



CATALYST

ERG Guide

ERG programming and initiatives

Executive summary

ERGs are involved in a wide scope of activities that range from small convening events to strategic organization-wide initiatives. ERGs are an especially powerful and flexible tool for organizations because of the variety of programming and initiatives they develop or assist. ERGs tend to be best known for their effectiveness in networking and connection, skill and career development, business and product development, recruitment, and community outreach.

Types of programming and initiatives

ERGs conduct activities anywhere from monthly to annually. Some events are high-profile and large-scale activities, while others are smaller check-ins. The size of the event, of course, depends on the target audience and goals. For ERG-hosted events, the ERG will commonly invite one or more of the following groups: ERG members, all employees, managers, senior management, other ERGs, clients and prospects, and community organizations. When ERGs collaborate or contribute to organizational initiatives related to talent and other business strategies, the activity type and cadence will depend on the needs of the organization and involvement of other stakeholders.

The following activities represent the many types of ERG programming and initiatives:

- An annual conference encompassing a wide range of networking and skill-development activities.
- Career development events, including workshops, leadership summits, and mentoring programs.
- Speaker series with discussions on topics such as cross-cultural communications and connecting across differences.
- Meetings and webinars for holding discussions with members.
- Cross-ERG events to share best practices, work toward common goals, and highlight issues that intersect across ERG constituencies.
- Receptions with customers featuring a particular product.
- Networking events for current and prospective clients.
- Participation in open house events and career fairs.
- Events hosted in partnership with professional associations.
- Meetings with community groups whose work complements that of the ERG.
- Mentoring programs, including reverse mentoring with senior leaders.
- Advising on recruitment strategy and roadmaps.
- Providing focus group feedback on product development and marketing campaigns.

Program and initiative success factors

Various skills and strategies are necessary for organizing different programs and activities, but a few overarching factors can ensure success for all of them.

- Meet needs of ERG members. If attendance is low, make sure members' needs are understood.
- Align programs with business needs. For every event, be sure that the ERG can answer the question, "How does this connect to the goals of our business?"
- Involve allies. When appropriate, leverage ERG programming to develop new allies or deepen existing allyship.
- Effectively communicate events and programs as well as their purpose.
- Keep events and programs focused. Make sure to identify goals and the target audience.
- Involve senior leaders. Let them know what the ERG is doing and encourage them to share their experiences and offer input.
- Be realistic about what is possible. Sequence activities over time and avoid member and leader burnout. Remember that it is better to have fewer high-impact programs than a long series of programs with limited participation.
- Share best practices and creative ideas with other ERGs in the organization and across organizations.
- Demonstrate the ERG's value to important stakeholders including HR, People and Culture, Inclusion Councils, Product Development, and Marketing.

Catalyst resource: ERG discussion guides

Catalyst has created a [series of discussion guides](#) that ERGs can leverage to give employees the opportunity to have open dialogue on various topics. Each guide contains everything needed for a successful dialogue, including pre- and post-session reads for additional learning; research and key concept overview (with additional notes for the meeting host); and discussion starter questions.

This ever-growing collection includes:

- Burnout
- Inclusive leadership
- Intersectionality
- Implicit bias

Examples of ERG programming and initiatives

This selection of programming and initiatives from ERGs are from Catalyst Award-winning initiatives, Catalyst [ENERGIZE](#) event panels, Catalyst research, and company progress reports.

Networking and recognition

Recognition and networking event celebrates ERG leaders and members

Medtronic: Local “Hub” leaders come together at Medtronic Women’s Network’s Signature Event, a two-day gathering designed to build community among members and celebrate key accomplishments.¹

Workshops, resources, and summit across ERGs and affinity groups

Sanofi: The company’s ERGs had a variety of impactful events including: the APEX (Asian American & Pacific Islander Excellence) ERG hosted facilitated workshops that focused on the intersection of identity, culture, and work; CAN (Capable + Able Network) worked to mitigate the stigma around mental health medication; ParentsConnect exchanged resources on parenting neurodiverse children; and the WISE (Women Inspiring Sanofi Excellence) network launched its inaugural member summit with a focus on personal growth and development.²

Established ERG helps create solutions and celebrations

TD Bank Group: The Forever Proud Employee Resource Group drives support from the ground up for 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion. This voluntary, employee-led group functions as a resource for 2SLGBTQ+ employees and participates in a range of activities, including awareness and education of 2SLGBTQ+ issues, Pride celebrations, and other community outreach efforts. Forever Proud members participate in feedback sessions to identify gaps or barriers to inclusion, which assists the 2SLGBTQ+ Executive Steering Committee in implementing new solutions. The Forever Proud ERG also hosts Employee Pride Receptions. These receptions are attended by TD colleagues across all levels and areas of the bank and are held during Pride celebrations between May and August. They are hallmark events in which employees are emotionally connected. Each region hosts its own reception, offering opportunities for celebration, networking, and learning.³

