



Creating an Employee Resource Group for Refugees

An employee resource group (ERG) provides a forum for employees at a company with shared interests or identities (e.g., ethnicity-based groups, disability-focused groups, etc.) to build stronger relationships with colleagues and create a more inclusive workplace. They also serve to increase employee engagement and signal support for underrepresented groups.

Along these lines, several companies have created ERGs for refugees. These have ranged from ERGs principally composed of refugee employees, with some non-refugee members, to ERGs that are focused on refugee issues but composed mostly of non-refugee employees. In launching these ERGs, companies have considered a number of factors, such as the level of interest among employees, the proximity of their operations to local refugee populations, and the number of refugee employees. These groups meet on a regular basis (such as biweekly or monthly) to support refugee employees, organize relevant initiatives or events, and discuss important workplace-related topics.

This resource outlines the benefits an ERG for refugees provides and shares guidance on how companies can establish a group of their own.



Benefits of an ERG for refugees:

- 01 Engaging and including refugee staff:** by encouraging both refugee and non-refugee staff to join an ERG for refugees, companies can help to boost cross-cultural interaction and employee engagement, while establishing a trusted support network for refugee staff.
- 02 Offering professional development opportunities:** an ERG for refugees allows participating members to strengthen their professional skills and interact with like-minded colleagues. Group members can collaborate on projects, support corporate initiatives, receive honest feedback from their peers, and/or build stronger working relationships across the company.
- 03 Advancing DEI and company goals:** an ERG for refugees can be used to support initiatives related to company culture and engagement – for example, by educating staff about foreign cultures, coordinating team-building events (e.g., a company potluck, cultural mixers), supporting company commitments related to refugee hiring and/or mentorship, and more.



Participation in an ERG for refugees should not be limited by age, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other protected classification.



Steps for establishing an ERG for refugees:

The following are illustrative examples of steps used by Tent member companies that may be of interest to you. Because the criteria for launching an ERG vary by company, please adapt these steps for your organization.

01

IDENTIFY A COMPANY CHAMPION(S)

- a. Begin by identifying a **company champion(s)**, who is an established and enthusiastic (refugee or non-refugee) employee willing to spearhead the group's early efforts. This person's commitment is crucial during the group's establishment – a process that may take up to one year.
 - b. Once a champion has been identified, encourage this person to lead the process of creating the ERG and be a primary point of contact.
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02

FIND ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTERS

- a. Speak with colleagues informally to assess their interest in creating or joining an ERG for refugees and determine if there is sufficient interest to move forward. If there is not, consider expanding the group's focus – for example, by including immigrants and/or expatriates.
 - b. Collect useful knowledge from established ERGs at your company by asking about their formation, structure, and impact. Ask group members to share any ideas or helpful resources.
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03

DEVELOP A FORMAL PROPOSAL

- a. Organize a group of two or more employees who are interested in forming the ERG. This team can scope out the process for establishing the group in more detail, develop a formal proposal to present to senior leadership, and work towards meeting criteria your company has set to become an official ERG (e.g., number of members, executive support).
 - b. Clarify the business case for creating the ERG by identifying challenges a group may help your company to address (e.g., issues with cultural integration or onboarding) and/or straightforward ways a group can advance company goals (e.g., planning events, supporting refugee hiring initiatives).
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GARNER EXECUTIVE SUPPORT

04

- a. Identify an **executive sponsor**, who is a senior leader willing to provide guidance, advocate on behalf of the group, and promote its impact company-wide. Their support is essential for moving things forward.
- b. Follow your company's protocol for proposing the creation of a new ERG. The proposal should establish the ERG's mission, determine its leadership team, identify potential members, and outline why senior leadership should give its support. If senior leadership approves of the proposal, the group will receive formal recognition, which brings financial support and expanded access to company resources, and allows the group to officially launch.

05 ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEES TO JOIN

- a. Encourage both refugee and non-refugee employees to join the newly established ERG. Membership should be voluntary and accessible to all staff, allowing colleagues from different backgrounds to collaborate and get to know each other.
- b. Use internal communication channels to create excitement and share information about the ERG – for example, by posting program details on internal channels, motivating senior leaders to send company-wide emails in support of the group, and/or encouraging members to ask their colleagues to join.

06 ESTABLISH A STRUCTURE AND SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- a. Outline key responsibilities and roles in the ERG, which may include communications support, event planning, financial management, and/or marketing. Groups with the capacity to do so can go further by following an even more organized structure, with well-defined positions such as Administrator, Co-Chair, Director, Marketing Manager, Programming Lead, and/or Treasurer.
- b. Organize the ERG's first meeting, where ERG leaders should introduce themselves, establish a biweekly or monthly schedule, and welcome interested employees. Be sure to share relevant information about the ERG's mission and goals, and answer any questions.



Tent would be happy to connect you with local organizations that can support your ERG's community initiatives.



Next Steps:

The Tent Partnership for Refugees can work with companies to develop and/or launch an ERG for refugees. To learn more about Tent and its services, reach out at info@tent.org.

About the Tent Partnership for Refugees

With more and more refugees displaced for longer periods of time, businesses have a critical role to play in helping refugees to integrate economically in their new communities. Tent was launched in 2016 by Hamdi Ulukaya, the CEO and founder of Chobani – a multibillion dollar food company in the U.S. – to mobilise global businesses to fill this gap by helping connect refugees to work. Today, we are a [network of over 300 major companies](https://www.tent.org) committed to hiring, training, and mentoring refugees. Find out more at www.tent.org.