



MERG

Missouri Employee Resource Group

Finding the Me in Missouri

Missouri Employee Resource Group Toolkit

Step 1: Gaining Support 2

Step 2: Set a Mission and Goals 3

Step 3: Getting Employees Involved 3

Step 4: Holding Meetings and Maintaining Momentum 4

Step 5: Leverage Relationships 5

Step 6: Measuring Success 5

Other things to consider 6

Make It Your Own 6

Getting Started

Below you will find some suggested steps to ensure that you can get your group up and running. This toolkit serves only as a guide and you may find other methods that enable your group to grow and thrive. We encourage you to pursue what makes best sense for your MeRG, so long as it falls within the parameters of the State of Missouri ERG Guidelines. The following steps included in the graphic below are elaborated on in the contents of this toolkit.



Step 1: Gaining Support

As a Chair or Champion of a MeRG, you will want to actively work to identify an executive sponsor and other key leaders who will demonstrate commitment and support for your MeRG. Strong executive sponsors will make the success of your MeRG a priority and a personal responsibility, without taking away autonomy of the group. In choosing an executive sponsor, it's important to find someone who is willing to put their own privilege and access to resources on the line for your MeRG and is personally committed to the success of the group.

Having strong leadership commitment and support for your MeRG will ensure that employees feel safe to participate and also allow leaders the opportunity to receive recommendations which can improve employee outcomes. The best groups are those that are organic and employee-driven. Additional information on the roles within your MeRG can be found within the State of Missouri ERG Guidelines.

Step 2: Set a Mission and Goals

Before you begin meeting with group participants regularly, you will want to spend time developing some draft goals and a mission statement for your MeRG. Once you begin meeting with your MeRG, allow participants the opportunity to provide input, feedback, and recommendations for your MeRG's goals and mission statement. The mission and goals should align or support the State of Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity's vision and strategic goals, which can be found in the MeRG Guidelines.

A few guiding questions that can help when establishing the mission and goals include:

- What do the members value in the group?
- How does this MeRG differ from other groups?
- What do you hope to accomplish or change?
- What steps does the MeRG need to take to achieve its mission?
- What are your group's goals? Examples below.
 - Make connections
 - Support
 - Shared interests
- What resources will you need to accomplish your goals or mission?
- Do your goals and objectives line up with those of the Office of Equal Opportunity?
- Who will take the lead on pursuing each goal?
- What are the short-term versus long-term goals?

Step 3: Getting Employees Involved

MeRG leaders should develop a plan and work with their team and other group members to develop marketing and outreach strategies in order to promote and encourage participation. As a condition of employment, State of Missouri employees can be advocates for change, but cannot picket, form a union, etc.

Sample Outreach Strategies:

- Newsletters
- Inclusion of materials in employee orientation/onboarding
- Email blasts
- Networking with other state agencies
- Asking participants to share information on the MERG with their peers
- Flyers
- Hosting events
- Creating Social Media pages
- Podcasts

Step 4: Holding Meetings and Maintaining Momentum

Meeting design, structure, and frequency should be decided collaboratively with inputs from your MeRG participants. A few suggested items to consider for establishing your MeRG meeting design include:

- Determining the dates, times, frequency, and length of meetings
- Determine the venue or platform (if virtual, which software will you use?)
- Consider specific roles for participants
- Establish an agenda

Tips for hosting your first few MeRG meetings:

During your first meeting, consider conducting some “icebreakers” or activities for participants to get to know one another. You can also facilitate team building exercises to begin establishing rapport and trust among members of the group. During the meeting you will want to discuss what some of the roles are for the MeRG and obtain a commitment from anyone interested in serving in a leadership capacity.

Once your group is established and meeting regularly, you will want to ensure you can maintain interest and momentum. This responsibility resides with the entire group, including the Champion and Executive Sponsor. The following tips may be used to maximize participation and maintain momentum:

- Create a positive, inclusive, welcoming, and safe place to share ideas, have hard conversations, and gain support
- Adhere to the group objectives, mission, and guidelines
- Continue outreach and networking to increase participation
- Create visibility through hosting or participating in events
- Host professional development seminars for your participants
- Create mentoring programs and peer support systems
- Hold workshops on topics of interest and engage subject matter experts for support
 - Lunch and Learns
 - Recognition/celebration of cultural, historic, or relevant days/months
- Develop a communication plan and establish a frequency for engaging with members and other audiences between meetings
 - Updates
 - Opportunities
- Host “member drives” and encourage participants to bring their colleagues
- Use social media to promote your group and events

Step 5: Leverage Relationships

The best MeRGs are those that are employee driven. Your group is centered on internal networks that represent a community of employees, sharing different characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, race, culture, ability status, interests, and so on. Leveraging your relationships and other networks is a great way to increase visibility for your group and to increase your group's impact.

A few way to leverage relationships, both internally and externally include:

- Developing partnerships with other MeRGs
- Maintaining open communication with members of other groups
- Sharing resources, information, and best practices
- Establishing partnerships with community leaders or other business leaders
- Disseminating announcements, MeRG news, and upcoming events
- Collaborating on professional and/or community events and activities

Step 6: Measuring Success

To measure success, you will need to ensure that your group has established clear goals as well as determined what success means for each goal. Your goals will drive the function of your group and establish a clear path to meeting the needs of participants.

The MeRG's goals and success criteria should be easy to understand and support your mission. A few examples of different success criteria may include:

- Hosting one annual professional development event
- Recruiting 15 new employees per year to join the group
- Publishing a quarterly newsletter
- Conducting outreach to at least one community organization/partner per year

Other things to consider

Outreach and Partnerships

Newly established MeRGs should network and partner with other groups and key Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion groups that are already in place across state government. Request permission from the group or organization to attend meetings or meet with the group leads to share ideas, gain feedback and begin to form partnerships and relationships.

Things to find out:

- When was their group started?
- What is their purpose/mission?
- Who is their audience?
- How do they conduct outreach?
- What obstacles, advice, or lessons learned can they share?
- In what ways can you work together?

Budget

Once your group has agreed upon a mission and a set of goals, you will want to spend time determining what types of resources you will need to achieve your mission and goals. If there are items which will require financing to support their implementation, prepare a budget which highlights the financial support you believe your MeRG will require.

At this time funding is not available for MeRGs, however we encourage MeRGs to brainstorm forms of funding to support your activities and efforts.

Sample ideas for funding methods:

- Grants
- Partnering with other entities or MeRGs to co-sponsor your event or initiative
- Charging registration fees for events
- Asking for voluntary MeRG memberships fees or annual dues
- Working with community partners to secure sponsorships

Make It Your Own

Your MeRGs can take on any number of different priorities for its participants. It is truly up to the MeRG Chairs/Champions and members to drive your MeRG's strategy and determine what you want to get out of the group. Make it your own and have fun!