Lessons From the Field:
Implementing Mental Health Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) & Recommendations for Future Success

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About NAMI-NYC

National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City (NAMI-NYC) is a leading nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of thousands of individuals and families affected by mental illness across the five boroughs of New York City each year. With a strong commitment to advocacy, education, and support, NAMI-NYC plays a vital role in the local community by raising awareness, reducing stigma, and providing essential resources for those impacted by mental health conditions. If you or someone you care about is struggling, please reach out to our Helpline at 212-684-3264 or helpline@naminyc.org for support and to be connected to services.

The NAMI-NYC Workplace Mental Health Initiative provides custom support to employers seeking to promote employee wellbeing and supportive mental health practices in the workplace while reducing stigma towards mental illness. Workplace mental health training and technical assistance can be tailored to specific needs and supports employers to:

- Promote good mental health for all employees.
- Provide education to increase awareness and reduce stigma towards mental health in the workplace.
- Create flexible organizational policies and facilitate open discussions about mental health.
- Ensure all employees and their families understand the array of mental health services available to support them through company resources and NAMI-NYC.

→ Reach out at **naminyc.org/workplace** to bring us to your workplace!

Introduction
About this report

→ **Mental health ERGs**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in five people will be diagnosed with a mental illness in any year. At NAMI-NYC, we say the other four are their family, friends, and co-workers. Mental illness is the leading cause of disability and greatly impacts employee productivity, whether by causing employees to be absent more often from the workplace or being less productive when present. Employers that prioritize creating a mental health friendly environment see improvements for both individual mental health, as well as overall organizational performance.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are voluntary employee-led groups in which employees who share an identity or characteristic come together to create community and provide support. There has been an increase in organizations creating ERGs focused on disability and/or mental health. Creating a mental health ERG is an opportunity for employees to create supportive spaces, reduce the stigma associated with mental health challenges, and provide a key resource to facilitate change by providing employee-level feedback on organizational policies and programs.

NAMI-NYC partnered with fourteen organizations to learn about the impactful work they are doing through their disability/mental health ERGs to create a culture promoting good mental health and emotional wellness in the workplace.
The goal was to bridge the gap between theory and practice to identify real-world applications of how ERGs are developed, what they focus on, and how they make an impact. To do so, we developed a survey based on a literature review of ERG best practices and workplace mental health programs. The survey was 45 qualitative and quantitative questions about governance, collaboration, and programming.

This report presents the data learned from the survey and recommendations to support employees, leadership, Human Resources (HR), Diversity Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB), and Wellness teams starting or enhancing disability/mental health ERGs. It provides strategies to set up a successful governance structure, leverage cross-department collaboration, and create meaningful programs to reduce stigma and promote good mental health among employees.

Governance

Governance
Findings

Who are the ERGs?

The fourteen organizations range in size from 500 to 20,000 employees. Most ERGs serve North America, with some serving New York or global employee bases. All ERGs have a mental health component, and several are expanding to incorporate disabilities, neurodiversity, and physical health as a part of the framework.

Most ERGs are relatively new, with approximately one-third starting since the COVID-19 pandemic. Three organizations spun off their European mental health ERGs into North America. Some started as grassroots efforts led by a few employees and eventually became formal once they started delivering programming and gained traction. Others were rolled out as a part of company-wide DEIB efforts.
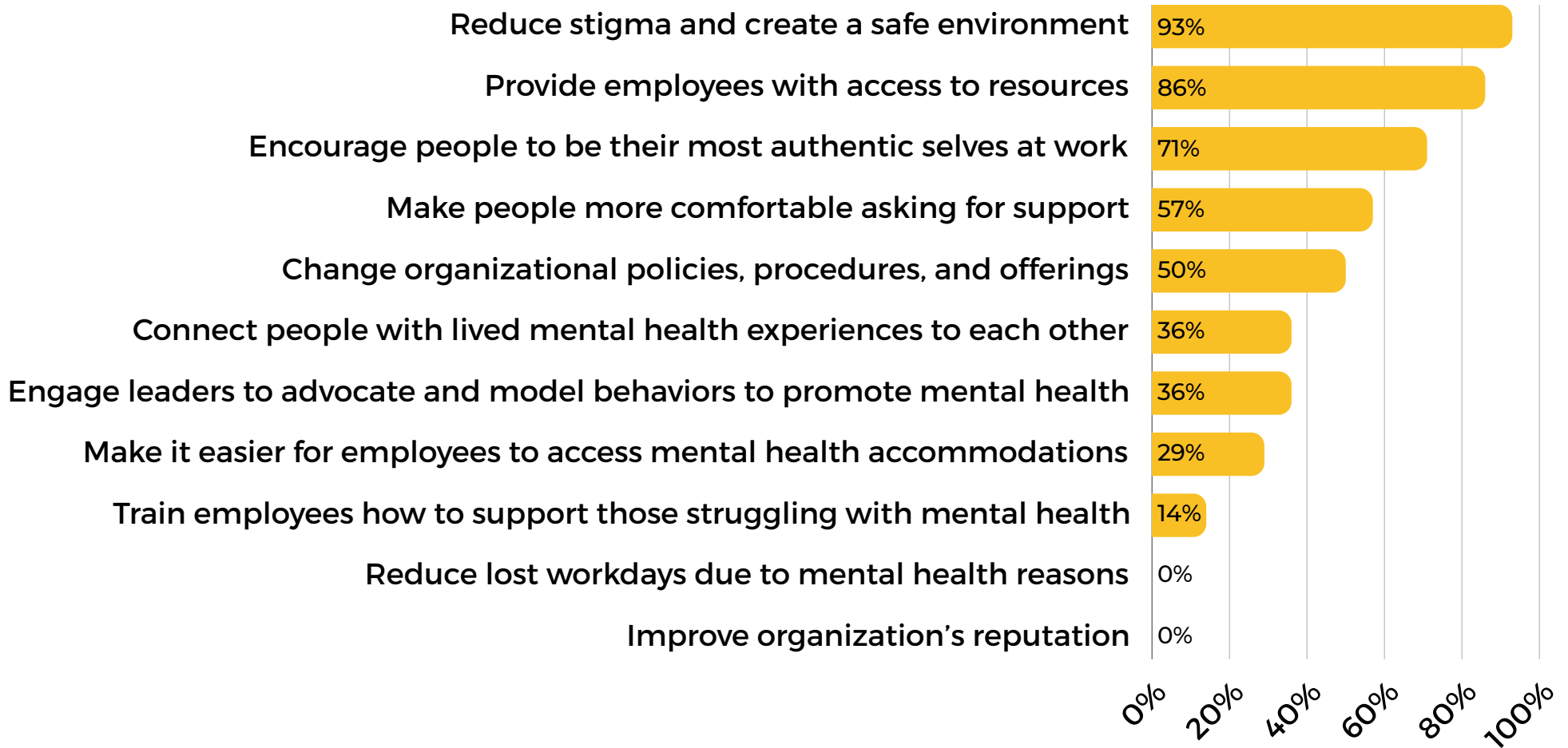
awareness inclusion mental health storytelling thrive equity empathy education resources acceptance connection enable safety compassion community understand accomodations respect destigmatize peers advocacy caregivers visible and invisible

