



**Holland Bloorview**

Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

**Learn how to start an  
Employee Resource Group  
(ERG) or Interest Group:  
A Toolkit for Holland Bloorview employees**

# Learn how to start an Employee Resource Group (ERG) or Interest Group: A Toolkit for Holland Bloorview employees

We are grateful that you are interested in launching an Employee Resource Group (ERG) or Interest Group (IG) at Holland Bloorview. This brief toolkit and FAQ is designed to support you in getting your group up and running, and to share few promising practices and recommendations to guide you along the way.

This toolkit will help you to:

- Learn about ERGs/IGs, their structure and rationale for creating them
- Learn promising practices and processes to both establish and run effective ERGs/IGs
- Know who to contact for support

## What is an ERG/IG and why start one?

An **Employee Resource Group (ERG)**: Self-led employee identity or experienced based group whose goal is to build community and belonging. It is made up of employees with shared goals, hopes and interests, and provides a space that aspires towards full, uncompromised safety for employees who want to connect, provide, and receive support. It gives a space for disclosure, to discuss issues, find solutions, and can have a line of communication to management.

What is an **Interest Group (IG)**: An interest group is a similar group that is more casual in nature and brings together a community of people that desire to connect and build relationships. It is less focussed on achieving shared goals or activities. Sometimes, but not necessarily, interest groups can change over time and become Employee Resource Groups.

Should I start an ERG or Interest group? You may be thinking about whether you want to start an Employee Resource Group or an interest group. Here are a couple things to think about before choosing which group to go with.

1. **Membership size:** If you have just a few members to start off with, an interest group may be a good start and a way to discuss the purpose of what you would like to achieve.
2. **Purpose:** If the group members have a mission and objective they would like to support, an Employee Resource Group can effectively support this.

## What is the purpose and benefit of an ERG?

- **Employee satisfaction:** ERGs are shown to improve and increase employee job satisfaction as they create spaces where historically marginalized and underrepresented groups can feel included, heard, and safe.
- **Community and networking:** ERGs are often used as an opportunity to meet, network, and build relationships with other employees who share experiences and values. Feeling a part of

a community at work can increase psychological safety, improve mental health, and increase sense of empowerment.

- **Support and mentorship:** Through building community, ERGs offer a space to feel supported, heard, and valued. As ERGs can and do consist of employees at all levels throughout the organization, mentorship (both formal and informal) opportunities often arise. This can contribute to professional and personal development.
- **Resources and insights for organization:** As Holland Bloorview has committed to move forward on its journey towards racial and social justice, ERGs can be a valuable space where leadership can tap into experience and expertise of its employees and shape organizational culture.

### What are some examples of an ERG/IG?

- Black identified
- Women
- People of Colour/Racialized
- Mental Health
- Persons with Disabilities
- Pride/LGBTQ2+

### Videos of ERG in action at other organizations:

If you would like to see how ERG's exist in other organizations, we have collected some videos that you can review:

1. Diversity City (4 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cDnwP-3Fac>
2. Netflix (10 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeTVsw5fD38>
3. The Culture Conference (40 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WV0b5i3F5sE>

## How to start the process of launching an ERG/IG: Three steps:



**Step 1- Find a partner to launch the ERG/IG with:** Starting any group or project is always easier when you have a partner. We suggest you find one or two other employees that have similar interests in launching an ERG/IG. When you have found a partner, you can work together to set a meeting date and submit a communication request so that you can spread the word to others across the organization.

**Step 2: Set your first ERG/IG meeting:** Employee Resource Groups and interest groups really come to life when people come together. To get this moving it's important to have your first meeting, called by the ERG initiator, with all interested potential members to discuss your hopes and suggestions for how to structure the group. The initiator should decide the point of commonality and use this meeting to discuss how to structure (or not structure) the ERG, how often to meet, presence of allies or folks that do not identify with the group, etc.

