



MINNESOTA STATE
Office of Equity and Inclusion

Employee Resource Group Guidelines

Table of Contents

Employee Resource Group (ERG) Guidelines	2
What are Minnesota State Employee Resource Groups?	2
Background.....	2
Benefits of Participating in Employee Resource Groups.....	3
Office of Equity and Inclusion Mission & Vision.....	4
ERG and Strategic Priority Alignment.....	4
Approved Employee Resource Groups	5
Criteria to Establish a MinnState Employee Resource Group	5
Frequently Asked Questions.....	6
Appendix A: Employee Resource Groups Bylaws.....	9
Article 1. Purpose	9
Article 2: Structure	9
<i>Executive Sponsor</i>	9
<i>Champion</i>	9
<i>Chair</i>	9
<i>Secretary</i>	10
Article 3: Meetings and Notices	10
Article 4: Election and Nominations	10
Article 5: Leadership Requirements	10
Article 6: Executive Sponsorship	11
Article 7: Funding.....	11
Article 8: Employee Participation	11
Article 9: Events and Communication	12
Article 10: Dissolutions/Resolutions/Removals	12
Article 11: Bylaw Changes	12
Article 12: Code of Conduct.....	12
Appendix B: Minnesota State ERG Application Form	13

Employee Resource Group (ERG) Guidelines

What are Minnesota State Employee Resource Groups?

Employee Resource Groups are a network of employees that help drive results and act as a catalyst to build a culture of inclusion. ERGs help foster an environment that embraces and leverages the culture of employees, fosters talent growth and development, and encourages meaningful community involvement. The guidelines contained within this document only apply to statewide Minnesota State ERGs, and not to individual campus ERGs or affinity groups.

Background

Minnesota State is committed to intentionally recruiting and retaining a diverse and vibrant workforce. We understand that in doing so, we drive growth, fuel retention, and improve organizational outcomes. The first 60 to 90 days of employment are a critical time for any new hire, and they can be particularly challenging for members of traditionally underrepresented groups. That short window of time can mean the difference between whether an employee stays for the long run or leaves before the year is out.

In partnership with Human Resources, the Minnesota State Office of Equity and Inclusion is supporting the creation of ERGs across Minnesota State to provide employees with an enhanced sense of community as well as support opportunities to network with peers, gain a stronger sense of belonging, and experience mentorship opportunities. Moving forward, our offices will provide the support and guidance necessary to ensure ERGs are able to meet the needs of our vibrant and increasingly diverse workforce.



Benefits of Participating in Employee Resource Groups

ERGs provide a voluntary space for employees to gather and work collaboratively toward common goals. These groups often co-sponsor events for professional development for employees of color or other underrepresented groups, including bringing in speakers, conducting trainings, and delivering workshops. The ERGs also can provide less structured opportunities for employee socialization and engagement. It's critical to allow the ERG to decide its focus while adhering to the organization's principles, and mission for equity and inclusion.

Benefits for Minnesota State

- Improve employee retention
- Increase employee engagement and talent management
- Build and foster partnerships with community business organizations
- Support statewide diversity and inclusion efforts
- Gain insights into diverse perspectives in the workforce
- Receive recommendations to improve employee outcomes
- Provide key cultural insights

Benefits for Employees

- Professional Development opportunities
- Networking
- Sense of belonging and community
- Visibility and awareness of key initiatives
- Provide unique insights from diverse perspectives, drive inclusion and engagement efforts

How to Sign Up

For additional information or to sign up to participate in an Employee Resource Group, please visit the Office of Equity and Inclusion website at <https://minnstate.edu/system/equity/glossary.html> or reach out to Tarrence Robertson, Project Director for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, at tarrence.robertson@minnstate.edu.

Office of Equity and Inclusion Mission & Vision

Mission:

The Minnesota State Office of Equity and Inclusion ensures students, faculty, and staff across Minnesota State learn and work in environments that actively promote equity and inclusion. The values that guide this work include access and opportunity, equity and inclusion, cultural competency, culturally responsive pedagogy and service, and community engagement.

Vision:

- Our educational environments are culturally relevant, responsive, and innovative to the students we serve.
- Our students are assets, we affirm their identities and lived experiences, and provide spaces that are emotionally safe and reflect who students are.
- We are recognized and valued as thought-leaders on equity and inclusion and feel empowered to lead as experts in the field.

