

# Employee Resource Groups (ERG) Needs Assessment Progress Report

APRIL 1, 2026

# Introduction/Background

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are integral to Queen's University's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable work environment. Recognizing their importance, the 2023 **ERG Needs Assessment** was conducted to identify opportunities, challenges, and recommendations for supporting ERGs across the university. This work aligned with Action Item 12 of the **Employment Equity Plan 2023/24**.

This assessment involved input from leaders across seven existing or emerging ERGs and identified actionable steps to enhance support, resources, visibility, and professional development for ERG leaders and members.

In response to the assessment, an ERG Recommendations Working Group was established to coordinate and oversee the implementation of proposed actions.

The Working Group is comprised of representatives from the Office of the VPCEI, the Human Rights and Equity Office (HREO), and Human Resources (HR). This cross-unit collaboration ensures comprehensive support, strategic alignment, and joint accountability for advancing ERG initiatives and embedding equity and inclusion across all sectors of the institution.

This report provides a progress update on the recommendations presented in the Needs Assessment with a focus on implementation status and next steps.



# Administrative Home

**Recommendation:** The Office of the Vice-Principal (Culture, Equity, Inclusion) (VPCEI) should serve as the administrative home for all ERGs.

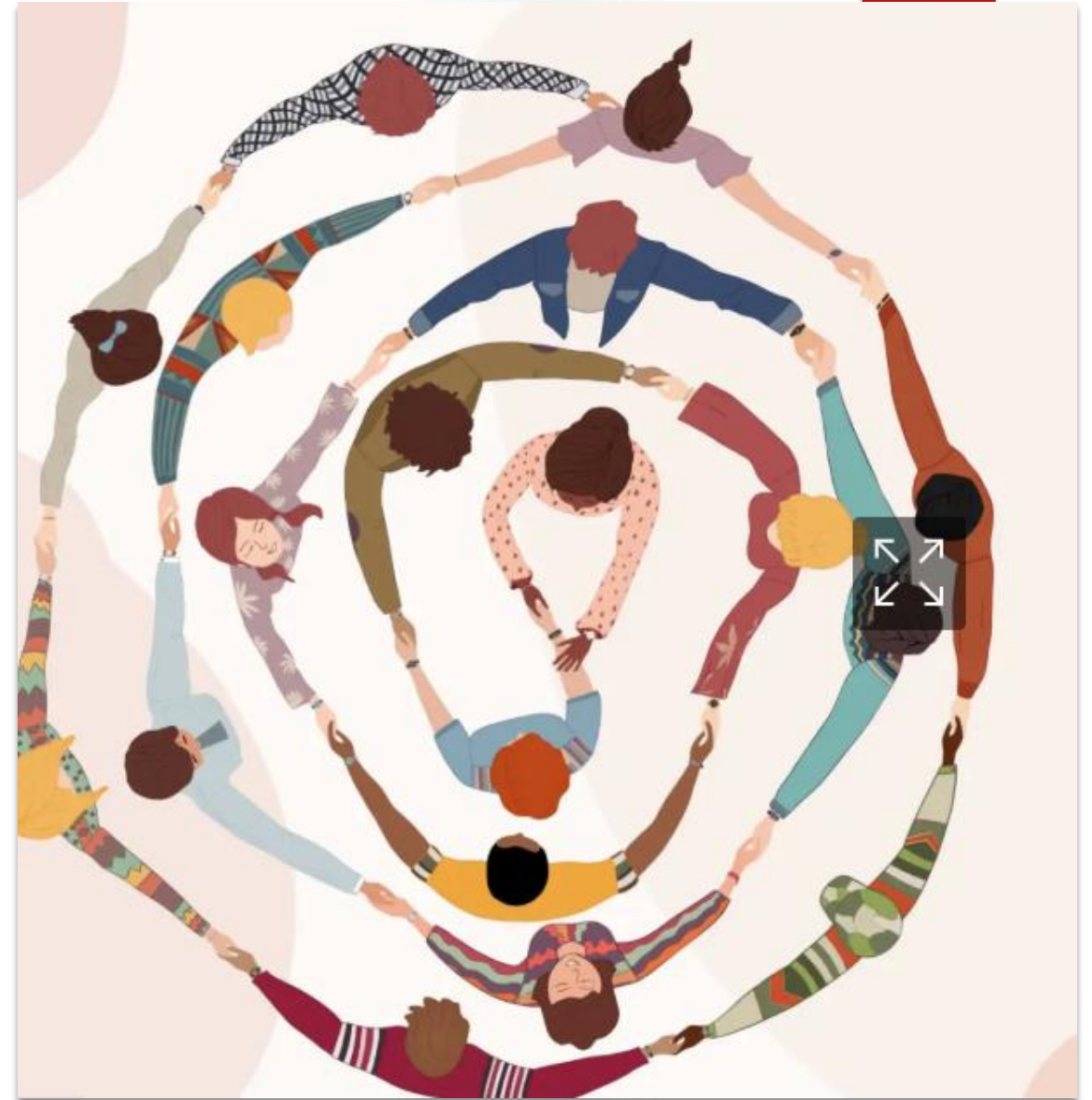
**Progress:** The Office of the VPCEI has formally assumed responsibility for coordinating and managing the administrative functions related to ERGs throughout the University. This means that instead of each ERG handling their own administrative tasks independently, there is now a centralized office dedicated to supporting these groups. This centralized support includes assistance with event planning, communication, budgeting and website development. By taking this lead, the Office of the VPCEI aims to streamline operations, enhance collaboration, ensure consistency in support services, and ultimately strengthen the impact and effectiveness of ERGs in fostering an inclusive and equitable campus environment.



