



EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS (ERGs)

Toolkit for Police Services:
How to Develop and Maintain ERGs

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**The OACP Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Network
Committee would like to thank the following
contributors for sharing their knowledge and
expertise towards the toolkit:**



Alicia Lauzon – Ontario Provincial Police



Rahim Samnani – Hamilton Police Service



Amy Stewart – Ontario Provincial Police



Joanna Styruczula – Peel Regional Police Service



Viktoria Tumilowicz – Barrie Police Service

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1 | What are Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)?

Description and Purpose

Police Services recognize the importance of providing a workplace where members feel welcome, safe, appreciated, included, and a strong sense of belonging.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are internally focused, member-led, voluntary networks created to empower specific, self-identified groups to share information, share lived experiences, provide support to one another, build cultural competencies, and foster an equitable and inclusive workplace. ERGs are often created in accordance with the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code. They are also sometimes created around shared interests or challenges, such as supporting a family member with cancer.

ERGs provide groups of employees with a formal structure within their organization to support their unique needs related to identifiable characteristics, including visible and invisible identities, qualities or interests. They create networking opportunities for equity-deserving groups who may have been historically excluded or underrepresented in your Service.

Employee Resource Groups are also sometimes referred to as Internal Support Networks, Member Support Networks, Peer Support Networks, or other similar names.

The Role of ERGs

ERGs provide members with a safe space, where all are welcome, and facilitate opportunities for equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives. They promote a place of belonging and networking, where members can build strong relationships with colleagues, discuss career goals and challenges, and gain professional and personal growth and support.

ERGs might take on different roles depending on the desires of the members participating. Some might be more focused on being a small support group for member sharing, while others might want to be a more prominent voice in the organization. The role of each individual ERG may differ slightly, but all should be aligned with the Service's Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Plan.

Types of ERGs

ERGs can be organized around a multitude of areas. They may be based on shared interests, challenges, a common bond, background, identity, characteristic, or any combination thereof. They are often, but not always, organized around the protected grounds under the Ontario Human Rights Code, including race, ancestry, place of origin,

colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, gender identity and gender expression, creed (religion), sex, sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, or disability. Some examples of types of ERGs include:

Race and Ethnicity

- Black
- East Asian
- Indigenous
- Latinx
- Middle Eastern
- South Asian

Religion

- Buddhist
- Christian
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Spirituality
- Sikh

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression

- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Gender Neutral
- Non-Binary
- Trans
- Women

Family and Parents

- Mothers
- Single Parents

Neurodiversity and Ability

- Disabilities
- Mental Health and Wellness
- Neurodiversity

International

- Immigrants
- Newcomers

Shared Interests or Challenges

- Being a Caregiver
- Reservists or Veterans
- Supporting family members with cancer

+ many others

2 | The Benefits of ERGs

Employee Resource Groups can benefit not only members, but also organizations and the community. Below are some examples of how ERG's can support your members, your Service, and your communities.

Benefits for Members:

- Creating an inclusive, open forum for members who share commonalities to meet and support one another.
- Creating a sense of connection and belonging, which can enhance individual job satisfaction and engagement.
- Improving working conditions for alienated, isolated, or uninvolved members.
- Amplifying minority voices and increasing the visibility of the group.
- Mentoring and informal coaching that can occur within the group.
- Networking across divisions/units/service areas – discussions with people from areas that a member might not be exposed to otherwise.
- Opportunity to take on leadership roles within an ERG allows employees to demonstrate successful leadership skills which might not be available in their day-to-day work.
- Providing support and encouragement with challenges or career development.
- Planning and implementing social, cultural and awareness enhancing opportunities.
- Potential for lowering the chance of mental health concerns, bad morale, and stress.
- Information sharing and learning from others.