**Step 3: Submitting an ERG/IG communication request:** What is a communication request? We want to support you in getting the word out across the organization to help other people learn about the ERG/IG. We created a template found in *Appendix 1* that you can complete and submit directly to [idea@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:idea@hollandbloorview.ca).

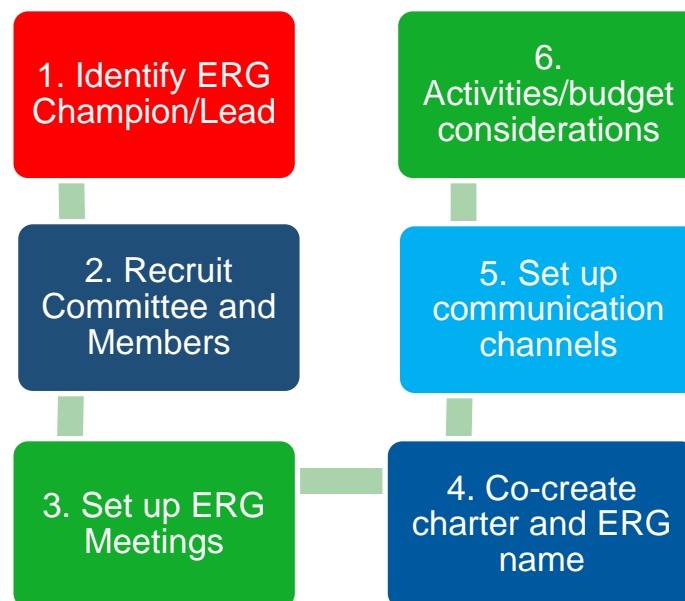
This request will support creation of an HBConnect article, posting on the internal IDEA webpage and inclusion in the HBConnect weekly email. We also recommend that you forward the HBConnect article/email to other employees you think might be interested in joining.

**There, you did it! You are on your way to creating a stronger and more connected community, thank you for taking the lead in making this happen!**

# Step by Step Guide: Planning for your first meeting and Best Practices

Now that you have completed the initial steps to launch your ERG (you have a partner, have set up your first meeting, and have submitted your communications request), it is time to start planning the details and logistics.

We developed the following roadmap to help employees think through the steps to consider when building and sustaining an Employee Resource Group. Not all steps are necessary, but they help establish discussions around key aspects like the mission, membership guidelines, recruitment, communication, and ongoing activities. Some steps can be added, removed, or happen simultaneously. Please see below for details and recommendations for each step.



## 1. Identify ERG Champion/Lead and Responsibilities:

- The ERG champion/lead will lead the members and committee in the successful execution of the ERG. Please note: this is a volunteer role and not paid.
- Responsibilities should include ensuring the ERG meets consistently, liaising with leadership and the IDEAA Task Force as needed, recruitment of members, and any other duties as defined by the ERG.
- Please advise [ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca) that you are beginning the process of starting an ERG so they support you throughout the process.
- **Best Practice Recommendations:**
  - Inform your manager and work with them to protect time for your role as an ERG Lead. We recommend a commitment of 4 hours a month (1 hour a week) to be able to successfully plan meeting agendas and content, write communication material, and recruit and promote your ERG.

## 2. Recruit General Members:

- General members are those who have interest in the mission and vision of the ERG and want to be kept aware of news, knowledge sharing, attend events and meetings, etc. but may not be responsible for planning or logistics
- General members can participate in an ERG in many ways. They may be involved in the implementation of initiatives both internally and externally. They can be responsible for specific planning and logistical activities such as communication, partnerships, event logistics, meeting minutes, etc.
- Being a member of an ERG is an unpaid voluntary position.
- **Best Practice Recommendations:**
  - Committee members can be self-appointed or voted on by the members. This will depend on the size of your ERG and the interest of folks in these positions
  - Membership should be limited to those that share the identity or experience of the community the ERG is for (e.g. only women should join the women's ERG) to ensure safety and comfort of members. (See more about this in Appendix 2)
  - Recruiting members of the ERG can be done through word of mouth and promotion through HB Connect (through the communication request in Appendix 1).
  - If you feel comfortable to do so, you have the option to inform your manager that you are a member of an ERG. You also have the option for your participation to remain confidential.
  - The time commitment will vary based on each ERG, but it is an estimated 2 hours a month.

