - i. Their manager.
 - ii. Their division management team.
 - iii. The ERG's executive sponsor.
 - iv. An OHA ERG program representative.
4. All OHA employees are eligible to join any OHA-sponsored ERG:
- a. Shared services employees who work in the Office of Information Services (OIS) may join OHA ERGs. All other shared services employees are considered community members or guests (refer to 14 below).
 - b. There may be division-specific considerations and protocols that guide ERG participation. Oregon State Hospital employees may need to work with their manager to identify a way to participate in ERGs to ensure adequate staffing coverage.

5. With health equity being core to OHA's vision, mission and goals, ERGs are one of many opportunities available for employees to participate in OHA-sponsored initiatives that support professional development.
 - a. Employees shall self-monitor their monthly time spent on ERG activities, to comply with the work time allotment this policy.
 - b. Employees shall code ERG hours the same as the work in their primary role
 - c. For positions that are grant funded, employees shall work with their manager and the OHA ERG Program to identify a solution.
6. Managers shall allow employees on trial service to participate in ERG activities unless there is a business need that prevents it.
7. 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.
8. Officers and leaders of an ERG are responsible for:
 - a. Determining how the ERG will be organized.
 - b. Selecting officers and recruiting membership that is inclusive of all OHA employees and divisions.
 - c. Setting the frequency, location, purpose, and content of meetings and activities.
 - d. Ensuring the ERG is universally accessible to all members, community members and guests.
 - e. Securing and maintaining an executive sponsor.
 - f. Developing and maintaining a contact list for members.
 - g. Facilitating communication among members, the executive sponsor and the OHA ERG Program.
9. ERGs shall not enroll individuals to its membership who are not current OHA employees, unless an exception request is granted for a "shared" ERG whose membership includes multiple agencies.
10. If an ERG identifies a need for representing multiple state agencies, it may seek an exception from the OHA ERG Program to be considered a "shared" resource.
11. In order to be recognized by OHA, each ERG shall:
 - a. Submit an application to the OHA ERG Program that outlines the group's proposed mission, goals, targeted membership, executive sponsor, executive committee and member roles as well as other factors that will establish a sustainable structure and relevance to the business of OHA.
 - b. Secure and maintain an executive sponsor. An executive sponsor 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 the OHA ERG Program for an executive sponsor who does not meet the criteria.
 - c. Develop a charter within one year of the date the ERG application is approved and seek review from the executive sponsor and the OHA ERG Program before finalizing. Charters must be reapproved by the OHA ERG Program every biennium.
 - d. Agree to coordinate with OHA's efforts to achieve health equity on activities, as feasible, including having members:
 - i. Engage in OHA-sponsored initiatives.
 - ii. Provide feedback on policies and plans.
 - iii. Serve on OHA-wide and division-specific committees and workgroups.
 - iv. Partner with the OHA ERG Program on communication and outreach efforts across the agency, including the Oregon State Hospital.
 - e. Maintain at least five active members and meet at least once each calendar year.
 - f. Submit an annual report to the OHA ERG Program by July 1 of every year.

- g. Allow all OHA staff to become members of an ERG and participate in ERG meetings and activities, as long as each individual is supportive and an ally to the mission of the group.
 - h. Ensure that the group is led by current OHA employees.
 - i. Comply with guidelines provided by the OHA ERG Program on ERG operational procedures.
12. ERG executive sponsors shall work with the ERG's leaders and officers to identify agreements and processes related to:
- a. The executive sponsor's participation in ERG-sponsored meetings and events.
 - b. Establishing regular meetings or calls to navigate issues or challenges and amplify successes.
 - c. Reviewing the ERG's charter, work plan, and annual report.
13. ERG charters shall identify a process or steps to address conduct or statements by ERG leaders or officers, executive sponsors, members and guests that are inconsistent with the OHA ERG Policy, state or agency policies, administrative rules, or state and federal laws.
14. ERG events may be open to community members and guests who are not current OHA employees – including employees from Oregon Department of Human Services, other governmental agencies, contractors, clients, consumers, and members of the public who are impacted by OHA policies, programs and services. Their participation must happen on their own personal time.
15. The OHA ERG Program 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. Onboarding and providing orientation to new ERGs, executive sponsors, and new ERG leaders and officers, as feasible by request.
 - d. Providing technical assistance to officially recognized ERGs.
 - e. Providing consultation to executive sponsors and potential executive sponsors of ERGs.
 - f. Reviewing and approving the Annual Report submitted by each ERG.
 - g. Identifying any concerns that preclude maintaining OHA recognition of the ERG for the next fiscal year.
 - h. Determining whether the ERG will continue to maintain active status.
 - i. Serving as the point of contact between ERGs and External Relations to facilitate OHA-wide ERG communications.
 - j. Connecting interested ERG members with interested members of OHA executive leadership.
 - k. Facilitating connections among OHA's ERGs with similar groups in other organizations, to support ERG success in OHA.
 - l. As available, providing funding to support ERG activities.
16. When an ERG does not meet the requirements of the OHA ERG Policy or voluntarily decides to stop operating, the group is no longer recognized by OHA as an official ERG. Reasons for discontinuation may include, but are not limited to:
- a. Actions or conduct that reflect negatively on OHA.
 - b. Lack of an executive sponsor or executive committee structure.
 - c. Low membership (less than five) or inactivity for a prolonged period.
 - d. Inability to demonstrate achievement of ERG goals and activities that serve the business needs of the agency, or the mission and purpose of the OHA ERG Program.
 - e. Inability or unwillingness to comply with the requirements of the OHA ERG Policy.
17. When an ERG voluntarily decides to end the ERG shall:
- a. Notify the OHA ERG Program, the executive sponsor, and the group's membership.
 - b. Close group email accounts, shared folders and other OHA-sanctioned communication platforms.

- c. Remove information about the ERG from the OWL, OHA newsletters and ERG program materials.
 - d. Identify other related tasks necessary to close the group.
18. To re-convene a discontinued group, interested individuals shall submit a new application to the OHA ERG Program for review and approval.
19. 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 OHA.
 - 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.
20. 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, spiritual 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.
21. ERGs shall avoid the use of, and the perceived use of, state resources and property for union activities.

References

- [OHA Affirmative Action Plan](#)
- [OHA Employee Resource Group Program: Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [OHA Health Equity Definition](#)
- [OHA Performance System: Workforce Equity and Inclusion Outcome Measure](#)

Forms referenced

Insert forms here

Related policies

- [DAS 50.010.01, Discrimination and Harassment Free Workplace](#)
- [DAS 50.010.03, Maintaining a Professional Workplace](#)
- [DAS 50.020.10, ADA and Reasonable Accommodation in Employment](#)
- [DHS-060-002, Conflict of Interest](#)
- [DHS-010-003, Political Activity](#)

[DHS-060-037, Use of State Property](#)

Contact

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