

## **Rule # 3-75**

### **Employee Resource Groups**

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#### **§ 3-75-010 Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to define authority, responsibility, accountability, and procedures for the formation and operations of County Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Multnomah County recognizes that ERGs are successful for the County because they can facilitate acclimation of new employees to their department/division, foster retention, improve the leadership development process, and help ensure alignment between the County's business and diversity strategies. It is County leadership's expectation that employee participation is supported by all managers to the greatest extent possible.

#### **§ 3-75-020 Overview**

ERGs are County-sponsored, employee-run groups that promote diversity values and strategic efforts of the County. They also promote personal and professional growth for County employees with shared lived experience around marginalized identities, and improve retention by providing a stronger sense of community within the County.

#### **§ 3-75-030 Authority**

The Multnomah County Chief Diversity and Equity Officer or their designee in the [Office of Diversity and Equity \(ODE\)](#) has direct management, oversight authority, and responsibility for the policies, rules, and procedures for all County-sponsored ERGs, including the denial or rescission of an employee's participation in an ERG due to their conduct on the ERG or violations of the ERG's by-laws.

#### **§ 3-75-040 Approval Process**

- A. The Chief Diversity and Equity Officer, Workforce Equity Manager, and/or the ERG Governance Coordinator oversee the initial and the annual approval process of ERGs. Employees who are interested in starting a resource group may email ODE at [diversity.and.equity@multco.us](mailto:diversity.and.equity@multco.us) to discuss the process and requirements. This process includes completion of a charter application, available from ODE.

- B. ERG and charter approval will be based on an assessment of:
  - 1. Stated mission and values having a clear and direct connection to the County's mission and values; and
  - 2. A work plan that describes activities listed in this Rule.
- C. All requests will be considered on an individual basis and will be submitted to the County Chair by the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer, with recommendation for approval or denial in consultation with the ERG Leadership Team.

#### **§ 3-75-050 Annual Review and Approval**

- A. ODE will conduct an annual review of all ERGs to ensure that the goals and objectives of each ERG continue to contribute to the County's mission, core values, and organizational outcomes.
- B. ODE will coordinate an annual retreat of ERG Leadership teams with the purpose of:
  - 1. Developing a summary of the previous year's accomplishments; and
  - 2. Developing a work plan for the coming year.
- C. The Chief Diversity and Equity Officer or their designee will publish on ODE's website and distribute to County employees the summary of ERG accomplishments at the end of the fiscal year.

#### **§ 3-75-060 ERG Formation and Activities**

- A. Groups must meet an identified business purpose of Multnomah County and be in alignment with the values, business purpose, policies, and mission of the County.
- B. Groups are organized by employees who support the goals of the ERG and wish to participate in its activities.
- C. Membership is made up of employees with similar characteristics, lived experiences, and/or demographics, and meetings must be open to any County 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.
- E. ERG activities may include, but are not limited to:
  - 1. Contributing to employees' professional development;

2. Identifying workforce engagement barriers and solutions;
  3. Helping the County with strategic planning, recruitment, employee development, and diversity awareness;
  4. Hosting events that give members and employees the opportunity to network and develop skills, in such areas as career development, business education, investment strategies, resume writing, or stress management;
  5. Sponsoring events, seminars and conferences (with the approval of the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer or their designee);
  6. Taking on special initiatives and projects; and
  7. Celebrating cultural, educational, and other special events.
- F. ERGs must operate within the constraints of Multnomah County policies and procedures.
1. Groups are specifically forbidden to engage in political activity as described in MCPR § 3-10-020, Employee Responsibilities.
  2. Groups must conduct discussions and activities within the Multnomah County rules for workplace conduct as outlined in MCPR 3-47, Maintaining a Professional and Respectful Workplace.
  3. Groups must comply with MCPR 3-35, Use of Information Technology.
  4. Groups may not charge membership dues or host fundraisers for their resource group. They should work with the Office of Diversity and Equity regarding budgetary requests and alternatives to dues and fundraising.
- G. Members of ERGs do not represent or speak for Multnomah County, nor do they represent policies or positions of Multnomah County.
- H. ERGs must have at least one member of their leadership attend the ERG Leadership meeting with the ERG Governance Coordinator and/or the Workforce Equity Manager or Chief Diversity and Equity Officer held on a monthly basis.
- I. All ERG time requires supervisor approval, and should not interfere with the employee's regular work for the County.
1. Participation in Countywide workgroups and attendance at Countywide sponsored events is not included in time allotted for ERG participation.
  2. ERG members who hold general membership status may spend a maximum of six (6) 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.

