

FAQs: Employee Resource Groups



BC HYDRO'S EXPERIENCE WITH EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) have a long history at BC Hydro. In fact, long after people have ended their career, the connections and friendships persist. All the ERGs give employees a safe space to discuss topics that are relevant and important to them, and make recommendations to the organization. The groups also give employees an opportunity to participate in something outside their day-to-day job, and potentially take on a leadership role.

BC Hydro's ERGs are an important part of their culture. The following FAQs are intended to assist organizations in forming their own ERGs by learning from BC Hydro's experience.

1. How do you define ERGs at BC Hydro?

BC Hydro has ERG's, clubs and societies:

- Clubs are organized around building a BC Hydro community around a sport or activity. Examples are golf, softball and dragon boat clubs.
- Societies are organized around connecting people, and learning together. Examples are the Social Club, Powered Pioneers (retired employees) and Toastmasters club.
- The ERG's are organized around providing support to and giving voice to employees in the organization.

2. What is the purpose of your ERGs?

BC Hydro has a multitude of social and affinity clubs, however the diversity-related ERG's are sponsored by Human Resources through their Diversity and Inclusion program.

The Diversity and Inclusion ERGs benefit employees by:

- Supporting members in their professional/personal growth and encouraging employees to be proactive in managing their careers.
- Creating an environment for making informal connections and building relationships across business areas and geographies.
- Providing a channel for employees to identify barriers to their success and to contribute to building a culture of inclusion.

The ERGs benefit BC Hydro by:

- Providing a means to demonstrate our support for diversity and inclusion.



- Engaging employees and creating cross-functional exposure and relationships.
- Providing insight into systemic barriers faced by employees.
- Providing development opportunities for participants.
- Building BC Hydro's reputation as an inclusive employer.

3. How do ERGs come together/start?

At BC Hydro, most of the ERG's start with a few employees identifying a shared interest. The only exception is our Indigenous employee network, RAIN which was formed as a result of a recommendation from the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business as BC Hydro was being assessed for Progressive Aboriginal Relations designation.

4. How do you decide on membership for your ERGs? Are they open to employees with lived experience, or open to allies as well?

Each network decides who is able to participate, and what role that participation will take. All of the networks share an aspiration; to balance the need to create a safe space for their members to share and learn from one another's experiences, and the need to reach out to allies and build understanding and inclusion.

5. What role does privacy play in ERGs?

As a Crown corporation, BC Hydro takes privacy of the individual very seriously. Employee training on privacy is mandatory, and is refreshed regularly. The sensitivity of privacy in relation to ERG's is about the membership lists. There are rules governing the assembly, maintenance, sustainment, use and access to the lists.

ERGs are trained on privacy best practices, such as limiting the data collection to what is required for purpose, telling members up front what survey information is being used for, using tools to store and capture information that comply with privacy standards, limiting access to member data and destroying any personal information after it has served its use.

There are some instances of ERG's where privacy may play an even more significant role, and that is when someone joins a group where they disclose information that they may have not disclosed to their colleagues, their employer, their family or their community in fear of what could happen as a result. Examples could be an employee with a disability who joins an ERG, but has not disclosed having a disability at work. These personal details require additional vigilance in respect to privacy because accidental disclosure could result in harm to the individual.



6. If ERGs decide they want to be open to *lived experience employees, how do you handle declaration?

BC Hydro ERG's have emerged from an appetite to connect with and build understanding and supports within non-dominant groups. So first-hand accounts and impressions are part of a connecting within a shared experience. Many of the networks feel it is part of their role to make BC Hydro aware of the large and small ways their work experience differs from the dominant group, and to advocate for equity.

In general, BC Hydro ERG's have adopted what can best be described as an "embassy" model, wherein members are welcomed, included and connected to supports within the ERG, with an understanding that it is not the role of the ERG to intervene in the members work, family, or community context.

* Lived experience is a term used to describe first-hand accounts of living as a member of a minority or oppressed group. For example, when women talk about what it's like to be female in a predominantly male environment, they are describing their lived experiences.

7. How are your ERG's governed?

The employee networks are governed independently by a member-elected body of officers and exist to serve the needs of their membership. Each Resource Group has its own governance structure and culture. Some of the groups have very structured governance, with defined executive roles, term limits and regular elections. Some of the groups have a looser structure, preferring to share the role of guiding the organization and providing opportunities for a wider group to be involved in governance. All of the groups have a terms of reference which documents the purpose, goals and membership criteria for their ERG.

8. How do you measure success of your ERGs?

Each ERG has its own metrics and program measures; typically they focus on growing membership, membership satisfaction with programming and the changes made in response to ERG insights and recommendations to BC Hydro in support of the communities they represent.

More broadly, BC Hydro looks at the impact of ERGs in how employees answer questions related to diversity and inclusion, discrimination, harassment and psychological safety on the annual employee survey.

9. How do senior level staff participate in your ERGs?

Oversight of corporate strategy for Diversity and Inclusiveness is the responsibility of Senior Vice-President, People, Customer and Corporate Affairs (who is also the Chief Human Resources Officer).



Reporting to the CHRO, with oversight of the implementation and operational effectiveness of the Diversity and Inclusiveness program is HR Director. Reporting to the HR Director, there is a Senior Program Manager for the Diversity and Inclusiveness Program who is a subject matter expert and responsible for the research, design, management, partnerships, and community relationships and support to the ERGs.

***Note:** ERGs have Executive Level sponsors.

10. How do ERGs submit recommendations to the organization?

The ERG's are sponsored and supported by HR through the Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager. Recommendations to the organization are usually facilitated by the Program Manager.

11. What types of programs and events have your ERGs initiated or participated in?

Many of the networks have anchoring events every year. Some examples of the events that the networks have held:

- An Executive Panel in the fall, for Senior Leaders to be accessible to the membership for a discussion on matters that are important to them.
- Taking the Stage – a personal leadership program on how to speak with courage and confidence and be heard as leaders.
- A "Buddy program" where an employee is paired up with a tenured BC Hydro employee with a similar background.
- ERG's promote membership to their groups at many events throughout the year that bring BC Hydro employees together.

12. What do meetings look like, and how often are they held?

Typically, the ERG's meet at the beginning of the year to plan their programming and then meet monthly with most taking a hiatus in July/August when many of their members might take vacation. Most ERG meetings will be to review with their Executive team their progress against their plan, to plan details of an event or to discuss a topic of shared interest. Recently, we invited our ethics office, health and recovery services and coaching program managers to speak to the specific supports available to the ERGs.