

Evaluation of ERG Recruitment Strategy at ConEdison

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### Abstract

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are voluntary, employee-led groups that aim to foster a diverse, inclusive workplace aligned with the organizations they serve. ERGs have become increasingly popular within organizations due to the support of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) management strategies such as improving diversity talent acquisition, retention, and career development of minority employees. The mixed-method embedded design incorporated in this study collected qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously to understand the ERG recruitment practices at ConEdison through the experiences of their employees. The results indicated that ERG participation had a significant positive impact on members' job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, aligning with previous research findings that effective ERGs contribute to better alignment between employees' expectations and the organization's DEI priorities. Implications of these findings are discussed relative to assisting the company in maximizing their ability to leverage the full potential of their employee base.

*Keywords:* Employee Resource Groups, recruitment, engagement, motivation, job satisfaction, workplace experience, diversity, equity, inclusion, allyship

### Dedication

I dedicate my capstone project to my family and many friends. I am uniquely grateful to my loving parents, Anderson and Bonita Barnes, whose encouragement gave me the strength to push forward. My guardian angel and mother, Carol, helped me understand that life is a precious gift we should never take for granted. Also, the love of my life, LaTonja, who never left my side, remains my motivation to grow continuously and be the best version of myself daily. I love you with all of my heart.

I also dedicate this project to many friends and family members who have supported me. I will always appreciate all they have done, especially my mother-in-law, Bettina, Grandma Ruth, Grandma Betty, father-in-law Charles, Uncle Charles, and Aunt Suzie. To my sister Acquinetta and my brothers Mark, David, and Jose, thank you for your unwavering love and support.

Most importantly, I would like to thank God for the opportunity and blessings he has provided me throughout my journey. Through him, anything is possible.

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## Introduction

Consolidated Edison of New York (Con Ed) provides electricity to approximately 3.6 million customers and gas service to approximately 1.1 million in New York City and Westchester County. During its 200 years of existence, the company has experienced changes in its workforce culture, behaviors, and overall mindset, which required a deliberate focus and effort to meet the needs of an ever-changing environment. The adaptive mindset developed at ConEdison demonstrates the company's emphasis on fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for its dynamic group of employees. Within the last ten years, the company has embarked on a journey towards diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which has evolved from focusing on compliance to building on its cultural competence.

One area where the company has focused on creating engagement and support for its DEI initiatives is through the emergence of Employee Resource Groups (ERG). ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups that the organization formally supports. ConEdison formed ERG to help support common interests, identities, and backgrounds to leverage the workforce's diverse needs and experiences. Consequently, the development of ERGs at ConEdison served as a means to meet the organization's goal of creating a more inclusive workplace and providing opportunities to network and advance their careers.

Today, over 4,100 employees at ConEdison are supported by one or more of the ten ERGs within the organization. Despite the positive momentum gained by the organization to increase ERG enrollment and engagement, only roughly 25% of their eligible employee base are members. The numbers are more alarming for minority employees, who make up over 50% of ConEdison's employee base, but less than 20% are members of an ERG. Thus, the organization needs help identifying gaps in its progress and implementing concrete steps that ensure that

employees genuinely reflect the diverse needs of their members and the communities served. As a result, gaining a clearer understanding of successful ERG recruitment and engagement practices can assist Edison's ability to transform its corporate culture and create a workplace where they celebrate individual differences, and organizational members feel included, valued, and respected.

This capstone examines the ERG membership recruitment and engagement strategy at ConEdison to identify the primary reasons why members join an ERG and to understand the general job satisfaction level for members, which may also impact their ability to serve as promoters who attract new members. The next section provides greater detail into the organizational situation to provide context for the challenges within ConEdison's ERG recruitment and engagement efforts.

### **Organizational Context**

ConEdison is a subsidiary of Consolidated Edison, Inc., that delivers energy to customers in New York City and Westchester County. The organization operates one of the world's largest energy delivery systems, providing electric, gas, and steam service for over 10 million residents in the New York region. Since its establishment in 1823, the company has fueled and sustained growth in delivering gas, electric, and steam services to over 10 million customers within the New York Metropolitan area. As part of its strategic initiative, ConEdison emphasizes safety, operational excellence, and enhancing the customer experience with everything they do. Additionally, the company has developed long-range plans to achieve its strategic priorities by developing plans for its electric and gas businesses to navigate today's challenges while preparing for the changes in the energy landscape.

ConEdison understands that the true power of their company lies within the over 14,000 employees who make up their team. The organization's ability to cultivate its diverse workforce helps ConEdison lead the industry on every level, from maintaining best-in-class reliability to achieving a clean energy future while creating a sustainable future for the company (Drury, 2023). Recognizing the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the workplace, the company uses metrics to identify gaps in their progress and implement concrete steps through their 14-point plan to challenge their employees to be more intentional in their efforts to create value for their employees and customers. To raise cultural awareness, increase outreach, and promote career development opportunities for employees, the company established Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Based on the many benefits associated with ERGs, 35% of companies have added or extended their ERG support by the start of 2020 (Krivkovich et al., 2022). 90% of Fortune 500 companies have incorporated ERGs into their business strategies to foster inclusion, decrease attrition, increase productivity, and increase engagement (Lublin, 2021). Additionally, some other expected benefits resulting from ERG membership include increasing cultural awareness among organizational members, enhanced employee engagement and overall job satisfaction, discovery of employees with excellent leadership potential, fostering better relationships between new and existing employees, providing professional development opportunities, and attracting and recruiting talent (Bryant, 2023; Catlino et al., 2023; Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013).

As part of its business strategy, ConEdison attempts to utilize its ERGs to connect and explore the intersectionality of its workforce. The ERGs at ConEdison include networks for women, people of color, LGBTQI+, veterans, those with disabilities, and mothers. Groups based on shared goals often focus on volunteering, mentorship, or sustainability.



Despite the many benefits delivered by its ERGs, ConEdison constantly undergoes evaluation and monitoring of its culture to amend policies and procedures related to talent management. This procedure aims to assist the company with creating spaces that allow employees to feel respected, grateful, and loyal to their organizations (Rogers, 2018). According to the company's Annual Diversity Equity and Inclusion report from 2022, ConEdison has 13,871 employees, with approximately 6,890 (49.7%) Persons of Color and 3,036 (21.9%) Women. The 287 employees who serve as Directors, General Managers, and C-suite leaders represent 29.6% People of Color and 34.1% Women. Even with the company's efforts towards cultural change, the organization has discovered that there are still areas needing improvement, including psychological safety and creating opportunities for employees to speak up, growth and opportunity, and trust and leadership accountability (ConEdison, 2022). As a result, the organization still has some challenges that may serve as barriers to maximizing its ERGs and DEI efforts.

### **Problem of Practice**

Only 25% of ConEdison's workforce are members of ERGs. One challenge for ConEdison that impacts its ability to recruit new members is discovering ways to cultivate environments that support open dialogue on complex and challenging conversations concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion. Addressing topics such as social justice, gender bias, and practices in religion become problematic for some employees due to the ability to make some feel uncomfortable at work. Parisi (2023) argued that employee presence needs to be explicit, and the elephant in the room needs to be acknowledged to gain trust between employees. Organizational member's identities and opinions are deeply rooted and influenced by their families, community, religion, and gender since early childhood. Thus, it has become

increasingly important for organizations like ConEdison to create opportunities for employees to express themselves in safe spaces and express their vulnerability and curiosity.

Additionally, privilege may play a role in members' experiences, where some members may need to consider the social advantages and how they continue to contribute to their opinions or actions or how it has kept them from understanding the experiences of others. Unpacking privilege in the workplace is challenging because it is often invisible to the ones who own it (Kartick, 2022). As a result, when creating an inclusive culture from ERG membership, the organization must ensure that it is not designed and delivered from the privileged viewpoint but from equal participation and collaboration to empower their employees traditionally excluded from the conversation. Based on the low enrollment rates, the organization faces the challenge of creating ERG groups that fail to serve the interests of all employees. For instance, ConEdison has ten ERG groups serving their employees' diverse needs and interests. However, some employees, such as members of the Muslim community, may feel excluded because the current alignment of ERGs may not meet their interests. In fact, despite being on a journey towards diversity, equity, and inclusion for several years, it wasn't until the early 2020s that the organization created an African American ERG and hosted virtual events to engage employees during their transition to hybrid work schedules. This suggests that the organization is more reactive to the needs of its employees instead of being proactive and forward-thinking.

I designed this project to assess the impact of the ERG membership strategy at ConEdison to identify areas of strength in their current practice and areas of opportunity. Specifically, the aim was to evaluate the recruitment strategy employed by the organization to provide further insight into the specific channels used for membership recruitment and determine their overall impact in attracting new members. The current recruitment strategy utilized by

ConEdison consists of new employee orientation, email communication, social media, and the employee intranet.

Prior to analyzing the ERG recruitment procedures at ConEdison, it was imperative to comprehend the scope of the study, identify existing knowledge deficiencies, and determine the areas that necessitate additional investigation.. In my next section, I examine the study of ERGs from a historical viewpoint to demonstrate the evolution of the concept and examine research focused on the recruitment and engagement of members.

## **Synthesis of Evidence**

### **History of ERGs**

To better understand the impact of ERGs on today's organizations, I sought to understand the history and evolution of the concept. The concept of ERGs has existed in organizations for close to 50 years. However, until recently, ERGs have evolved from networking groups that assist organizations in promoting diversity and inclusion while also serving as key contributors to organizational strategy and operations. The origins of ERGs started as a race-based employee group that developed in response to racial tensions in the 1960s. The first ERG originated at the Xerox Corporation, which formed the National Black Employee Caucus in the early 1970s (Douglas, 2008). The company furthered its DE&I efforts by starting the Black Women's Leadership Caucus ten years later, soon after other organizations began to follow the trend of designing ERGs to support racial minority groups and women by emphasizing social networking and the opportunity to share workplace experiences (Casey, 2021). Other companies, such as Hewlett-Packard, extended upon the increasing level of focus on organizational DE&I efforts by encouraging the formation of the Gay and Lesbian Employee Network (GLEN) in 1978, which became the first LGBT ERG (Welbourne et al., 2015).

Early ERGs, referred to as affinity groups, were initially slow due to the organization's perception that the groups were threatening and risky political tactics for advocating for equal pay and opportunity (Snowden & Associates, n.d.). Organizational groups within the Bell System in the mid-70s, such as Mountain Bell's Black Management Association (BMA) and Women in Management, became a party to the most significant Affirmative Action case in the history of the US. The groups' collective action against the Bell System resulted in the Affirmative Action Consent Decree of 1973, which required progress in promoting women and minorities for the next five years. Based on the lack of organizational support, it was common for members to feel reluctant to speak up to managers about their status as minorities for fear of being labeled as troublemakers or having an individualistic mindset.

However, ERGs continued to evolve in the 1980s and 1990s, moving from affinity-based groups to employee networks led by organizational administrators focused on recruiting and retaining employees (Snowden & Associates, n.d.). Additionally, organizational leadership slowly started to see the value of employee networks by aiming to provide opportunities that enhanced members' careers through social support, information sharing, networking, and leadership development (Friedman, 1999). The evolution of the concept also allowed organizations to reap benefits through increased job satisfaction and commitment from those involved.

The 2000s continued to see ERGs serve as employee networks; however, their focus now shifted to support recruitment and retention efforts by organizations (Snowden & Associates, n.d.). By 2010, ERGs continued to embrace refinement by integrating business strategies, spreading influence internationally, providing opportunities for leadership and professional growth, and fostering awareness around inclusion in the workplace. While at most companies,

the role of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) as a topic continues to generate interest, events in the 2020s have shined a new light and emphasized the importance of social justice, anti-discrimination, diversity, and inclusion. As a result, companies have increased their dependency on ERGs to build a more inclusive environment and address diversity and inclusion in a more holistic, community-based way. Most organizations have increased their focus on providing a forum where members share their common interests, issues, or concerns. Additionally, organizations with ERGs also attempt to leverage their ERGs to impact an organization's strategic efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies that help to improve employee retention, mentoring, leadership development, marketing, customer relations, and return on investment.

### **ERG Engagement and Recruitment**

Due to the evolving landscape of ERGs and the limited availability of information and data about what they accomplish and how they do what they do, it is challenging for organizations to continue to maximize the benefits of their programs. Some argue that ERGs help organizations cultivate a supportive environment for employees who desire community and make sense because they are typically good for business (Brinson, 2022). A study conducted by Welbourne and McLaughlin (2013) supports this argument by discovering that ERG membership can also provide employees with a more engaging and fulfilling work experience. Additionally, understanding that ERGs are a collection of individuals, group strength is dependent on developing an understanding of the social identities of their members. Since ERGs exist within an organization, members can experience a dual social identity- one as an employee and the other as a member of the ERG (Briscoe & Stafford, 2011).

Thus, it may be increasingly essential for companies to utilize ERGs to support organizational efforts to recruit and retain employees positively and impact their bottom line. For example, a study by Seramount (2022) discovered linkages between ERGs and an organization's environmental, sustainability, and governance goals. ERGs have also evolved and become company-sponsored, taking on a more structured approach with mission statements, executive sponsors, and specific goals (Lindsey, 2023). Consequently, ERGs continue to grow and shift their focus to recruitment, education, and advancement by emphasizing business needs while remaining affinity-based at the same time.