3. ERG members in leadership positions may spend a maximum of eight (8) hours total per month on paid release time for ERG business. These positions, including treasurers, secretaries, communications, and other elected positions, must be reflected in ERG bylaws approved by the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer.
4. Co-chairs of an ERG may spend a maximum of twelve (12) hours total per month on paid release time for ERG business.
5. All ERG members, including those with general membership status, those in leadership positions, and co-chairs shall track all hours spent on ERG activity as outlined above. The hours allotted to said member, leader, and co-chair are not to be combined.
6. ERG members shall make every reasonable attempt to provide fifteen (15) calendar days' notice of ERG participation to their manager for approval.
7. An employee's ERG participation may be denied or rescinded due to business needs or performance issues on their work team. To be considered for rescission of ERG involvement for performance issues, the employee must first have been given prior notice by their manager, and opportunity to correct a performance issue.
8. Denial and rescission of ERG participation for the reasons listed in number 7 above, will be referred to the Department Director and shall be at the Director's sole discretion. Decisions will be shared with the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer, but may not be overturned by them.
9. An employee's ERG participation may be rescinded if behavior violates the values of the ERG. To be considered for rescission for behavior concerns, the employee must first have been given prior notice from one or more of the ERG leaders in partnership with either the ERG Governance Coordinator, Workforce Equity Manager, or the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer, and opportunity to correct said behavior. The Office of Diversity and Equity will support the officers of the ERG in delivering the information. In the event an employee's behavior continues or the recurrence of incidents continue, the employee may be removed in accordance with the Removal from Office section in the resource group's Bylaws and/or Charter. The removal from office has to be considered by all resource group leaders, regardless of whether the employee is a resource group member or officer. The Office of Diversity and Equity will support the officers in managing the process, if needed. The resource group will determine any restorative opportunities for reunification and how to proceed going forward.

- a. Proceeding if Removal from Office is Disputed: If the ERG member or officer disputes removal from office, the Chief Diversity and Equity Office will work with the employee's manager, Labor Relations, the County Attorney, and department Human Resources to determine next steps that are equitable for all involved parties.
- J. ERGs are asked to adhere to County values of sustainability by holding meetings in locations that require the least amount of travel by members.

### **§3-75-070 Communication**

- A. Groups may use County communication systems (interoffice mail, email, telephone, etc.) to notify members of meetings, events, meeting actions, or minutes pertaining to ERG business per MCPR 3-35-050.
- B. ERGs wishing to use County communication systems for all-employee emails or mailings must have prior approval from the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer or their designee.

### **§3-75-080 Expenditures and Reimbursements**

- A. ODE is responsible for tracking the budgets and approving expenditures and payment for all ERGs and will maintain a line item in the program budget for ERG use.
- B. Groups may expend their budget according to the [Administrative Guidelines for Miscellaneous Expense Reimbursement \(FIN-4\)](#).
- C. Groups are responsible for ensuring that expenditures are within the allowable guidelines.
- D. When requesting purchases or reimbursements:
  - 1. ERGs must submit the request with complete details to ODE via email or interoffice mail;
  - 2. Requests will be forwarded to the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer for approval; and
  - 3. Status of the request and payment options, consistent with procurement rules, will be communicated to the requesting ERG within thirty (30) days following receipt of the request by the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer.

## **REFERENCES**

MCPR 3-10 Employee Responsibilities

MCPR 3-35 Use of Information Technology

MCPR 3-47 Maintaining a Professional and Respectful Workplace

[Administrative Guidelines for Miscellaneous Expense Reimbursement \(FIN-4\)](#)