



2026 ERG IMPACT AWARDS

Application Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Table of Contents

ERG Impact Awards Application Guidelines	3
General Eligibility	3
Eligibility to Apply	3
Consideration Period	3
Work Eligible for an ERG Impact Award	4
Application Limitations	5
Submitting a Nomination Application	6
Nomination Form	6
Application Nominators/Submitters	6
Short Answer Questions	6
Word/Character Count.....	6
Supplemental Materials	6
Guidelines per Award Category	7
Business Impact	7
Community Impact	7
Workforce Impact	8
Workplace Culture Impact.....	8
Trailblazer	8
ERG Collaboration.....	9
ERG Leadership	9
Valued Partner	9
ERG Impact Awards Frequently Asked Questions.....	10
Definitions	10
Submitting a Nomination Application	10
What Makes a Strong Application	12
Award Selection.....	13

ERG Impact Awards Application Guidelines

General Eligibility

Eligibility to Apply

Groups and individuals from organizations with an Employee Resource Group (ERG) are eligible to apply, regardless of industry, geographic location, or Seramount membership.

Groups Eligible for an ERG Impact Award

[Employee Resource Groups \(ERGs\)](#) are eligible to apply under the Group Categories: [Business Impact](#), [Community Impact](#), [Workforce Impact](#), [Workplace Culture Impact](#), [ERG Collaboration](#), and [Trailblazer](#). See below for specific [Guidelines per Award Category](#). The same ERG may not apply to multiple group categories, with the exception of the ERG Collaboration category. See [Application Limitations](#) for more.

Group applications must be completed on behalf of the overall ERG on an [enterprise level](#). While different chapter-specific activities and achievements can still be indicated in the nomination, we ask that chapters consolidate their efforts into a single submission under the overarching enterprise ERG per award category.

Centers of Excellence, Inclusion Councils, Human Resources, and Inclusion Offices/Teams are not considered ERGs and will not be eligible to be nominated in the Awards. See [Ineligible Submissions](#) for more examples.

Individuals Eligible for an ERG Impact Award

Individuals are eligible to apply under the Individual Categories: [ERG Leadership](#) and [Valued Partner](#). Individuals may apply to either category, but not both.

Individuals, such as ERG leaders, committee leads, and members, are eligible to apply under the ERG Leadership Award. Individuals such as executive sponsors, ERG program directors and managers, Inclusion and HR team members, and business/functional leaders who serve as valued allies and partners to the ERG are eligible to apply for the Valued Partner Award.

Consideration Period

For the 2026 Awards cycle, we are considering and recognizing **ERG efforts completed from July 2024 through June 2025**. Work done before or outside of this consideration period will not be eligible. However, if the ERG/individual carried out a program, activity, or event within this timeframe that expanded on or was rooted in work started before July 2024, it may be included in the nomination as long as it was actively sustained, completed, and measured during the consideration period.

Work Eligible for an ERG Impact Award

Work submitted under any of the Group Categories must be created, driven, and carried out directly by the ERG. The Awards are intended to recognize projects and initiatives where the ERG played a central role and demonstrated leading contributions. The initiative's success should be directly attributable to the ERG's efforts, vision, and leadership. While we highly encourage cross-ERG collaboration and partnerships with internal functional departments and business units, the submission must outline leading contributions from the ERG(s) within these partnerships.

Ineligible Submissions:

- **Entire ERG Programs:** We will not consider a collective submission on behalf of an Inclusion Office's entire ERG program, or all ERGs from an organization, where the ERGs did not actively collaborate and make distinct, leading contributions toward a specific initiative. For example, if an Inclusion Office leads and implements an ally program across all its ERGs, that effort would not be eligible. If, however, ERGs collaborate to build and execute an ally program with input from the Inclusion Office, that could be eligible, particularly in the ERG Collaboration category.
- **Inclusion Office Mandates:** We will not consider nominations for initiatives solely required or mandated by the Inclusion Office.
- **Collective Submissions for Siloed ERG Work:** We will not consider a collective submission from a group of ERGs who independently worked on the same or similar initiatives without any collaboration. For example, we will not consider a collective submission where different ERGs each worked on separate scholarship programs that focused on their respective demographics. In this case, we recommend each ERG submit its own application.
- **ERG Coalitions:** We will not consider submissions from a group of ERGs representing different organizations that do not roll up to the same parent organization.
- **Inclusion Councils:** Inclusion Councils are not ERGs. We will not consider Inclusion Council submissions, even if the council consists of various ERG leaders. Collaborative work must be carried out by the ERGs themselves, instead of the council.
- **Organization-Driven Initiatives:** We will not consider initiatives spearheaded by the enterprise organization or functional departments (HR, Communications, Learning & Development, etc.), with the ERG playing a minimal support role.