Benefits for Organizations:

- Fostering an inclusive workplace where employees feel comfortable bringing all aspects of themselves to work and enhancing the engagement and overall health and wellbeing of members.
- Providing opportunities for personal and professional development that members may not get otherwise. ERGs are often comprised of members from across an organization at various levels. This allows a unique opportunity for formal and informal mentoring to help members develop toward their professional goals.
- Amplification of minority voices and identification of issues or barriers for groups of members.
- Greater employee retention and job satisfaction.
- Supporting recruitment of diverse members as ERGs may attract candidates, and ERG members may be able to assist in attendance at recruitment events.
- Enhancement of education and awareness of all members through activities and initiatives brought forward by these groups.
- Enhanced ability for creative problem solving and innovation through the gathering of people from many areas throughout an organization.
- A shift toward a more psychologically safe and culturally competent organization.
- Identification and development of potential leaders within the organization.
- Solutions generated to organizational-wide challenges.

Benefits for Communities:

- The awareness and knowledge of members to better understand the needs of diverse citizens and provide improved service.
- Employees are also community members. Employees of diverse backgrounds and perspectives can share feedback and experiences that may be similar to those of diverse communities.
- The engagement, happiness, and health of members can result in higher quality of service provided to community members.

3 | Getting Started – Building an ERG Program

Creating an ERG Program

Assessing Readiness

Understanding your organizational structure and culture is crucial for determining readiness to implement an ERG Program. It should not be considered a given that your members would be interested in participating in ERGs. ERGs can sometimes be viewed as divisive, creating the perception of an “us vs. them” environment. While not all members might be interested, if a self-identified group feels it would be beneficial, then it should be considered. Remember that your program may start slowly but grow with time as members assess for themselves whether or not they think the program is beneficial.

Different quantitative and qualitative tools can be applied to evaluate an organization's openness to adopt the program including, but not limited to:

- Internal member surveys
- Member turnover and retention metrics
- Facilitated member focus groups or interviews
- Cultural assessment tools
- Leadership interviews and/or focus groups
- Member satisfaction surveys
- Review of existing member resources



Obtaining Buy-In

Executive Champions/Sponsors

Establishing an executive champion or sponsor for the development and implementation of an ERG program is crucial for long-term success, as it provides credibility and legitimacy to the program. Senior leadership's visible support signifies to the organization that this initiative is a priority, and central to the Service's core values. Moreover, it drives long-term strategic alignment for organizational goals, key performance indicators (KPIs), and decision-making.

Messaging to Potential Executive Champions/Sponsors could include:

- **Demonstrating alignment with the organization's strategic priorities.**
Present a business-case/rationale that outlines how the establishment of and investment into an ERG program can contribute to the organization's long-term goals and needs, such as strengthened member recruitment and retention.

- **Providing research-informed insights.**

Highlight existing research, data and/or case studies that offer insight and credibility to the value and measurable outcomes that can be achieved through the implementation of an ERG program.

Associations

Consulting with and seeking feedback from your Police Association(s) can help to gain valuable insight into developing a successful ERG program and assisting with member participation. Police Associations may have information on what members are looking for to best respond to members' needs with your program. Having the support of your Police Association could also help to get buy-in from your leadership, as well as promoting ERGs and their benefits to members. Police Associations may also be willing to help support organizational ERGs with financial contributions since they provide significant benefits to members.

Program Development and Management – Policy

Determining a program development and management policy is necessary for long-term ERG program evolution and sustainability. The policy should be viewed as a dynamic and living document, subject to scheduled reviews and changes as required to ensure accountability and credibility. This document should adhere to existing organizational practices, and include considerations of the following:

- **Purpose:** Define the purpose of the ERG program, including alignment with the organization's strategic priorities and long-term goals.
- **Program Oversight:** Determine the appropriate reporting structure for your ERG program to report in to. This could be an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Unit, an Executive Officer, Wellness Unit, Human Resources, or other appropriate body. Determining this reporting structure is important for program approvals, budget requests, and program advocacy.
- **Governance Structure:** Establish the role of the ERG, its structure, and the functional roles responsible for overseeing its strategic direction and accountable reporting.
- **Program Structure:** Defining whether the program is all encompassing as a general support network, or if it is to be sectioned into specific sub-groups for further refined and detailed service offerings.
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Determine quantifiable metrics for performance evaluation, e.g., pre and post participation surveys, participation volume, engagement levels, organizational turnover.
- **Communication Practices:** Identify communication channels to keep members informed and engaged in the ERG program.