ERG and Strategic Priority Alignment

Employee Resource Groups support the following Office of Equity & Inclusion strategic priority areas and goals:

Strategic Priority Areas:

- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Expertise and Strategy
- Campus Climate

Strategic Goals:

- Recruit and retain a more diverse workforce across Minnesota State and address disparities affecting employees of color and American Indian employees.
- Improve Minnesota State capacity, strategy, and stakeholder competency to advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts through planning, policy, training, and professional development initiatives.
- Support the work to ensure welcoming and inclusive environments across Minnesota State.

Approved Employee Resource Groups

Currently, there are three statewide Employee Resource Groups in the process of forming across Minnesota State: 1) Employees of Color; 2) LGBTQIA+ Employees; and 3) Womxn in Higher Education. We recognize that many campuses may have their own ERGs or affinity groups already established. Participation in ERGs is completely voluntary and employees can choose to participate in any campus or statewide group, or consider forming their own group consistent with the parameters described below.

The Minnesota State Office of Equity and Inclusion has approved statewide Employee Resource Groups that can form under any one of the following identities/backgrounds:

- Race/Ethnicity
- LGBTQIA+
- Gender
- Veteran Status
- Disability Communities
- Generational (i.e., millennials, young professionals, etc.)

While all the groups (current or future) will be referred to collectively as MinnState ERGs, each group can maintain a name in accordance with the dimension of diversity it represents. MinnState ERGs cannot be formed around common interests or activities such as sports/hobbies, politics and other beliefs that do not align with or are outside the scope of the strategic vision of the Office of Equity and Inclusion.

The following would not be considered a MinnState ERG: Biking or Exercising Group, Healthy Living Clubs, Investment Groups, or Book Clubs. Though these groups/clubs can support the morale or productivity of employees, they should be considered as interest groups and not ERGs. Questions should be directed to the Minnesota State System HR office or the Office of Equity and Inclusion.

Criteria to Establish a MinnState Employee Resource Group

Employees who are interested in forming a MinnState ERG must take into consideration the following criteria (*note that this information is required in the proposal application*):

1. The group must have a minimum of 5 participants to start.
2. The group should recommend the following on their application (Please see [Article 2](#) (Structure) in Appendix A (Bylaws), for more information about these roles):
 - a. Executive Sponsor
 - b. Champion
 - c. Chairs
3. Must develop a work plan that is in alignment with the mission, vision and strategic goals of the Office of Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.
4. Develop group bylaws or adopt the bylaws within these guidelines and identify key leader roles.
5. MinnState ERGs are not intended to replace labor/management committees.
6. Groups cannot be formed in opposition to another group.
7. Group participation must be open to all – including allies who support the mission of the ERG.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: I would like to start a MinnState Employee Resource Group (ERG) but my proposed MinnState ERG does not meet any of the approved identities/backgrounds, what should I do?

A1: Employees are encouraged to contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion to discuss whether or not the identities/backgrounds meet the requirements to be considered a MinnState ERG. OEI will provide feedback and suggestions to ensure that the conditions are in alignment with the vision of MinnState ERGs.

Q2: Do I need to have prior approval from the proposed Executive Sponsor and Champion in order to submit the application to the Office of Equity and Inclusion?

A2: Employees do not need prior approval from the proposed Executive Sponsor or Champion to submit the proposal. Employees are encouraged to list who (at the Executive Sponsor and Champion level) they would consider to oversee the group. Once the proposal is approved, employees will receive notifications on next steps.

Q3: How do I submit a proposal to start a MinnState Employee Resource Group (ERG)?

A3: Employees who are interested in starting a MinnState ERG must submit an application (Appendix B) detailing how the group meets the criteria listed on page 3. The completed application should be sent to OEI@minnstate.edu for further review. Once approved, the Office of Equity and Inclusion will notify the proposed Chair(s) of the group. Please allow several weeks for processing once submitted.

Q4: Do I need supervisor approval to join or participate in a MinnState Employee Resource Group?

A4: Employees who take part in any leadership role of a MinnState ERG (such as Chair, Vice Chair, or Secretary) must have supervisor approval to hold a leadership role since there is a commitment expectation to deliver MinnState ERG goals during the duration of service. Similarly, employees who take part in MinnState ERGs as a participant (non-leadership role) during their normally scheduled working time must have supervisor approval. Employees do not need supervisor approval to take part in MinnState ERG activities on their own personal time (not normally scheduled working hours).

Q5: My supervisor has denied my request to form and/or participate in a MinnState ERG. I am not on an oral or written performance plan to my knowledge and I have not received prior discipline. What can I do to rally my supervisor's support at this time?