Application Limitations

Number of Applications Per Nominee

An ERG or Individual **can only apply to one category**, with the exception of the ERG Collaboration category.

The same ERG or individual may not apply to multiple categories. ERGs may only apply to one of the following group categories: Business Impact, Community Impact, Workforce Impact, Workplace Culture Impact, or Trailblazer. The ERG Collaboration Category is the only exception where an ERG may submit another application if they already apply under one of the other group categories. For example, an ERG may apply to both the Community Impact category and the ERG Collaboration category (with another ERG), but it may not apply to both the Community Impact and the Business Impact categories, nor both the Community Impact and Trailblazer categories. An individual may apply to the ERG Leadership category or the Valued Partner category, but not both.

While implementing this limitation to make the Awards more equitable, we want to emphasize the importance of intentional efforts toward a focused area of impact. We recommend prioritizing *quality over quantity* and selecting a category where the ERG had the greatest [measurable impact](#). If the ERG Impact Awards Committee believes your submission is stronger in another category, we will reach out to the nominators to suggest recategorization and move it on our backend.

There must be only one submission per ERG or per individual. If your ERG completed multiple accomplishments under the same category, combine those efforts into a single nomination to tell a holistic story of the impact of your ERG's efforts. We recommend coordinating within your ERG, and in collaboration with your Inclusion team and/or communications team, to craft your nomination and ensure only one application is submitted.

Number of Applications Per Organization

You can nominate multiple groups and/or individuals from your organization in the different award categories. However, there can only be **one application per ERG or per individual per category**. Again, the same ERG or individual may not apply to multiple categories, except for the ERG Collaboration Category.

We recommend prioritizing quality over quantity when determining nominations. The standards are raised every year by the nominees and their incredible work, so it is best to choose a small number of nominees who meet the standards of a category and demonstrate measurable impact, as opposed to submitting many nominees who may not be quite there yet.

2025 Winners

[2025 ERG Impact Award Winners](#) are not eligible to submit within the same category they won in, but can still apply to another category. This limitation is only applied to one award cycle after winning in a category.

2025 Honorable Mentions and former (pre-2025) honorees are still eligible to win in the same category they were recognized for. However, their initiatives must be different or significantly evolved from what they were already recognized for.

Submitting a Nomination Application

Nomination Form

All nominations must be submitted via the online form. Word file applications will not be accepted.

Application Nominators/Submitters

For each submission, there must be two nominators. **At least one of the nominators must be a member of the Inclusion or HR Team that oversees the ERG.** Individuals (i.e. ERG leaders or executive sponsors) can nominate themselves or their own ERG for an award. However, the application must also be reviewed and approved by an Inclusion or HR team member (i.e. ERG Program Manager, Chief Diversity Officer, HR Business Partner, etc.). Both nominators will be notified of their application status in February, regardless of award selection.

We highly recommend aligning with your ERG program manager or Inclusion team on your application before submitting it.

Short Answer Questions

We've made a few changes to our 2026 Short Answer Questions. We've broken up some of our traditional questions into separate short-answer response prompts. The 2026 Applications now have one high-level impact synopsis section and four short answer questions.

Word/Character Count

There is a 1000-character limit, including spaces, for each short answer question on the nomination form. The high-level impact synopsis is the only exception that has a 350 character limit.

When entering your nomination into the online form, a counter at the bottom of the text box indicates how many characters you have left. Your submission will be cut off if you exceed the limit.

Supplemental Materials

Supplemental materials are *optional* to support your nominations. You may include one supporting PDF document and/or a video or website link within the nomination form. This document may be *supplemental* to your nomination; it should not contain the nomination or application question responses themselves.

If providing a link, please ensure that the link is public and/or accessible for our judges without needing special login credentials or permissions.

Guidelines per Award Category

GROUP CATEGORIES

Impact-Specific Group Categories

Groups may apply to only one of the four impact-specific categories. We recommend prioritizing quality over quantity and selecting a category where the ERG had the greatest measurable impact.



Business Impact

Groups nominated in this category have made a clear and significant contribution to their organization’s business goals. They drive innovation, market growth, and organizational competitiveness through inclusive and equitable practices that produce tangible commercial results.

