



# Employee Resource Group Leadership Guide



August 2023

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# WELCOME

Thank you for your participation in MIT's Employee Resource Group (ERG) Program, and for your interest in a leadership role.

Employee Resource Groups are staff-initiated community groups and networks formed around shared values, characteristics, and backgrounds. ERGs play a vital role in supporting individuals, identities, and communities across MIT by creating a space for employees with common interests and concerns to meet and support one another. ERGs provide opportunities for community members to positively address issues, advance a respectful and caring community, and promote [MIT's values](#): excellence and curiosity, openness and respect, and belonging and community. They are also pivotal in advancing [MIT's Strategic Action Plan for Belonging, Achievement, and Composition](#).

In our roles as co-chairs for the program, we represent the Human Resources (HR) Department and the Institute Community and Equity Office (ICEO), which work together to support the ERG program. Ramona Allen, Vice President for Human Resources, and Daniel Hastings, Interim Institute Community and Equity Officer, are executive sponsors of the program.

This document is intended to provide guidance and insights about the many and varied aspects of an ERG leadership role. We will continue to expand this guide with resources each year. This is a living document to capture best practices and provide guiding principles for ERG leadership. The [most current version of this guide](#) will always be available on the ICEO website.

Sincerely,

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome .....	1
ERGs .....	3
Purpose .....	3
Guiding principles .....	3
Benefits .....	3
Activities .....	3
Current ERGs.....	4
Executive sponsors, co-chairs, and co-leads .....	4
ORGANIZATION .....	4
Mission and goals .....	5
Membership .....	5
Structure and governance .....	5
Strategic leadership responsibilities .....	5
Tactical leadership responsibilities .....	5
Term and transitions .....	6
Setting up an optional planning team .....	6
Meetings and events .....	7
Guidelines for invitations/participants .....	7
Photography .....	7
Funding .....	7
CONCLUSION .....	8
APPENDIX: RESOURCES .....	9
Sample interview questions for potential ERG co-leads .....	9
Behavioral competencies of leadership .....	9
Advance planning .....	9
Accessibility language examples.....	10
Accessibility of materials and presentations.....	10
Post-event documentation and surveys.....	10
Planning template.....	11
Messaging: templates for executive sponsors and co-chairs.....	12

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## ERGS

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are employee-led networks formed around shared values, characteristics, and backgrounds.

### Purpose

The purpose of ERGs is to create a space for employees with common interests and concerns to meet and support one another. ERGs provide opportunities for staff to address challenges and advance a respectful and caring community. They also serve to advance MIT's core tenants of Belonging, Achievement, and Composition (BAC) found in the Strategic Action Plan.

### Guiding principles

- ERGs are open to all employees (including, but not limited to, postdocs, faculty, and student workers)
- ERGs promote diversity, openness, understanding, and inclusiveness
- ERGs foster and promote an enduring sense of belonging
- ERG participation is voluntary
- ERGs adhere to MIT's policies and procedures

### Benefits

ERGs help to create an inclusive workplace and support recruitment and retention by:

- Connecting with and welcoming new employees
- Offering networking and mentoring opportunities
- Creating a supportive open forum to share common interests and embrace differences
- Providing awareness to Institute leadership regarding challenges in the staff community

### Activities

All ERG members should determine for themselves how they want to best serve their community and support the Institute's mission. Some examples of ERG work and activities include:

- **Communication** – Creating newsletters, web content, social media, and outreach
- **Community Building** – Bringing MIT and ERG community members together, e.g., brown-bag lunches, monthly check-ins
- **Collaboration** – Supporting and enhancing the relationship between staff and the broader MIT community
- **Education** – Advancing deeper understanding of cultural differences, celebrating heritage months, and providing insights on historical information through multiple lenses
- **Inclusion** – Advocating for practices and activities that are welcoming and encourage new ways of thinking that allow for different perspectives to be valued
- **Leadership** – Supporting a leadership pipeline by providing employees with new types of responsibility
- **Well-Being** – Leveraging existing Institute resources to address and facilitate self-care

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## Current ERGs

More [details about each ERG, including contact information](#), are available on the ICEO website.