A5: Employees can access resources on the Minnesota State [Office of Equity and Inclusion Website](#). These resources are meant to help employees with the MinnState ERG pitch and also help supervisors understand the advantages of participating in a MinnState ERG both in a leadership and non-leadership role. Employees must have supervisor approval to serve in any leadership capacity since the employee is expected to dedicate additional time to the work of the MinnState ERG. The amount of time should be determined by employee and supervisor. Employees should also contact other MinnState ERG leadership for feedback. If the employee is unable to rally the support of the supervisor after accessing these resources, they should contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion for further guidance at OEI@minnstate.edu.

Q6: How many MinnState Employee Resource Groups can I be involved in?

A6: Employees are expected to prioritize their job responsibilities; it is expected that employees will use good judgment as it relates to the ability to meet work commitments /deadlines. Employees in leadership roles should limit their involvement to the single group they are serving due to expected time commitment and responsibilities. If an employee is interested in participating in more than one ERG, the employee must consult with their supervisor for the parameters. See Article 8: Employee Participation.

Q7: Can I form and/or participate in MinnState ERGs if I am a new employee in a probationary period? What conditions would prevent me from being able to join MinnState ERGs as a new employee?

A7: Yes, new employees can participate in MinnState ERGs during the probationary period. MinnState ERGs are platforms meant to support and advance employee recruitment and retention objectives. Therefore, new employees should use these resources as a means to network and build relationships across the enterprise for professional development.

Q8: I supervise an employee who wants to participate in an ERG-sponsored professional development workshop for 4 hours on a Thursday, during their normal work hours. Is this considered paid work time?

A8: You have the discretion whether or not to permit your employee to attend this event during their normal work hours. If they do attend, it is considered paid work time.

Q9: I supervise an exempt employee who wants to participate in an ERG-sponsored symposium that begins at 3 p.m. and ends at 8 p.m.; their normal workday ends at 5 p.m. Do I need to pay the employee for the additional three hours that they spend at the event?

A9: No. You never are required to pay your exempt employee additional compensation for attending an ERG event.

Q10: Would your answer to Q9 change if the employee were nonexempt?

A10: If the ERG event is directly related to the employee's job duties, he or she should be paid for the entire event. Please consider permitting this employee to balance hours within their workweek to avoid any overtime obligation. If the ERG event is not directly related to the employee's job duties, and you have not assigned the employee to attend the event as a work assignment, the three hours that extend after the employee's normal workday will be unpaid.

Q11: I supervise an employee who wants to participate in an ERG-sponsored charitable activity that occurs during the employee's normal workday. Is the employees participation paid work time?

A11: No, these types of activities are never paid, even if they occur during the normal workday. However, the employee may use accumulated paid vacation or compensatory time to attend the activity if it occurs during the normal workday. You have the discretion to decide whether the employee may attend this activity during normal work hours.

Q12: My campus already has an employee resource group or groups. How are these different?

A12: The guidelines within this document only apply to statewide MinnState ERGs and not to individual campus groups. The MinnState ERGs are not meant to take the place of individual groups which may already exist on campuses. Some campuses, however, do not have enough employees to form a group or may not have a campus culture which is supportive of creating of employee resource groups. For this reason, employees can choose to participate in a statewide group which meets their identity, needs, and/or professional development goals.

Q13: I have more questions about exempt and non-exempt employee status and participation in ERGs. Where can I get additional information?

A13: For additional information on the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), please visit the [HR Connect Sharepoint site](#) or reach out to the System HR Office. On the SharePoint page, you will also find a FLSA Overview and FAQ document, available at the following link: <https://mnscu.sharepoint.com/sites/hr/Resources/FLSA%20-%20FLSA%20Overview%20and%20FAQ.pdf>

Q14: Are MinnState ERGs required to maintain an up-to-date list of participants and monitor attendance within the ERG?

A14: MinnState ERGs will maintain a list of participants who are being paid for attendance in a MinnState ERG activity. This list should include employees who are released without loss of pay from normal job duties to participate in the ERG. If participants are attending in an unpaid status, tracking participation is not required. Participant lists shall remain confidential. If a supervisor requires documentation that their employee did in fact participate in an activity while being paid, the ERG Chair will provide applicable confirmation to the supervisor without divulging information about other participants.

Appendix A: Employee Resource Groups Bylaws

Article 1. Purpose

Statewide Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are a network of employees that help drive results and act as a catalyst to build a culture of inclusion and diversity across Minnesota State. Statewide ERGs understand the advantages of an environment that embraces the culture of employees, fosters talent growth and development, and encourages meaningful community involvement. Statewide ERGs work collaboratively to ensure that the impact is reflected through their principles and alignment with the Office of Equity and Inclusion Strategic Priority Areas and Goals.