Examples of work in this impact area include, but are not limited to, market insights, product development and innovation, supplier diversity, marketing strategies, targeted campaigns and partnerships, brand reputation, and other business operations.

Community Impact

Groups nominated in this category have made a clear and significant contribution to the external communities in which their organization does business. They foster external engagement, support, and social responsibility initiatives.

Examples of work in this impact area include, but are not limited to, volunteerism and philanthropy, external partnerships with advocacy groups and community-based organizations, educational opportunities and economic empowerment for historically

excluded populations, environmental sustainability, disaster relief, overall health of a community, and enhanced visibility for minority-owned businesses.

Charitable foundations are not ERGs and are not eligible to apply for the Awards. Community Impact initiatives submitted cannot solely be based on monetary donations.

Workforce Impact

Groups nominated in this category have made a clear and significant contribution to their organization's efforts to recruit, retain, and advance talent. They enhance the employee experience by positively impacting talent from recruitment through the entirety of the talent lifecycle.

Examples of work in this impact area include, but are not limited to, networking and professional development, talent attraction and recruitment, onboarding, mentorship and sponsorship, retention and career progression, leadership development programming and pipelines, and frontline and hourly workforce engagement.

Workplace Culture Impact

Groups nominated in this category have made a clear and significant contribution to their organization's inclusive culture. They influence values and behaviors to enhance inclusivity within an organization.

Examples of work in this impact area include, but are not limited to, employee engagement, spaces of belonging, allyship building and intersectionality, inclusive benefits and policies, equitable processes and practices, workplace design and accessibility, and opportunities to increase cultural competency.

Group-Specific Categories

Trailblazer

Groups nominated in this category have made a significant trailblazing effort to contribute to their organization's inclusion goals in relation to business, community, workforce, and/or workplace culture impact despite their size, limited resources, and age since initial ERG formation and charter. Only ERGs from small organizations with *less than 2,500 [total employees](#) AND/OR have two or fewer years of [ERG age](#) at an [enterprise level](#)* are eligible to submit to the Trailblazer category.

Groups submitting to the Trailblazer category may not submit to any of the four impact-specific categories (Business Impact, Community Impact, Workforce Impact, Workplace Culture Impact).

ERG Collaboration

Groups nominated in this category have made a significant collaborative effort to contribute to their organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in relation to business, community, workforce, and/or workplace culture impact. To be considered for this award, at least two or more ERGs must have collaborated on an initiative within one of the areas of impact above.

Cross-ERG collaborations must be internal. Submissions from external coalitions and groups of ERGs representing different organizations that do not roll up to the same parent organization are ineligible. Collaboration must be intentional between two or more ERGs, each with distinct contributions. Initiatives must be carried out directly by ERGs, not Inclusion councils made up of various ERG leaders, nor the Inclusion teams overseeing the ERGs.

INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES

ERG Leadership

A candidate for the ERG Leadership Award is an individual whose resilience and determination have led to the creation, success and/or turnaround of their ERG.

Examples of exemplary leadership include, but are not limited to, a deep understanding of the organization's inclusion strategy and business goals; the ability to forge partnerships with other ERGs, business leaders, and external organizations to create meaningful impact; and the ability to influence multiple aspects of the organization's culture, business, workforce, and the community.

The category is not limited to only ERG Chairs; ERG committee leads and highly engaged members are also eligible to be nominated.

Valued Partner

A candidate for the Valued Partner Award must be an executive sponsor, ERG program manager/director, Inclusion or HR team member, or a business/functional leader who serves as a valued partner to one or more ERGs within their organization. These individuals contribute to the success of ERG(s) by providing support, outstanding guidance, and exposure.

Examples of exemplary valued partners include, but are not limited to, leveraging their position within the company to influence senior leadership and build engagement of the C-suite in Inclusion and ERG work, showing a commitment to Inclusion through and beyond active involvement in an ERG, and seeking opportunities to expand a knowledge base to better support the ERG and the business.

ERG Impact Awards Frequently Asked Questions

Definitions

What is considered an Employee Resource Group (ERG)?

ERGs are employer-recognized workplace groups voluntarily led by employees. These groups are formed around a common dimension (similar backgrounds, experiences, or interests) or a shared identity, generally focusing on historically excluded groups. They serve as a safe space where employees can meet, support, share views, learn from others, and empower each other to further personal growth, achieve career goals, and drive business. Recognizing that ERG nomenclature varies depending on maturity and organizational preference, we use “ERGs” broadly and synonymously with affinity networks, business resource groups, etc., for the Awards.