Current ERGs are:

- African, Black, American, Caribbean (ABAC)
- Asian Pacific American (APA)
- Disabilities
- Latino
- Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender, Queer (LBGTQ+)
- Millennials
- Women In Technology (WIT)

## Executive sponsors, co-chairs, and co-leads

Executive Sponsors: Institutional support for ERGs is provided jointly through the Human Resources department (HR) and the Institute Community and Equity Office (ICEO). The Vice President of HR and the Institute Community and Equity Officer are the executive sponsors for all ERGs. Through this sponsorship, HR, ICEO, and the ERGs can effectively impact Institute interests and goals. The executive sponsors can also provide visibility, mentorship, advocacy for ERG groups, and financial support. They make the final determination regarding the direction of the ERGs.

Co-Chairs: The executive sponsors have designated a business owner/co-chair from each of their departments to oversee the ERGs: for HR, the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; for the ICEO, the Director of Engagement and Inclusion. They administer the program, serve as thought partners and consultants, provide guidance, and relay critical information to the executive sponsors.

Co-Leads: Individual ERGs are coordinated by staff who oversee their programming and activities. These ERG Leads and co-leads will gain direction from this guide on how best to lead their ERGs. Leading an ERG is valued and appreciated by the Institute. It is also a secondary commitment and should not be prioritized above primary job duties.

## ORGANIZATION

Each ERG should develop and maintain the following:

- Mission and goals
- Membership
- Structure and governance
- Meetings and events
- Funding

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## **Mission and goals**

Each ERG should review its mission statement annually with both leadership and membership as they formulate goals for the coming year. Programming, meetings, and events should support these goals, and ERG activities should be measured to evaluate their impact and alignment (*See Appendix*).

## **Membership**

Membership in any ERG is voluntary and open to all MIT employees. Employees are welcome to participate in multiple ERGs.

## **Structure and governance**

There are various components of ERG structure and governance, including leadership roles, ongoing strategic and tactical responsibilities, term and transitions, and planning teams.

### ***Strategic leadership responsibilities***

ERG leaders play a critical role in guiding and fostering a diverse, inclusive workplace that reinforces MIT's values and supports their members. Leaders should be prepared to serve a wide range of functions to help their ERG succeed. Some examples include:

- Serving as a liaison and public representative of the ERG
- Receiving feedback from their constituencies and driving progress while being cognizant of the needs of the Institute
- Providing information, ideas, and feedback to the co-chairs upon request and when the need arises
- Supporting and encouraging interest from membership for future ERG leadership roles
- Recommending professional development and growth training for its members
- Consulting with HR/ICEO communications staff for coordinated, broad-reaching messaging

### ***Tactical leadership responsibilities***

There are continuing responsibilities for which leaders/co-leaders will need to allocate time and resources. The ICEO program assistant is available to provide administrative support as requested. Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Setting up regular meetings with membership
- Adding events to the ICEO calendar webpage
- Responding to questions and feedback from their members
- Attending regular meetings (virtual or in person) with ERG co-chairs (minimum twice a year and as needed)
- Attending meetings with executive sponsors (twice a year)
- Coordinating ERG events and providing post-event evaluation (*See Appendix*)
- Budgeting and planning for ERG activities
- Generating a report of annual activities to be presented to executive sponsors
- Succession planning (*See Term and Transitions*)

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### **Term and transitions**

- ERG leads should consider their ability to serve for three years: one year as transition/learning on the job and two years as senior lead.
- When possible, co-lead transitions should be staggered so there is always at least one experienced co-lead.
- Current co-leads should discuss the timeline and process for onboarding a new co-lead with the ERG co-chairs.
- A potential ERG lead should plan to meet with the ERG co-chairs for an informal interview to make sure that (1) responsibilities are clear, (2) the individual has the skills and capacity to meet those responsibilities, and (3) the potential lead has permission from their manager or supervisor to participate.

**NOTE:** *While recommendations for a new co-lead from the current co-leads will be respected where possible, the ERG co-chairs will confirm the candidate's eligibility with their manager before they are able to serve.*

- Selected co-leads should set aside time to read/review this packet and have start-up conversations with the current ERG co-leads and co-chairs.
- Annually, the co-chairs will need written confirmation from the co-leads' managers to continue in their leadership roles in ERGs.
- If there are disciplinary issues during their tenure as co-lead, co-leads should notify the co-chairs and step down from their role.
- Set term limits. ERG leads can only serve for a maximum of three years. This does not apply to planning committees. If there are no volunteers to lead, the ERG can be paused.