## 3. Set up Inaugural and Subsequent ERG Meetings:

- Step 3 can be done simultaneously with step 2 and can be communicated as part of member recruitment.
- The inaugural meeting can be used to discuss the ERG, why you have created it, and to meet and start to build relationships within your community.
- Subsequent ERG meetings should be set up after the inaugural meeting to ensure that members can voice their preferred frequency of meetings, times, and days.
- **Best Practice Recommendations:**
  - The first meeting should be over Zoom to ensure accessibility for all. Subsequent meeting places should be decided as a group.
  - Poll your members to find the most suitable time and days to meet for the majority of your members. This ensures access to participate and engage with the ERG. Time can be on or off business hours as agreed upon by the members of the ERG.
  - To effectively build relationships and purpose of your ERG, it is recommended to meet monthly or bi-monthly. The frequency can be decided on by your members. Send meeting invites at least 2 months in advance to increase attendance.

#### 4. Co-create Charter/Terms of Reference:

- **Define Mission, Vision, and Purpose:**
  - What would you like to accomplish with your ERG? Is it a community space, would you like to work on or advance any initiatives, etc.?
  - Do you have any short and long term goals? Define them.
  - What will you call your ERG? Come up with a name that will be used to advertise and communicate your ERG to your members and to the organization.
- **Membership:**
  - It is recommended that your ERG membership is limited to folks that self-identify as part of the community or experience in which the ERG is for. If, as an ERG, there is consensus to open membership to allies, please review the guidelines as provided in *Appendix 2*
  - An Executive Sponsor can be valuable to an ERG as they can be a direct line of communication and support to senior management and can help bring awareness to issues, initiatives, and ERG objectives. This is optional and you should decide as an ERG if this is the best practice for your mission and vision.
  - The ERG Champion/Lead should keep track of both committee and general members – the membership list should remain confidential to ERG members only however, should not be anonymous (see *Appendix 2* for more guidelines on membership)
- **Engagement:**
  - Co-create with your members a set of rules and guidelines of ways to ensure safety, participation, and inclusion at meetings and within the ERG. This should be completed in the first meeting.
- **Best Practice Recommendations:**
  - The charter should be agreed upon by members, written down, and shared. Please contact [ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca) if you would like a template terms of reference that can be used as you build yours
  - Please see *Appendix 3* for some guidelines on inclusive meeting design and etiquette that can be used if you see fit.
  - Note: Creating a formal terms of reference is optional

#### 5. Set up Communications Channel:

- The ability to share information, best practices, and knowledge building resources, events, and meetings will be essential to the success of your ERG.
- Think through the best way to communicate the above to your members
- **Best Practice Recommendations:**
  - The ERG Champion should send meeting invites to events and webinars and member meetings

- Create a shared OneDrive for members of your ERG to easily share articles, resources, meeting minutes, etc.

## 6. Budget and activity considerations:

- Once your ERG is established, you may want to host events or webinars for your ERG or for all employees at Holland Bloorview. These activities and events are a great way to engage the broader community and to provide education and learning opportunities.
- If you require budget support for an activity or event, please contact [ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca) and put in a request with the amount requested.

## Contact:

Please contact [ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca) for any questions about this document and if you require additional guidance and support throughout the process.



## Appendix 1: Communication Request Form:

Submit a [communications request](#) which contains the information below and as much detail as possible.

1. What type of group are you aiming to launch at Holland Bloorview?
2. Is this an Employee Resource Group or Interest Group (or not sure yet)?
3. When is the first meeting? Please include Zoom link
4. What are you hoping the group can support with (maximum 2 sentences)?