# Financial Support

**Recommendation:** Guaranteed baseline funding of \$1,000 with potential for additional funding.

**Progress:** The Diversity and Inclusion Fund guarantees each ERG an annual allocation of \$1,000 to support their programming, while the Inclusive Community Fund provides additional funding opportunities for ERGs to apply for resources beyond this baseline. Together, these funds ensure ERGs have the financial support needed to advance their initiatives across the University. Both funds are managed and administered through the Office of the VPCEI.



# ERG Websites

**Recommendation:** Move and refresh the ERG website under the Office of the VPCEI with clear processes for forming and joining ERGs.

**Progress:** The webpage dedicated to supporting Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) has been successfully updated and moved to the Office of the (VPCEI). This relocation centralizes information and resources related to ERGs, making it easier for members and the broader University community to access relevant content. Additionally, coordination efforts with Human Resources have been completed to ensure seamless linkage between the VPCEI site and HR's website, enhancing navigation and resource accessibility.



# Physical Space

**Recommendation:** Secure dedicated, no-cost physical space for ERGs to meet and store materials.

**Progress:** The Office of the VPCEI in collaboration with the Human Resources (HR) department, has successfully secured dedicated space for all ERGs within the Faculty & Staff Learning Facility (FSLF) in B176 Mackintosh Corry Hall. This allocation provides ERGs with a centralized, physical location on campus where they can store their materials, resources, and supplies conveniently and securely. In addition to storage, the space also includes designated meeting areas, enabling ERGs to hold gatherings, planning sessions, and events in a consistent and accessible environment.



# Annual ERG Gathering

**Recommendation:** Organize and fund an annual ERG event focusing on leadership and networking.

**Progress:** The Office of the VPCEI successfully funded and coordinated the inaugural ERG Gathering in May 2024, marking a significant milestone in fostering connection and collaboration among ERGs across the University. This initial event provided a dedicated platform for ERG members and leaders to come together, share best practices, celebrate achievements, and build a stronger sense of community. Building on its success, the ERG Gathering was held again on June 17th, 2025, further solidifying its role as a key opportunity for networking, learning, and mutual support.



**Given the positive reception and growing participation, the Office of the VPCEI has committed to making the ERG Gathering an annual tradition.**

# Recognition

**Recommendation:** Recognize ERG leadership as valued community service with release time policies.

**Progress:** The ERG Recommendations Working Group developed and implemented the [ERG Leaders Time Release Policy](#) in early 2025. Stephanie Simpson, Vice-Principal (Culture, Equity and Inclusion), updated the ERG Leads about the policy at the ERG Gathering. On October 22, HREO and HR met with the Client Services Team in Human Resources to discuss the policy. Further communications included a Gazette story on November 10 and a memo from VPCEI to the Queen's Managerial and Professional Group (QMPG) on November 11. The policy recognizes the valuable contributions of ERG Leaders. ERG Leaders are eligible for up to 12 hours per month of paid time release to perform ERG related duties.