- **Confidentiality:** Build in confidentiality considerations to policy as confidentiality is extremely critical in building trust with members and for an ERG program. Remember that due to the nature of the ERG, for example 2SLGBTQIA+, members might not want others to know they are part of the ERG as to not “out” themselves. While you might wish to report names of board or steering committee members, it is not advised that member names be reported on.

Alignment with Organizational Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) and Human Rights Goals and Priorities

The ERG program should be directly linked to the broader organizational EDI and human rights strategy. If one is yet to be formalized, an ERG could serve as an initial resource to develop one. This creates alignment between ERG activities and organizational goals, as both will be able to harmoniously evolve. To establish this aspect of an ERG program, it is important to identify and understand EDI priorities specific to one's organization, which will inform the strategy and measurables to ensure operational cohesion. Considerations that can be taken to foster this alignment may include:

- Exploring inclusive EDI-focused leadership development
- Aligning ERG programming with organizational training initiatives
- Maintaining accountable communications

Funding Model

Funding can be explored through several means, including:

- **Volunteerism:** Leveraging the skill sets of those willing to dedicate time and resources in a voluntary capacity to initially establish an ERG program and demonstrate its potential to leadership.
- **Budget Allocation:** Dependent on fiscal feasibility, a business case highlighting the return on investment and operational benefits may afford an allocation of funds from the organization's budget.
- **Associations:** Many are willing to contribute funds or monies for events as they recognize the value that ERGs bring to their membership.
- **Grants:** Grant opportunities are a viable resource to explore for the initial development of an ERG program.

Communications

It is imperative to identify communication channels that will keep members informed and engaged in the ERG program. By maintaining strong communication practices, a sense of belonging has the potential to be fostered. Moreover, this is an opportunity to showcase ERG impact, accountability, transparency and alignment with organizational strategic priorities.

Methods of communication can include, but are not limited to:

- Intranet – e.g. dedicated SharePoint Page
- Branded and consistently scheduled emails
- Printed posters circulated throughout the member workplace (where feasible)
- Annual reports to members and senior leadership
- Email based newsletters
- ERG member spotlight / success stories
- Member surveys and polling
- Subject matter presentations and training sessions
- Internal video updates and resources
- Internal podcasts

4 | Developing an ERG Structure

Mission and Goals

The creation of an ERG's mission and goals is a critical component to a successful start. Both elements help to set the direction of the ERG and ensure all participants, along with the organization, are on the same page in terms of what drives them and what they aim to achieve.

Mission: A statement in concise words that describes the purpose for being. Why does your ERG exist? What is the purpose?

Goals: Describe the specific achievements that your ERG is looking to accomplish. These are the actions that your ERG wants to complete and help to achieve the mission. Examples could include things such as:

- Subject matter presentations and training sessions to enhance knowledge of members on certain topics
- Internal video updates and resources to support ERG members
- Internal podcasts to share information throughout the organization
- Meetings to allow for connection amongst ERG members to provide support to one another



Terms of Reference/Charter

Terms of Reference or Charter documents provide specific information about your ERG and more details about your group, scope of work, group structure, roles and responsibilities, membership terms, decision-making, meeting frequency, and other important working details.

Completion of a Terms of Reference document or Charter is important to help provide your group with a framework, outline all members' responsibilities, and ensure everyone is clear about deliverables, timelines, and accountability. See the Terms of Reference Template in the Appendices for a sample you can use to create your own.

Membership including Executive/Board/Steering Committee

Setting up an appropriate structure can help your ERG make progress and achieve desired goals. The structure may differ depending on the size of your group or size of your Service, but including elements of decision-making hierarchy and leadership endorsement can set your ERG up for success.

