

Equity and Social Justice ERG/Affinity Policy

Employee Resource Groups ("Affinity Groups") Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Employee Resource or Affinity Group?

An Employee Resource Group (ERG), also known as an Affinity Group, is an employee-led group formed around shared interests, issues, and backgrounds. King County ERGs focus exclusively on protected categories as defined by federal, state, and local anti-discrimination laws. Protected category-specific ERGs address racism and other forms of oppression to advance the county's equity and social justice goals.

Who can participate in ERGs?

Career service and appointed employees may participate with manager approval. This includes:

- Employees on their initial probation
- Limited temporary employees
- Short-term temporary employees
- Interns

What are the benefits of participating in an ERG?

ERGs help ensure an inclusive environment where all are valued and empowered to succeed and:

- Promote equity and social justice
- Foster employee engagement
- Strengthen workplace effectiveness
- Enhance personal and professional growth

How do you join an ERG?

Employees must have manager approval to participate in an ERG. Contact the ERG representative of the group you'd like to join for information about meeting times and group member agreements.

If an employee wants to "try out" an ERG, they may attend two ERG meetings on a trial basis. If the employee wishes to continue attending, the manager must sign the employee's ERG participation approval form.

How do you start an ERG?

For a countywide ERG, submit a proposal to the Office of Equity and Social Justice. The proposal must have an executive sponsor who is a member of the Executive Branch cabinet and approval from the Director of the Office of Equity and Social Justice. For department-level ERGs, the department director or designee must approve the request.



Equity and Social Justice ERG/Affinity Policy

What is the time commitment to become a member?

ERG participants may use up to three work hours a month to attend meetings and other ERG-driven activities. ERG representatives may use up to six work hours a month. Allotted hours include commute times. County-sanctioned events (e.g., recruitment fairs, interview panels, county-sponsored speaker presentations) will not count toward these hours.

Who supports ERGs?

The Office of Equity and Social Justice approves new ERGs and provides technical assistance to existing groups. Contact Janine Anzalota, Equity and Civil Rights Manager, at janzalota@kingcounty.gov for more information.

Can employees use county resources to support their ERGs?

Yes, employees may use King County resources like vehicles and email for ERG activities. Employees must follow department procedures when using county resources.

Can employees be members of more than one ERG?

Yes, employees may attend multiple ERGs within the three allotted hours per month.

My employee is already involved in many Equity and Social Justice activities. Do I have to approve ERG participation too?

Managers and supervisors should approve employee participation based on their individual employment needs and/or the department's operational requirements. Generally, employees receive approval unless their absence would negatively impact operations.

What if I have multiple staff members who want to participate in ERGs?

Consider rotating participation in six-month increments or prioritizing employees who have not had recent professional development opportunities.

My employee is on a performance improvement plan (PIP). Can they participate?

Employee participation is up to management discretion. Depending on the details of the PIP, your employee may benefit from the professional development opportunity that comes with participation. If the employee is on a PIP because of attendance issues, this opportunity may not be the right fit. If you have concerns, consult your agency's Human Resources representative.