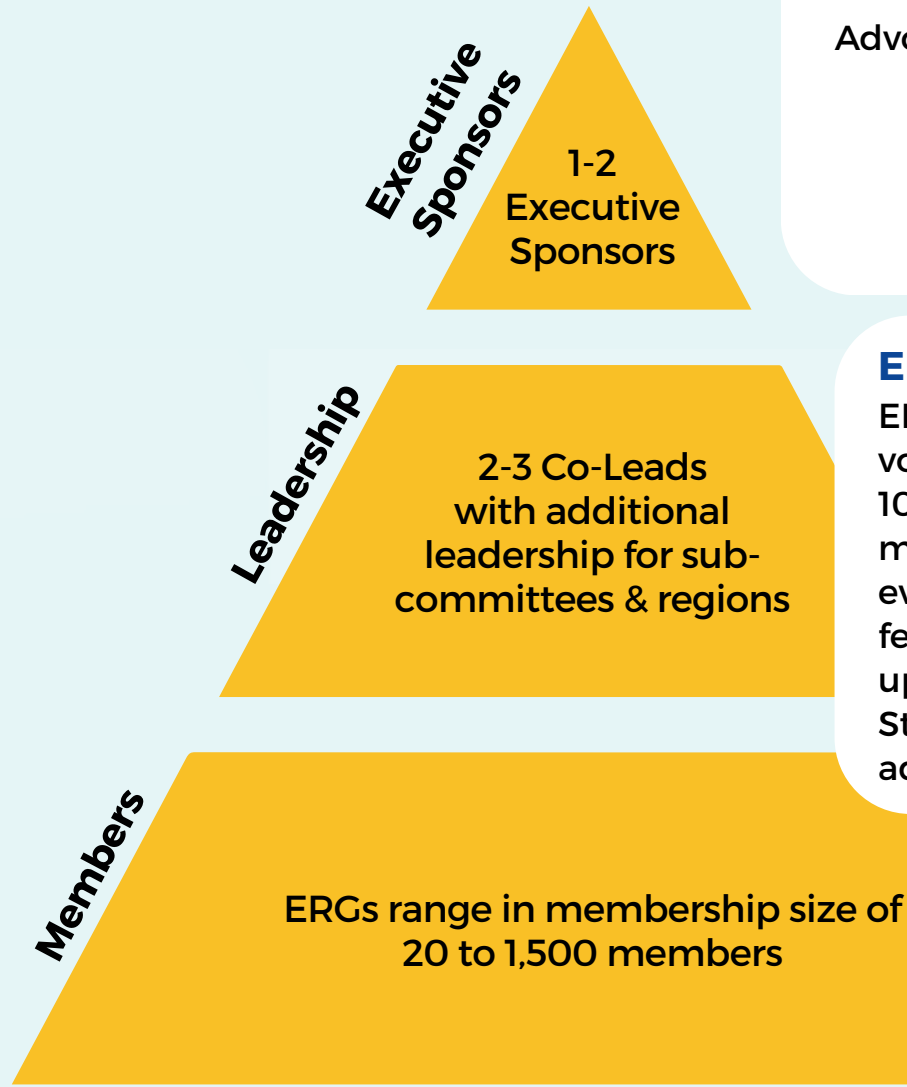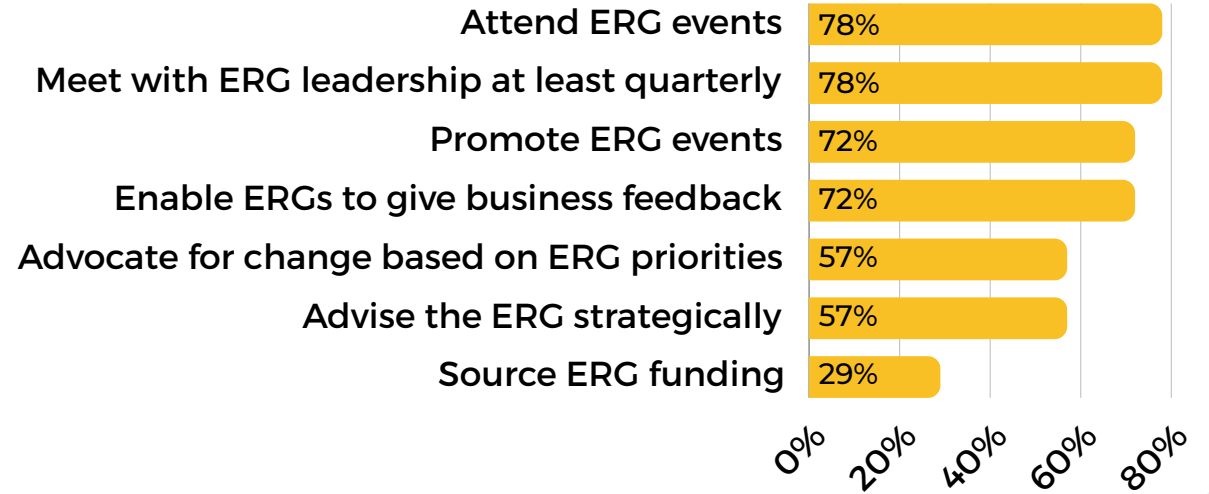| Organization	ERG Name	Geography	Founded	Focus Area
AstraZeneca	Safe Space US	USA/N.A.	2022	Mental health
Barclays Bank	Mental Health	New York	2017	Mental health
Deutsche Bank	dbEnable US	USA/N.A.	2018	Disability, mental health, neurodiversity, and wellness
Invesco	Neurodiversity Network	USA/N.A.	2023	Neurodiversity (with mental health component)
Justworks	Justability	New York	2022	Disability, mental health, neurodiversity, and wellness
LinkedIn	EnableIn	Global	2015	Disability and mental health
Mindbody	Mindbody Access	Global	2019	Disability (with mental health component)
MUFG Investor Services	The Culture Club	USA/N.A.	2019	Cross-section of employees' "culture"
Shutterstock, Inc.	Minds Over Matter	Global	2021	Disability (with mental health component)
SMBC Bank	UNIQUE	New York	2019	Mental health
Howard Hughes	Abilities + Allies	USA/N.A.	2021	Disability (with mental health component)
Willis Towers Watson	Workability North America	USA/N.A.	2019	Disability, mental health, and neurodiversity
Financial, software, data, and media company	Redacted	USA/N.A.	2017	Disability (with mental health component)
Asset management company	Redacted	Global	2017	Disability, mental health, and neurodiversity