Chairs

A Chair or Co-Chairs lead the group and typically drive some of the direction and actions of the ERG. Having a 'point person' or two leads can be beneficial in bringing the group together, organizing participants, and being the leadership presence that groups need. It also helps to keep the group on track, progressing and accountable.

Steering Committee/Board

Larger groups may want to include a Steering Committee, or small group of lead members, that help to set the direction of the ERG, make decisions, and take on tasks. This group often assists the Chairs and can be a strong voice for informing direction, priorities, and action items. Again, depending on size, this group may be from 4-10 people, or perhaps more. Remember that having a Steering Committee that is too big could lead to difficulty in making decisions or coming to consensus on action items. If you have a small group of members, a Steering Committee might not be necessary and your entire group can serve this purpose.

Executive Champions/Sponsors

Having a Champion or Sponsor for your ERG who sits at the executive level provides significant benefit and is recommended. The Executive Champion can provide advice on your mission, goals and action items, as well as raise the profile of your group at executive tables. They can act as an advocate on your behalf to achieve buy in and approvals at the executive level.

Seek out an Executive Champion that your group believes would be a strong ally and advocate for your group. It is also important to ensure your Executive Champion is aligned with your mission and identified purpose and priorities.

Members

ERG members will make up the majority of your group. It is recommended that groups be open to ALL members, including those who identify as allies. This creates less opportunity for feelings of divisiveness amongst members or an “us vs. them” environment. It can also help to create innovative problem solving and an opportunity for members to understand more about their colleagues and some of the challenges they may face.

Meeting Schedules

Depending on the goals of your group, you might meet more or less frequently. It is recommended to have at minimum, a quarterly meeting with your entire group to discuss action items, progress, and also just for connection. In-person meetings can be of great importance for conversation and connection, and while not always possible, should try to be implemented at least periodically.

Meeting schedules and attendance expectations should be laid out within the Terms of Reference Document and be as accessible to members as possible.

Work Planning – Setting ERG Activities/Areas of Focus

When planning your work and action items, do not overwhelm yourselves and members of the ERGs. What is reasonable to complete within the next 3-6-12 months? Set goals that are achievable, as trying to complete too much often results in feelings of discouragement or unmet expectations.

- Review your goals and brainstorm all action items that would contribute to completing or advancing goals.
- Prioritize action items with your Steering Committee and membership. When prioritizing, consider the following elements:
 - What will make the biggest impact for the most people?
 - What can be done relatively easily and quickly – the “low-hanging fruit”?
 - What needs to be done first before other items can be tackled?
 - What will provide the biggest return on your investment?
 - If your group could do only one thing, what would it be?
 - What is a nice to have vs. a need to have?
 - What needs to be done now vs. what could wait until later?

- After you have prioritized, assess for what you can feasibly achieve and consider bucketing items into 3-month, 6-month and 12-month timeframes. It may be helpful to assign leads for each item at this stage to ensure they have capacity to fulfil any timeframes committed to.
- Review activities and areas of focus with your Executive Champion for their feedback and assessment.
- Capture actions/activities in a project plan, including leads and deadlines, to help stay on track and accountable.

5 | Maintaining Momentum and Engagement

Sustaining ERG membership requires consistent promotion, creative outreach and keeping members engaged to maximize the group's impact.

Strategies for Sustaining, Engaging and Growing ERGs

- **Volunteerism:** Leveraging the skill sets of those willing to dedicate time and resources in a voluntary capacity to initially establish an ERG program and demonstrate its potential to leadership.
- **Engage All Employees:** Host events like volunteer days, awareness campaigns, and social activities. Offering different types of events will attract more members and keep them involved. Make sure to plan activities that are inclusive and appealing to a wide range of members. For example, you could host a virtual book club, a panel discussion, or a family-friendly event to ensure there is something for everyone. Consider different times of day, days of the week, etc., to make events accessible for everyone.
- **Measure and Report Impact:** Track your progress on goals. Sharing your success keeps members motivated and shows the impact of your ERG. Regular updates also help maintain leadership support by demonstrating the group's value. Consider creating a quarterly newsletter to highlight your ERG's accomplishments and upcoming activities.