## Appendix 2: Membership Guidelines

Please read below for best practice recommendations to ensure a safe space for members of your ERG.

- Members should be limited to those that self-identify with the community, group, or experience that your ERG is created to support.
  - Do not ask for proof: self-declaration is sufficient for self-identifying.
- **Allies/Accomplices:** Allies and accomplices are folks that do not identify with the community, group, or experience but that support and actively participate in making systemic change to reduce the reproduction of inequalities. Although allies are a valuable and integral part of moving racial and social justice work forward, it is not recommended that they be invited to be members of an ERG as it can and does change the safety and power dynamics a group. ERG's are meant to be self-led and to give an opportunity to hear voices that are often marginalized, silenced, and underrepresented.
  - Once an ERG is established, it is recommended to have “drop in days” (e.g. quarterly) meetings that are open to allies
  - Allies should be invited to some events that are around education and learning
  - Assign limited speaking and participation roles to allies (e.g. not being able to vote, not counting towards quorum where quorum is used)
- **Intersectionality:** it is important to remember that folks have multiple identities and can belong to more than one interest group or ERG.
  - Ensure your ERG is inclusive and takes into consideration intersectionality
- Each member should disclose whether they would like their membership to an ERG be confidential or public
- It can be beneficial to recruit a Senior Management Team member to be a member of your ERG in an advocate capacity. This is completely optional, however, can help to create a direct line of communication to management about issues, events, justice-related incidents, etc. For assistance and recommendations on how and who to recruit, please contact the IDEA team.

## Appendix 3: Inclusive Meeting Etiquette and Design

Please go to [HB Connect](#) to download the PowerPoint slides for Inclusive Meeting Etiquette and Design:

### Inclusive Meeting: etiquette

- 1. Practice compassion and allyship for the trans community** by introducing your pronouns and/or list your pronouns if you feel safe to do so.
- 2. Take responsibility for what you think and feel** by using “I statements”.
- 3. Demonstrate respect** by listening with an open-mind, aspiring to learn and better understand.
- 4. Recognize diversity** by continuously reflecting on the insights and limitations afforded to us by our lived experience.
- 5. Be aware of privileged positions each of us may hold:** be mindful of how much space is being taken up and by whom, reflecting on when our voice is needed and when others need the space to be heard.
- 6. Create space for others by briefly pausing after outlining key points:** This ensures that participants have a chance to respond.
- 7. Use the “raised hand” function** when you want to speak.

### Inclusive Meeting Design: virtual

#### **Ensure that all have access to the active conversation:**

- Ensure live transcription or interpretation is standard.
- When participants enter a virtual meeting, consider typing a greeting or wait until they acknowledge you – they may need to enable the Closed Captioning (CC) and miss your greeting.
- Take your time speaking to support the auto-captioning.
- Use the chat to outline key discussion points or lead questions to support participation.
- Offer chat as a way of participating as opposed or verbal.
- If enabling video, make sure your face is visible and not in shadow.

#### **Large groups can make it challenging for roundtable introductions and participation:**

- Offer the chat as an option to introduce oneself: offer this option verbally and in the chat.
- Offer private prompts if needed.
- Consider saying “I’m going in this order: X, then Y, then Z”; repeat as needed.

## Inclusive Meeting Design: in-person

### **Adapt based on size of room & number of participants**

1. The room layout provides a clear path from the entrance to the front of room. This accommodates speakers and participants using wheelchairs/walkers/scooters.
2. There is a clear sightline of the main speaker's face and if needed, a stationary or portable microphone is provided.
3. Participants use raised hand function to visually identify who is speaking OR the chair/host briefly re-caps e.g. "That's a good idea X, we can consider doing Y"
4. Encourage presenters/speakers to face the audience directly at all times.
5. Videos are captioned or a transcript made available.