ERGs prioritize stigma, safety, and resources.

Top five priorities ranked by ERGs

Priority	%
Reduce stigma and create a safe environment	93%
Provide employees with access to resources	86%
Encourage people to be their most authentic selves at work	71%
Make people more comfortable asking for support	57%
Change organizational policies, procedures, and offerings	50%
Connect people with lived mental health experiences to each other	36%
Engage leaders to advocate and model behaviors to promote mental health	36%
Make it easier for employees to access mental health accommodations	29%
Train employees how to support those struggling with mental health	14%
Reduce lost workdays due to mental health reasons	0%
Improve organization's reputation	0%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Governance
Findings

Executive Sponsors support ERGs in many ways:

Attend ERG events	78%
Meet with ERG leadership at least quarterly	78%
Promote ERG events	72%
Enable ERGs to give business feedback	72%
Advocate for change based on ERG priorities	57%
Advise the ERG strategically	57%
Source ERG funding	29%

(x-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%)

Executive Sponsors

1-2 Executive Sponsors

Leadership

2-3 Co-Leads with additional leadership for sub-committees & regions

ERGs have designated leadership positions:

ERGs fill leadership positions through application, nomination, voting, interviewing, or self-selection. The majority of leads spend 10-25 hours per quarter (up to 100 hours) on ERG activities and meet weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly. Leaders plan and execute events and meetings, identify strategic focus areas, solicit member feedback and ideas, collaborate with other ERG leaders, and report updates. Some ERGs have regional leads, sub-committees, and Steering Committees. Some ERGs utilize DEIB and HR teams for additional leadership support.

Members

ERGs range in membership size of 20 to 1,500 members

ERGs have low barriers to access membership:

Most ERGs consider employees members if they attend one ERG event, while a few count whoever joins their virtual platform (e.g., Slack, Workplace, LinkedIn, intranet).
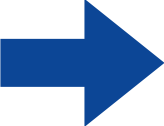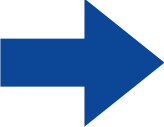
Governance
Recommendations

#1

Create an ERG or committee dedicated exclusively to mental health.

We all have mental health.
NAMI-NYC views mental health as a spectrum in which many people can experience mental health challenges which, while not meeting the threshold of diagnosis, impact them negatively, whereas others live with a diagnosis of a mental illness and are thriving. In our experience, some people who are diagnosed with a mental illness may not view themselves as a person with a disability. For instance, we have heard people describe their mental illness as a 'super-power' which allows them to work in very productive creative bursts. Framing it as part of the disability community can leave out people who do not identify with that label or require specific accommodations in the workplace. In addition, elements of mental illness can be different from other types of chronic illnesses or disabilities. Mental illness can be episodic, and so individuals may need more care and support at different times, whereas other types of disabilities can appear more linear and chronic in their trajectory. Most importantly, most people who experience a mental illness can and will recover with appropriate treatment. One study found that 80% of employees who received appropriate, evidence-based care made a full recovery in their mental health journey.

Mental health challenges show up in different ways.
Most ERGs focus on mental health within a broader set of goals related to disabilities, neurodiversity, and/or employee engagement. While clearly ERGs can be successful at addressing mental health challenges as part of a broader strategy, there are differences in the way mental illnesses and mental health challenges present, particularly in the workplace, which can make it difficult to address them in the same way as other disabilities.

