

PURPOSE:

The purpose of Essex Employee Affinity Groups Policy is to establish requirements and guidelines for introducing new Employee Affinity Groups (“EAGs”) at Essex (the “Company”). The policy is intended to provide guidance for employees who wish to form EAGs.

SCOPE:

The Policy applies to all employees of the Company. It further applies to the creation and formation of EAGs and all associated activities, including the creation and amendment of group charters and operating procedures.

POLICY STATEMENT:

EAGs are voluntary associations of employees who share common interests to support and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”) throughout the Company. These groups can play an important role in articulating, promoting, and supporting their collective concerns, as well as assist the Company in achieving its goals and progressing culture. The primary focus of EAGs at Essex is to support and advance DEI. By empowering its members, EAGs can also help increase morale, provide insights, and enhance Company engagement efforts.

I. Guidelines:

Employees who wish to form an approved EAG must follow the subsequent guidelines:

- A. EAGs must be formed voluntarily, and individual employee membership and participation in such groups must be voluntary.
- B. During the initial formation stage, one member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee must act as a sponsor and at least two full-time employees must serve as the chairs of the EAG.
- C. Membership, meetings, and activities of EAGs must be open to all employees.
 1. In accordance with the Company’s human rights statement ([pg. 4](#)), membership and participation must be open to all employees, regardless of race, color, national origin, ancestry, creed, religion, sex, familial/marital status, physical or medical condition, age, genetics, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, political views, military status, domestic violence victimhood, source of income, handicap, disability, citizenship status, immigration status, primary language spoken, or any other protected classification under local, state, or federal law.
- D. The mission and purpose of EAGs should include alignment with the mission, values, and behaviors of the Company and the purpose of the DEI Charter ([pg. 4](#)).
 1. Mission statements must be included in the application of EAGs and will be reviewed by the DEI Committee.

II. Procedures for Approval:

- a. To be recognized as an approved EAG, the proposed EAG must complete an application ([pg. 4](#)) that defines the mission, purpose, and goals of the group. EAG applications must be submitted to the DEI Committee. The DEI Committee will review the application to ensure the proposed EAG (1) is aligned with the Company's mission, values, and behaviors (2) is being formed to support and advance DEI efforts within the Company, and (3) upholds the Company's EAG Policy. Failure to meet all the above criteria may result in denial of approval to form an official EAG. Each EAG application must:
 - A. Identify at least two full-time employees to serve as chairs of the EAG. Chairs are responsible for:
 1. Confirming employee interest in establishing the EAG
 2. Submitting the application for the EAG to the DEI Committee for approval ([pg. 4](#))
 3. Requesting a sponsor from the DEI Committee
 4. Organizing initial meetings and activities for the EAG
 - B. Submit application for proposed EAG to the DEI Committee. The Committee will review the application and provide determination of approval within 30 days of submission.
 - C. Upon approval, chairs must attend an initial meeting with the appointed sponsor from the DEI Committee. Among the topics that will be discussed in the meeting include:
 1. Group mission, goals, activities, and resources
 2. Strategies on building and sustaining engagement
 3. Annual reporting
 - D. Organize and promote first meeting of the EAG.
 1. Groups are responsible for all meeting logistics, including securing the location, technology needs, speakers, and any other resources to achieve the goals of the meeting.
 2. The first meeting should include the purpose and goals for the group including how they advance the Company's DEI efforts.
 - E. Submit brief mid-year and annual reports (e.g. bulleted list of activities and expenditures) to the DEI Committee by mid-December and June of each year.

III. Membership Participation:

EAGs must refrain from discrimination as defined by Company policies. Membership must be voluntary, inclusive, and open to all employees who support the EAGs mission.

IV. Employee Time:

An employee's participation may not interfere with performance of the employee's assigned work. Where an employee's performance is affected by participation, supervisors may limit use of work time on EAG activities to improve performance.

V. Funding:

The EAGs will be provided with appropriate annual funding, as determined by the DEI Committee.

VI. Use of Essex Branding:

Use of the Company's name, logo, and other branding assets is subject to approval by the Marketing and Communications Department marketing@essex.com.

VII. Policy Administration:

This policy shall be administered by the DEI Committee. All questions related to this policy should be referred to the Committee DEI@essex.com.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

I. What are Employee Affinity Groups?

EAGs are Company supported employee-led groups which support and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion ("DEI") throughout the Company and are drawn together by common interests, shared characteristics, or life experiences, and play an important role in articulating, promoting, and supporting their collective concerns.

II. Why establish Employee Affinity Groups at Essex?

EAGs support internal community building, strengthening communication and collaboration. They also provide visibility and support to our DEI efforts allowing us to continue fostering an inclusive Company culture that values the rich diversity of identities, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of our employees.

III. Who can join an Employee Affinity Group?

Membership for Essex EAGs is voluntary and open to all employees of the Company who share an interest in the group's purpose.

IV. What are some examples of Employee Affinity Groups?

EAGs can represent a wide range of shared interests, backgrounds, and experiences among employees. EAGs should be organized as groups dedicated to helping advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at Essex, and reflect the foundations of the DEI Committee Charter. Some groups may organize in support of backgrounds, such as race/ethnicity, nationality, gender-identity & expression, sexual orientation, etc. Others may organize to represent other interests, and whose collective insights help to promote an inclusive, equity-minded community within the Company.

Some employees may wish to organize socially due to shared interests that are not related to supporting the Company's DEI efforts. While this is not prohibited, these informal associations do not qualify for recognition as an official Essex Employee Affinity Group.

V. Does an Employee Affinity Group need to host Company-wide events?

No. You can hold small meetings, activities, or events for the members of your group. However, we encourage the solicitation of participation to be Company-wide so as not to exclude any potential membership interest.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:

- I. [Essex Employee Affinity Group Application](#)
- II. [Essex Human Rights Statement](#)
- III. [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Charter](#)
- IV. [Essex Acceptable Internet Use Policy Statement and Guidelines](#)