A study conducted by the Sequoia Consulting Group's 2021 Employee Experience Benchmarking report discovered 40% of companies have ERGs, a 9% increase from the previous year (Nicastro, 2021). Additionally, a survey from Bentley University found that 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies have ERGs or BRGs, but only 8 percent of employees are members of these groups (Catalino et al., 2022). Of those 8 percent, however, 85 percent say these groups help their careers. They allow the members to navigate the corporate culture, find mentors and sponsors, and address common concerns they may have (Jensen, 2021). Organizational leadership can also help to provide deliberate, detailed communications, which helps to eliminate the disconnect between employee expectations and reality. They also emphasize learning how to generate employee interest and awareness for the ERGs and the activities and initiatives they provide for their members (Catalino et al., 2022). The findings suggest that an alignment exists between ERGs and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives that focus on creating new opportunities to evolve the overall experiences of employees.

Likewise, advancements in technology have led more organizational members to work remotely. Research performed by Rodgers (2022) identified that introducing remote work has led

to a lack of face-to-face interaction that may cause some employees to feel disconnected from the workplace. Hence, organizations must identify ways to foster an inclusive work culture by connecting members virtually and reducing feelings of isolation and exclusion. Tu and Li (2021) argued that ERGs can use online mentoring opportunities to eliminate the biases often associated with face-to-face meetings. Rodgers (2022) expanded upon this finding by identifying additional advantages for virtual ERGs by arguing that online meetings can help increase visibility and allow minority groups to have a greater voice in their companies by providing a safe online space for members. Finally, as companies move into an increasingly virtual environment, some argue that creating different collaboration spaces helps ERGs keep employees engaged and focused on fostering innovation (McNamara, 2022). Consequently, history demonstrates the need for ERGs to continuously develop fresh and innovative strategies to meet the ever-changing demands of their workforce.

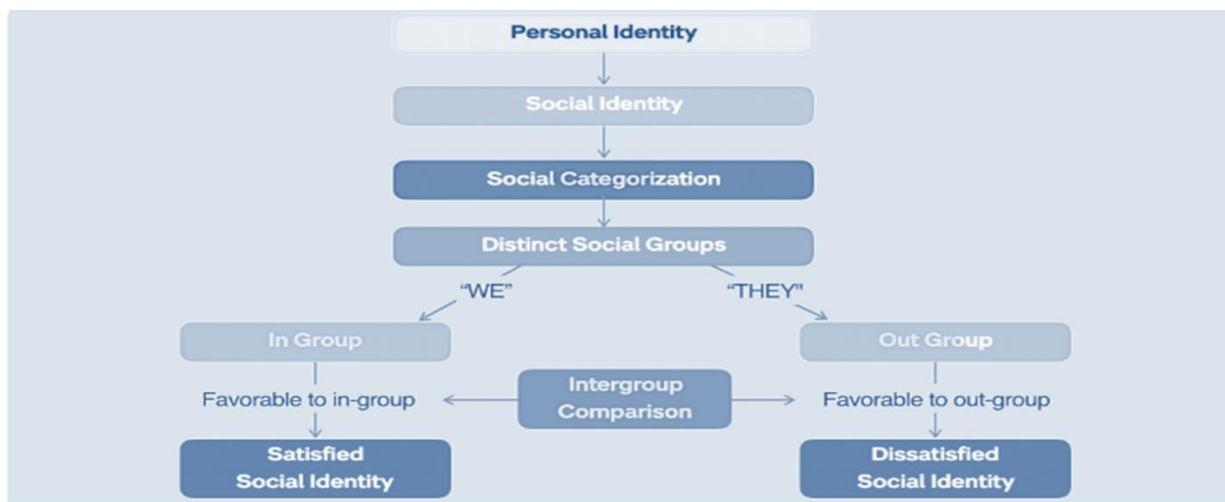
Furthermore, research also identified five key dimensions that help associate employee inclusion in the workplace with a sense of belonging and help propel ERGs into the future (Catalino et al., 2022). According to the study, ERGs align with employees' expectations and with the business's DEI priorities:

- External engagement: engaging outside the organization through community service and volunteering.
- Allyship: educating employees about allyship; leveraging allies to help employee resource group (ERG) members and to further the ERG's mission.
- Leadership connection: providing a channel to engage with company leadership.
- Employee community building: broadening the social network and meeting others within the organization.
- Career advancement: offering advice and support to advance the careers of ERG members.

### Conceptual Framework & Project Questions

Two conceptual frameworks form the basis for this project: Self-Determination Theory and Social Identity Theory.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory of human motivation that evolved from research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and expanded to include research on work organizations and other domains of life (Desi, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017). According to this theory, organizational conditions that help support an individual's autonomy and relatedness can foster the most high-quality forms of motivation and engagement for activities, including enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity. SDT suggests that fostering workplace conditions where employees feel supported in their autonomy can help lead to increased levels of employee satisfaction and thriving, as well as benefits to the overall organization. ERGs help members develop a certain level of autonomy by self-directing their goals, sharing concerns, and gathering insights into their individual and collective experiences, which allow the group to create a sustainable program and serve as a gateway to identifying root cause issues. The study intends to include SDT from this framework to determine the relationship between ERG group membership and overall job satisfaction.



Source: Self-Determination Theory in Work Organizations: The State of a Science (Desi, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017)



Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1970) attempts to explain why individuals demonstrate preferences for fellow in-group members, such that individuals within a particular group identify with the group's defining characteristics and values (Tajfel & Turner, 1985).

Research conducted in this study focused on utilizing SIT as the conceptual model to help differentiate ERG members vs. nonmembers. In this context, SIT postulates that individuals derive a portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups (as cited in Worley, 2021). Melbourne and Mclaughlin asserted that SIT helps to categorize ERG group membership using the following typology (Melbourne & Mclaughlin, 2013):

- Social cause-centered ERGs are concerned with specific social issues, which include factors such as literacy, environment, or physical conditions.
- Professional-centered ERGs- focused on specific professional fields, such as engineering, technology, or management.
- Attribute-centered ERGs concentrate on personal characteristics, such as race, gender, religion, or sexuality.

ConEdison has ten ERGs that primarily focus on an attribute-centered typology. So, the analysis focused on the reasons for joining an ERG based on five categories to help the organization determine what is working and what is not. Reasons for joining were categorized into five categories to measure the impact on members' members or joining each ERG group: social (fun), cause focus, personal/professional development, support the company, and support their ERG.

The increased commitment to providing ERGs with substantial resources in support of their DE&I strategies and the increasing prevalence of ERGs has started to generate research around the topic; however, few clear conclusions exist regarding the perceived benefits and organizational satisfaction levels for the variety of employee groups who support the initiative. Since ConEdison has designed ERGs to contribute to positive social and career outcomes,

assessing the organizational strategies and programs designed to impact the employees' experience is essential to meeting the goals of creating positive outcomes from their overall DEI strategy. Based on the limited research on the impact of organizational investment in ERGs on their members, this study examines the following questions:

1. Among ERG participants, what motivational factors encouraged their enrollment?
2. How do current members characterize the nature and quality of their experience in an ERG?
3. What is the relationship between ERG membership and job satisfaction based on the strength of the member's identification with their ERG?

### **Project Design**

The study integrated evidence-based practice to evaluate the effectiveness of ConEdison's current strategy in achieving its objective. Through statistical analysis and employee interviews, I identified the key factors influencing member recruitment and engagement, as well as the impact of ERG membership on overall job satisfaction. Subsequently, I recommended strategies to help the organization enhance its ability to make well-informed decisions based on the study's findings. This deeper understanding of the results consolidated relevant information for the research question, thereby establishing an evidence base for best practice guidance.

The research utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze ConEdison's enlistment tactics and ascertain the main motivations behind employees' participation in ERG groups. The quantitative methods included organizational demographic data and survey questions drawn from the University of Southern California Marshall Center for Effective Organizations EE Pulse Survey (USC Center for Effective Organizations, 2024) and the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire from the Michigan Organizational Assessment (MOAQ-JSS; Cammann et al., 1979). The study utilized survey data to capture key insights into factors that lead to ERG engagement and levels of employee satisfaction based on their affiliation to their

ERG. The statistical power from the large ERG member and non-member population assisted with understanding employees' characteristics and gained insights into motivational factors that impact their overall experience and levels of job satisfaction. The quantitative data incorporated an online survey sent via company email, text messages, and QR codes to increase the response rates by creating an easy and convenient method for organizational members to access the survey.

The research also emphasized the concurrent gathering of qualitative and quantitative data. This approach was chosen to bolster quantitative findings with qualitative data and to gain deeper insights into the responses of ERG members. Empathy interviews were employed as the qualitative research method for this study, allowing for the enrichment of quantitative findings by generating ideas to enhance organizational practices and human resource development functions. The focus on user-centered conversations facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of members' viewpoints and experiences (Lochmiller, 2022). Additionally, insights gleaned from the interviews aided in identifying concerns, pinpointing areas that require improvement, and ascertaining the aspects that are valued by the participants regarding the program. In the subsequent section, a detailed account of the data collection activities is provided.

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

The study captured quantitative data by obtaining organizational demographic data and utilizing select categories from a combination of two surveys (the EE-pulse survey from the University of Southern California Marshall Center for Effective Organizations and the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire) to understand ERG recruitment at ConEdison better. In sum, participants had 25 minutes to complete a 25-question survey to provide insights into the

motivational factors that impact enrollment, insights into the overall experience, and impact on their overall job satisfaction based on ERG engagement.

The first section of the survey consisted of eight demographic questions to provide background data on ERG members, such as ERG group affiliation, service time, and nature of involvement. Next, the survey utilized a 5-point Likert scale from the USC EE Pulse Survey to acquire quantitative data from 14 questions that focused on the five ERG recruitment subscales, which measured attributes that influenced employee expectations for ERG membership, including Expanding Network, Career Development, Volunteerism, Sense of Belonging, and Acting as a Mentor. The final three survey questions incorporate the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire—Job Satisfaction Subscale to identify job satisfaction levels based on ERG members' experience. The MOAQ-JSS examined three items that measured the affective components of overall job satisfaction. The survey utilizes a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "Disagree Very Much" to (7) "Agree Very Much." Appendix A contains a sample of this study's proposed quantitative survey questions.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

I employed empathy interviews to enhance my understanding of how I can make sense of the quantitative data used in this study. To do so, I engaged with the data from the perspective that every individual, whether the researcher or participant, looks at the social world differently. Savin-Badin & Major (2013) explained that positionality refers to the position a researcher has chosen to adopt within a given study. In the case of this study, I needed to understand how positionality informs my various social identities. Thus, as an African-American heterosexual male who is a middle manager in a large organization and serves as an active member of my ERG, I could potentially enter the study with biases and assumptions that could impact the

quality of my research. As a result, before performing the interview with participants, I needed to acknowledge my positionality to successfully contextualize my data collection and analysis.

I elected to study the ERG recruitment process at ConEdison to learn more about other people's experiences as members, how it impacts their lives, and, therefore, how I can be more inclusive with my leadership practice within my organization. My personal experiences have shaped my view of the world; thus, this positionality statement is an attempt to become aware of my biases so I may eliminate them. As a member of an ERG, I have experienced the benefits of the supportive and communal environment that helps me participate in causes that are closest to me and provide opportunities for career growth and development. Being an African American male, I am a minority in my workplace who seeks an environment that is safe and inclusive. In specific workplace settings, I am hyper-aware of my identity and, at times, feel alienated, which affects my social circle in the workplace. Thus, at times, I find it easier to find comfort with other people of color who represent my values and share my identity. My experience as an ERG member in the African American group has also allowed me to empower myself as an organizational member to have my voice heard on issues that are meaningful to my experience, mainly because of my perception that it is easier to make connections with people who share the same experiences within social and workplace settings. So, I acknowledge that my positionality affected this project to some extent. Still, my membership with various ERGs within my organization provided me with resources that helped me make meaning from the interviews and enhanced my understanding of the values, standpoints, and positions of others.

Additionally, my experience as an African-American male who has worked in a leadership position in a multicultural organization, I felt that the best opportunity to analyze members' experiences through a clear understanding of the shared experiences, perceptions, and

involved social identity would come from utilizing a phenomenological approach. The overarching aim of phenomenology is to attain knowledge and description of the structures of human experience based on cultures and beliefs, historical development, and linguistic symbols (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). Combining this approach with the quantitative results can also help the study gain an in-depth understanding of members' thoughts and perceptions of members' experiences to provide additional value to the study's findings.

Before performing the interview, I asked ERG members who participated in the survey if they would like to share their personal experiences to enhance the findings of the survey data. ERG members were allowed to return an email to my organizational partner to express their interest in participating further in the study. However, this method presented low participation and threatened the potential of including survey data. One concern from potential candidates identified to my organizational partner was fear of identification and retaliation. Additionally, the interviews scheduled to take place over Zoom conference calls also heightened fears of identifying information.

Surprisingly, my initial contact with ERG members yielded zero results and forced me to take a different approach by incorporating snowball sampling to generate support. Research conducted by Noy (2008) proposed that a sampling procedure may be defined a snowball sampling when researchers invite informants through contact information provided by other informants. This process involves informants referring the researcher to other informants who contacted potential candidates with a relationship with the informant. This practice allowed me to leverage my friendships and business partners to access their network, build trust from their previous relationships, and gather additional support for participation in the interview process. Adopting this strategy proved fruitful as our network invited other participants to join, which

helped to develop trust based on previously established connections and helped to minimize the fear of identification associated with guidelines that needed to be clarified.

To honor the concerns of potential participants, I asked participants to participate in recorded phone interviews instead of conducting Zoom meetings. Utilizing this strategy helped create additional flexibility with scheduling and created additional trust due to eliminating facial recognition. I advised participants that we would incorporate pseudonyms to protect their identities to create a safe and ethical space. Before conducting the interviews, I reminded participants they could request a break or stop the interview if they felt unsafe. I recognized the challenges and reassured them that the interview process would emphasize their safety by protecting their confidentiality.