**Mental health requires its own focus.**
Therefore, we recommend having either a separate mental health ERG, or a specific mental health committee with owners within an employee engagement/disability ERG. Having clear ownership of goals related to mental health can ensure that ERGs provide education, facilitate dialogue, and offer access to resources specifically related to mental health and mental illness.
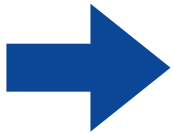
Governance
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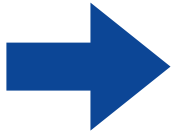
Set and align on ERG priorities.
Clear priorities will help inform programming, align expectations on goals across leaders and members, facilitate program evaluation for improvement, and build organizational support for the ERG.

> "Ensure leaders are passionate and vulnerable enough to share their stories."

Find dedicated leaders.
Take your time in selecting ERG leaders. Leaders should be passionate about mental health, willing to listen to others, and value community. Team-building helps create and execute an ERG strategic vision. Strong internal champions can greatly influence organizational priorities, so identifying employees with relationships across the organization can assist in creating institutional support for the program.

All the ERGs we surveyed were run by volunteers, which one organization described as "a total side of desk activity." Provide clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, such as expectations related to time commitment, meeting attendance, and what success looks like. This can keep the momentum going, ensure leaders receive support, and do not burn out due to a lack of clarity about the scope of work.

> "Include enough colleagues who are truly passionate about the cause and willing to contribute time and ideas in a positive collaborative way."
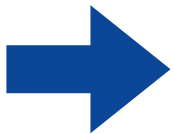
Define membership.
Define what constitutes a member of the ERG for reporting and identifying the population impacted by and seeking out ERG support. To create an engaged membership population and facilitate more opportunities for education and community building, we recommend that ERGs define membership to include:

- Virtual component (such as being in a Slack group or signing up for an email listserv) to enable people who may prefer to be anonymous or not be able to attend in-person. One ERG reported that employees (who they had no idea were involved) thanked the ERG for the ERG's help. You never know who you may reach.
- Participating in at least one event or activity as a measure of more meaningful engagement.
- Caregivers for those living with mental health challenges to open up the conversation to a wider array of individuals who need support. NAMI-NYC is one of the only organizations that supports caregivers for those living with mental health challenges. The impact on mental health for those who are caregivers can be profound and cause increases in mental health challenges for the caregivers themselves, as well as serious challenges in the workplace, such as missed work due to caretaking responsibilities.

#3

Get internal buy-in and organizational support with 'small wins' early.
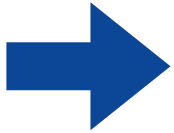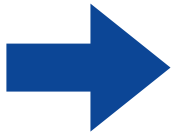
Starting a mental health ERG can be overwhelming.
Increasing knowledge about mental health, reducing stigma towards mental illness, and creating a culture which promotes good mental health are all complex organizational challenges. Workplace mental health initiatives can be challenging to implement as they often occur across multiple business domains (e.g., benefits, HR, learning and development, DEIB, wellness departments, etc.). While the bureaucratic and logistical hurdles can feel daunting, several survey respondents indicated that projects or programs related to mental health which produce quick and early wins can lay the groundwork for future initiatives and build the business case for further support for your ERG.

Use 'small wins' to gain interest and build momentum.
If you are either starting a new ERG or trying to enhance your current ERG, start out with a small event to demonstrate early success and the viability of your program. Several ERGs indicated that their first events gained so much attention and interest from employees that it showed leadership the significant need for their ERG to be built. This approach also allows you to pivot quickly in case your initial strategy changes to ensure you can meet the needs of the ERG members.

Examples of programs which may be a lighter lift include:
- Event for Mental Health Awareness month or publicly recognized mental health efforts.
- Informal sharing session where people talk about their stories with mental health.
- Interactive lunch and learn on a mental health topic, such as mindfulness or burnout.
- Share mental health resources across a Slack channel or other communication platform.
- Ask HR/Employee Assistance Program for educational opportunities that can be delivered to employees.
- Partner with external community organizations dedicated to mental health, such as NAMI-NYC.

"Just do it and figure out the fine details as you go. It's a learning experience and trying is the first step."

"The group was formed organically and unofficially by passionate product engineers and designers. Employee interest grew after the group delivered accessibility programming around the company and officially named an ERG."

"We started a grassroots emotional wellbeing group for a few offices and then it rose to an actual network."

"Get buy-in from the business in addition to HR and DEIB."

