



## **POLICY**

**Subject:** Employee resource groups (ERGs)  
**Section:** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
**Approved by:** Marissa Madrigal, Chief Operating Officer  
**Approved on:** Jan. 16, 2025  
**Replaces:** Letter of Agreement on Employee Resource Groups, AFSCME Local 3580 and LIUNA Local 483, signed August 2020

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### **PURPOSE**

Metro recognizes that Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are successful mechanisms for Metro to improve leadership development and help ensure alignment between its business and diversity strategies. This policy defines authority, responsibility, accountability, and procedures for the formation and operations of Metro ERG's.

ERGs are an important part of Metro workplaces, providing opportunities for employees with shared life experience to connect with one another, provide personal and professional development, mentorship and support. These groups contribute to Metro's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and support retention of employees by providing a stronger sense of community within the organization for employees from marginalized and/or underrepresented identities.

### **APPLICABLE TO**

This policy is applicable to all Metro employees including regular status, limited duration, variable hour employees and paid interns.

### **GUIDELINES**

#### **1. Participation**

- a. Supervisor approval is not required to join an ERG. However, all Employee Resource Group time requires supervisor approval and should not interfere with an employee's regular work for Metro.

- b. Employees who wish to participate in monthly ERG meetings or other ERG-sponsored activities such as planning committees, during their scheduled work hours, must obtain supervisor's approval for the purposes of scheduling and, where applicable, coverage of duties. Employees will make a reasonable effort to provide at least fifteen (15) calendar days' notice to their supervisor of their interest to attend an ERG meeting if the meeting occurs during scheduled work time.
- c. Employees who wish to participate in an ERG meeting on days when they are not originally scheduled to work can coordinate with their supervisor to modify their work schedule. When requesting schedule modifications, employees will make a reasonable effort to provide at least fifteen (15) calendar days' notice of the request to their supervisor. Approved modifications to an employee's work schedule are subject to guidelines in Section 6 of this policy.

Attendance at ERG meetings on days when employees are not scheduled to work and where no schedule modification has been approved by their supervisor is considered unpaid.

- d. Employees who experience barriers in participating in ERG meetings have several options to address their concerns, including discussing the issue with management and leadership within their department, Human Resources staff, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) staff, union representatives (where applicable), and ERG Chairs.

## **2. Formation**

- a. ERGs must contribute to Metro's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and support retention of employees by providing a stronger sense of community within the organization for employees from marginalized and/or underrepresented identities.
- b. Groups are organized by employees who support the goals of the ERG and wish to participate in its activities.
- c. Membership will be defined, but meetings must be open to any Metro employee who wishes to attend.
- d. ERGs must not make proposals to management involving employment terms and conditions which would appear to fall within the scope of bargaining, which management then could accept or reject, or to which management could make a counterproposal. ERGs can provide brainstorming or information related to issues of concern.

### **3. Starting new ERGs**

Employees who choose to start a new ERG must follow guidelines established by and work with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion department. The DEI department Director approves ERGs who meet eligibility requirements. Minimum requirements must include:

- a. Formation of a three-member planning committee.
- b. Submitting an ERG application. More information on starting an ERG can be found on Metro's internal website, MetroNet. Search terms "Starting an ERG".
- c. ERGs must create bylaws within one year of being established, host regular meetings and have ongoing communications with members.

### **4. ERG activities**

May include, but are not limited to:

- a. Contributing to employees' professional development.
- b. Identifying workplace issues and solutions.
- c. Providing input and guidance to Metro Leadership on agency wide policies or projects.
- d. Planning or attending ERG social events.
- e. Attending workshops or and conferences
- f. Celebrating cultural, educational, and other special events.
- g. Metro-wide workgroups and attendance at Metro-wide sponsored events are not included in the time allotted for ERG participation.

### **5. Supervisor expectations for supporting ERG participation**

- a. Metro leadership expects that participation in ERGs will be supported by all departments, managers and supervisors to the greatest extent possible. Supervisors will work with interested employees to identify ways and remove barriers for employees to participate in ERG activities while meeting the department's operational needs.
- b. HR Business Partners and other personnel in Human Resources can assist supervisors in identifying approaches and methods to support employee participation in ERGs.
- c. ERG members shall make every reasonable attempt to provide fifteen (15) calendar days' notice of ERG participation to their manager or supervisor for approval.
- d. All Employee Resource Group time requires supervisor approval and should not interfere with an employee's regular work for Metro.

- e. Work release time for ERG participation may be denied or rescinded due to business needs or documented performance issues. When denying or rescinding ERG involvement due to documented performance issues, supervisors should first consult with Human Resources.

