

 **UR HOUR**

**A Gathering for BIPOC
in Public Media**

This space is for **us.**

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

“Typically organized around a shared identity, such as race, gender, age, or mental health, they serve as a haven of belonging, offering a space for under-represented employees to find one another, stave off a sense of isolation, and experience a reprieve from the daily aggressions they’ve endured at work.”

Source: Harvard Business Review



ERGs vs Racial Affinity Groups

*Typically open to anyone and focused on social events & resource sharing for members

*Groups can be outside of race/ethnicity identities (ability/disability, gender, LGBTQ+, working parents/caregivers, etc.)

*Typically developed by HR and given a budget

*Typically only for intended racial identity

*Typically grassroots started and led

*More intimate and focused on psychological safety of intended members

*May or may not have HR oversight

*May or may not have an executive sponsor(s)

*Both Under the DEI Umbrella * Community Building * Problem Solving *

* Seek and share experiences, perspective, resources *

Remember: There are multiple ways to establish and structure groups. Organizations are going to develop these spaces differently based on employees' needs, the workplace culture and the surrounding environment.

Some Benefits of ERGs/Affinity Spaces

- They build stronger bonds between employees, creating a sense of community and belonging, which can lead to higher engagement and retention rates.
- If structured and supported properly, they can be used to identify and help develop internal leaders by creating visibility for active members.
- Members can help with companies' recruiting and talent pipeline development if they share job openings with their professional contacts.
- They can empower employees by establishing a collective voice to share member concerns with leadership and/or provide a resource for leadership and decision makers regarding staff/community issues, needs and policies.
- Members often offer their expertise and experiences to improve equality and equity at an organization.
- Serve as another connection point across physical/virtual offices, departments and other organizational groups, bringing together employees at different levels and across disciplines.
- If tasked, ERGs can assist with
 - Business decisions to make innovative and inclusive products and services
 - Cultivating mentorship opportunities
 - Establishing connections with potential vendors and community partners
 - Create opportunities for cross-functional teamwork and collaboration

Black XChange



Mission Statement Excerpt:

Black XChange ERG is both a social and advocacy Employee Resource Group formed with the intent of creating a more inclusive dynamic to the culture of PBS North Carolina. In connection with PBS North Carolina's vision and mission statement, Black XChange's mission is as follows:

Black XChange will be a support and collaboration group in which we can discuss how we can –

- Advocate for Black People and People of Color
- Support our colleagues
- Connect with diverse communities
- Address ways we can help PBS North Carolina reach its goal of equity and inclusion both internally and externally

[Click here to read the entire Mission Statement.](#) Questions & Connection Welcomed!
Reach out to members at blackxchange@pbsnc.org.

Prepare for obstacles early on.

- First things first, make sure you and others who have similar need and want to start an ERG/Affinity Space have a clearly defined purpose, goals and bandwidth for the work ahead. Focus on your needs.
- Depending on your organization's culture and the need for community and support, ERGs/Affinity Spaces can be started grassroots, volunteer led, and/or initiated by the organization.
- Many of our organizations' leaders and HR departments are still ill-equipped on how to support and structure race-specific ERGs/Affinity Spaces. Training and additional support may be necessary.
- If your station is a university licensee, be prepared to lean on them for guidance and support. More and more universities are establishing ERGs for faculty and staff so this topic should be familiar to most administrators.

Serve intended members first.

BIPOC have been socialized to be accommodating of others first. Race-based ERGs/Affinity Spaces are designed to disrupt this socialization and offer a safe haven to employees in need. If you have or want to start a race-based ERG/Affinity Space, ask yourself/your colleagues in need these questions:

- Who is the ERG for?
- What is the purpose?
- Who benefits?
- How do members benefit?

Members of ERGs who do not identify with the core group's racial identity should understand the goals of the group/space and be supportive allies. If they are there solely for education and are unwilling to take or support any course of action outlined by the core members, their presence could interrupt the intended psychological safety and be a deterrent to what core members aim to achieve.

Leverage collective power.

There is value and benefits to having a unified voice to advocate for change. Use it!

- Stations and organizations across the industry are in the midst of hiring DEI consultants not realizing (or willfully ignoring) that their BIPOC employees with lived experiences already have answers and solutions. Get involved in the process. Ask to meet with the consultants and be sure there is alignment between the needs of your group(s) and the program(s) consultants are designing and/or implementing.
- Post-pandemic, back-to-the-office conversations are beginning to take place, yet many BIPOC employees across industries are happier working from home so that they do not have to navigate microaggressions or workplaces where they do not feel seen or valued. ERGs can band together and advocate for establishing a workplace culture that is in tune with the needs of BIPOC employees and is prepared to hold space when tragedy strikes again.

Racial Affinity Groups ARE

A time for **White folx** to do the following without harming and/or re-traumatizing BIPOC:

- Embrace, excavate, and reckon with their Whiteness, including their privilege and power.
- Examine how to center the voices and experiences of BIPOC

A time for **BIPOC** to take care of themselves and one another while doing the following in the absence of Whiteness:

- Unpack racism, internalized oppression, and racialized trauma
- Discuss the impact of White Supremacy Culture and the pressure of assimilation

Source: <https://culturallyresponsiveleadership.com/affinity/>

Racial Affinity Group Are NOT

- Racist or segregationist
- A replacement for doing mixed-race racial equity work
- A time for White folx to avoid discussion about race by focusing on other identities
- A time for White folx to rely on BIPOC to educate or coddle them

Resource Links:

[**Forbes:** Don't Make Employee Resource Groups The Elixir To Racial Inclusion: Here's Why](#)

[**Harvard Business Review:** What Black Employee Resource Groups Need Right Now](#)

[**Culturally Sponsored Leadership:** Racial Affinity Groups Aren't Racist – They are the Secret Sauce in Antiracist Schools](#)

[**Forbes:** How to Foster Workplace Belonging Through Successful Employee Resource Groups](#)

[**Medium:** Understanding Employee Resource Groups: A Guide for Organizations \(3-Part Guide\)](#)

[**Society for Human Resource Management:** Today's Affinity Groups: Risks & Rewards](#)