Employee Resource Group Event Ideas:

- **Workshops and Webinars:** Host educational sessions on topics relevant to your ERG's mission, such as career development, cultural awareness, or mental health.
- **Social Events:** Plan activities like themed lunches to help members connect in a relaxed setting.
- **Volunteer Projects:** Organize community service events that align with your ERG's mission. For example, a Veterans ERG might partner with local organizations to support veterans in need.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Use special months or days (e.g., Black History Month, National Indigenous History Month, Pride Month, etc.) to educate members and celebrate diversity.
- **Cause-Focused Volunteer Events:** Cause-focused volunteer events are a powerful way for ERGs to support their community and engage allies across the organization. These events are tied to specific cause awareness months and give ERGs a unique opportunity to make a meaningful impact. For example, a Pride ERG could host a Pride Month community volunteer event, in which the ERG and allies come together to support a local 2SLGBTQIA+ organization. This event aligned with the ERG's mission, encourages community connection and can result in a meaningful volunteer experience.
- **Charitable Fundraising Campaigns:** Charitable fundraising campaigns offer ERGs the opportunity to support important causes by raising awareness and funds for local organizations. For example, during Black History Month, a Black Employee Resource Group may organize a fundraising campaign for a local organization that empowers Black youth. Fundraising campaigns not only bring members and a local organization together to rally around a common cause but can also extend to the entire ERG's organization that results in making a real difference for communities.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Mentorship programs offer ERGs a structured way to support professional development within their group. These programs can take two forms:
 1. Internal ERG Mentorship: ERG members are mentored by experienced members within the organization, gaining valuable career guidance and skills development.
 2. Community Mentorship: ERG members act as mentors for a local organization program, such as mentoring youth from underrepresented communities. This allows ERG members to give back while also building leadership skills.

- **Cultural Exchange Days:** Cultural exchange days are an opportunity for ERG members to celebrate and share their cultural backgrounds with others in the organization. This type of event might include traditional foods, music, and storytelling, promoting diversity and inclusivity. These events create a unique experience that bring together members from all backgrounds, strengthening connections across the organization.

Local organizations that focus on cultural education can make these events even better. They can bring in guest speakers, provide educational materials, and offer insights into cultural traditions. By collaborating with local organizations, ERGs can host more immersive and informative events that deepen cultural understanding across the organization.

- **Speaker Panels:** Speaker panels are an excellent way for ERGs to connect members with experts in fields relevant to their mission. Speaker panels provide valuable knowledge, raise awareness, and foster discussions on topics that matter to ERG members and allies.
- **Professional Development Workshops:** Professional development workshops allow ERG members to grow professionally while gaining new skills. For example, a Women in Leadership ERG could offer their expertise to host a workshop on leadership development and career advancement.
- **Partner with other ERGs:** Consider partnering with other ERGs to expand your reach and provide new opportunities for members. Collaborating with other groups can help you learn best practices, combine resources, and increase the visibility of your ERG.



6 | Measurement and Evaluation

Leveraging ERGs for Success

Tracking and reporting on ERG's progress is a good way to show achievements and keep members excited. Tracking accomplishments can reveal what is working and areas for improvement. Reporting holds ERGs accountable to ensure objectives are measured, achieved, and align with larger organizational equity and inclusion goals.

- **Year-End Reporting** – ERGs should track and annually report on their goals and accomplishments; this includes budget expenditures. Such data is important to show the organization how an ERG is performing.
- **Dedicated Budget Line** – Some of the programming that ERGs will do may require funding. It is important that ERGs are equipped with the resources they need to achieve their goals. Acquiring a budget demonstrates to ERGs that the organization is behind them.

Evaluation Measures

Well-established metrics are an important way to track the success of ERGs and possibly reveal areas for improvement. Metrics are also a good indicator of members engagement and can boost the request for additional ERG funding.