What do you mean by “ERG chapters” and “enterprise level”?

ERG chapters usually apply to larger organizations in which they have the same ERG across different regions (domestically and/or globally), and each chapter is a region-based subset of the ERG. If an ERG has multiple chapters, we define “enterprise level” as the overarching “parent”/governing ERG that the chapters or subgroups roll up to. While different chapter-specific activities and achievements can still be indicated in the nomination, we ask that chapters consolidate their efforts into a single submission under the overall “enterprise level” ERG.

What is considered by “total employees”?

We define “total employees” as the total number of permanent employees (global, if applicable), including part-time employees, but not including contractors or interns.

What is considered by “ERG age”?

ERG age is how old (in years) the ERG is since its conception and formal recognition at the organization at its top-most enterprise level. Changes in ERG strategy or leadership do not consider the group “new,” nor does it reset the ERG’s age. For example, if an ERG has been dormant for the past three years but was originally formed 10 years ago, the age is still considered 10 years.

Submitting a Nomination Application

Is there a cost to submit a nomination?

No, there is no cost to submit any nominations.

Are the awards limited only to ERG efforts in the United States?

No, the awards are global. Nominations are accepted for ERG work done worldwide. If your ERG is global or multinational with various regional or global chapters, we ask

that chapters consolidate their efforts into a single submission under the enterprise level ERG.

What language can applications be submitted in?

We are only accepting applications in English, as Seramount is a US-based organization and majority of our judges are US-based English speakers. Seramount does not offer translation services; translation will be up to and at the expense of the submitter.

Does the submission have to be done all in one sitting, or can progress be saved along the way?

Progress cannot be saved via the online form prior to submission. All the nomination forms will be provided in Word files on the [ERG Impact Awards website](#) starting June 13, 2025, so you can save and work on your submission offline and over time via the Word document. We recommend using the Word file to draft your nomination and only filling out the online forms by copying and pasting your content when it is final and ready for submission. Only nominations submitted via the online forms will be accepted.

Who should be involved in crafting the application responses?

The [nominators](#) and application contributors can range from Inclusion and HR team members, ERG leaders, ERG executive sponsors, etc.. We recommend ERG leaders coordinate within their ERG leadership teams to craft the responses, with collaboration, input, and review from their Inclusion or HR team, executive sponsor, and communications team.

Organizations may require internal sign-off (i.e. from legal and communications teams) prior to submitting external applications, so be sure to coordinate accordingly.

What happens if I don't answer the optional questions?

Your application score will not be impacted by whether you choose to answer the optional questions. Some applications have optional questions around 1) ERG Budget and 2) ERG Operational Excellence. Answers to these optional questions will help the ERG Impact Awards Committee assess and make more equitable enhancements to our application and judging processes/procedures. Answers here will serve as additional knowledge sharing to provide Seramount with aggregated data and potential anonymized case studies that can better inform their research and advisory.

Will I receive a confirmation email or a copy of my responses upon submission?

Yes, [nominators](#) will receive a confirmation email with a copy of their response upon submission. An automated email will be sent to the two individuals listed as the nominators on the application.


What Makes a Strong Application

What types of work have been recognized in the past?

We encourage you to review best practices from previous honorees ([2025](#), [2023](#), [2022](#)). Take note of how they told their ERG impact story and demonstrated measurable impact.

What types of work are realistic for my ERG's maturity?

Review [Seramount's Employee Group Maturity Model](#) for a structured framework for different stages of growth as it relates to ERG impact.

Maturity Level 				
Impact Focus Areas	EARLY	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED	LEADING PRACTICE
Workplace Culture	Education & connection-building	Community-building & intersectionality	Culture development & influence	Catalyst for culture change & cultural fluency
Community	Individual volunteerism & donations	Group volunteerism & philanthropy	External partnerships & supplier diversity	Leader in the community
Workforce	Networking & professional development	Talent attraction & recruitment	Full talent lifecycle engagement & enhancement	Driving retention & engagement
Business	Business referrals	Market insights & research	Growth driven & innovative business outcomes	Business innovator

ERGs can have a significant impact at any maturity level. An ERG does not have to be at the Leading Practice level to be recognized. We consider work across all maturity levels in which the ERG is able to demonstrate *measurable impact*.

What types of metrics should be included in the nomination?