NAMI
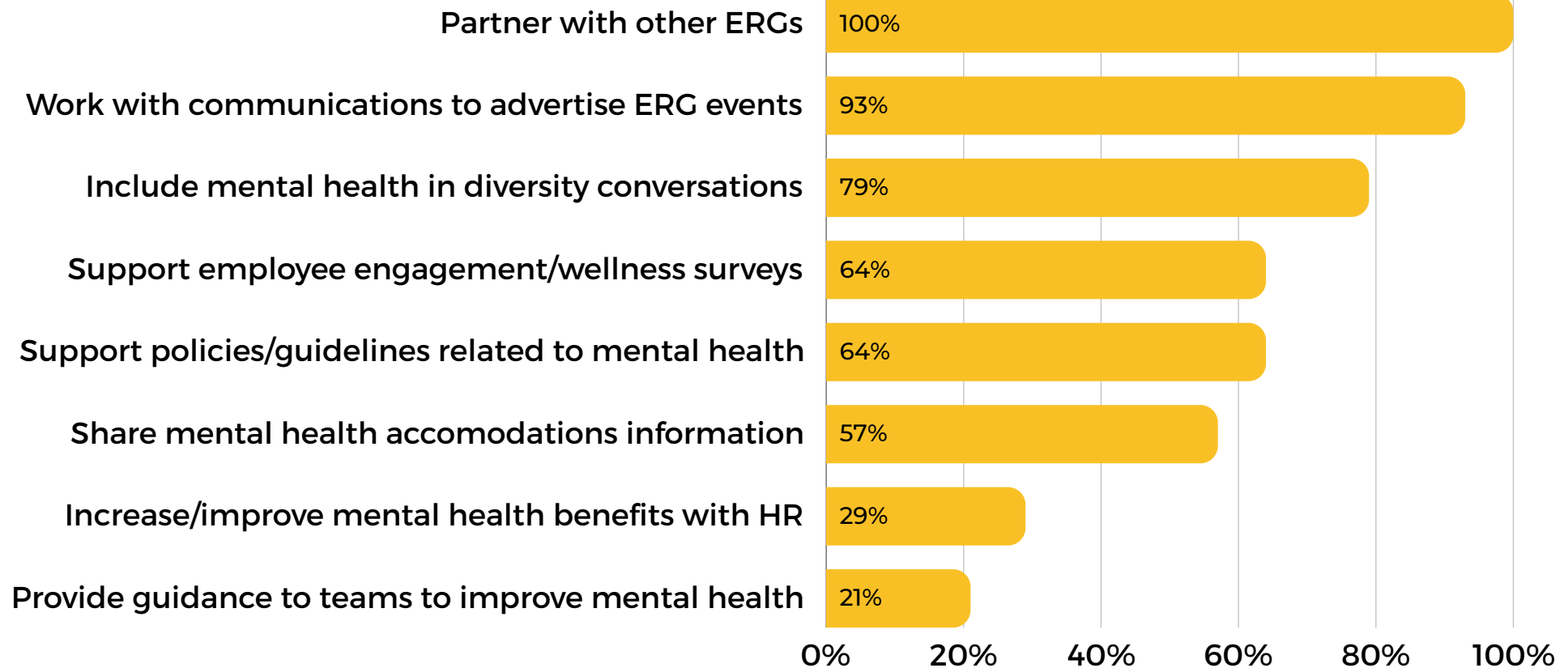National Alliance on Mental Illness
New York City Metro

Collaboration

Collaboration
Findings

ERGs collaborate across the organization to maximize impact.

How ERGs collaborate across the organization

Partner with other ERGs	100%
Work with communications to advertise ERG events	93%
Include mental health in diversity conversations	79%
Support employee engagement/wellness surveys	64%
Support policies/guidelines related to mental health	64%
Share mental health accomodations information	57%
Increase/improve mental health benefits with HR	29%
Provide guidance to teams to improve mental health	21%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
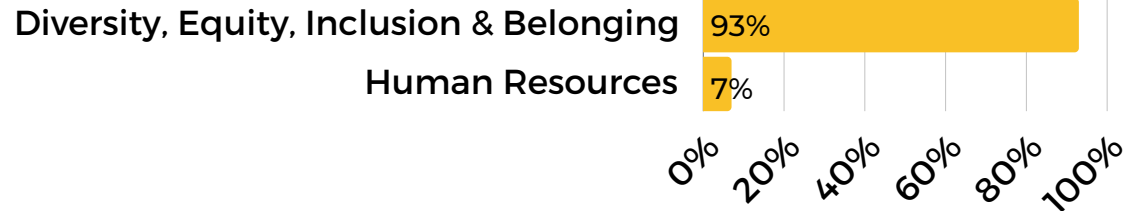
Collaboration
Findings

ERGs leverage intersectionality.

All ERGs reported that they partner with other ERGs. They do this by co-hosting events, sharing resources, promoting each other's events, highlighting impact months, and sharing best practices (e.g., recruitment, mentorship, and governance). By partnering with other ERGs, they can talk about mental health challenges with different communities based on race, ethnicity, national origin, sexuality, gender, age, abilities, and other shared experiences such as being a caretaker.

ERGs are embedded in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging efforts.

Department that oversees ERG

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging	93%
Human Resources	7%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Department that funds ERG

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging	93%
Human Resources	7%
Executive Sponsor	7%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Collaboration
Recommendations

#1

Utilize the ERG to drive organizational decisions related to mental health.

Leverage the ERG as a resource and guide for business decisions and policy changes.
The top ways that ERGs collaborate across the organization are by partnering with other ERGs, working with communications to advertise ERG events, and including mental health in diversity conversations. Responses varied for other types of activities. For instance, 57% of respondents indicated their ERG provide information about mental health accommodations, which is an important area in which ERGs and business functions can partner to ensure that there is clarity about the accommodations process for employees who may need it. Over the past two years, employer requests to NAMI-NYC for information about mental health accommodations have increased, and in discussions with ERG leaders, many employees are now coming to the ERG with questions about how to talk to their manager or get a mental health accommodation. ERGs are an excellent resource to provide guidance to employers about employee needs for and feedback on the accommodation process.

"We are working with DEIB to create an accommodations page to make it easier for employees to know what's available and how to ask."

"Get support from your executive leadership team. Find a member that can boost your ERG's message among leadership."

Executive sponsors can elevate ERG's input to leadership.
All ERGs surveyed had at least one executive sponsor whose main functions were to promote and attend activities of the ERG. Executive sponsors are in a key position to integrate the ERG meaningfully into business functions, including advocating for specific ERG recommendations to other organizational leaders, and serving as an internal champion. We recommend ERGs utilize their executive sponsors to facilitate opportunities to provide feedback and recommendations on organizational policies related to mental health.

There are a variety of organizational priorities ERGs can provide feedback on.
- Mental health friendly workplace policies (e.g., flexible scheduling, paid parental leave).
- Mental health benefits (e.g., in-network culturally competent providers, affordable care).
- More inclusive and equitable recruiting, hiring, retention, career development, and promotion practices.
- Opportunities for improvement around communication (e.g., ease of finding information about requesting accommodations, how to access full array of mental health benefits available through organization).
- Training needs related to mental health (e.g., manager training, mental health skills training).