I scheduled interviews based on the participant's availability and completed the process over two weeks between the second and fourth week in April 2024. In sum, the survey generated responses from ten members whose information helped to identify themes that could provide insights into the survey data and answer the interview questions. Of the ten survey participants interviewed, six identified as male, and four as female. The interviewees also had a wide range of experience, ranging from a year or less to over 10 years of experience. Additionally, participants belonged to a diverse group of ERGs, represented by diverse ERG groups. Specifically, the motivation for conducting the interviews with random ERG members was to gain additional insight into the motivational factors that influenced enrollment, factors that affect the nature and quality of their experience as members, and job satisfaction. As a result, this study strategically incorporated empathy interviews to capture the diverse experiences of ERG members.

### **Mixed Method Data Analysis Plan**

The incorporation of a mixed-method strategy facilitated the conceptual and analytical integration of quantitative research methods with qualitative data in this investigation. The plan included the utilization of a mixed method approach to aid in comprehending the effectiveness of the intervention and its underlying mechanisms, causes, and beneficiaries. The inclusion of empathy interviews intended to further enrich the study by capturing the nuanced organizational experiences of ERG group members, presenting unique strategies to uncover potential unacknowledged needs. Consequently, the introduction of qualitative data mitigated the limitations of exclusively relying on quantitative data, offering a more comprehensive understanding of ERG recruitment issues and potential resolutions.

In a scholarly fashion, the study involved incorporating qualitative data alongside the quantitative results. I personally planned to conduct empathy interviews with random participants to gather deeper insights into their quantitative survey responses. Using a series of seven questions, I sought to delve into recruitment, engagement, and job satisfaction to offer additional information on the impact of ERGs at ConEdison. Subsequently, I intended to import the qualitative data into the Dovetail database to investigate the findings comprehensively by assigning codes, identifying relevant themes, and applying labels. The aim was to simultaneously collect qualitative data alongside the quantitative findings to draw a comprehensive conclusion from the study. After analyzing both the qualitative and quantitative data, the next step of my plan involved integrating the data, as suggested by Creswell & Tashakkori (2007) to develop meaningful inferences and ensure the trustworthiness of the reported work. As a result, the study would incorporate the narrative responses from the qualitative interviews into the primary data



set and transformed the qualitative data into a narrative code using Dovetail to enable complementary analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Quantitative Data: Survey Analysis**

Quantitative data was collected through a survey to analyze responses from the members, with a focus on the use of the Likert scale. The analysis tool utilized is designed to provide a clearer understanding of the range of answers provided by participants. Given that the Likert scale is ordinal and closely resembles an interval data set, the project's data analysis will involve a non-parametric test to scrutinize the quantitative data. This approach is supported by Gardner and Martin (2007) and Jamieson (2004), who argue that Likert data possesses an ordinal rank or rank order nature, thereby necessitating the use of non-parametric tests to yield valid results.

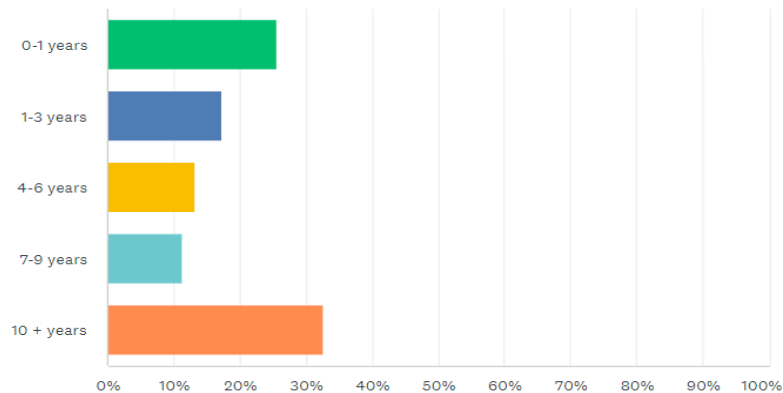
Due to the delay from interview respondents, I concentrated my analysis on the results from the survey data. The survey for this study was completed using the SurveyMonkey application and distributed to participants from Gas Operations utilizing the ConEdison intranet to include ERG and non-ERG members. Approximately 1,200 emails were sent from the study's corporate partner's contact list, representing 8.5% of ConEdison's employee base and 29.3% of the total ERG membership. Upon conclusion, the survey yielded 98 of 1,200 (8.3%) employee responses at ConEdison. Gender and diversity in experience were present as 47 (49.96%) participants identified as a man, 50 (51.02%) identified as a woman, and 1(1.02%) preferred to self-describe. The length of employment at ConEdison participants demonstrated a wide range of experience as 25 (25.51%) reported that they had 0-1 years of employment, 17 (17.35%) had 1-3 years, 13 (13.27%) had 4-6 years, 11 (11.22%) had 7-9 years, and 32 (32.65%) had over ten

years of experience. Below is a table to demonstrate the diversity in experience of employees who participated in the survey.

**Exhibit 1** Demonstrates the diverse experience of Con Ed employees who participated in the study. N=98

### Length of Employment at Con Edison

Answered: 98 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
0-1 years	25.51% 25
1-3 years	17.35% 17
4-6 years	13.27% 13
7-9 years	11.22% 11
10 + years	32.65% 32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>

The survey also separated the data between employees who are currently active members of an ERG and members who do not belong to an ERG. The rationale for separating the members into two groups was to discover some motivational factors that attract and engage current ERG members, develop critical insights into their experiences, and find a connection exists between their experience as members and overall job satisfaction.

The purpose of utilizing non-member survey data in this study was to collect data that could provide insights into their rationale for not joining an ERG. The study asked respondents

not involved with ERGs to share why they considered joining an ERG. Each participant was able to select from multiple categories to describe their reasoning, which included the following: lack of awareness, not enough time, not interested in group activities, not enough information, lack of power to create meaningful change, not sure where I fit in, too much work, or other. The results indicated that 30 of 56 (53.57%) respondents who reported as non-members suggested that a lack of awareness was the most common reason for not joining an ERG. Additionally, 17 (30.36%) non-members identified “Not Enough Information” as another primary reason for a lack of interest in ERG membership. Finally, the survey discovered that time also served as a detractor to ERG membership, with 15 (26.79%) respondents noting it as a critical factor in their decision to join an ERG.

The results from non-members also allowed members to write in their rationale for not joining by creating an “Other” category. To help specify their rationale and valuable insights into their experience as organizational members, 6 of the 56 (10.71%) utilized the category to expound upon their responses. A response by a participant indicated that issues may exist with organizational communication concerning ERGs, demonstrated in the statement below:

“I want to participate, but can’t find the link on the corporate intranet. I have looked”  
(Non-member respondent 4, April 19, 2024).

Other non-members identified that the perceived value of membership is a deterrent for joining exemplified by the responses from other selected survey participants.

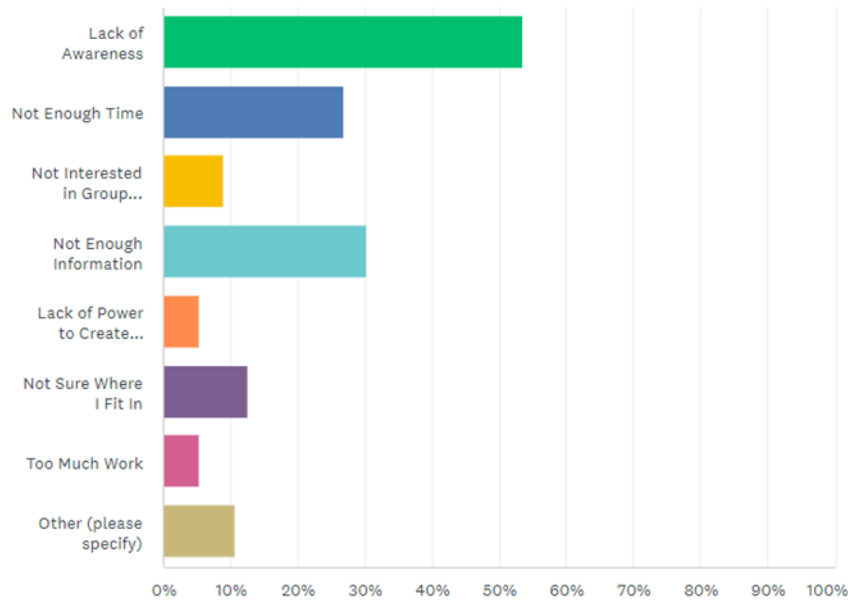
“I was an active member of a few ERGs, but stopped because they are more divisive than forming solidarity and community” (Non-member respondent 1, April 10, 2024).

The table listed below provides an understanding of the respondent’s rationale for non-membership below.

**Exhibit 2** Non-ERG Members Rationale for Not Joining ERG. N=56

If you answered "no," please share why you have never considered joining an ERG at Con Edison. Please select the following reasons that apply.

Answered: 56 Skipped: 42



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Lack of Awareness	53.57% 30
▼ Not Enough Time	26.79% 15
▼ Not Interested in Group Activities	8.93% 5
▼ Not Enough Information	30.36% 17
▼ Lack of Power to Create Desired Change	5.36% 3
▼ Not Sure Where I Fit In	12.50% 7
▼ Too Much Work	5.36% 3
▼ Other (please specify) <a href="#">Responses</a>	10.71% 6

### Quantitative Data: Survey Findings

Consequently, the findings have implications for ConEdison’s ERG efforts and remain consistent with findings from previous research. A study by Dhingra et al. (2021) identified the challenges organizations face when aligning employees’ individual purposes and maximizing their fulfillment at work. A survey by the researchers identified that 70% of employees noted that their sense of purpose is primarily determined by work. Similarly, research conducted by

Catalino et al. (2022) suggested that the roles Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) departments envision for ERGs are only sometimes in agreement with the roles set by the ERG or employee expectations. Based on previous research and the findings from the data in this study from non-members, ConEdison may present the opportunity to understand the gap between what employees’ desire and the ERG’s ability to meet the motivational factors that influence recruitment and engagement.

Conversely, members of the ten ERG groups at ConEdison completed 42 surveys. The survey identified 26 members (61.9%) who participated in multiple ERG groups, and 16 (38.1%) only participated in one group. Additionally, the survey produced diverse participants, including primary members from 9 of the 10 ERG groups. The Veterans of ConEdison was the only group that did not serve as a primary ERG for the participants surveyed but included in two responses for those who belonged to multiple ERGs. Exhibit 3 demonstrates the diverse ERG membership at ConEdison based on their area of interest.

**Exhibit 3** ConEdison Primary ERG membership. N=38

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
APACE (Asian Professional Alliance of Con Edison)	7.89% 3
BUILD (Blacks United in Leadership and Development)	34.21% 13
CapeABLE	5.26% 2
CLARO - Hispanic Heritage ( Cultivating Leadership and Actively Realizing Opportunities)	18.42% 7
Emerald Society (Irish Heritage)	15.79% 6
JADE	5.26% 2
LGTBQ+	2.63% 1
Moms ON IT/ Dads Matter	2.63% 1
Veterans of Con Edison	0.00% 0
WOCE (Women of Con Edison)	18.42% 7
<b>Total Respondents: 38</b>	

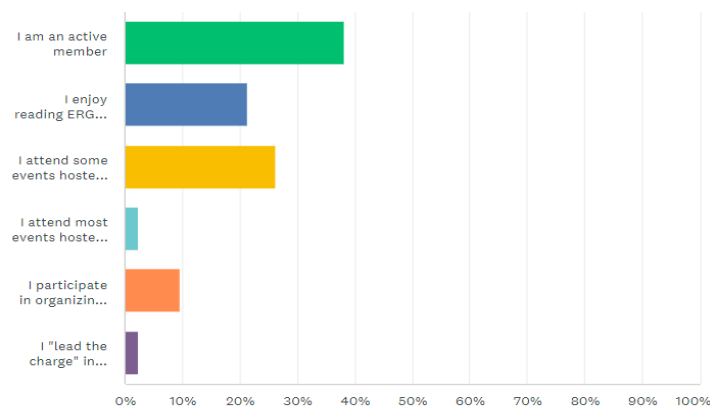
The study collected additional data to identify the organization’s activity level and demonstrate current members’ engagement. The survey revealed that the overwhelming majority of members were active (38.1%) and enjoyed reading ERG news and updates but generally did not attend events (21.4%) or attend some events (26.19%). By way of contrast, less than 10% of

members were able to attend most events hosted by the ERG (2.4%), participate in organizing the events and initiatives (9.5%), and lead organizing ERG events and initiatives (2.4%). The survey findings also discovered that most participants in ERGs spend between 0-3 hours per month (66.7%) and 4-6 hours (21.4%). This information is consistent with studies conducted by Winstanley (2023) and Martinez (2022), who identified time commitment as challenging engagement with their ERG engagement and membership. The authors noted that time spent in ERGs might challenge members to find a healthy work-life or lead to burnout due to event scheduling. Hence, the data presented in this study may identify some of the challenges associated with time commitment and influence the level of employee engagement or deter members from increasing their levels of engagement. The chart below provides greater insight into the levels of commitment made by the ERG members who participated in the survey.

**Exhibit 4** ERG Members Nature of Involvement. N=42

Please describe the nature of your involvement with your ERG.

Answered: 42 Skipped: 56



After capturing the demographic data from ERG members, the survey incorporated select questions from the EE-pulse survey from the University of Southern California Marshall Center for Effective Organizations to provide a greater understanding of employees’ motivational factors for joining and the quality of membership experience. Specifically, the survey utilized a

5-point Likert scale to acquire quantitative data from 14 questions that focused on the five ERG subscales that measure attributes that influence employee expectations for ERG membership, which included Expanding Network, Nature and Quality of Experience, and Organizational Impact. We'll first examine the relationship between the ability to expand their network and its impact on the quality of the ERG member's experience.

