

# EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS IN VETERINARY WORKPLACES

A Practical Guide for Building Connection, Voice, and Professional Growth

## WHAT IS AN ERG?

ERGs help employees connect with one another while supporting workplace culture and organizational goals. While employees typically lead the development of an ERG, the initiative must be formally recognized and supported by their organization’s leadership team. ERGs usually focus on:

- Strengthening connection and belonging
- Providing peer support and shared learning
- Offering insight into employee experiences
- Enhancing workplace culture and team engagement
- Supporting professional development and leadership growth

## WHY ERGS MATTER IN VETERINARY SETTINGS

Veterinary teams include diverse roles, generations, backgrounds, and lived experiences. ERGs help create stronger workplaces by:

- Encouraging collaboration across roles
- Reducing isolation in high-stress environments
- Providing leadership development opportunities
- Supporting wellbeing and engagement initiatives
- Supporting psychological safety and team cohesion
- Improving candidate recruitment and employee retention
- Enhancing understanding of the communities veterinary professionals serve

**An Employee Resource Group (ERG) is a voluntary, employee-led group formed around a shared identity, lived experience, or professional interest.**

**To be successful, ERGs must be supported by the organization’s leadership. The benefits of an ERG can only be realized when it is formally recognized as an initiative that works with leadership to improve organizational objectives.**

## HOW TO SET UP AN ERG IN A VETERINARY WORKPLACE

Effective ERGs are employee-led. This means that a group of self-identifying employees have a desire to work together around their shared experience to improve the workplace culture for all. Once a founding group has been established, set a date to meet and explore the group's potential purpose, goals, and needs from leadership.

To create a successful ERG, it may help to establish the following parameters:

- 1 Clarify purpose**  
Define the shared experience/interest and the intended outcomes (connection, mentorship, education, advising leadership). Draft a statement of purpose that clearly outlines the contributions the ERG will make to the workplace culture and organization.
- 2 Secure leadership & financial support**  
Leadership should provide visible encouragement, meeting space or virtual access, and designate an executive sponsor. Together the ERG and executive sponsor should set an annual budget for the initiative, or a business case to be presented to the organization leadership. Funding for ERG-led initiatives should come from the organization, not from membership fees.
- 3 Establish a basic governance structure**  
Set the leader or co-leaders and establish terms for leadership (e.g., one-year terms for the roles of chair, vice chair, secretary/treasurer, etc.). Determine how often the ERG will meet (e.g., monthly or quarterly), and which channels will be used for communication (e.g., workplace or personal emails, dedicated ERG email, newsletters, bulletins, Teams chat, etc.).
- 4 Define membership**  
Decide whether the group is identity-based, open to allies, role-based, or interest-based. Perhaps some sessions are open to allies, while others are dedicated to those that self-identify with the shared experience.
- 5 Set clear boundaries**  
ERGs are community-building and advisory spaces. They are not HR grievance channels, policy-making bodies, or social clubs.
- 6 Create a terms of reference or charter**  
Once the ERG members and executive sponsor have discussed all of the above and received support from leadership, record all of the above in a document called a Terms of Reference or Charter. The document can then be used to measure how effect the ERG is at advancing workplace culture and organizational goals.
- 7 Launch thoughtfully**  
Communicate to colleagues the purpose of the ERG, who the group is for, how to join, the meeting schedule, and leadership contacts.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Are ERGs a social club?

No. Effective ERGs act as a strategic resource to help guide leadership decisions and achieve outcomes that align with an organization's strategic plan and business goals.

### Are ERGs divisive?

No. ERGs are designed to strengthen connection and understanding across teams and often welcome allies.

### Do ERGs create legal or HR risk?

Clear purpose statements and leadership sponsorship help ensure ERGs remain appropriate advisory and community spaces.

### Do ERGs require a large budget?

No. Many begin with minimal resources such as meeting space and occasional support for learning activities.

### How many people are needed to form an ERG?

An ERG can begin with as few as 4-5 committed participants. The number of participants in an ERG may vary based on the size of your organization (*see below*).

Organization size	Typical ERG participation
Small (10-25 staff)	4-8 members
Mid-size (25-100 staff)	6-20 members
Large (100+)	15-100+ members

### How much time commitment is expected?

Typically one meeting per month, plus occasional planning meetings for ERG leaders.

### What outcomes should we expect?

Increased engagement, improved morale, leadership development, stronger collaboration, and better understanding of employee experience.

### Can small veterinary practices create ERGs?

Yes. Even small clinics benefit from structured peer networks that strengthen communication and connection.

### How do we measure impact?

Consider participation rates, engagement feedback, retention trends, and qualitative member feedback.

## Closing thoughts

ERGs are not about separation—they are about connection. In veterinary medicine, strengthening internal culture ultimately enhances how teams care for one another, their clients, and the animals they serve.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

These resources are excellent tools for learning more about how to start, and maintain, ERGs in your organization.

[What are Employee Resource Groups \(ERGs\)?](#)

by Great Place to Work

[11 tips for creating & cultivating an Employee Resource Group \(ERG\)](#)

by PrideVMC

[How to maximize the potential of your ERGs](#)

by Catalyst

[Exploring employee resource groups in the age of DEI](#)

by Harvard Business School

### Disclaimers

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