Heartfelt notes thanking essential workers

Whirlpool: During the Covid-19 pandemic, Whirlpool Women’s Network helped show appreciation for the essential colleagues. With the support of leadership, the Whirlpool Women’s Network, an ERG with nearly 1,500 members, launched a thank you letter-writing campaign for Whirlpool manufacturing workers in the US. Whirlpool employees from across the organization mailed handwritten letters. Many of Whirlpool’s manufacturing sites highlighted the letters in videos and weekly newsletters distributed to all staff. Said one Women’s Network member, “Our men and women in our manufacturing and distribution facilities are our ‘essential’ workers. We are incredibly grateful for their dedication and skill. It’s an uplifting, culture-building experience to write them personal thank you notes that are really from the heart.”⁴

Employee wellness

Caring for colleagues with cancer

Sanofi: Cancer at Work, the company's most advanced affinity group, has been instrumental in developing Sanofi's benefit policy for employees with cancer and other critical illnesses. Created by employees for employees, Cancer at Work provides care for employees with cancer or other critical illnesses. Employees diagnosed with cancer are able to maintain their job, salary, and benefits for up to one year globally. Flexible work arrangements can be adapted depending on the individual's needs and the nature of their role. They also receive an allowance to cover miscellaneous non-medical expenses. Employees who are caring for a family member impacted by cancer will also have access to flexible work arrangements and are offered support as caregivers.⁵

Benefits lunch and learn addresses member health needs

Scotiabank: After hearing concerns from members struggling to uncover the policies and benefits the bank had around family planning and fertility, the Women's ERG partnered with the global benefits team to host a lunch and learn. They walked the attendees through what benefits were available and were able to answer questions and provide quick access to resources.⁶

Menopause event raises awareness and debunks myths

Scotiabank: The women's ERG worked with a group of women put on a menopause event to raise awareness. The event started with a doctor presenting about menopause, discussing symptoms and remedies, debunking myths and addressing stigma, and answering questions from the audience. That was followed by a panel discussion in which two women leaders shared their personal stories about menopause. Notable in the event was the inclusion of men allies who had volunteered to be part of the panel, wanting to support partners, parents, and team members impacted by menopause.⁷

Mental health ERG launched in single factory location

Kimberly-Clark: A grassroots effort founded a mental health ERG called HOPE (which stands for Happiness. Optimism. Peace. Empowerment) at a single company paper mill. The HOPE ERG provides resources and support through sharing sessions, as well as focused activities, tips, webinars, and more for all employees in support of Mental Health Awareness Month (May) and Suicide Prevention Month (September).⁸

Talent recruitment and development

New hire reflections to improve process

Zoetis: In a leadership listening session between the Differently-abled Neurodiversity Alliance Colleague Resource Group and Zoetis leaders, new hires shared their experience joining Zoetis. Attendees walked away with practical tips on how to create a supportive candidate experience for all and how to ask inclusive interview questions.⁹

Digitizing ERG model leads to powerful onboarding tool

BMO: What began as an effort to maximize participation during the Covid-19 pandemic became a mission to digitize nearly every aspect of BMO's ERG model, from learning and professional development presentations to mentorship programming and supporting employees with timely resources and information. To maintain engagement in a largely virtual setting, BMO experimented with new content formats, such as 15-minute micro-sessions and user-friendly apps like 10,000 Coffees, which uses an algorithm to pair mentors and mentees. The bank increased both the awareness and understanding of its ERGs by integrating the program directly into the new-hire onboarding process. The Welcome to BMO ERG Pathway is an onboarding module that allows new hires to learn about—and choose to join—an ERG during their first week at the organization.¹⁰

Network participates in recruiting and feedback on campaigns

Sephora: One way that Sephora engages its employees is through its "INCommunities," Sephora's version of employee resource groups. These groups align their work with the company's DE&I strategy and contribute to its success by providing feedback on company campaigns. The leadership of In Communities regularly meets with the company CEO and President to check in on KPI progress.¹¹

Explore the guide

- Key ERG concepts
- Building and growing ERG membership
- Developing an ERG
- Cultivating ERG support and collaboration
- Establishing ERG governance and structure
- Common ERG challenges and solutions
- ERG communications
- Measuring ERG success

1. *Medtronic: Igniting women to lead through the Medtronic Women's Network.* (2020). Catalyst.
2. [At the heart of equity: Inclusion and social impact 2023 report, North America.](#) Sanofi.
3. [TD Bank: Forever proud. Forever progressing.](#) (2023). Catalyst.
4. *5 ways employee resource groups are helping during Covid-19.* (16 July 2020). Catalyst.
5. [Sanofi: Diversity edge.](#) (2025). Catalyst.
6. [Why companies must pay attention to women's health – and what ERGs can do to help.](#) (2024). Catalyst ENERGIZE.
7. [Why companies must pay attention to women's health – and what ERGs can do to help.](#) (2024). Catalyst ENERGIZE.
8. [Kimberly-Clark: Better care for a better world.](#) (2024). Catalyst.
9. [Are you energized for ENERGIZE?](#) (3 June 2024). Catalyst.
10. [BMO: Breaking down systemic barriers to "boldly grow the good in business and life."](#) (2023). Catalyst.
11. [Sephora DE&I Heart Journey.](#) (2024). Catalyst.

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