- **Setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** – Defining clear and measurable KPIs for ERG activities can provide valuable insights into their impact and effectiveness. These indicators may include membership growth, member engagement and satisfaction, or the realization of specific project objectives.
 - For example, if an ERG's goal is to increase membership by 20% within six months, they can track the number of new members and assess their engagement and satisfaction levels. Similarly, if an ERG is working on a project to promote inclusion in the workplace, they can measure the project's success by the number of members who participated in the initiative and the impact it had on the organization's culture.

Suggested reporting metrics to include in a year-end report:

- **Overall Membership** – Track the number of members that belong to each ERG year-over-year. High membership numbers indicate that ERGs are serving the workplace population as intended and members find value in the ERG's offering.
- **Number of Events** – Track the number of ERG events held per year.
- **Event Attendance** – Track the number of people attending an ERG event, meeting or activity. Tracking this data helps you understand how engaged members are and whether the group is meeting their needs. Low participation rates may indicate that the group's activities are not aligned with the interests of its members or that the group needs to do more to promote its activities and engage members.
- **Professional Development** – Number of members attending professional development opportunities provided by an ERG.
- **Mentorship Program Participation** – Track the number of members who participate in an ERG specific mentoring program or the organization's mentorship program.
- **Community Initiatives** – Track the number of community service initiatives led by an ERG. These may include volunteering, charitable donations, or additional forms of community service.
- **Participant Satisfaction** – Surveys or feedback mechanisms can be used to measure how satisfied members are with the ERG and its activities. This metric is important as it helps to understand whether the ERG is meeting its members' needs or if there are opportunities for improvement. A high level of member satisfaction with the ERG can also contribute to improved engagement and retention rates. Here are two suggested ways you can gather satisfaction survey data.
 - **Community Initiatives** – Track the number of community service initiatives led by an ERG. These may include volunteering, charitable donations, or additional forms of community service.
 - **Member Surveys** – Surveys can be used to gather feedback from ERG members on their overall satisfaction with the group and its activities. Surveys can also be used to gather feedback on specific areas such as events and activities, communication, and leadership. For example, you can ask questions such as:
 - On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the overall ERG?
 - How would you rate the quality of the events and activities organized by the ERG?
 - How effectively does the ERG communicate with its members?
 - How would you rate the leadership of the ERG?

- **Feedback Sessions** – Feedback sessions can be used to gather feedback on specific areas of the ERG program, such as events and activities, communication, and leadership. Feedback sessions should be structured to encourage open and honest communication, with a focus on constructive feedback. For example, you can ask questions such as:
 - What do you like about the ERG?
 - What areas of the ERG do you think could be improved?
 - How can the ERG better meet the needs of its members?
 - What suggestions do you have for future events and activities?
- **Report Out** – Remember to share an overall ERG year-end report with the organization and senior leaders in an electronic newsletter, blog, etc.

Barriers and Limitations

Well-established metrics are an important way to track the success of ERGs and possibly reveal areas for improvement. Metrics are also a good indicator of members' engagement and can boost the request for additional ERG funding.

- **Understand the Level of Involvement of Members** – Not all members in ERGs are able to contribute/participate at the same level due to staffing levels and workloads. Don't discount low levels of engagement when evaluating the success of ERGs. Keep in mind the 80-20 rule, in which 80% of the work is accomplished by 20% of ERG members.
- **Rigid Goal Setting** – ERGs may have the urge to establish goals/objectives that are very rigid and quantitative. This can place undue pressure on ERGs. If an ERG is unable to fulfill targets, this may have the unwanted effect of triggering doubt from members who have not already bought into the value that ERGs can have for members.