### *Expanding Network*

Questions regarding the ERG members' ability to expand their network and quality of experience were adapted from the Marshall Center for Organizational Effectiveness EE-pulse survey. Bryant (2023) noted that networking is vital to an employee's ability to connect with others with similar backgrounds, experiences, or career aspirations. Furthermore, the author's findings suggested that networking within ERGs benefited members by facilitating professional growth and developing a sense of belonging and companionship with other group members.

This study defines networking as building and maintaining informal relationships that might give access to information and resources (Utz & Breuer, 2019). This section of the survey focused on questions that focused on the degree of impact ranging from 1- very low to 5- very high using a Likert scale. Each question focused on the following indicators: ability to network within the company, ability to network outside of the company, mobility, innovation, and career growth. While this section reflects a diverse group of categories demonstrating the ERG's ability to impact members' ability to expand their network, the findings suggest a positive correlation between members' perception of the ERG's role. I asked survey participants to respond to the following statement, "The impact the ERG has on my ability to network within the company." Based on the findings, most respondents found that the ERG has either a High Impact (42.86%) or Very High Impact (30.95%) on their ability to network within ConEdison.

Results were identical when it came to the areas of Career Growth and Upward Mobility. I asked participants to respond to the statement, "The impact the ERG has on my potential career growth." Members continued to react at a positive rate of impact, with 40.48% of participants suggesting that the ERG had a High Impact and 14.29% identifying a Very High Impact. The impact was relatively the same when I asked participants, "The impact the ERG has on their upward mobility within the company." Most members reported a High Impact (40.48%), but fewer employees reported a Very High Impact, with only 9.52% answering in the affirmative.

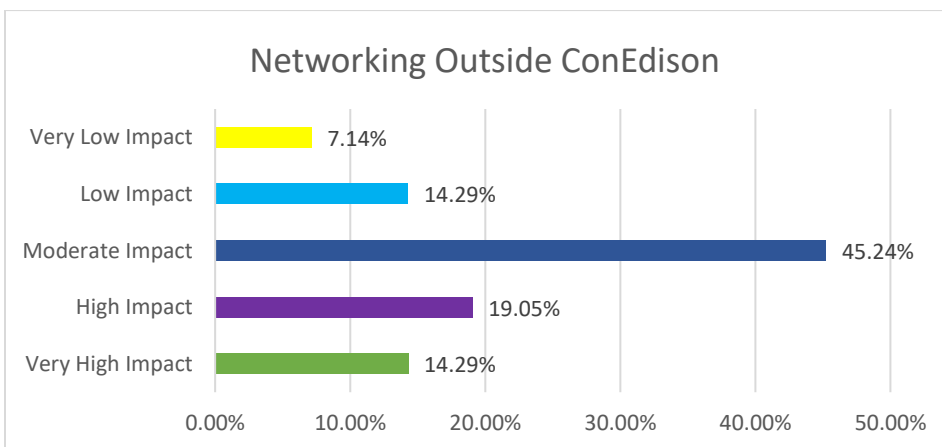
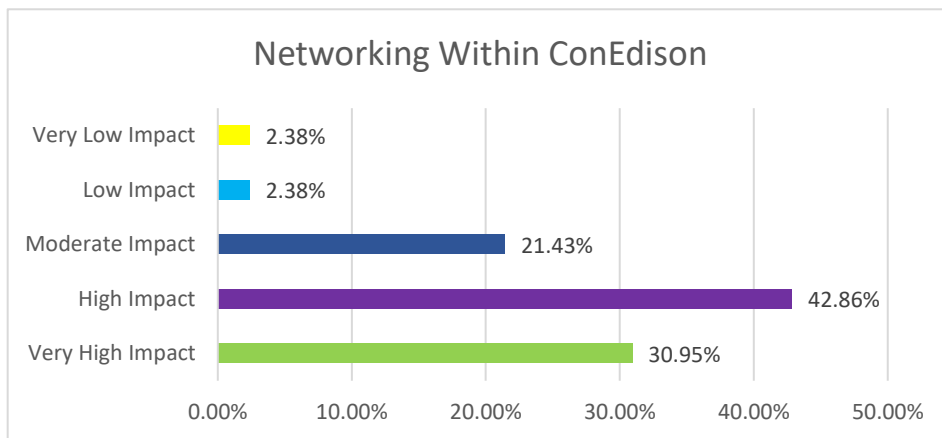
The results from the data indicate that networking allows members to showcase their skills, expertise, and achievements to a broader audience. Participating in professional communities and sharing knowledge can help members enhance their brand and overall reputation. Hence, developing the ability to network can significantly impact members' social identity based on their group membership. Ramdass (2023) posits that an organization's self-concept from their association with group memberships helps reflect their sense of belonging, self-esteem, and pride in their group. Thus, social identity plays a central role in helping individuals feel connected and unified with others while gaining greater insight into how they want to align their identities (Madison, 2024). More importantly, the organization can gain valuable insights into how networking and identity help shape each other, where one can gain a heightened sense of self-esteem, connection, and access within the organization.

By way of contrast, findings from members suggested that the ERG was less impactful with their ability to network outside of the company. The findings led to asking participants to answer, "The impact the ERG has on my ability to network outside the company." The answers from respondents indicated a moderate impact of their involvement in an ERG



(45.24%). Furthermore, this category indicated an increased reporting of Low Impact (14.29%) compared to their internal networking results, which identified only 2.38% of participants experiencing the same result. Exhibit 5 demonstrates the differences in the members' perceived impact on their networking opportunities within ConEdison and outside of the organization. Self-determination theory explains that relatedness is a need for feelings of connection and caring for others (Griener et al., 2024). The findings in this study indicate a stronger connection to support, inclusion, and protection from threats, which helps to promote the intrinsic motivation, exploratory behaviors, and well-being of members when networking inside their organization compared to networking externally.

**Exhibit 5-** ERG Impact on Networking Within and Outside of ConEdison



*Nature and Quality of Experience*

ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups formed around shared characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, or disability. Thus, the very nature of ERG groups is to leverage the power of belonging in service to organizational members, the company, and their communities at large. In their study on the employee experience, Dhingra et al. (2021) demonstrated the power of investing in the employee experience by noting the importance of organizational members feeling a sense of purpose they want from their work. Consistent with their research, this study intended to gain additional insight into the relationship between the ERG member's quality of experience. I again used the EE-pulse survey to gather data to understand this relationship further. As a result, the focal point of this section concentrated on analyzing the subcategories of inclusion, happiness, recruitment, performing meaningful work, and creating a great work environment. Based on the responses from each category, ERG membership highly impacts the employee's perceived quality of experience. As demonstrated in Exhibit 6 below, the survey indicated consistency with a combined score of over 50% in High Impact and Very High Impact results based on the following statements.

*Statement 2: The impact the ERG has on the recruiting and selection of non-ERG members- 43.90% reported High Impact and 9.76% reported Very High Impact*

*Statement 5: The impact the ERG has on making this a great place to work. – 47.62% reported High Impact and 21.43% reported Very High Impact*

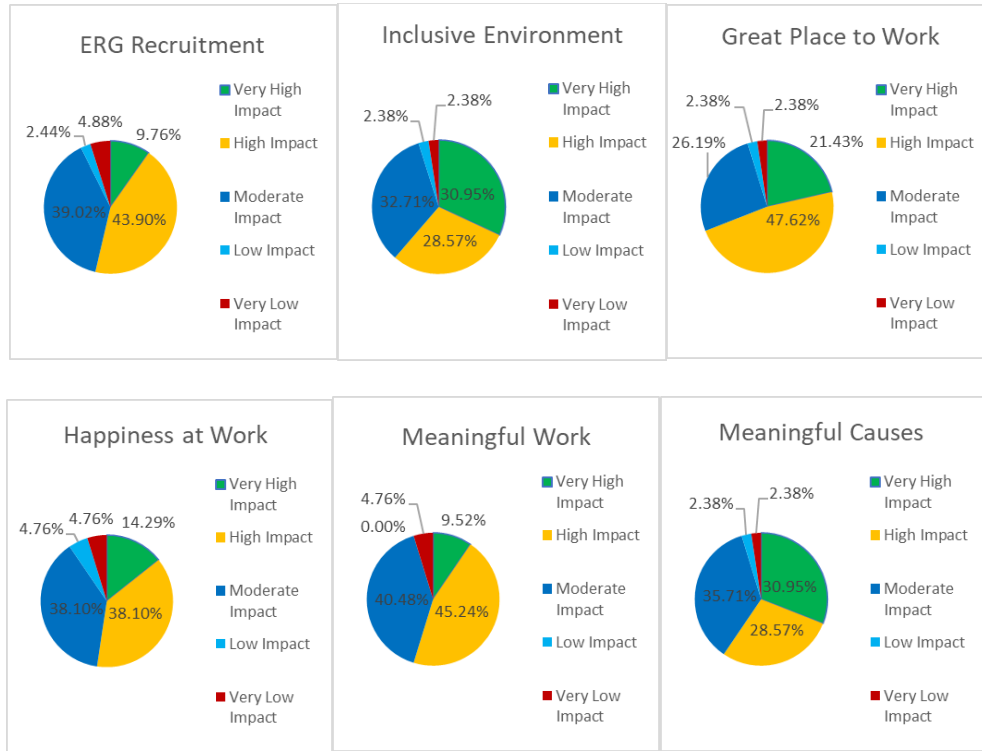
*Statement 6: The impact the ERG has on connecting me with causes that mean the most to me- 28.57% reported High Impact, while 30.95% reported Very High Impact*

*Statement 7: The impact the ERG has on creating an environment that is inclusive- 47.62% reported High Impact and 23.81% reported Very High Impact*

*Statement 13: The impact my ERG has on my sense of happiness at work- 38.10% reported High Impact and 14.29% reported Very High Impact*

*Statement 14: The impact my ERG has on making my work meaningful- 45.24% reported High Impact and 9.52% reported Very High Impact*

Exhibit 6- Quality of Experience Results. N=42



*Organizational Impact*

ERGs can also serve as influential ambassadors for the organization. Thus, their activities and initiatives can help contribute to a positive image and strengthen relationships to improve overall performance. In turn, ERGs can help foster a greater sense of connection and engagement from the workforce because they see their membership as a positive investment by bolstering productivity, creativity, and engagement. The survey asked members to respond to the following statements to better understand this relationship.

*Statement 8: The impact my ERG has on influencing how outsiders view the culture of the company.*

*Statement 9: The impact the ERG has on helping me to become more innovative at my job.*

*Statement 10: The impact my ERG has on creating a high-performance business environment.*

*Statement 12: The impact the ERG has on my ability to serve as a mentor.*

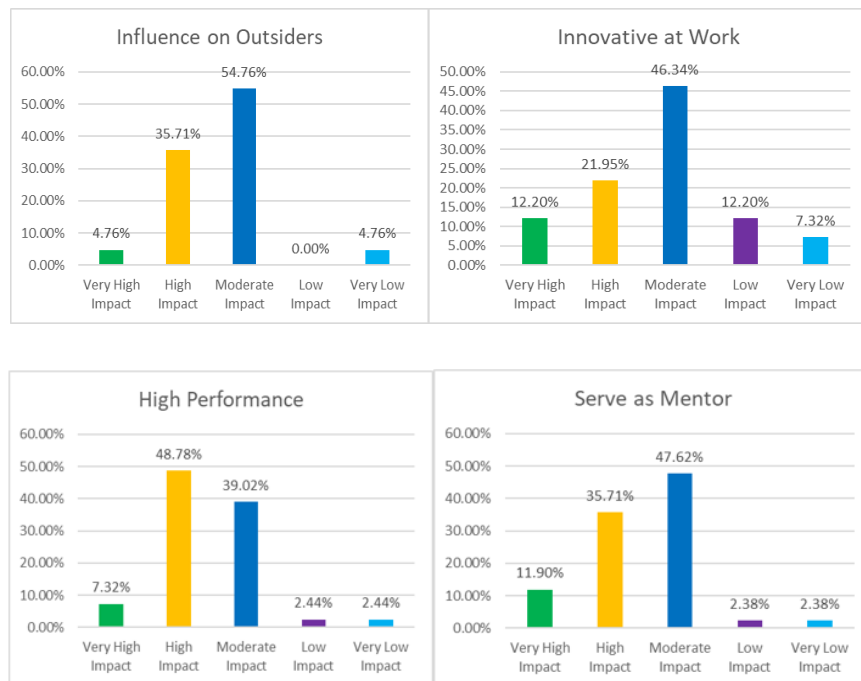
Members consistently reported results that measured between the Moderate to High Impact selections regarding their organizational experiences within their ERG. For example, members viewed the influence of their ERGs on outsiders as Moderate in 54.76% of the surveys while also having a High Impact 35.71% of the time. The data presented less extreme when analyzing the opposites of Very Low Impact (4.76%) and Very High Impact (4.76%) scales. Additionally, creating a high-performance business environment yielded a change in outcome, with only 39.02% of members reporting a Moderate Impact and 48.78% reporting a High Impact. The results remained consistent with findings from Catalino et al. (2022), who noted that employees want to find connections to their jobs and be a part of the evolution of policies, practices, and procedures by having a recognized and acknowledged voice. Based on this insight and employee experience within their ERGs, most responses' overall organizational impact scores landed within the Moderate to High Impact range.

Moreover, the question regarding the employee's ability to become innovative through ERG membership yielded similar results. The survey asked ERG members to answer the following statement, "The impact my ERG has on helping me become more innovative at my job," which resulted in responses that indicated a moderate impact (46.34%). However, most of the remaining respondents leaned towards the High Impact (21.95%) and Very High Impact (12.20%) results, which would indicate that there is more of a positive correlation. The ability to serve as the mentor followed the same positive correlation trend with their organizational impact,

with 47.62% of members reporting Moderate Impact, but close to 50% of members reported a High (35.71%) to Very High (11.90%) rating.