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Collaboration
Recommendations

#2

Prioritize intersectionality between mental health and other identities.

Though mental health affects us all, the impact is not equally shared. One of the more powerful findings across different ERGs was the importance of creating spaces for conversations about specific intersectional issues related to mental health and other components of DEIB. NAMI-NYC views DEIB as a central part of creating a mental health friendly workplace. Research has robustly and consistently shown that while people experience mental illness at similar rates, people from communities of color and marginalized communities are more negatively impacted and experience increased physical and mental health symptoms related to discrimination and harassment at work. In addition, individuals experiencing mental health challenges at work are more likely to experience workplace discrimination due to stigma, fear, stereotypes, bullying, and more. Therefore, individuals with mental health challenges should be considered in conversations about DEIB.

"Joint events with other ERGs have been most successful. Examples include: coming out versus disclosure with LGBTQIA+, mental health and traumatic events, domestic violence with women's ERG, Black ERG, AAPI ERG, and supporting children mental health with working families."

"We collaborate monthly with our other 7 ERGs on mental health, recruiting, mentorship, and coaching endeavors."

Develop intersectional programming and partnerships. We recommend all mental health/disabilities ERGs partner with other ERGs to facilitate events and collaborate on workplace policy recommendations which explore the complex relationship between mental health and identity. Examples shared by ERGs include:
- Host intersectional events, such as with family members and caretakers of people with mental illness.
- Spotlight impact months when appropriate. For instance, "we did an event with [our Black ERG] to highlight black mental health access and stigma during Black History Month."
- Talk about mental health for particular communities. For instance, "we've partnered with [our generational ERG] to talk about mental health stigma focused on mature employees."
- Discuss mental health impact of events, such as legislation changes affecting LGBTQIA+ populations.
- Advocate for mental health friendly policies, such as transparent evaluations and insurance provider diversity.

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Collaboration
Recommendations

#3

Provide funding for ERG leadership and activities.

Funding enables leaders to make meaningful impact and avoid burnout.
We recommend providing a robust funding stream to support both ERG activities and ERG leads who are guiding the work. A strong ERG leader can make a huge difference in both the reach and impact of the group and requires a lot of time for both administrative functions (such as scheduling events), as well as emotional capital for sharing their story and supporting others in their mental health journey. Many ERG leads shared that people would approach them with questions about their mental health challenges, including how to access organizational resources, outside of ERG events. This critical relationship building warrants additional support both for the individuals providing it as well as for ERGs to create an infrastructure so that employees can get the information they need through other channels, such as training events.

> "ERG leads are given additional restricted stock units (RSUs) as recognition and appreciation for their work."

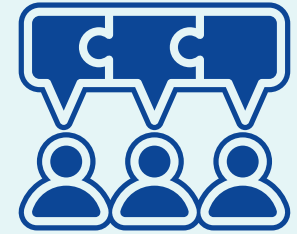**Consider unique ways to fund ERGs and compensate leaders.**
Examples of different ways that organizations can provide financial support for ERGs include:
- Company match donations and/or volunteer hours to non-profit community mental health organizations.
- Compensate ERG leads, including in-kind support to conduct ERG work during the workday.
- Provide a specific training budget to hire external speakers and experts on mental health topics.
- Use insurance wellness dollars to fund ERG programming.
- Align ERG goals to HR, Benefits, DEIB, and/or Philanthropy departments and allocate budget to the ERG.
- Work with executive sponsors to tap into their budgets or identify other opportunities for funding.
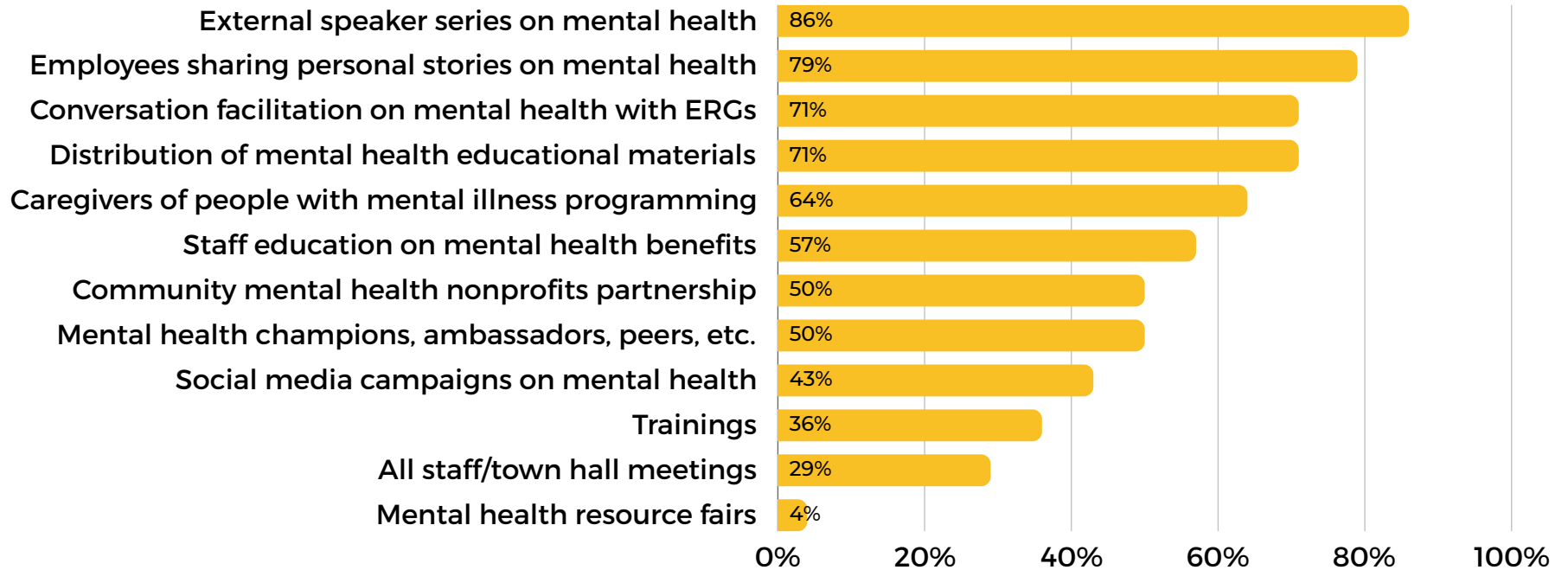
Programming