### **Setting up an optional planning team**

ERG leads may establish a planning team from their membership to contribute ideas and help with planning, but the ultimate responsibility for the ERG rests with the co-leads. If a planning team is established the following are recommended:

- Define the role(s) for planning team members (general help, working in specific areas). Co-leads need to consider:
  - The skills needed to create an effective, action-oriented team;
  - Delegating responsibilities to leverage the skills of the planning team; and
  - Delegating responsibilities based on an issue or an event.
- Set expectations for how much time is expected (e.g., 1-2 hours/month) and length of term on planning team (e.g., one year, renewable).
- As you recruit members, please confirm that they have obtained permission from their managers for this additional role.
- Plan and implement an orientation process for new planning team members.

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## Meetings and events

ERG events should be open and accessible to all MIT employees.

- When posting information about a meeting or event, always include accessibility language (*See Appendix for sample text*) so that any necessary accommodations can be made.
- Acknowledge ICEO/HR sponsorship of ERGs in promotional materials.

### ***Guidelines for invitations/participants***

If an event has a space limitation, MIT community members should be prioritized for in-person attendance. Small events may be for the membership of a specific ERG only. If you can accommodate a larger group, prioritizing additional invitees in the following order is recommended:

1. All MIT ERG members
2. Lincoln Laboratory ERGs
3. All MIT employees (including faculty)
4. Draper Lab ERGs
5. Relevant student offices to invite students. If *co-sponsoring* an event with a student office, their participants should move up in priority order.

### ***Photography***

ERG co-leads and members should observe the following guidelines about photography at ERG events:

- If an event will include photography, signs should be posted informing attendees.
  - Sample signage: “Photographs will be taken at this event for use in documenting ERG activities. These photos may be posted on the ERG or other websites, or used in future ERG materials.”
- Speakers at events may be photographed as part of the historical record.
- Signed photography releases are not required for public events.

## Funding

Each ERG will be allocated up to \$3,000 for the academic year for expenses such as funding for speakers, space, or food. Fund requests should be made to the co-chairs using the planning template (*See Appendix*). Meetings that are not open to the full membership of the ERG may not use ERG funds.

If proposed programming exceeds the budget, co-leads can consider:

- partnering with other ERGs;
- submitting a proposal to the executive sponsors; or
- collaborating with offices and programs across campus that could also contribute funds.

Additional sources of funding may come from a DLC’s leadership for co-sponsored ERG initiatives that directly connect with the DLC’s work. Some departments may want to support events or efforts with which the staff in their areas are directly involved; others may want their contributions to support the work of all ERGs.



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If a department wants to fund ERG work, they can:

1. underwrite the cost, or a portion of the cost, for a particular event being sponsored by the requesting employee's ERG (e.g., IS&T underwriting the cost of lunch for an event organized by the APA ERG); or
2. contribute to all ERGs by transferring funds to HR's central ERG budget. That contribution will be divided equally among the seven ERGs.

In these cases, co-leads will need to notify the HR fiscal officer so that the funds can be properly captured and allocated.

ERG co-leads are responsible for tracking their ERG expenses. Central tracking will also be done in HR. At the start of each semester, ERG co-leads should meet with the HR fiscal officer to discuss budget management and deadlines.

In addition to individual ERG budgets, a portion of the overall ERG budget is available for large, cross-ERG events. HR and the ICEO maintain these funds, which are not part of any individual ERG's allocation. To request funding through this source, co-leads will be asked to prepare a funding proposal.

All funds allocated for ERG use must be spent in accordance with MIT policies and procedures. If there are questions, please contact the ERG co-chairs for clarification. Unused funds at the end of the fiscal year are not carried over into the next fiscal year.

## **CONCLUSION**

MIT continues to prioritize a commitment to DEI. ERGs are encouraged to connect and collaborate with dedicated DEI staff to leverage resources and reduce overlap. By aligning with DEI efforts at the local level and beyond, ERGs play an important role in enhancing and strengthening a culture of inclusion across the entire Institute.

Thank you again for your support of and participation in an ERG. We hope that this guide will help to steer our joint efforts in making MIT an inclusive, equitable, safe, and fulfilling place to work.