We heavily emphasize the usage of metrics to depict measurable impact. The type of metrics can vary depending on your initiative. We recommend providing a mix of both programmatic datapoints as well as long-term success metrics to assess change and demonstrate the benefit of the ERG's work and existence. Some examples include but are not limited to

- Financial Impact: direct revenue, savings as a result of an initiative, dollar value of new customers or vendor relationships
- Market Reach: website visitors, customer engagement and retention, increase in market demographics
- Membership: growth, participation, satisfaction, skill enhancement
- Event Performance: attendance, reach, participant feedback
- Community Impact: volunteer hours, charitable giving, number of beneficiaries
- Professional Growth: advancement rate of ERG leaders, retention of ERG members, percent increase of historically excluded talent within the organization, promotional rates of employees

- Policy Influence: creation and/or expansion of policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion
- Talent Attraction & Retention: presence and activities of ERGs contribute to higher attraction and retention rates
- Employee Satisfaction: satisfaction level of employees regarding inclusivity and workplace culture
- Organizational Culture: long-term changes in attitudes and practices towards diversity, equity, belonging, accessibility, inclusion, etc.

If partnering with other functional departments (i.e. HR, Talent Acquisitions, Marketing, etc.) or external organizations (i.e. nonprofits, foundations, community-based organizations), we recommend gathering relevant data from them to strengthen your nomination.

Award Selection

Will I be notified about the status of my application even if I don't win an award?

Yes, all *nominators* will be notified about their application status in February 2026, regardless of whether or not their submission was selected for an award. If the nominator does not receive a notification by the end of February, or if the nominator is no longer with the organization, you email ergimpactawards@seramount.com to request a status update.

How many winners are selected per category?

One winner and one honorable mention will be selected per category.

How is the nomination content used once the honorees are determined?

Seramount uses submitted nomination content for various research and communications, including but not limited to recaps about the year's honorees and presentations/documentation to external partners on ERG best practices. Nomination content may be used by Seramount in aggregate or in potential anonymized case studies to better inform Seramount's research and advisory.

Honoree submissions, once approved by the honoree, are published on the Seramount website for DBP members to learn from the great work other ERGs are doing. Honorees are also showcased at our annual EmERGE conference, with potential opportunities to be presenters, providing external brand visibility and highlighting their winning practices.

Semifinalist Case Studies

Seramount often features semifinalist submissions in external case studies, even if they aren't selected for an award. These submissions showcase strong ERG impact and serve as valuable examples for our network of Seramount members. As members frequently seek insights into what other organizations and ERGs are doing, we like to highlight the work of ERG Impact Award honorees and semifinalists in future research and events, positioning these ERGs and

organizations as role models for others. These case studies can be anonymized if needed to protect the identity of the organization.

We ask for semifinalist case study participation preference in the application, in which our team will follow up with additional information and next steps if you are selected and interested.

What do the honorees receive as for their recognition?

Recognition includes, but is not limited to, being identified as the winner or honorable mention for the selected ERG Impact Award, having their honoree best practices featured on the Seramount website and in external presentations only to Seramount partners, and participating in the Awards Celebration at Seramount's [EmERGe Conference](#) in Spring 2026. Winners will receive one in-person ticket and honorable mentions will receive one virtual ticket. Honorees for the ERG Collaboration category will receive as many tickets as necessary depending on the number of ERGs included in the submission; one ticket will be allotted per ERG. Award recipients may also have the opportunity to present at EmERGe.

Aside from receiving a complimentary EmERGe ticket and physical award, being selected provides the honor of being publicly recognized and the opportunity for exposure across hundreds of Inclusion practitioners, ERG leaders, organizations, and industries.

Are recognition options flexible?

By applying for an ERG Impact Award, you are agreeing to be recognized if selected for an award. We understand that organizations may have varying comfort levels for public recognition. Seramount will only share what the honoree is comfortable sharing. We will adjust recognition as needed upon request and preference indicated in the application, giving honorees the option to choose how they want to be recognized and opt out where appropriate.

Recognition options include

- Public Recognition: Sharing the honoree's and organization's names alongside their achievement.
- Anonymous Recognition: Anonymizing honoree's and organization's names and removing identifying information while still recognizing their achievement.

Examples of both public and anonymous recognition can be seen in our recap of the [2025 ERG Impact Award Honorees](#).

Is attendance at the EmERGe conference in Spring 2026 required to win?

Attendance is not required to win; however, it is encouraged. [EmERGe](#) is a two-day conference with many topics, presenters, networking opportunities, and activities focused on ERGs. The ERG Impact Awards Celebration and recognition of honorees is just one part of the event program.