Sample Templates for Success – Refer to appendices for the following templates and documents you can use:

- FAQs ERG
- Business Case Template and Sample
- ERG Terms of Reference Template
- ERG Funding Request Form Template
- ERG Year End Review Template
- ERG case sample 2SLGBTQIA+

7 | Glossary of Terms

- **2SLGBTQIA+:** Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual or allies, plus all additional identities.
- **Creed:** A sincerely, freely and deeply held belief. It is integrally linked to a person's self-definition and spiritual fulfilment; is a particular, comprehensive and overarching system of belief that governs one's conduct and practices; addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a creator and/or a higher or different order of existence; has some "nexus" or connection to an organization or community that professes a shared system of belief.
- **Cultural Competence:** An ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures, particularly in human resources, non-profit organizations, and government agencies whose employees work with persons from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds.
- **Disability:** There are two common ways of looking at what disability is. One way is to see a disability as a medical condition that a person has. From this perspective, disability covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and some not visible. A disability may have been present from birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. There are physical, mental, cognitive and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, drug and alcohol dependencies, environmental sensitivities and other conditions. A newer way of looking at disability is that it is not something a person has. A person with a medical condition is not necessarily prevented (or disabled) from fully taking part in society. If society is designed to be accessible and include everyone, then people with medical conditions often don't have a problem taking part. From this point of view, disability is a problem that occurs when a person's environment is not designed to suit their abilities.
- **Diversity:** The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within an individual, group or organization. Diversity includes such factors as age, sex, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, religion, sexual orientation, educational background and expertise.
- **Employee Resource Groups:** Employee led groups that serve many purposes depending on the organization and its focus, structure, sector and / or industry. Their primary purpose is to provide equity-deserving groups with a formal structure within the organization to support their unique needs.
- **Equitable:** Just or characterized by fairness or equity. Equitable treatment can at times differ from same treatment.

- **Equity-Deserving Group:** A group of people who, because of systemic discrimination, face barriers that prevent them from having the same access to the resources and opportunities that are available to other members of society, and that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. In Canada, groups generally considered to be equity-deserving groups include women, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, people who are part of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, religious minority groups and racialized people.
- **Inclusion:** Appreciating and using our unique differences – strengths, talents, weaknesses and frailties – in a way that shows respect for the individual and ultimately creates a dynamic multi-dimensional organization.
- **Ethnicity:** Sharing a distinctive cultural and historical tradition often associated with race, place of origin, ancestry or creed.
- **Family Status:** Being in a parent and child relationship. The grounds of marital and family status intersect to cover a range of family forms, including lone parent and blended families, as well as families where the parents are in a 'common law' relationship.
- **Gender Expression:** How a person publicly presents or expresses their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways people express their gender. Others perceive a person's gender through these attributes.
- **Gender Identity:** Each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex. For most people, their sex and gender identity align. For some, it does not. A person may be assigned male at birth but identify as a woman, or assigned female at birth but identify as a man. Other people may identify outside the categories of woman/man or may see their gender identity as fluid and moving between different genders at different times in their life.

- **Neurodiversity:** The variation in neurological functioning and behavioural traits considered as a normal phenomenon in the human population. The concept of neurodiversity is inclusive as it encompasses both neurodivergent and neurotypical people. Neurodivergent refers to a person with neurological functioning or behavioural traits that differ from what is considered typical. For example, people with autism, dyslexia or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder are considered neurodivergent. The term "neurodiverse" is often mistakenly used to refer to a neurodivergent person. However, "neurodiverse" refers to the variety of neurological traits possessed by a group. Therefore, a person cannot be neurodiverse.
- **Race:** A term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits (phenotypes) such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has created (i.e. "socially constructed"), with significant consequences for people's lives. Racial categories may vary over time and place and can overlap with ethnic, cultural or religious groupings.
- **Religion:** Any religious denomination, group, sect, or other religiously defined community or system of belief and/or spiritual faith practices.
- **Sex and Gender:** Whereas "sex" is a person's physical characteristics, "gender" is about what it means to be a man or woman in society. It is the expectations and stereotypes about behaviours, actions and roles linked to being a "man" or "woman." Social norms related to gender can vary depending on the culture and can change over time.
- **Sexual Orientation:** The direction of one's sexual interest or attraction. It is a personal characteristic that forms part of who you are. It covers the range of human sexuality from lesbian and gay, to bisexual and heterosexual.

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