Chen and Kanfer (2006) argued that team motivation is the collective system by which team members coordinate their efforts' direction, intensity, and persistence. This study's findings indicate a relationship between the enjoyment or intrinsic satisfaction members experience and ERG membership. Likewise, the collective motivation of the collective group allows them to engage in team membership because they view the group's goals as necessary due to their common interest and enjoyment in belonging to the larger group (Howard et al., 2020). These findings are also consistent with Bryant's (2023) and Kalser's (2024) findings that ERGs are instrumental in leveraging members' diverse knowledge and perspectives to drive innovation in the workplace. Exhibit 7 demonstrates the relationship between ERG membership and its impact on ConEdison.

**Exhibit 7- Organizational Impact Results. N=42**



*Job Satisfaction*

The final three questions in the survey incorporated the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire—Job Satisfaction Subscale (MOAQ-JSS; Cammann et al., 1979) to identify job satisfaction levels based on ERG members' workplace experiences. The MOAQ-JSS consists of three items that measure the affective components of overall job satisfaction. This survey utilized a seven-point Likert scale to capture this data and included the following questions.

*Q1: In general, membership in my ERG does not impact my dislike for my job.*

*Q2: All in all, my ERG membership has made my job satisfying.*

*Q3: In general, ERG membership makes me like working here.*

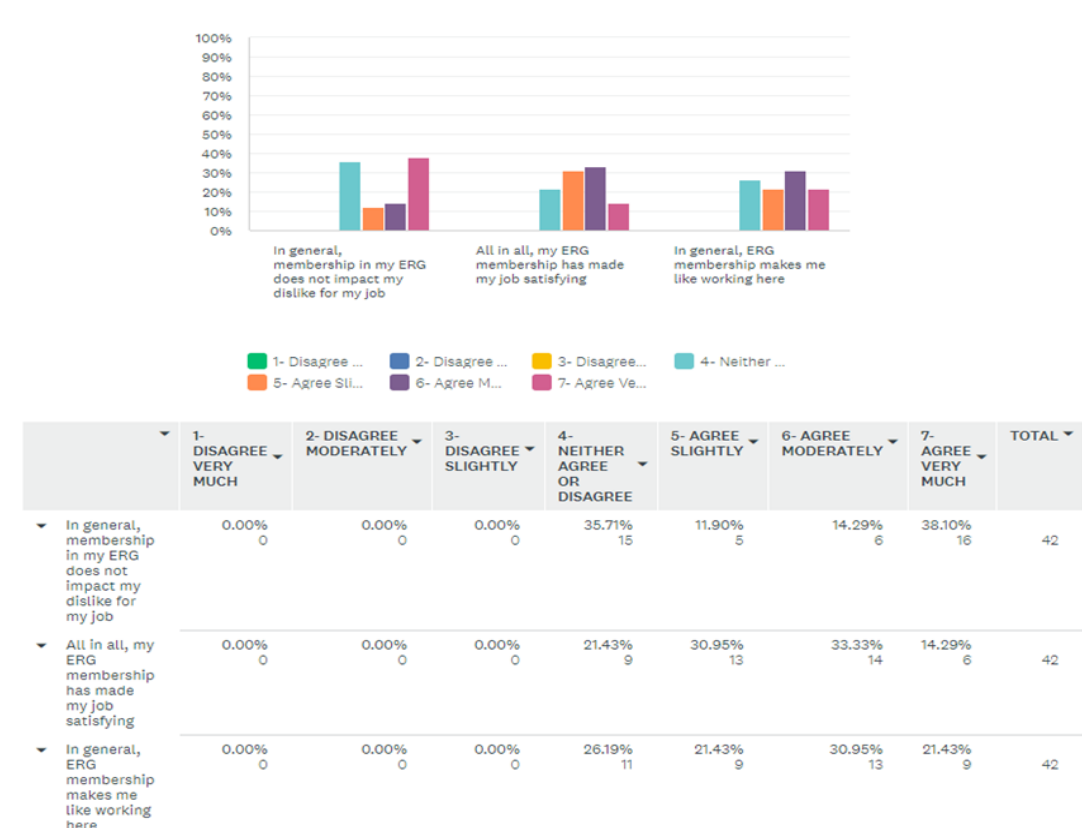
For this study, we defined job satisfaction based on how the ERG impacts the feelings of fulfillment or enjoyment in one's overall work experience. Thus, the study asked employees who described higher satisfaction in their experience to provide answers reflected on the right side of the scale (5 to 7). In contrast, the study asked members with lower satisfaction feelings to rate their responses towards the left side of the scale (1 to 3). If the employee had neutral feelings towards the question, they responded with a 4 (Neither Agree nor Disagree). The survey responses from 42 ERG members indicated a positive relationship between ERG membership and job satisfaction. Surprisingly, no member recorded a reaction from the included Disagreement variables (Disagree Very Much, Disagree Moderately, or Disagree Slightly). In response to Question 1, 35.71% of members reported that they Neither Agreed nor Disagreed with the statement, 11.90% reported that they Agreed Slightly, 14.29% reported Moderate Agreement, and 38.10% reported that they Agreed Very Much. The results demonstrated that ERG membership had little to no impact on members' dislike of their jobs.

Questions 2 and 3 followed the same pattern, with more responses indicating Slight or Moderate Agreement. For instance, the responses to Question 2 reported that 21.43% of members Neither Agreed nor Disagreed with ERGs making their jobs more satisfying, while 30.95% Agreed Slightly, 33.33% Agreed Moderately, and 14.29% Agreed Very Much. The results from this question suggest that, in most cases, there is a positive association between ERG membership and job satisfaction. Finally, responses to Question 3 reported a more balanced response rate, with 26.19% of members Neither Agree or Disagree with the statement, 21.43% Agreed Slightly, 30.95% Agreed Moderately, and 21.43% Agreed Very Much. Thus, the data suggest that there is also a positive relationship between employee levels of workplace satisfaction and ERG membership.

The overall survey responses provided valuable insights into some of the key reasons why members joined their ERGs and their impact on their experience and levels of job satisfaction (Exhibit 8). The results aligned with studies from Catalino et al. (2022), Bryant (2023), & Sokolowsky (2024), who suggested companies that support ERGs are likely to find success in creating diverse, inclusive work environments and promoting a culture of allyship. Additionally, a study by Gagne & Deci (2004) indicated a strong relationship between job fit and employee objectives. The author's research referred to job fit as the relationship between the values of the member and their alignment with the organization's values. The higher a member's knowledge, skills, and abilities are suited for the demands of the job, then the greater the chance for satisfaction on both ends. Thus, understanding how self-determination relates to a member's sense of inclusion and support can positively impact their outlook on work and their association with others in the workplace. Based on this notion, ERGS can help align members' talents with the organization's overall strategic plan and determine the satisfaction levels in the workplace.

Catalino et al. (2022) explained the in-group/out-group experience from self-determination theory by suggesting that ERGs are less effective when employees feel excluded. Their study discovered that employees who rated their ERGs as effective in one or more of the categories of engagement, allyship, leadership connection, community building, and career advancement were more likely to report positive inclusion scores with their organizations. Hence, the findings from the ConEdison ERG member's data and research help reinforce the notion that a positive connection exists between levels of effectiveness and connection formed from ERG membership and overall employee job satisfaction. In my next section, I will provide more significant insights into this finding, which utilized the Spearman Rank Coefficient test to examine the strength of relationships between ERG job satisfaction and the three main quantitative categories included in this study.

**Exhibit 8: ERG Membership and Job Satisfaction Data**





### **Quantitative Analysis: Examining the relationship between ERG membership and Job Satisfaction Spearman Rank Coefficient**

The non-parametric test selected for this study is the Spearman rank correlation coefficient test. I decided to include the Spearman test, which used ordinal data to measure the strength of association between two variables. Specifically, Spearman's correlation test determines the strength and direction of the monotonic relationship between two variables rather than the strength and direction of the linear relationship. Thus, the monotonic relationship can evaluate one of the following: 1) as the value of one variable increases, so does the value of the other variable, or 2) as the value of one variable increases, the other variable value decreases.

To calculate the Spearman's rho test, we must first ensure that our data is ordinal. Spearman coefficients rank from -1 to +1 to demonstrate if the two variables share a positive or negative monotonic relationship. A positive sign indicates that if one variable increases, the other will also increase. Conversely, a negative sign implies that with one variable increasing, the other would decrease. If there is no change between variables, the Spearman rank will indicate a relationship by showing Zero. Utilizing this technique will assist with describing the degree of relation between the variables. I collected the quantitative data from the survey to import into the IBM SPSS system to serve as descriptors or information that helps to describe the research participant groups to develop a more robust understanding of the scores from survey measures.

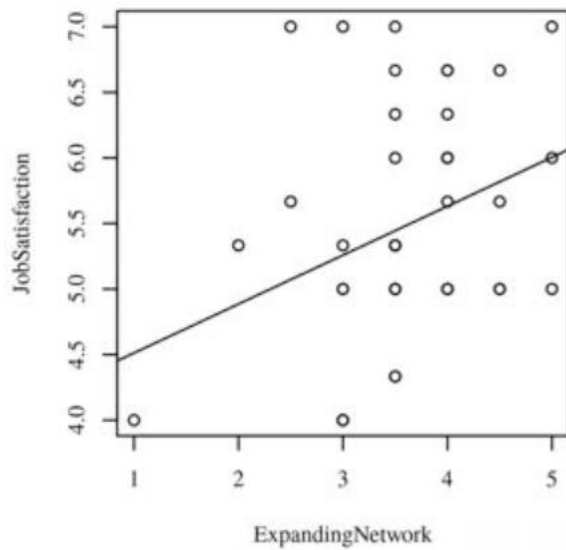
A Spearman rank correlation is appropriate when one or both variables are ordinal, but it can also be used with scale variables. In this study, I examined the correlation as a bivariate measure of the association between two variables and the magnitude of the relationship. Conover & Iman (1981) explained that the Spearman rank correlation test assumes that the variables have

a monotonic relationship with each other and do not change direction. The monotonic relationship will be assessed graphically with a scatterplot to describe this relationship.

I performed a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient test to identify the strength of the relationship based on the observed variables included in this study. The acceptable range for the Spearman rank test when analyzing Likert scale data is typically between -1 and 1. Thus, a coefficient of -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation, a coefficient of 0 means no correlation and a coefficient of 1 indicates a perfect positive correlation. The magnitude of the relationship between the variables determines the strength of their relationship based on the two variables. I included Cohen's standard to evaluate the correlation coefficient, where 0.10 to .29 represents a weak association between the two variables, 0.30 to 0.49 represents a moderate association, and 0.50 or larger represents a strong association.

My initial analysis examined the relationship between ERG members' ability to Expand the Network and Job Satisfaction. My data consisted of responses from 42 ERG members who belonged to single and multiple ERG groups. I also assumed that a monotonic relationship existed between the two variables. A Spearman correlation requires that the relationship between each pair of variables does not change direction (Conover & Iman, 1981). This assumption is violated if the points on the scatterplot between variables shift from a positive to harmful to a positive relationship. Exhibit 9 presents the scatterplot of the correlation. I added a regression line to assist in the interpretation of the data.

**Exhibit 9:** *Scatterplot Data with regression line added for Expand Network and Job Satisfaction Data*



The result of the correlation was examined based on an alpha value of .05. There were no significant correlations between any pairs of variables. Table 1 and Table 2 presents the results of the correlation.

**Table 1**

*Spearman Correlation Matrix Between ExpandingNetwork and JobSatisfaction*

Variable	1	2
1. ExpandingNetwork	-	
2. JobSatisfaction	.29	-

Note. \*  $p < .05$ .

**Table 2**

*Spearman Correlation Results Between ExpandingNetwork and JobSatisfaction*

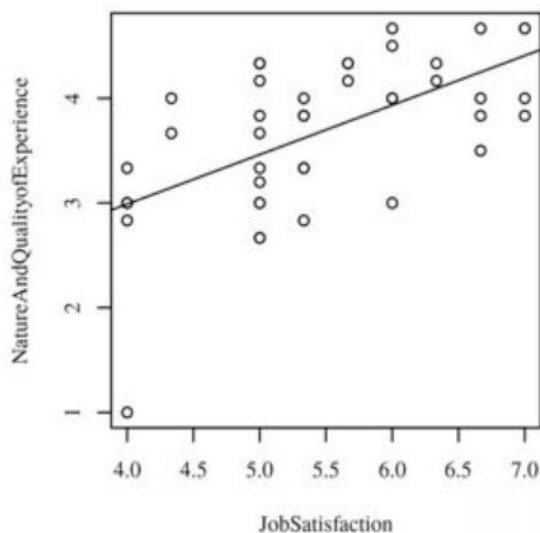
Combination	<i>r</i>	95.00% CI	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
ExpandingNetwork-JobSatisfaction	.29	[-.01, .55]	42	.062

Consequently, Spearman’s rank correlation was computed to assess the relationship between 42 ERG members ability to Expand their Network and Job Satisfaction. There was a

weak, positive monotonic correlation between Expanding the Network and Job Satisfaction,  $r(40) = .29, p = .062$ .

Next, the study performed the Spearman test to examine the relationship between the Nature and Quality of Experience and Job Satisfaction. We examined this relationship utilizing the same parameters for the relationship between Expanding Network and Job Satisfaction. I also assumed that a monotonic relationship existed between each pair of variables and did not change direction. Exhibit 10 presents the scatterplot of the correlation and a regression line was added to assist with the interpretation of the data.