# Time Allocation

**Recommendation:** Provide appropriate compensated time for ERG members and leaders to attend and organize events.

**Progress:** Enhanced language regarding time allocations has been incorporated into the [Employee Resource Group \(ERG\) webpage](#) to provide clearer, more detailed guidance to Managers on how employees can utilize their work time to participate in ERG activities. This improvement aims to address previous ambiguities about the amount and types of time employees are permitted to dedicate to ERG-related initiatives during regular work hours.



# Contributions

**Recommendation:** Recognize the contribution of ERG leaders via events and awards developed collaboratively with ERGs.

**Progress:** The ERG Gatherings held in May 2024 and June 2025 functioned not only as an opportunity for ERG members to connect and share best practices but also as a formal recognition event celebrating the achievements and dedication of ERG leaders across the organization. During this gathering, leaders were acknowledged for their efforts in driving inclusion, fostering community, and supporting the organization's diversity goals.





# Formal Recognition

**Recommendation:** Include ERG participation in Staff Performance Dialogue (PDP) and Faculty Reviews.

**Progress:** ERG participation is now formally integrated into the Staff Performance Dialogue (PDP) Process, ensuring that employees' contributions to ERG activities are recognized as part of their overall performance assessment. This integration reflects the organization's commitment to valuing inclusive leadership and community engagement as important components of professional growth and organizational success.



# Mentorship

**Recommendation:** HR and HREO to provide and support tailored mentorship programs for ERGs.

**Progress:** Building on the established framework provided by the Queen's Women's Network (QWN), the ERG Working Group is actively exploring opportunities to adapt and expand mentorship initiatives to serve the broader range of ERGs within the university. While no formal, university-wide mentorship program dedicated to all ERGs has been launched, these exploratory efforts are focused on identifying best practices, assessing the unique needs of diverse ERG members, and designing approaches to foster meaningful connections. To further this work, mentorship will be a key topic of discussion at the June 2026 ERG Gathering.



# Leadership Programs

**Recommendation:** Integrate ERG leaders into existing leadership development programs focused on I-EDIAA principles.

**Progress:** Human Resources has proactively reserved dedicated spots within established leadership cohort programs, specifically for ERG leaders, ensuring they have prioritized access to advanced training opportunities designed to enhance their leadership skills within an equity-focused framework. Additionally, discussions are underway regarding funding waivers to reduce financial barriers for ERG leaders' participation, demonstrating a commitment to making these development opportunities accessible and inclusive.



# Leadership Awareness

**Recommendation:** Deliver ongoing sessions to senior leadership on ERG benefits and ways to engage.

**Progress:** Targeted presentations have been delivered to senior leaders and Deans, strategically aligned with the rollout of the ERG Release Time policy to maximize relevance and impact. These sessions have focused on highlighting how ERGs contribute to fostering a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture, enhancing employee engagement, and advancing organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. These presentations aim to encourage active sponsorship and support for ERGs, ensuring leadership is well-equipped to champion ERG initiatives and integrate them effectively within broader institutional priorities.



# Manager Training

**Recommendation:** Provide training and guidelines to supervisors/managers on how to support ERG involvement.

**Progress:** Training content has been developed that outlines best practices for fostering an inclusive environment, recognizing the value of ERG participation, and managing time allocations fairly for ERG leaders and members. To date, presentations have been delivered to the Client Services Team in Human Resources as well as QMPG. Additionally, an asynchronous, onboarding module, including information of ERGs, has been launched by Human Resources.



# Promotion

**Recommendation:** Improve communication and encourage ERG participation.

**Progress:** ERGs are now regularly promoted during New Hire Orientation sessions, ensuring new employees are introduced to these groups early in their university experience. Information about ERGs is also shared through monthly HR newsletters and disseminated via the equity listserv to reach a broad campus audience. Additionally, a dedicated promotion table is set up at key events to provide direct engagement opportunities. The Office of the VPCEI led several successful initiatives this year, including outreach during new faculty orientation, a membership drive at the summer Principal's BBQ, and another drive at the Principal's Holiday Gathering.



