

Notes from 2/21, 2023 Region of Choice session: Employee Resource Groups: Fostering Belonging & Driving DEI

Julia Smith, Assistant Director Leadership Development, DEI + Chair of the African American ERG, Northwestern Mutual

- ERGs must have a sustainable mission. They should be more than “food, flags and fun”, though at some companies these elements remain part of the agenda.
- ERGs often encompass the 4 Cs: Career, Community, Culture and Commerce
- AT NM, ERGs are a part of the organization’s ecosystem for talent, focused on successful career outcomes for members. They foster education, exposure, and experience. They can also provide leadership development through elected or appointed top positions within the ERG.
- Chairs and co-chairs are appointed positions.
- All ERGs have dedicated budgets.
- For leaders of the ERGs, their managers need to understand and appreciate the time it takes to do the ERG portion of their job effectively, balanced against their “day job.”

Lirhonda Price, Director Community Relations, Goodwill Industries of SEWI

Goodwill has mapped out a course of action for their ERGs through a framework. The groups are aligned with strategic goals to advance the culture of the organization and help individuals advance in the workplace.

ERG benefits include:

- Professional development
- Peer learning
- Providing a safe and supportive work environment
- ERGs are part of the DEI function at Goodwill; it is CEO-led with senior leadership accountability; and there is representation at the board level of the organization. This elevates the ERG to a business imperative.

Lucia Galezewski, Cultural Transformation Leader – Digital Finance + Chair of the Latinx Advisory Network, Rockwell Automation

ERGs do not fall under the DEI function but they collaborate with that team.

Lucia estimated that 80% of the work happens behind the scenes.

ERGs should start by defining their purpose and grow into true BRGs (focused on business objectives)

Need to understand issues beyond the company = “where the region is going” and think about what problem you are trying to solve. Involve strong allies.