**Exhibit 10:** Scatterplot with the regression line added for Nature and Quality of Job Experience and Job Satisfaction



The result of the correlation was examined based on an alpha value of .05. A significant positive correlation was observed between the Nature and Quality of Experience and Job Satisfaction, with a correlation of .59, indicating a large effect size ( $p < .001, 95.00\% \text{ CI} = [.34, .76]$ ). This suggests that as Nature and Quality of Experience increases, Job Satisfaction tends to increase. Table 3 and Table 4 presents the results of the correlation.

**Table 3**

*Spearman Correlation Matrix Between JobSatisfaction and NatureAndQualityofExperience*

Variable	1	2
1. JobSatisfaction	-	
2. NatureAndQualityofExperience	.59*	-

Note. \* $p < .05$ .

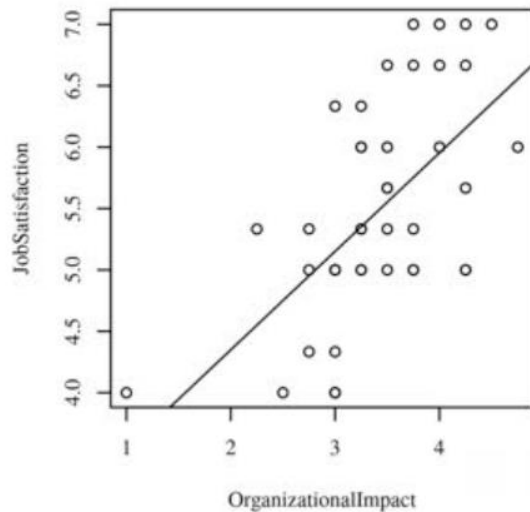
**Table 4**

*Spearman Correlation Results Between JobSatisfaction and NatureAndQualityofExperience*

Combination	<i>r</i>	95.00% CI	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
JobSatisfaction-NatureAndQualityofExperience	.59	[.34, .76]	42	< .001

Finally, I examined the relationship between Organizational Impact and Job Satisfaction variables. The same rules as the previous two test applied with the assumption of a monotonic relationship and the use of Cohen’s standard to evaluate the strength of the relationship. Exhibit 11 presents a scatterplot of the correlation to assist with the interpretation of the relationship.

**Exhibit 11:** *Scatterplots with the regression line added for Organizational Impact and Job Satisfaction*



The result of the correlation was examined based on an alpha value of .05. A significant positive correlation was observed between Organizational Impact and Job Satisfaction, with a

correlation of .60, indicating a large effect size ( $p < .001$ , 95.00% CI = [.37, .77]). This suggests that as Organizational Impact increases, Job Satisfaction tends to increase. Table 5 and Table 6 presents the results of the correlation.

**Table 5**

*Spearman Correlation Matrix Between OrganizationalImpact and JobSatisfaction*

Variable	1	2
1. OrganizationalImpact	-	
2. JobSatisfaction	.60*	-

Note. \* $p < .05$ .

**Table 6**

*Spearman Correlation Results Between OrganizationalImpact and JobSatisfaction*

Combination	<i>r</i>	95.00% CI	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
OrganizationalImpact-JobSatisfaction	.60	[.37, .77]	42	< .001

Thus, the additional insights presented from the Spearman correlation analysis demonstrate the strength of relationships based on multiple variables. To further expand upon the findings, I utilized interview data to provide a more robust understanding of this phenomenon. Our next part of the study will present the interview information that provide additional details on the quantitative findings presented from the survey.

**Qualitative Data Analysis: Empathy Interviews**

Empathy interviews utilize semi-structured interviews to understand the interviewee's experience and bring to light their unacknowledged needs (Bennett et al., 2022). Empathy interviews allow the participant to tell the story behind their experience by prompting them to recall a specific time, place, or experience. Furthermore, empathy interviews utilize interviewees' stories to dig deeper into their experiences and guide the conversation. Thus, this study used empathy interviews to find consistency with the conceptual framework and insights from the

literature and their relation to understanding members' experiences from their lens. Based on the research questions, the study utilized empathy interviews by asking members to share their experiences, which are listed below.

*Q1. How did you learn about ERGs and what is the most important factor that influenced your decision to join?*

*Q2. How would you describe your overall experience as an ERG member?*

*Q3. What do you hope to get out of your experience as an ERG member? Describe how it is meeting or not meeting your expectations?*

*Q4. What is your favorite ERG activity/program/initiative you participated in within the last 12 months and why?*

*Q5. What was your least favorite ERG activity/program/initiative you participated in within the last 12 months and why?*

*Q6. What topics would you like to see covered in a future activity/program/initiative?*

*Q7. Would you recommend joining an ERG to other organizational members? Why or why not?*

The transcribed data from the phone interview utilized dictation on separate Microsoft Word documents to clean the text from the audio file. Next, the data from the transcript utilized an application called Dovetail to transfer and identify themes. Using this tool allowed me to edit the document at my discretion and identify relevant terms that shared a connection to the data collected during the survey process to provide more significant insights into their quantitative responses. The study incorporated qualitative data analysis to describe general statements about relationships and themes present in the data. Wolcott (1994) explained that analysis is a generic term that utilizes three basis categories when analyzing data: description, analysis, and interpretation. His study suggested that the categories are not exclusive but are used to organize and present the data by identifying and distinguishing each component. Hence, reflecting upon my conceptual framework and questioning the data presented the opportunity to gain a deeper

understanding of emerging themes that confirmed or challenged the findings from the quantitative surveys collected in this study.

The phenomenological approach utilized in this study aimed to investigate the everyday experiences of ConEdison ERG members while suspending my preconceived assumptions about the phenomenon. To help address the issue, I looked for information during the research process to help challenge my preconceived notions, engaging in conversations with people in my organization who share similar experiences with members of ConEdison's ERGs and learning about different cultures to broaden my understanding and contest the stereotypes and assumptions I held before conducting the study.

As a result, the interviews performed in this study utilized the lessons learned to become a more active listener and open-minded to gain deeper insights into how members understand their lived experiences within their ERG. My analysis started by utilizing deductive coding from predetermined codes developed from the research questions. Some coding included member's motivation, experience, barriers, satisfaction, and promotion. After creating my codes, I utilized the initial coding technique to find excerpts from the interviews that fit the codes. I started with initial coding to read through each interview and examine, compare, and search for recurring themes and patterns. I then transcribed the phone interviews utilizing the Dovetail program. I used the transcriptions from the interviews and transferred the data into Dovetail to analyze the syntax from the participants and decode the data by determining the most common keywords and phrases. I analyzed the keywords and phrases in a word cloud, which were analyzed and encoded with suitable category labels (Saldana, 2009, p.4). Consequently, certain commonalities started to develop within the interview data and allowed me to move into the second cycle of my



analysis. Following this process allowed me to remain open to all possible theoretical directions based on the lived experiences of members.

Initially, I faced the challenge of setting aside my prejudices and a priori assumptions to focus mainly on the immediate experiences of members; however, following this process kept me grounded in concentrating on the existing framework and following a deductively constructed analysis. I later used pattern coding to help explain relationship patterns, search for causes and explanations for possible phenomena, and build frameworks. The second analysis cycle utilized a pattern coding method to recognize primary coded data to create subcodes and further consolidate them into sub-categories. The data collected listed various organizational insights such as psychological safety, positivity, compensation, connecting, self-interest, self-efficacy, added work, multiple group benefits, communication, networking, career advice, similarities, fear, volunteerism, virtual interactions, informative content, and lack of program information that related to organizational culture, employee engagement, personal development, and other internal factors that impacted both people and groups within the organization. These findings eventually led to critical themes centered around communication, relationships, personal and professional growth, and organizational processes and norms. I have listed this relationship in Exhibit 9 below.

The data collection from the empathy interviews provided a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the motivational factors for ERG membership, participants' experience, and the relationship to their satisfaction with their jobs. Next, we will delve deeper into the connection between the survey and empathy interviews to better understand the factors influencing ERG membership, experience, and job satisfaction based on the connection to the group.

**Exhibit 9-** Key Themes from Empathy Interviews

Codes from Empathy Interviews		
Codes	Sub codes	Key Themes
<b>Motivation</b>	Self-efficacy	<b>Relationships</b>
	Psychological safety	
	Volunteerism	
	Networking	
	Career Advice	
	Support	
Experience	Group benefits	<b>Personal and professional growth</b>
	Commitment Expectations	
	Support	
	Networking	
	Development Opportunities	
	Sense of Community	
	Format and Structure	
	Career Advice	
Access to C-Suite Leadership		
<b>Barriers</b>	Group Size	<b>Organizational Processes and Norms</b>
	Fear of the Unknown	
	Added Work	
	Time restraints	
	Lack of Compensation	
	Difficult Conversations	
	Recognition of Differences	
	Virtual vs. In-person preferences	
Miscommunication		
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	Sense of Connection	<b>Effective communication, Culture, &amp; Professional and Personal Growth</b>
	Volunteerism	
	Growth Opportunities	
	Career Advice	
	Networking	
	Inclusion	
<b>Promotion</b>	Connecting	<b>Relationships and Personal Growth</b>
	Multiple Work Group Benefits	
	Positivity	
	Self-interest	
	Self-efficacy	
	Community	

After analyzing data from the study's qualitative and quantitative segments, the next step included integrating the data. The primary data source in this project relates to the quantitative data findings. Creswell & Tashakkori (2007) suggested that following this approach can help the study develop meaningful inferences from the results of each strand, as well as procedures promoting the trustworthiness of the work reported. Consequently, the study incorporated the narrative responses from the qualitative interviews and embedded them into our primary data set. I then converted the qualitative data into a narrative code using Dovetail to facilitate

complementary analysis. The next section of the study will share the results from the quantitative and qualitative segments to better understand how I analyzed the data to answer the research questions.

### **Findings**

This study aimed to evaluate ConEdison's ERG recruitment strategy. The evaluation included multiple data sources, including internal demographic information from ConEdison's website, online surveys, empathy interviews, and a literature review. The demographic data provided by the company's website provided insights into the characteristics of ConEdison's population and strategic direction. Additionally, the online survey data helped to give a general understanding of the factors that influenced the perception of ERGs at ConEdison. The quantitative data provided insights into the factors that discouraged membership. These motivational factors led to the engagement of members, level of commitment, quality of experience, and the role of ERG membership in overall job satisfaction levels. The quantitative data findings helped inform the qualitative data collection through initial coding.

Consequently, the findings from incorporating a mixed methods approach demonstrated themes and alignment with the conceptual frameworks utilized in this study, ultimately providing the basis for my recommendations. My findings support the connection that I will include using quotes from the qualitative data collection to further the understanding of the experiences of ConEdison employees from both a member and non-member perspective. I will next share some examples of the findings from the study to demonstrate these relationships.

*Finding #1: Lack of awareness, insufficient information, and limited participation time are the main contributors to limited ERG membership growth.*

The findings from the quantitative portion of our study identified a need for more awareness, more information, and limited time as the main contributors to limited membership growth. Currently, ConEdison relies on multiple sources of ERG recruitment tactics, including its organization's website, social media page, email communication, ERG social events, word of mouth, and the annual ERG Expo. Based on the responses from both the quantitative and qualitative data sets, I identified that some of the methods currently incorporated by the organization have led to the effective recruitment of current members, which the statements below exemplify:

When I came to ConEdison, I knew that the company this size had to have some type of ERG because my prior company had them as well. So, I reached out and I saw an email come over about some event one of the ERGs was having and was able to find ones that interested me and joined. – Denise (BUILD, WOCE, & LGBTQ+ member)

“I heard about ERGs from our company website and speeches from our senior leadership.” - Jackie (APACE member)

Based on the responses from current members, ConEdison's current recruitment practices were effective in helping them decide to join an ERG. Despite successfully recruiting almost 30% of organizational members, ConEdison still has opportunities to connect with employees who may need to learn about the purpose of ERGs, their functionality, and the potential benefits each ERG offers. The ERGs appear on the company's website, with information that provides a broad definition of each group and how they are associated with the overall DEI strategy. However, as demonstrated in our earlier non-member survey, some experienced difficulties navigating the corporate website to learn about ERG groups and felt the groups needed to be more effective at demonstrating alignment with their personal or professional goals.

Another key factor identified in the online survey that limited the recruitment of non-members to join ERGs was time constraints. This finding is especially true at ConEdison due to the mixture of employees who report onsite to various work locations and members who work from home. Work-life integration allows employees to organize their personal and professional lives in a complementary way and fulfill both sets of responsibilities (Walker, 2023). In short, ERG work may deter non-members from joining because they may present additional work that they do not see as beneficial towards managing their personal needs for fulfillment. Consequently, based on this viewpoint, some see membership as a chore rather than a potential sense of enjoyment. The quote below represents this relationship between a lack of relatedness and non-member attraction to ERGs from a current member who was reluctant to join.

“I know that there are ERG groups that exist within the organization. They broadcast events and stuff that I can go to, but work is so busy so I don’t really make time to go”- Sabrina (LGBTQ+ member).

Another non-ERG member explained his rationale for not joining due to the lack of integration between his connection between work and personal needs.

“It’s not part of my job” (Non-member respondent 6, April 21, 2024).

Self-determination theory has shaped our understanding of the factors that help optimize worker motivation by emphasizing how work context influences basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Research conducted by Deci & Ryan (1995) argued that meeting these three psychological needs is required to effectively motivate workers and ensure optimal performance and a feeling of well-being in the workplace. Non-ERG members may seek opportunities to meet these psychological needs and avoid threats; therefore, understanding how to satisfy these needs may lead to higher success in generating the motivation to join and keep them engaged (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Thus, when employees feel supported and information is

shared effectively, it can leverage feelings of altruism and curiosity, which may motivate non-members to join ERGs.