# Executive Sponsorship

**Recommendation:** HREO to support recruitment and training of executive sponsors for ERGs.

**Progress:** The HREO took the lead in defining the role and responsibilities of Executive Sponsors, with a clear and comprehensive Executive Sponsor definition that was reviewed and formally approved, providing a foundational framework for engaging senior leaders in this capacity. Executive Sponsors play a significant role in supporting ERGs by serving as influential advocates who help elevate ERGs' voices, connect them to organizational priorities, and increase their visibility and impact within the university. They offer valuable guidance and strategic insights that help ERGs navigate challenges and align their efforts with broader institutional goals.



“An executive sponsor can amplify who you are, what you’re doing, and any events that the ERG is having. They are a throughline to the rest of the executive team and any teams that they lead,” says Susie Silver, Director of Client Success for The Diversity Movement, a Workplace Options company.

# Ambassador Program

**Recommendation:** Match new employees with ERG members to foster connection during the first year.

**Progress:** As a foundational step, ERG information has been incorporated into the new employee onboarding training, ensuring that all incoming staff and faculty are introduced to ERG opportunities and the value they offer in building community and support networks within the university. While this integration raises awareness, formal coordination with broader HR onboarding initiatives to establish a structured mentorship or buddy program linking new hires directly with ERG members is pending.



# HREO as First Point of Contact

**Recommendation:** Ensure HREO provides initial and ongoing guidance on forming and sustaining ERGs.

**Progress:** Equity Advisors in the HREO have been designated as the primary points of contact for ERGs, offering advice, resources, and assistance throughout the lifecycle of the groups. This ongoing support role is clearly outlined within the ERG guidelines. By working with Equity Advisors who are knowledgeable about equity, diversity, and inclusion principles, HREO ensures that ERGs receive consistent, informed guidance tailored to their unique needs.



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This structure facilitates effective group development, helps address challenges proactively, and supports ERGs in building strong, sustainable communities that align with the university's broader equity and inclusion goals.

# Collaboration

**Recommendation:** Foster collaboration between HREO and HR to support ERG success.

**Progress:** As part of the broader effort to address all recommendations outlined in the ERG Recommendations Report, the VPCEI established an ERG Needs Assessment Working Group that includes representatives from the Office of the VPCEI, HR, and HREO. This cross-functional working group serves as a collaborative platform to identify and assess the evolving needs of ERGs, ensuring that the support provided is well-coordinated and responsive. This collaboration exemplifies a unified organizational commitment to strengthening ERGs as vital contributors to an inclusive and engaged campus culture.



# ERG Collective

**Recommendation:** Establish a formal ERG Collective for collaboration and advocacy.

**Progress:** Building on the foundation of the existing EQUI-TEA Teams group, this group was transitioned into the ERG Collective, serving as a centralized forum where ERG leaders and members can come together to share best practices, upcoming events, and coordinate initiatives. The ERG Collective is administered by staff within the Office of the VPCEI. We hope that the formation of the ERG Collective strengthens inter-group collaboration, fosters a unified approach to advancing inclusion goals, and ensures sustained support and visibility for ERGs across the university community.



# ERG Toolkit

**Recommendation:** Create accessible toolkit with universal templates to support ERG operations and develop clear documented processes for forming, joining ERGs, and Standard Operating Procedures for leaders.

**Progress:** The Toolkit was designed by the ERG Recommendation Working Group to support ERG leaders and members by offering practical guidance and resources for establishing, managing, and sustaining ERGs. Organized into seven sections, it covers everything from foundational concepts and pre-launch planning, to day-to-day operations, long-term growth, communications, and resources, contacts, and templates.



# Summary and Conclusion

- Significant strides have been made in implementing the assessment's recommendations, with the majority of actions completed or well underway. Centralized administrative and financial support, enhanced visibility, physical resource allocation, leadership development opportunities, and formal recognition processes have been successfully established. Areas requiring further development include mentorship programs and an ambassador onboarding program.
- The collaborative commitment demonstrated by the Office of the VPCEI, HREO, HR, ERG leaders, and senior university leadership highlights the institution's dedication to empowering ERGs as critical contributors to equitable and inclusive university culture.



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