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## APPENDIX: RESOURCES

The following items are provided to help in support of ERG effectiveness.

- Sample interview questions for potential ERG leads
- Behavioral competencies of leadership
- Advance planning
- Accessibility: events and materials
- Post-event surveys
- Planning template
- Messaging: templates for executive sponsors and co-chairs

### Sample interview questions for potential ERG co-leads

- What has your involvement been, to date, with this particular ERG?
- How would you describe the role of ERGs at MIT?
- Do you have explicit permission from your manager to take on this role?
- What has worked well about your ERG to this point?
- What ideas do you have for possible upgrades or changes?
- What experiences do you have in formal or informal leadership roles, at MIT or elsewhere?

In addition, consider the behavior competencies of leadership (*See below*) when interviewing.

### Behavioral competencies of leadership

Ideally, co-leads will model inclusive practices evidenced through the [behavioral competencies](#) described below:

- **Ability to influence:** the ability to move or persuade others to act in a desired way
- **Bias for action:** the tendency to act rather than react and to accept accountability for completing tasks
- **Collaboration:** the ability (and willingness) to collaborate with others to achieve shared success
- **Excellent communication skills:** the ability to achieve results by conveying goals and objectives clearly and in a compelling manner
- **Interpersonal understanding:** the ability to accurately hear and understand the unspoken or partly expressed thoughts, feelings, and concerns of others; the ability to show cross-cultural sensitivity
- **Organizational savvy:** understanding organizational relationships and the culture of MIT; the ability to use this knowledge to achieve objectives

### Advance planning

Before each academic semester, ERG co-leads develop plans and a budget for the coming semester. Plans should include goals, required resources, and desired impacts and reach. Each event or program should be considered in relation to:

- Relevance
- Intended audience
- Timing/dates
- Budget (including additional sources of funding)

A planning template is included later in this appendix.

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## Accessibility language examples

Make sure any contact address(es) provided in accessibility language is/are regularly monitored.

*“We want our workshops to be fully accessible to everyone who wants to attend, so please don’t hesitate to contact us at {EMAIL ADDRESS} if there’s anything you need to participate fully in this workshop, and/or if you have any questions or concerns.”*

*“We are committed to making this event fully accessible to everyone who wants to attend. Please let us know if there is anything you need to participate fully in this event by emailing {EMAIL ADDRESS}.”*

## Accessibility of materials and presentations

Meetings, presentations, and materials should be created with accessibility in mind – for example, documents that are distributed digitally should always have alt-tagged images. For assistance creating accessible documents and materials, contact the ICEO program assistant.

## Post-event documentation and surveys

After each event, ERG co-leads create a debrief with the following information:

- A survey of attendees. For assistance with surveys, contact the ICEO program assistant.
- Name and date of event
- Number of participants
- Impact of the event
- What worked well about the event?
- What upgrades would you suggest for future events?

These post-event notes will assist with year-end reporting to the ERG executive sponsors. The planning template below can help in collecting and organizing post-event documentation.

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## Planning template

Before each academic semester, ERG co-leads will develop plans for the coming semester that include goals and demonstrate efforts and impact. The following template collects required documentation; you will likely not be able to complete all items in advance, but this document can be used throughout each semester to collect required post-event reporting.

### **Employee Resource Group: ERG mission statement and objectives:**

**In alignment with MIT’s mission, the DEI Strategic Plan, and your ERG’s mission, what will guide your activities and programming this year?**

*Example: raise awareness of anti-Asian racism*

**What do you hope to accomplish? How will you measure if you have accomplished your goals?**

*Example: provide historical context, hold panel and focus group discussions; measurement by feedback surveys and attendance at events*

**What effort will your ERG employ to meet your mission, goals, or objectives?**

**What resources (time, budget) are necessary to meet your mission, goals, or objectives?**

**Proposed events, necessary resources, and schedule (copy for as many items as needed):**

*Not all information will be available as a part of advance planning. Complete as many fields as possible in advance:*

**Event name:**

**Co-presenters, if any:**

**Date/Proposed date (indicate if date has been confirmed):**

**Cost (if known)—indicate specific items and cost separately (food, speaker fee, books or materials):**

**Audience:**

**Proposed location:**

**AV needs:**

**Accessibility needs:**

**Outreach plan/partners:**

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## Messaging: templates for executive sponsors and co-chairs