Article 2: Structure

All Statewide ERGs shall have a leadership team comprised of the at least a Chair and Champion. Employees who take on leadership roles such as Champion, Chair, or Secretary of a Statewide ERGs must receive supervisor approval to hold such position.

Executive Sponsor

The Executive Sponsor (a department head or delegate of a department head) shall provide overall leadership to the MinnState ERGs ensuring that the MinnState ERG is operating in alignment with the Bylaws. The Executive Sponsor shall support the efforts and initiatives of the MinnState ERGs-stated in the annual work plan.

Strong executive sponsors will make the success of the ERG a priority and personal responsibility, without taking any ownership or taking away autonomy of the group. In choosing an executive sponsor, it's important to find someone who is willing to put their own privilege and access to resources on the line for the ERG and is personally committed to the success of the group.

Champion

The Champion (*Director Role*) shall have a commitment to the purpose of MinnState ERGs and the commitment to advance the goals of recruitment and retention. They shall ensure that the goals of the MinnState ERG is carried out effectively and preside and/or arrange meetings, lead business planning, as well as oversee all business done by the MinnState ERG. The Champion shall also be the main point of contact for the MinnState ERG Executive Sponsor.

Chair

The Chair shall be responsible for ensuring that MinnState ERG meetings are in alignment with the vision, mission and strategic direction of the MinnState ERG. They shall work closely with the secretary to establish meeting agendas and provide structure to the meetings. The Chair shall act as the facilitator of the meetings and address any issues raised by the MinnState ERG.

Secretary

If the ERG designates a secretary, a few examples of their scope can include: Keeping records of MinnState ERG actions, taking of minutes at all MinnState ERG meetings, sending out meeting announcements, distributing copies of minutes and the agenda to each MinnState ERG participant, and assuring that MinnState ERG records are maintained.

Article 3: Meetings and Notices

MinnState ERGs shall meet at least quarterly, at an agreed upon location (online or face-to-face). MinnState ERGs should establish their own meeting schedules and notices as they see fit. It is required that ERGs establish at least one mode of audio/video conferencing for participants who are outside of the region and/or off-site. Examples of audio or video tools are: Skype, Zoom, WebEx, etc.

Article 4: Election and Nominations

The ERGs can determine how they want to structure leadership terms. The OEI *recommends* the following leadership term limits: The Champion and Secretary roles being 1-year terms, with individuals permitted to serve a maximum of 2 consecutive elected terms, except in the case where a leader assumes the role mid-term. It is recommended that participants of the MinnState ERG elect a Champion during the last quarter of the fiscal year, with elections being conducted annually. When possible, terms should begin on July 1 – the start fiscal year. Leadership appointments are subject to final approval by the Office of Equity and Inclusion.

Additionally, OEI reserves the right to:

- Assign an employee to a Leadership Team or committee lead position of any ERG should there be opportunities identified for employee leadership development. In said cases, OEI shall inform the MinnState ERG Leadership Team prior to any appointments.
- Remove any Leadership Team member should they fail to meet any of the requirements listed in Article 5 and/or violate the code of conduct in any way (*see Article 12*).

Article 5: Leadership Requirements

Any employee serving in a leadership capacity in MinnState ERGs must:

- Dedicate time and effort to ensure the success of the MinnState ERG.
- Be in good standing with their manager, cannot be on any type of oral or written performance improvement plan, and cannot have received any disciplinary action within 1 year of assuming a leadership role or while holding a leadership role.
- Have manager permission to participate in a leadership role with the MinnState ERG.
- Act in accordance with the State Code of Ethics, Minn. Stat. 43A.38, and in support of the creation of an inclusive environment.
- Be able to dedicate additional time to the work of the ERG.
- Attend scheduled MinnState ERG leader training sessions.
- Include MinnState ERG leadership responsibilities in their annual performance and development goals.

Article 6: Executive Sponsorship

Each MinnState ERG should seek to identify one Executive Sponsor. Executive Sponsors shall serve a 2-year term. Some of the key responsibilities of the Executive Sponsor will be to:

- Provide leadership and guidance to the annual MinnState ERG work plan.
- Help remove organizational and individual barriers to achieve MinnState ERG goals.
- Champion inclusion and diversity both internally and externally.

Refer to the Statewide ERG Executive Sponsor Role Description (Article 2: Structure) document for more details. Additionally, each Executive Sponsor will serve on the MinnState Equity and Inclusion Council.

Article 7: Funding

The funding of MinnState ERGs is to be determined.