Key programming includes speakers, storytelling, and education.

ERG programming

Category	Percentage
External speaker series on mental health	86%
Employees sharing personal stories on mental health	79%
Conversation facilitation on mental health with ERGs	71%
Distribution of mental health educational materials	71%
Caregivers of people with mental illness programming	64%
Staff education on mental health benefits	57%
Community mental health nonprofits partnership	50%
Mental health champions, ambassadors, peers, etc.	50%
Social media campaigns on mental health	43%
Trainings	36%
All staff/town hall meetings	29%
Mental health resource fairs	4%

Virtual, in-person, and company-wide efforts are used to market ERG programming.

It's not always easy to get the word out about the great work ERGs do. ERGs rely on virtual communications including emails, newsletters, all-team calendars, and channels (e.g., Slack, Workplace, LinkedIn, intranet, etc.). They access as many people as possible through in-person company-wide meetings, new hire events, and global announcements channels. ERGs leverage leadership/C-suite, DEIB council, HR, and partner ERGs to market their events. Most ERGs do not have external social media campaigns. Those that do center them around awareness months (a full listing for ideas can be found here).

Programming
Findings

A key step to destigmatizing mental illness is talking about it. ERGs do just that.

The workplace can be a challenging environment to navigate when determining what to share about ourselves, especially as it relates to mental health. Although people spend most of their day at work, there are not always opportunities or safe spaces to discuss mental health. Stigma can make sharing extremely difficult due to fear, bullying, and stereotypes.

By providing a space for employees to share their mental health experiences, ERGs normalize and destigmatize mental health challenges at work. Conversation is at the core of the most frequently reported ERG activities, including speakers, storytelling, ERG collaboration, and internal chat platforms. ERGs show us that just providing information about mental health might not be enough. By facilitating comfortable environments for employees to connect with one another, ERGs encourage employees to bring their most authentic selves to work and be respected for it.

Creating spaces for conversation are at the heart of programming.

How ERGs promote conversation

- Small, non-recorded mental health chat sessions.
- Company-wide education and storytelling sessions.
- Slack events and virtual channels/forums; can be anonymous.
- Leadership sharing their stories to encourage others.
- Internal podcasts.
- Lunch & learn in-person sharing sessions.
- Panels and fireside chats with individuals.
- Targeted internal communications featuring employees.
- Mental health peers, champions, or first aider programs.
- Informal co-working, such as body doubling sessions.

Examples

- **"Take a Break"** weekly 30-minute virtual education and personal storytelling sessions with >500 attendees.
- **"Being Your Vulnerable Self"** small, non-recorded sessions to share mental health stories and coping techniques.
- **"Drop-In, Time to Talk"** virtual sessions 1-2x per month.
- **"Morning Brew"** features topics such as self-care, mindfulness tools, it's okay not to be okay, and talking about disabilities.

Program
Findings

Organizations have dedicated programs for employees to support others experiencing mental health challenges.

Though employees are not HR, doctors, or therapists, they can still support their colleagues. 50% of organizations surveyed have dedicated programs where volunteers serve as mental health champions, allies, advocates, first-aiders, or peers. Volunteers support colleagues that may be struggling with mental health challenges. Programs vary in formality with some requiring Mental Health First Aid certifications and others simply requiring the interest in supporting others. DEIB, Benefits, HR, Wellbeing or the ERG oversee the programs.

Employees can make a difference by supporting their colleagues.
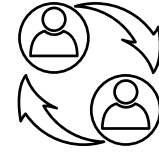
Roles of employee volunteers shared by ERGs

- Support colleagues struggling with mental health.
- Have conversations about navigating mental health at work.
- Provide emotional support using empathy.
- Practice active listening and validation.
- Share personal stories, expertise, and knowledge from unique experiences with mental health challenges.
- Model vulnerability, recovery, and resilience.
- Direct colleagues to mental health resources.
- Act as mental health awareness advocates.
- Reach out for additional support when needed.

Impact of employee volunteers shared by ERGs

- Conversations between colleagues related to mental health.
- Awareness of and access to mental health resources.
- De-stigmatization of having mental health challenges.
- Feeling of belonging, community, and trust in the workplace.
- Hope for recovery.

Programming
Recommendations

#1 **Engage external experts to provide training and technical assistance.**
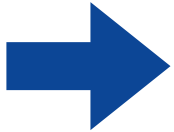
**Increasing knowledge destigmatizes mental illness.**
86% of ERGs surveyed reported they engage external speakers on mental health topics. All ERGs identified reducing stigma as one of the most important goals of the ERG. Both the research and over 40 years of experience reducing stigma related to mental illness at NAMI-NYC have taught us that increasing knowledge is a critical component of this goal. Education also increases help-seeking behavior. ERGs can engage external experts to provide guidance on the ERG's strategy and programming, as well as deliver education, training, and resources to employees.