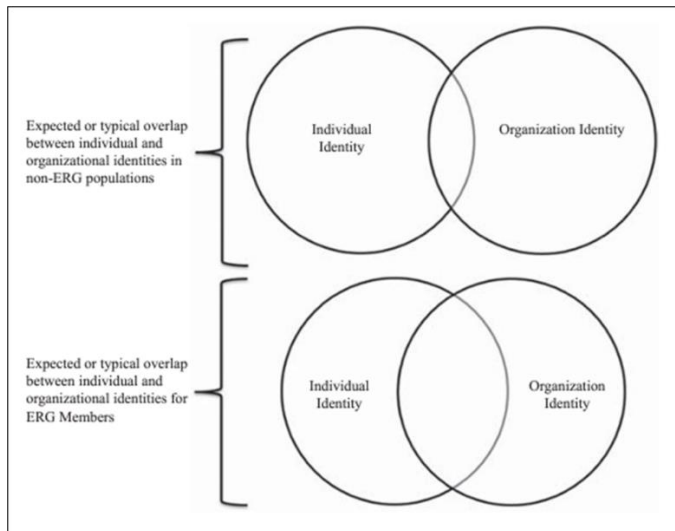
*Finding #2: Intrinsic factors positively influence members' motivation to join ERGs, as they can achieve a greater sense of self, solidarity, and support.*

The recruitment efforts of new members into ERGs should provide information that is accessible, actionable, and useful to each person, which would address the competence needs of members. Likewise, members who joined ERGs demonstrated they owned their choices and had a complete sense of volition when deciding to join the group. The findings revealed a connection to intrinsic motivational factors that encouraged their membership, such as a sense of belonging and connection to the group and members, which influences the feeling of feeling close to, trusting of, and cared for by others.

Cooperation between team members helps create a sense of community in the workplace where employees feel like they belong. Their satisfaction comes from helping others, thus increasing a member's intrinsic motivation. The results from the survey data indicated that ERG membership highly impacted most employees' workplace experience at ConEdison by making it a great place to work, providing meaningful work, and increasing their levels of happiness based on their experience. Hence, ERG membership served as a means to help employees feel well-served and enjoy greater feelings of inclusion.

Furthermore, organizations that create meaning behind the work encourage a willingness to exert high effort toward organizational goals. Exhibit 10 demonstrates that ERGs can be pivotal in increasing the likelihood of connecting an individual's identity with the organization's identity based on connected values. Thus, by aligning work with corporate and employee expectations, ERGs can help people feel more included and connected to their work (Catalino et

al., 2022). Thus, the organization's ability to align employees' expectations with DE&I priorities helps improve the overall experience for ERG members and their connection to their organization by understanding the importance of serving their intrinsic needs.



*Finding #3: ERG members experienced higher levels of psychological safety, which influenced their sense of belongingness and the quality of their organizational experience.*

The empathy interviews with ERG members provided space to discuss their experiences at ConEdison. Several speakers joined ERGs representing their ethnic backgrounds, such as the Asian Pacific Islander ERG or the African American ERG, to connect with people with similar experiences and backgrounds. Speakers found these groups provided ERG members with a sense of community and helped amplify their voices on issues impacting their communities. Listed below are some examples of responses from ERG members concerning their feelings of connection in the workplace due to their membership.

Discussion around Asian hate was my most enjoyable activity. Just having the event and allowing members to talk about their experiences, helped a lot. It made me feel like we're in this together and understand that other people go through the same type of fear that I experience. – Jackie (APACE ERG Member)

“We had a meeting via Microsoft Teams where we did a bunch of trivia games about the company, LGBTQ+ history and things like that, which was engaging and got everyone involved” (Sabrina, LGBTQ ERG Member)

“So, for that group it was ethnically based, which was my main reason for joining. Forming a connection with people who looked like me was important. People who shared the same experiences, qualities, and values” (Mario, BUILD ERG Member)

As demonstrated in the comments, some speakers highlighted interactive ERG events focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics, such as psychological safety workshops, discussions on current events like Asian hate, and trivia games celebrating LGBTQ+ history, which they found educational and engaging. Others valued ERGs as networking opportunities, career support, and people who listen and offer encouragement, as presented in the response below.

The best thing is that it mirrors the things that support me. Right now, I am currently in the African American ERG that mirrors my background and allows for different networking opportunities for me. I love being a member because it allows me to interact with people from different walks of life. Joseph- (BUILD and CLARO ERG member).

Members' comments highlighted interactive ERG events focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics, such as psychological safety workshops, discussions on current events like Asian hate, and trivia games celebrating LGBTQ+ history, which they found educational and engaging. Others valued ERGs as networking opportunities, career support, and people who listen and offer encouragement. Overall, interviewees felt ERGs fostered belonging, unity, and self-pride, aligning with one's overall well-being. (Pirutinsky & Mancuso, 2011). Social Identity Theory also suggests a connection exists between the perceived health in one's mind and the social factors that affect one's social identity (Jetten et al., 2017). The interviews collected in this study helped to understand how group membership contributes to providing individual members with meaning, support, and agency within their workplace. For example, the comments provided



suggested ERG members felt enabled to connect with people across the organization they may not otherwise interact with. Every interviewee in this study recommended others join an ERG that aligns with their values and where they feel they can add value. They emphasized that ERGs are not just about the individual but also about understanding similarities and differences across the company, which provided members with a greater sense of allegiance and connection to their ERG groups and workplace.

*Finding #4: A positive feeling of quality of experience is strongly associated with organizational performance outcomes and increased levels of job satisfaction.*

The Spearman correlation coefficient test in this study identified a strong positive correlation between ERG members' Nature and Quality of Experience and their overall job satisfaction. The results from the survey suggested that a person's ability to make choices and manage their own life significantly impacted their satisfaction with their job. Self Determination Theory suggests that being self-determined means feeling in greater control rather than feeling controlled by others. The survey indicated solid relationships between ERG members' experiences and a positive correlation to their perception of the quality of experience within the group. Additionally, the concept of intrinsic motivation in Self Determination Theory suggests that engagement in activities for the inherent reward of the behavior plays a vital role in one level of motivation and satisfaction in the workplace (Deci et al., 2017). Based on the survey results, ERG members demonstrated this correlation when reporting a "Very High Impact" on their ERG's ability to "Create an Inclusive Environment" (30.95%) and make ConEdison a "Great Place to Work" (21.43%). Similarly, ERG members surveyed reported a high impact between their membership experience and their ability to "Participate in Meaningful Causes" (30.95%), perform "Meaningful Work" (45.24%), and "Happiness at Work" (38.40%).

The insights from the empathy interviews provided a deeper understanding of employees' feelings of self-determination in the workplace, specifically regarding actions performed by the ERG that tapped into their intrinsic motivation. The findings from the interviews also help explain how feelings of self-determination impact motivation and lead to fulfilling their needs for competence, connection, and autonomy. Some examples of this connection are listed below when members stated the following:

“We were able to contribute to a school in my area and people seemed to enjoy that stuff. I loved to see the expressions on people’s faces when we got involved. It felt good doing this.” – Travis (BUILD ERG member)

“I just want to become a more well-rounded person by understanding different people, where they’re from and so on. It gives me the opportunity to learn other cultures as well, so it has been a pretty good experience.” – Antonio (CLARO ERG member)

“I participated in a volunteer event through BUILD and it helped me feel good about the work we were doing.” – Mario (BUILD member)

Hence, participants could participate in educational and enjoyable activities, impacting their ability to feel supported and empowered through membership. The interviewees also highlighted the value of ERGs in providing a sense of community and belonging within a large organization. As a result, the components of connection and relatedness to the work performed by ERG members offer a greater sense of satisfaction with their work by driving intrinsic motivational factors such as enjoyment, interest, and fulfillment. This finding is significant regarding members' motivation to recruit and attract non-ERG participants into the group, evident in the responses from 43.90% of current members who reported that this highly impacts their decision to serve as promoters.

*Finding #5: ERGs help to satisfy intrinsic work needs, such as personal growth, connection and achievement, influencing motivation, engagement, and satisfaction at work.*

Self-determination theory also plays a vital role in social relationships. Research conducted by Tsai & Pai (2014) posits that when members fulfill their intrinsic needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence, their social identity is impacted, ultimately affecting participation behaviors. Therefore, forging close relationships with others can help to increase one's level of self-determination through their need to seek positive relationships and offer support and feedback to those who are part of their social circle. An example of this relationship exists in the form of networking within ERGs. ERGs help members build high-trust relationships that allow their companies to grow. The groups are significant in networking to foster a sense of belonging, inspire conversation, and tackle company-wide challenges. In addition, networking within ERGs can help the organization identify and develop new leaders while providing a safe space for everyone to enjoy the comfort of being their true selves in the workplace.

The survey results indicated that over 73% of ERGs identified that their membership had a "High to Very High Impact" on their ability to network within the company. The findings suggest that ERG participants leveraged their membership to find new opportunities to connect with members and supportive colleagues within the workplace. In addition, ERG networking opportunities also provided access to senior management, which provided insights into their career growth and development. The examples below from the empathy interviews increased the study's understanding of the impact networking within ERGs had on fulfilling the intrinsic needs of members.

“I enjoyed the men’s health event with all the ERGs that provided me with a great opportunity to meet others from different ERGs. It was another great networking event that allows you to see different perspectives and grow.” – Joseph (BUILD and CLARO ERG member).

“I just wanted to make sure that I was networking and part of a community, which attracted me to join an ERG. It’s very informative and rewarding” – Tina (CLARO and WOCE ERG member).

I love being a member because it allows me to interact with people from different walks of life. Also, people who are in different parts of the business that support the different things that I want to do and provide great networking opportunities – Courtney (BUILD ERG member).

The insights from the interviews demonstrated that networking helps members feel part of a community in the workplace. Some members developed a greater appreciation for their organization based on their association with people and causes that mirrored their experiences and interests. Another critical factor was the ability to progress their career, which could serve as a means of satisfying member's feelings of accomplishment and worth within the organization, exemplified by the quotation below:

The biggest event that I participated in was a career progression conversation with upper management, where they discuss how they ascended into their roles as African-Americans. They discussed goals and some of the motivating factors that led to their success. I thought that it was really insightful because it reflected some of the things I am interested in, and I saw myself in them. – Mario (BUILD ERG).

As a result, some ERG members leverage their experience to serve as mentors, which over 35% of respondents indicated as having a high impact on their rationale for joining. Likewise, the survey and interview responses found that due to their ability to network, they could overcome challenges with the assistance of the connections they formed within their ERGs and by leveraging their shared experiences to increase their skills on the job. Consequently, the ability to improve one's skills has a significant impact on member's self-determination because they can feel more confident, competent, and supported in their desire to achieve career goals.

*Finding #6: Social identity needs to be clear-cut. Some members may feel a different connection to the multiple aspects of their identity.*

Over the years, ERGs have organized groups based on race, gender, disability, and interest. Initially, ERGs, like the ones formed at ConEdison, focused on connecting employees

based on a shared interest. However, a key finding from the survey data indicated that most ERG members surveyed participated in multiple ERG groups. Of the 42 ERG members surveyed, 26 respondents reported belonging to numerous groups. Thus, several employees joined ERGs that reflected their ethnic background or other aspects of their identity, allowing them to connect with people with similar experiences. ERG events like picnics and health events provided opportunities for networking and building community across the organization.

The results in this study also demonstrate that some ERG members at ConEdison identify in multiple ways and need to connect with others who are like them to fulfill their need for connections and to feel heard and seen within their workplace. ERGs help members find a safe space to focus on more than one dimension of their lived experience. Instead, membership in multiple ERGs allows one to acknowledge that each member's identity consists of various intersecting aspects that make them unique and accepted in their workplace. One ERG member shared their insights regarding their intersectionality in the statement below:

I think the most important factor is that it felt powerful to have other people like me, specifically with the LGBTQ+ and BUILD ERGs to provide me with a stronger voice. I no longer felt alone in who I am and that what made me join and become active in the both ERGs. – Denise (LGBTQ+ and BUILD ERGs)

This study helped demonstrate that some members identify with multiple representations of themselves, which help shape who they are. The example from the interview indicates that Denise's experience as a queen black woman may experience the world based on her sexuality, gender, and race, which provides a unique understanding of how each identity intersects in her life. Likewise, her experience demonstrates the pivotal role ERGs play in recognizing that individuals face multiple forms of oppression or discrimination due to their overlapping identities, such as race, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or gender. Therefore, members within ERGs look for their groups to help shape members' experiences based on their ability to

assist them with finding comfort within their workplace while also acknowledging their multiple identities to create safe spaces for them to be their true selves.

Evaluating the ERG recruitment strategy at ConEdison established that the needs of members and non-members are dynamic and ever-changing. Utilizing a mixed-method approach in this study, we identified some main contributors that attracted members to join ERG groups and learned detractors for non-members. The next section of this study will share some recommendations based on the findings of this study that may assist ConEdison with improving its recruitment of members into ERGs in the future.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations from the findings of this study on the ERG recruitment strategy at ConEdison focused on the purpose, project questions, and results of the study. The implications of these findings suggest that ERGs are most effective when employees feel included. The recommendations also connect to the literature reviewed in this study. A survey conducted by Catalino et al. (2022) helps to demonstrate this connection by discovering that when there is a gap between what ERGs deliver and what employees desire, they feel less included at work and rate their ERGs as ineffective. Thus, ConEdison's task is to ensure alignment between employee expectations and DEI priorities, which will generate greater interest and engagement within their ERGs.

Examining self-identity and self-determination theories also provided valuable insights that helped inform my recommendations. This study discovered that social support that acknowledges their social identity makes them more likely to feel supported and connected to their organization. Likewise, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) helps to inform the study by creating opportunities to understand the importance of the relationship between intrinsic

motivation and employee well-being. This finding generated a more comprehensive understanding of the data from the survey and interview included in the study. It also identified that employees want to affirm activities that meet their essential autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs. Hence, understanding both theories in this study provided valuable insights into the proposed recommendations to maximize the potential for an enhanced ERG recruitment and engagement process.