Article 8: Employee Participation

Participation in MinnState ERGs is completely voluntary and shall be open to all employees, including interns/student workers, trainees and temporary employees. All employees are expected to prioritize their job responsibilities over MinnState ERG participation; it is expected that employees will use good judgment as it relates to their ability to meet work commitments/deadlines, and will ensure that their participation in MinnState ERGs does not interfere with their job responsibilities.

Employees must receive approval from their manager prior to participating in any ERG events that occur during an employee's normal work schedule. Similar to attending any other type of paid event related to work, records of participation during normal work hours will be maintained by the ERG. It is not necessary to maintain participation information for participants who take part in ERG activities outside of their normal work schedule or during unpaid time.

Using Paid Work Time to Participate in ERG Activities

Participation in ERG activities is entirely voluntary. With manager approval, employees may use paid work time to attend MinnState ERG meetings which align directly with their normal job duties, and ERG-sponsored professional development events such as symposiums, lectures, workshops, learning opportunities, etc., which occur during the employee's normal work schedule. Managers are encouraged to allow participating non-exempt employees the opportunity to balance hours within their workweek to avoid overtime. Managers always retain the right to deny any request for participation that would result in overtime. Exempt employees are never eligible for overtime for ERG participation.

ERG Activities that Are Unpaid

Participation in any type of ERG activities outside of an employee's normal work schedule is always unpaid, unless the employee is non-exempt and attendance at the activity is assigned by the employee's manager or attendance at the event is otherwise directly related to the employee's normal job duties. In addition, employees cannot use paid work time to participate in ERG-related community service activities, charitable events, or social events. However, for such events that occur during the employee's normal work schedule, employees may use accrued vacation or accumulated compensatory time. You should consult with HR or your manager if you have questions about whether time spent in an activity or event will be considered work time.

Article 9: Events and Communication

MinnState ERGs are responsible for creating performance measures and tracking goals, as well as maintaining their Microsoft Teams Sites. Each MinnState ERG shall determine appropriate communication vehicles and frequency. All printed materials should follow Minnesota State's [branding guidelines](#) and Minnesota State's specific templates where applicable. Refer all inquiries from external media outlets/press to the Minnesota State Marketing and Communication department. ERG activities are prohibited if they conflict with respectful work place objectives, statewide policies, the State Code of Ethics, or law.

Article 10: Dissolutions/Resolutions/Removals

Minnesota State reserves the right to dissolve MinnState ERGs at any time. In the event a designated Minnstate ERG leader fails to satisfy all of the requirements set forth in Article 5: Leadership Requirements – the individual will be removed from the leadership role and the Office of Equity and Inclusion will appoint a new individual until time of election and nominations. Similarly, ERG leaders may request removal of ERG participants if they fail to adhere to the code of conduct. Reach out to the Minnesota State Office of Equity & Inclusion with any questions or to request removal of a participant at OEI@minnstate.edu.

OEI shall have the authority and responsibility to certify new MinnState ERGs. Submission of a proposal is not a guarantee that MinnState ERG status will be granted. MinnState ERGs shall not be used to discuss, negotiate or bargain over terms or conditions of employment or to express grievances or labor disputes.

Article 11: Bylaw Changes

OEI reserves the right to change these bylaws at any time and will communicate any changes to MinnState ERG Champions and Executive Sponsors. MinnState ERGs shall comply with any changes within the identified timelines.

Article 12: Code of Conduct

Employees who participate in MinnState ERGs must conduct themselves in accordance with the State Code of Ethics, 43A.38. They must:

- Conduct themselves in an honest and ethical manner, and
- Comply with all applicable laws, policies, and rules.

Appendix B: Minnesota State ERG Application Form

Instructions:

Submit the completed form to the Minnesota State Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) via email at OEI@minnstate.edu. Once approved, OEI will send notifications to proposed Chair(s) regarding next steps in formalizing the Employee Resource Group. Questions? Please contact OEI at tarrence.robertson@minnstate.edu.

Proposed ERG Name: _____

Executive Sponsor: _____

Proposed Champion: _____

Proposed Chair/Co-Chairs: _____

What is your vision?

Provide a summary of your ERG objectives and the desired goals of the ERG.

What is your mission?

Provide a summary of who, what, and why your ERG would exist.

Initial Work Plan

Proposed Initiatives/Goals (during a 1-year period)	Impact – How will your ERG Measure Success? What are the measurable proposed goals?

Approval

Champion Approval: _____

Executive Sponsor Approval: _____

Date of Approval: _____

OEI approval required for official operation.

Date Received: _____

Date Approved: _____