"It is imperative to seek guidance from mental health professionals, practitioners, and related organizations in planning our strategies of engagements."
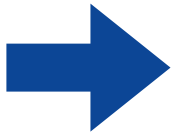
Partnering with experts increases ERG capacity and effectiveness.
ERGs may not always have the answers employees need to navigate the complex and disparate mental health system, which often makes finding high-quality, actionable, and evidence-based information and care for oneself or others difficult without guidance. Leveraging external resources can reduce the burden on ERGs to figure it all out on their own. In addition, several ERGs identified human resources concerns around liability that "we will go too far" with people talking about mental health and mental illness in the workplace who are not experts. While we value the lived experience of peers, we also believe partnering with external experts, such as NAMI-NYC, can ensure that the information provided to employees is accurate, vetted with different employers, and alleviates these concerns.
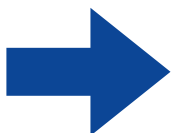
**Consider a variety of ways to partner externally.**
- Learn about what other employers doing, such as in our NAMI-NYC Workplace Mental Health Collaborative, which brings together employers to cross-pollinate ideas, learn best practices, and implement them.
- Deliver workplace mental health trainings to employees. At NAMI-NYC, we provide trainings on workplace mental health 101, burnout, resilience, managers, coping with stressors, caregivers, and more.
- Identify experts for specific topics that the ERG is interested in, such as substance use or suicide prevention.
- Connect ERG members with free resources, including education and services, from other organizations.
- Identify non-profit organizations aligned to the ERG's mission.

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Programming
Recommendations

Develop and prioritize peer support programs.
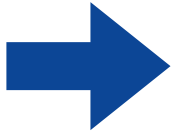
Peers are people with lived experiences of mental health challenges.
As the only mental health peer-led organization by both people living with mental illness, as well as caregivers, family, and friends of people living with mental illness, NAMI-NYC greatly values lived experience and the importance of peer support. Peer support brings people together who have shared experiences and creates a space to connect with people who truly understand because they have been there.

"Connecting people through experience and storytelling is also something we do. In Slack or virtual events, it's amazing to hear people's stories and vulnerabilities -- it shows how safe they feel in our space."
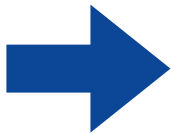
Peers programs are mutually beneficial, strengths-based, and non-hierarchical.
79% of ERGs identified storytelling (hearing people share their lived experience of mental health challenges) as one of the most powerful strategies to destigmatize mental health in the workplace. We recommend ERGs develop and implement mental health peer support programs, where employees are trained to provide nonclinical support. They share personal knowledge and expertise, help connect others to resources, and model recovery and resiliency of thriving despite having mental health challenges in the workplace. Peer support builds on people's strengths, not what they lack. It prioritizes a non-hierarchical and mutual learning experience in which people support others' individual paths without judgement. These can be helpful traits in workplaces where hierarchy can make it difficult for people to reach out for and access help. Sharing these lived experiences helps people feel less alone and connects them to a larger workplace community to support them on their way to recovery.

"We never underestimate the value and power of informal conversations about mental health... Storytelling is an incredibly powerful way to connect with colleagues."
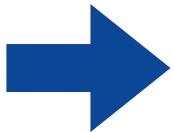
Peer support in the workplace plays a pivotal role in fostering a culture of empathy, belonging, and wellness.
Drawing from personal experiences, individuals offer unique insights to their colleagues, which builds understanding and compassion. When employees share their lived experiences, it cultivates an environment where others feel safe and encouraged to share their own experiences, effectively promoting vulnerability, mutual respect, and trust. The authenticity and relatability of these experiences can profoundly impact psychological safety and how confident employees feel asking for help without fear and stigma.

#3 Identify specific goals and use available data to demonstrate success.

→ **Measuring workplace mental health is challenging.**
One of the main challenges across all ERGs surveyed was identifying and collecting meaningful metrics that allowed the ERG to measure their impact. Many of the ERGs surveyed were also newer ERGs and have not yet built out an evaluation strategy.

"Be clear in your goals for the ERG and what you hope to accomplish."

"Number of events and attendance varies quarter by quarter (and event to event). We use pre- and post-event surveys to gauge impact. Regularly monitoring Slack channel member counts."

→ **Start with easy-to-collect data to track progress and advocate for resources.**
We recommend that all ERGs prioritize collecting data to better understand their program activities and impact to inform future goals and advocate for additional resources from organizational leadership. We also encourage ERGs to not overthink this process! While a robust analytics program would be nice to have, there are many ways to collect simple program evaluation data that can go a long way to support your program. ERGs should not ask for identified personal health information.
Sample data collection and review methods include:
- Counts (e.g. events, attendance, members, listserv, online communities, resources, posts, communications)
- Surveys (e.g. employee engagement surveys, members, pre- and post-event surveys, case studies)
- De-identified aggregate employee mental health claims data (e.g. EAP usage)
- Business impacts (e.g. reviewing existing policies and processes to provide feedback)

Potential program evaluation questions include:
- How many people attend each event (and attend multiple events)?
- How many people sign up for newsletter/online community?
- How many people interact in online communities?
- How many events were held?
- How many educational resources/posts were shared?
- Has employee knowledge of mental health challenges and how to access employer resources increased?
- Has mental health care utilization increased?
- Do employees feel that the ERG and organization prioritize their mental health?
- Have any of the recommendations of the ERG been integrated into formal policy?

Conclusion
Next Steps

Investing in an ERG focused on mental health and mental illness is a critical step to support employees in the workplace.

Reach out to the NAMI-NYC Workplace Mental Health Initiative at **naminyc.org/workplace** for support. We offer technical assistance, employee and manager trainings, an employer collaborative, and more!

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