1. Executive sponsors' support for ERGs
2. Co-chairs to managers of ERG co-leads seeking/confirming permission for participation
3. Co-chairs to managers in advance of performance reviews
4. Co-chairs to managers confirming continued participation of ERG co-lead

### 1. Executive leadership support for ERGs | Frequency: Annually

Dear Assistant Deans, Directors of Administration and Finance, and Human Resources Officers,

We are writing to thank you for your support of the many employees within our community who participate in MIT's Employee Resource Groups. ERGs are an important way to celebrate and promote MIT as an inclusive workplace. The groups are critical to creating a sense of belonging among the Institute's more than 14,000 employees.

Each of [MIT's seven ERGs](#) was developed by community members who share interests, backgrounds, perspectives, and a common bond. The groups receive administrative and financial support from Human Resources and the Institute Community and Equity Office, but the impacts of their effort—which are delivered entirely by the staff volunteers in each ERG—extend across the entire Institute.

If a member of your staff asks to serve as a co-lead or planning committee member for an ERG, or if they simply wish to participate, we ask that managers and supervisors continue to support and encourage this interest. ERGs can be important avenues for professional and leadership development, and they improve our sense of community at the Institute. We also encourage you to remind managers and supervisors in your units to consider these contributions when conducting staff performance reviews. For your awareness, the time commitment for a co-lead rarely exceeds two hours per week.

If you have any questions about ERGs or would like to discuss how you can support these efforts, please contact ERG co-chairs [Gabe Campos](#) (HR) and [Beatriz Cantada](#) (ICEO).

### 2. Co-chairs to managers of ERG co-leads seeking permission for/confirmation of participation | Frequency: When new co-leads are identified

Dear [manager/supervisor],

Your direct report, [full name], has indicated that they would like to be the next [lead/co-lead/event role] of the [ERG name] Employee Resource Group (ERG). We are writing to ask for your confirmation that you approve of [first name] taking on this role.

As you know, Employee Resource Groups (ERG) are one of the ways that we celebrate and promote MIT as an inclusive workplace that welcomes and supports people from all backgrounds. MIT's ERGs are critical to our ability to recognize and create a sense of belonging among the Institute's more than 14,000 employees.

Each of [MIT's seven ERGs](#) was developed by community members who share interests, backgrounds, perspectives, and a common bond. The groups receive administrative and financial support from Human Resources and the Institute Community and Equity Office, but their relevance and success depend entirely on the staff volunteers in each of the ERGs.

ERGs can be important avenues for professional and leadership development. Staff members do not receive extra compensation for the time and energy they apply to improving our sense of community at MIT, but we all benefit from their efforts. For your awareness, the time commitment for a co-lead rarely exceeds two hours per week.

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If you have any questions about ERGs, concerns about the employee's participation, or if you would like to discuss how you can support these efforts, please do not hesitate to contact us.

**3. Co-chairs to managers in advance of performance reviews | Frequency: Annually**

**NOTE: co-chairs will need to send in groups to managers with [timing aligned to the various performance review cycles](#)**

Dear [manager/supervisor],

As you know, your direct report, [full name], serves as [lead/co-lead/event role] of the [ERG name] Employee Resource Group (ERG).

We very much appreciate your support and encouragement of their participation. ERGs can be important avenues for professional and leadership development. As you know, staff members do not receive extra compensation for the time and energy they apply to improving our sense of community at MIT, but we all benefit from their efforts. We encourage you to consider these contributions when conducting their upcoming performance review. For your awareness, the time commitment for a [lead/co-lead/event role] rarely exceeds two hours per week.

If you have any questions about ERGs, concerns about the employee's participation, or if you would like to discuss how you can support these efforts, please do not hesitate to contact us.

**4. Co-chairs to managers confirming continued participation of ERG co-lead | Frequency: Annually**

Dear [manager/supervisor],

Your direct report, [full name], has indicated that they would like to continue serving as [lead/co-lead/event role] of the [ERG name] Employee Resource Group (ERG). We are writing to ask for your confirmation that you approve of [first name] continuing in this role.

If you have any questions about ERGs, concerns about the employee's participation, or if you would like to discuss how you can support these efforts, please do not hesitate to contact us.