## **6. ERG meetings and planning committees**

- a. Participation in an ERG is voluntary and at the employee's discretion along with supervisory approval. If an employee participates in an ERG activity during normal working hours, this participation will be paid as part of their regular work shift. Participation is not intended to result in overtime.
- b. Employees/general membership may spend a maximum of four (4) hours per month on paid release time for ERG business. This applies to meetings, travel to and from meetings, planning, leadership activities, writing newsletters, group retreats, work required between meetings, etc.
- c. Members of an ERG may serve on the group's Planning committee. Planning committee members can spend a maximum of seven (7) hours per month attending ERG meetings and assisting with meeting preparation without loss of pay.
- d. Notwithstanding any provision in any Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), Employees will not be eligible for overtime, premium pay, shift differentials, and/or call back pay due to participation in ERG meetings or planning committee meetings that occur outside of their regular work schedule.
- e. Employees will waive their right to consecutive days off when attending the ERG meeting or the planning committee meeting.
- f. ERG participants are eligible for either a maximum of four (4) hours as members, seven (7) hours as planning committee members or twelve (12) hours as a co-chair and hours cannot be added across categories.

## **7. ERG co-chairs**

- a. Employees may serve as the co-chairs of one ERG and are eligible to receive an annual stipend of \$1,500 to be paid \$125 monthly for the term served. Stipends will be paid once a month, beginning after the first full month of participation as ERG chair or co-chair and will continue to be paid for the term served. There can only be two co-chairs per group.
- b. Co-chairs of an ERG may spend a maximum of twelve (12) hours total per month on paid release time for ERG business. Including a monthly one (1) hour meeting with the DEI department.

- c. Co-chairs shall track all hours spent on ERG activity as outlined above.
- d. The DEI department will be responsible for maintaining the list of eligible chairs and co-chairs, and for communicating to Human Resources and Payroll staff the appointments, terms and stipend beginning and end dates for each employee.

#### **8. Adherence to Metro policies and procedures**

- a. ERGs may not make proposals on topics concerning wages, hours or any other terms or conditions of employment within the scope of collective bargaining or applicable under Oregon's Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA). However, ERGs can provide information related to issues of concern.
- b. ERGs must operate and abide within the constraints of Metro policies and procedure.
- c. ERGs are specifically forbidden to engage in political activity as described under Metro Policy: Political Activity by Public Employees and ORS 260. 432
- d. ERGs must conduct discussions and activities within Metro's rules for workplace conduct.
- e. ERGs must comply with Metro's Information Technology and Metro's Social Media Policies and Procedures.
- f. ERGs may not charge membership dues.
- g. While ERGs do not represent or speak for Metro, and do not represent policies or positions of Metro, members are expected to adhere to the highest standards of conduct in alignment with Metro's values.
- h. ERGs may use Metro communication systems (email, telephone, MetroNet, etc.) to communicate ERG business. For example, these resources can be used to notify members of meetings, events, meeting actions or minutes.
- i. An annual budget will be made available to each ERG to use for expenses related to meetings and events. ERG Co-Chairs must maintain and report their annual budget to Metro DEI.
- j. The DEI Department Director will approve annual budgets, and expenditures must follow Metro purchasing and contracting policies. The DEI department will provide administrative support for ERG purchasing activities as required.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Employees**

- Learn and comply with Metro's policies, including this one and those that support an inclusive workplace, including Discrimination and harassment-free workplace, Non-retaliation, Employee conduct, Anti-bullying, Acceptable use of resources, Ethics, and Political activity by public employees.
- An employee must provide at least fifteen (15) calendar days' notice to their supervisor of their interest to attend an ERG meeting.

### **Supervisors and Managers**

- Support employee attendance in ERG meetings and events by promoting the availability of the groups within your work team.
- Work with Metro Human Resources (HR) Department if there are any performance concerns that may impact approving an employee participating in an ERG or attending ERG related events and meetings.
- Whenever possible, adjust work schedules and duties of employees who request to attend ERG meetings.

### **Department Directors**

- Support employee participation in ERGs by removing barriers to participation within your work teams.

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department**

- Responsible for the policies, rules, and procedures for all Metro sponsored ERGs
- Maintain processes and procedures for the establishment of new ERGs.
- Establish and administer annual budgets for ERGs.
- As required, provide administrative support for internal processes related to purchasing and personnel activities such as payroll.

### **Human Resources Department**

- Work with employees and supervisors to identify ways to remove barriers to participation in ERGs.
- Upon notification of potential barriers to participation by supervisors, provide a copy of this policy to the complainant and immediately conduct a thorough investigation.
- Provide support and guidance to Supervisors regarding performance concerns that may impact approval of an employee participating in an ERG.