

OFM-State HR Business Resource Groups

Policy Title: Supporting Employee Business Resource Group Participation

Brief Description:	This policy is meant to provide guidance to state agencies on how to support and manage employee participation in statewide, OFM State HR sanctioned business resource groups.
Effective:	June 1, 2021
Approved by:	Robin Vazquez, Workforce Strategies Section Chief
Responsible Office:	State HR, Workforce Strategies
Policy Contact:	DEI Innovations Manager
Supersedes:	N/A
Last Reviewed:	New
Applies to:	All current Washington executive branch state employees.

Reason for Policy:

1. To clarify expectations and align enterprise practices of all executive branch agencies related to employee participation in statewide business resource groups. All other agencies, the legislative and judicial branches, high education institutions, boards, commissions and offices are encouraged to follow the provisions of this policy.
 2. To ensure state employees have fair and reasonable access to belong to, participate and support the important activities, contributions and work that the business resource groups contribute to our State.
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I. INTRODUCTION

Business Resource Groups (BRGs) are critical partners in the work the State of Washington does to provide the best possible services to all Washingtonians. Each BRG has specific missions and goals meant to increase employee engagement and retention; amplify and strengthen employee and community voices; to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in a respectful workplace and apply best practices.

II. DEFINITIONS

Business Resource Groups (BRGs) – Statewide BRGs are cross-agency, employee-led groups with Executive Sponsors, formed to develop unique missions, visions, goals, charters and bylaws. In

consultation with OFM-State HR, BRGs contribute recommendations and feedback to inform statewide business strategies with a focus on issues faced by traditionally marginalized communities.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)– Diversity means the presence of differences, everyone's unique qualities and attributes. Equity refers to removing barriers to the fair and respectful treatment of all people. Inclusion means that all individuals feel respected, accepted and valued through consistent and intentional effort. For more specific definitions of these terms and how they affect our workforce, please see the [Enterprise DEI Foundational Definitions](#).

Reasonable Access - Appropriate and reasonable resources shall include but are not limited to providing employees who are interested in participating with access during their work hours. Additionally, providing access to resources such as office supplies, transportation, distribution capabilities, meeting spaces and facilities, storage space for promotional materials and teleconferencing technologies for the groups' work as needed.

BRG-Related Activities – Any meetings, activities, or events hosted by a statewide BRG that are approved by State HR. This includes planning, set up activity and post-event logistics. BRG activities are usually planned and scheduled in advance and reflected on the OFM activity calendar or on the various BRG communications pages.

Employer - For purposes of this policy, "Employer" means any state office or activity of the executive and judicial branches of state government, including state agencies, departments, offices, divisions, boards, commissions, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW **28B.10.016**, and correctional and other types of institutions.

Members/Participants – State employees, in consultation with their assigned supervisor, who are granted permission to attend BRG-related activities and/or commit to participation as a BRG committee member or leader and who support the values, principles and activities of the business resource groups. Employees approved for participation in a BRG by their assigned supervisor/manager are assumed to be in good standing.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to outline agency expectations related to supporting and facilitating employee participation in BRG related activities. Employee participation and engagement is vital to fulfill the respective BRG goals and missions, while complying with and advancing the Governor's [Executive Order 21-01, *Affirming Washington State Business Resource Groups*](#). The collective voices of employee BRGs help meet the goal of making Washington State an employer of choice.

For represented employees, the collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) supersede specific provisions of agency policies where they conflict.

- A. Participation in BRG-related activities is open to all current employees of Washington State who identify as a member of the BRG's focus community or as an ally. Employee participation in BRG-related activities is considered work-related and a leadership priority. Participating employees shall experience no loss in pay, and shall not be asked to take vacation, sick leave, personal holidays, or other leave time to attend BRG-related activities. Attendance at BRG-related activities shall not result in payment of overtime. Supervisors are encouraged to consider temporary schedule adjustments to support an employee's participation.
- B. Employers are expected to inform new employees about their opportunity to participate in BRG-related activities and where they can find more information.
- C. Employers are encouraged to be proactive by planning, approving, and providing resources necessary for their employees to participate in BRG-related activities. Employers should strive for equitable opportunities for all employees to participate, including employees with disabilities who may require reasonable accommodations. No participation request from an employee with a disability shall be arbitrarily denied due to a need for reasonable accommodation.
- D. Employee Responsibilities: Employees shall request approval to participate in BRG activities from their supervisor or other agency designee. Employees need not request approval each time they want to attend an event if the supervisor supports their ongoing participation and has agreed on less frequent approval discussions, and if the employee and supervisor are both aware of the schedule of such activities and the amount of time the employee will spend participating. Clear communication between the employee and their supervisor is *essential*. Employees should proactively plan their participation and assist in developing coverage plans based on BRG activity calendars and their own expected workloads at those times.

- E. Requests to participate should not be arbitrarily denied; time spent attending BRG-related activities is to be considered part of their workday. In supporting employee BRG participation, supervisors will need to discuss work expectations and adequate coverage with employees who are interested in participating in BRG-related activities.
- F. OFM-State HR will partner with agencies to work through and resolve issues where concerns related to employee participation in BRG-related activities may arise.

IV. ESTABLISHED BUSINESS RESOURCE GROUPS

This policy is intended to cover business resource groups that will be established in the future as well as those listed here.

1. Veteran Employee Resource Group (VERG)
2. Latino Leadership Network (LLN)
3. Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN)
4. Washington Immigrant Network (WIN)
5. Disability Inclusion Network (DIN)
6. Blacks United in Leadership and Diversity (BUILD)

V. AUTHORIZING DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

A. Forms

Interpreter Request Form

B. Guidelines

EO 21-01: Business Resource Groups

Directive 16-11: LGBTQ Inclusion and Safe Places Initiative

EO 19-01: Veteran and Military Family Transition and Readiness Support

EO 13-02: Improving Employment Opportunities and Outcomes for People with Disabilities in State Government

C. Other Resources

OFM BRG Advisor Roles and Responsibilities

OFM DEI Events Calendar

OFM Organization Chart

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for BRG Participation

VI. CONTACT

Flora Estrada

DEI Innovations Manager

Flora.estrada@ofm.wa.gov

(360) 742-8569

Robin Vazquez

Workforce Strategies Section Chief

Robin.Vazquez@ofm.wa.gov

(360) 485-5132