Additionally, the proposed recommendations require alignment between ConEdison's, DE&I, and ERG leadership groups. Implementing a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PSDA) cycle could assist the organization with implementing change and lead to greater sustainability. Incorporating this strategy can allow the organization to start with small changes that minimize risks and costs associated with large-scale approaches. An incremental approach can make it easier for the organization to identify and correct issues as they implement process changes. Based on this strategy and the findings from the study, I recommend the following modifications to assist with improving the ERG recruitment and engagement strategy at ConEdison:

1. **Improve alignment between ERGs and DE&I leadership-** Some non-participants identified needing to be made aware of ERGs or a clearer understanding of their impact. These findings suggest an opportunity for the company to improve its communications with employees to ensure they know the advantages of group membership and its impact on the organization. Therefore, ConEdison can improve alignment by involving ERGs in crafting DE&I goals. ConEdison should allow ERGs to have a direct role in shaping the initiatives they will support. Likewise, leadership from both groups should actively work towards developing strategy sessions between DE&I and ERGs to help provide a clear understanding of how ERGs can support overall DE&I initiatives through increased

support and collaboration. Likewise, the company should leverage its DE&I Task Force to continue to develop its action plan by consistently examining its culture and evaluating policies and procedures by sharing the responsibilities with ERGs instead of working as an independent entity.

2. **Integration of ERG activities into employee's workday-** Other non-ERG and ERG participants in the study indicated that time was one of the most significant constraints to group membership and overall experience. Some suggested that the organization should prioritize these activities because they are outside their regular job expectations. To assist employees in improving their work/life balance, ConEdison could integrate some ERG events and activities as part of their employees' scheduled work time. Offering allocated work time can help send a clear message to employees that ERG work is work and that organizational leadership at ConEdison perceives it that way. Discovering ways to encourage employees to attend ERG events as part of their job responsibilities can send a clear message that ERGs are an essential part of the work culture at ConEdison. In addition, non-members can find ways to connect to work that is meaningful to them and eliminate the choice to sacrifice personal time for work that is not part of their job.
3. **Integrate Collaborative Problem-Solving Activities between ERG groups-** The data from the empathy interviews indicated that some employees belonging to marginalized groups feel that they cannot speak up because it may make others uncomfortable. Yet, those same groups are often made uncomfortable by insensitive remarks from others. Other members acknowledged that there is a feeling that minority employees must assimilate into the prevailing culture rather than having an environment that incorporates diverse perspectives into daily operations. To assist with creating safe spaces for



employees to share dialogue and experiences, ConEdison should develop collaborative problem-solving opportunities by connecting their diverse members of ERGs through lunch and learn and integrated speaking events sponsored by the organization, DE&I, and ERG leadership. Creating spaces for difficult but respectful conversations may provide further insight into how one's privilege and power impact others, thus creating opportunities for understanding and empathy. Finally, providing space to talk about identities and allowing employees to bring their whole selves to work can allow ConEdison to support efforts to help all employees feel welcomed, respected, and valued.

4. **Leverage Technology to Increase Outreach-** ConEdison currently relies on its intranet, email communication, networking events, and social media websites to deliver information regarding its ERGs. The lack of a central hub poses a challenge in organizing and mobilizing employees who are interested in ERGs. Thus, actions such as recruitment and discussion can be fragmented and lead to missed opportunities for engagement and improvement.

Since ConEdison has a mix of at-home, hybrid, and on-site workers, the organization must leverage connections from each group to maintain a culture of inclusion, whether employees are within or outside the physical workspace's confines. Utilizing technology to connect these members can improve networking and development opportunities while allowing members to find connections that meet their needs. Additionally, increasing the visibility of ERGs through the development of individualized and collective ERG social media pages could help ConEdison employees learn about the purpose of the groups and how they can form connections with others. Likewise, developing an internal and external website that features how ConEdison employees find a connection in their

differences and similarities and how the groups empower them to bring their whole and authentic selves to the workplace. Following this process can increase accessibility for non-ERG members and attract potential ConEdison employees by learning how they could benefit from participation and feel encouraged to join.

5. **Focus on numerous dimension demographics to better understand employees'**

**multiple identities-** Reevaluate the structures and systems to ensure that current practices are not undermining efforts. ERGs should continually adapt and learn to remain relevant and effective in their DEI efforts. Both DE&I and ERG leadership should utilize data from the diverse experiences of members to understand the value that their groups are adding to the organization by gaining an understanding of the full spectrum of humanity in their workforce, which can allow the company to improve forecasting of DE&I trends from both ERG and non-ERG populations. Utilizing this process can help arm ERGs with the information that will enable them to become more responsive to the needs of their employees.

In addition, creating opportunities to allow ERG members to engage actively in conversations surrounding intersectionality can help foster a culture of continuous learning and empathy. Providing training, resources, and opportunities for dialogue can help organizational members understand employees with different intersecting identities. For example, the LGBTQ+ ERG could actively organize events and discussions that address the unique experiences and needs of their members who are also part of other marginalized groups. Leadership is vital in setting the tone for understanding intersectionality and inclusion within the workplace. Embracing a strategy that focuses on creating diverse ERG leadership by rotating roles and responsibilities, encouraging

nomination, and developing cross-collaboration opportunities for ERG groups can help leverage the intersectional experiences of members, which promotes allyship and increases advocacy.

ERGs are valuable to employers because they can help promote inclusion, equitable policies, and advancement opportunities for employees. Additionally, they can help promote a sense of belonging and enhance corporate culture. Despite the many advantages that ERGs presented in the proposed recommendations, ConEdison must weigh some concerns as they consider when implementing a new process. For example, ConEdison must remain aware that ERGs cannot solve issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion alone. ConEdison's leadership must ensure that they align with DE&I and ERG leadership to ensure that there is a clear purpose to prevent strategic misalignment. In addition, the organization must remain intentional and detailed in their communications efforts to ensure that employees' expectations and in tact with the reality. Therefore, it is important for the company to demonstrate commitment in both their messaging and actions to create alignment with the ERG's purpose and goals.

### **Conclusion**

This study intended to evaluate the current ERG recruitment strategy at ConEdison. The rationale was to help the organization improve upon its 29% ERG participation rate, which could assist with leveraging its workforce to meet its DE&I goal of eliminating barriers to inclusion and celebrating and acknowledging the diversity of its workforce. Before I began this study, it was necessary to recognize the current strategy utilized by ConEdison to attract new members into ERG groups. In addition, the study used a Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal (PESTEL) Analysis and logic model to better understand the forces that influenced their recruitment strategy. The insights from this strategy proved effective as I

understood the organization's structure, the various forces that affect strategic leadership, and its impact on organizational members.

The study also gained insights into this phenomenon by incorporating a mixed-methods approach that relied on surveys and empathy interviews to understand the experiences of ERG and non-ERG members. The results from the study identified that non-ERG members needed more information and awareness or faced time restraints, which limited their interest in joining ERGs. Likewise, ERG members demonstrated ERGs' impact on their feeling of connection in the workplace and levels of job satisfaction. The empathy interviews conducted after the study contributed to understanding the underlying motivational factors that influenced their membership and the impact of the organizational experiences.

The project also focused on two theories to help provide a clearer understanding of the relationship between identity and group membership. Specifically, the study utilized Social Identity and Self-Determination Theory to develop a sense of this connection between ERG members and their groups. Leveraging the insights from these theories proved valuable as they aided the interpretation and understanding of the findings. The insights from the theory, in connection with the results of the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study, allowed me to develop recommendations based on the findings.

The insights from this study identified that ERGs are most effective when their employees feel included. Specifically, the findings identified that organizations must understand the importance of connecting to employees' self-identities and tap into their intrinsic motivational needs to foster a greater level of connection. ERGs are pivotal in creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment that allows employees to feel valued and safe. The connection that I formed with participants in this study helped me to identify employees want to

be heard and respected for their unique qualities, talents, and experiences that they bring into the workplace. Only when employees are allowed to be authentic will they do their best work and foster an environment of growth and learning in their organizations. I also discovered that members want to be involved in creating solutions that help develop their organization, which may require difficult conversations and the ability to connect outside of the groups they are associated with. Learning how to connect ERG groups can position their members to embrace their multiple identities while providing opportunities to grow and learn by allowing employees to understand and empathize with different people.

ConEdison has the opportunity for greater recruitment levels. Therefore, the organization needs to leverage the ERGs as a source of ideas and agents for positive change in the workplace. Generating support from DE&I and ConEdison's leadership will only help the ERGs unlock the true potential of their employees and propel the organization toward sustainable success.

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### **Appendix A: Quantitative Interview Questions**

The study will capture quantitative data by obtaining organizational demographic data, and utilize select categories from the combination of two surveys (EE-pulse survey from the University of Southern California Marshall Center for Effective Organizations (2023) and the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire to gain a clearer understanding of ERG recruitment at ConEdison. In sum, participants are allotted 25 minutes to complete a 25-question survey to provide insights into the motivational factors that impact enrollment, insights into the overall experience, and impact on their overall job satisfaction based on ERG engagement.

The first section of the survey consists of eight demographic questions to provide background data on ERG members, such as ERG group affiliation, service time, and nature of involvement. Next, the survey utilizes a 5- point Likert scale from the USC EE Pulse Survey to acquire quantitative data from 14 questions that focus on the five ERG recruitment subscales, which measure attributes that influence employee expectations for ERG membership, including Expanding Network, Career Development, Volunteerism, Sense of Belonging, and Acting as a Mentor. The final three survey questions incorporate the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire-- Job Satisfaction Subscale (MOAQ-JSS; Cammann et al., 1979) to identify job satisfaction levels based on ERG members' experience. The MOAQ-JSS consists of three items that measure the affective components of overall job satisfaction. The survey utilizes a six-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "Disagree Very Much" to (7) "Agree Very Much." Below is a sample of the proposed quantitative survey questions for this study.

**1. Do you currently participate in an ERG at ConEdison?**

Yes

No

**2. If no, please share the reasons why you have never considered joining an ERG at**

**ConEdison. Please select the following reasons that apply.**

Lack of Awareness

Not enough time

Not interested in group activities

Not enough information

- Lack of power to effect change within the company
- Not sure where I fit in
- Too much work
- Other. Please explain

**3. If yes, which of the following Employee Resource Groups do you belong to?**

**If no, please share the reasons why you have never considered joining an ERG at ConEdison. Please rank the following reasons based on your organizational experience.**

- APACE (Asian Professional Alliance of ConEdison)
- Build (Black United in Leadership and Development)
- CapeABLE
- CLARO Hispanic Heritage (Cultivating Leadership and Actively Realizing Opportunities)
- Emerald Society (Irish Heritage)
- JADE
- LGBTQ+
- Moms ON IT/Dads Matter
- Veterans of ConEdison

WOCE (Women of ConEdison)

**4. Do you belong to multiple ERG Groups?**

Yes

No

**3a. If yes, what ERG do you spend the majority of your time with?**

APACE (Asian Professional Alliance of ConEdison)

Build (Black United in Leadership and Development)

CapeABLE

CLARO Hispanic Heritage (Cultivating Leadership and Actively Realizing Opportunities)

Emerald Society (Irish Heritage)

JADE

LGBTQ+

Moms ON IT/Dads Matter

Veterans of ConEdison

WOCE (Women of ConEdison)

**5. Length of employment at ConEdison?**

0-1 years

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-9 years

10 years and over

**6. Please describe the nature of your involvement with your primary ERG:**

I am an inactive member

I enjoy reading ERG news and updates, but generally do not attend events



- I attend some events hosted by the ERG
- I attend most events hosted by the ERG
- I participate in organizing ERG events and initiatives
- I “lead the charge” in organizing ERG events and initiatives

**7. How many hours per month do you spend, on average, focused on your ERG (working for the ERG?)**

- 0-3 hours
- 3-6 hours
- 6-9 hours
- 10-12 hours
- 12 or more hours

**ERG Member Experience**

**Rate the impact your ERG has on the following:**

- 1- Very Low Impact**
- 2- Low Impact**
- 3- Moderate Impact**
- 4- High Impact**
- 5- Very High Impact**

- 8. The impact my ERG has on my upward mobility within the company
- 9. The impact my ERG has on recruiting and selection of non-ERG members
- 10. The impact my ERG has on networking inside the company
- 11. The impact my ERG has on the ability to network with those outside of the company
- 12. The impact my ERG has on making this a great place to work for me
- 13. The impact my ERG has on connecting with causes that mean the most to me
- 14. The impact my ERG has on creating a company environment that is inclusive

15. The impact my ERG has on how outsiders view the culture of the company
16. The impact my ERG has on helping me be more innovative in my job
17. The impact my ERG has on creating a high-performance business environment
18. The impact my ERG has on my potential for career growth
19. The impact my ERG has on my ability to serve as a mentor
20. The impact my ERG has on my sense of happiness at work
21. The impact my ERG has on making my work meaningful

### **Job Satisfaction**

**Rate your experience based on the following criteria:**

- 1- Disagree Very Much**
- 2- Disagree Moderately**
- 3- Disagree Slightly**
- 4- Neither Agree or Disagree**
- 5- Agree Slightly**
- 6- Agree Moderately**
- 7- Agree Very Much**

22. In general, membership in an ERG does not impact my dislike for my job
23. All in all, ERG membership has made my job satisfying
24. In general, ERG membership makes me like working here

## **Appendix B: Qualitative Data Collection**

### **Empathy Interview Questions**

Q1. How did you learn about ERGs and what is the most important factor that influenced your decision to join?

Q2. How would you describe your overall experience as an ERG member?

Q3. What do you hope to get out of your experience as an ERG member? Describe how it is meeting or not meeting your expectations?

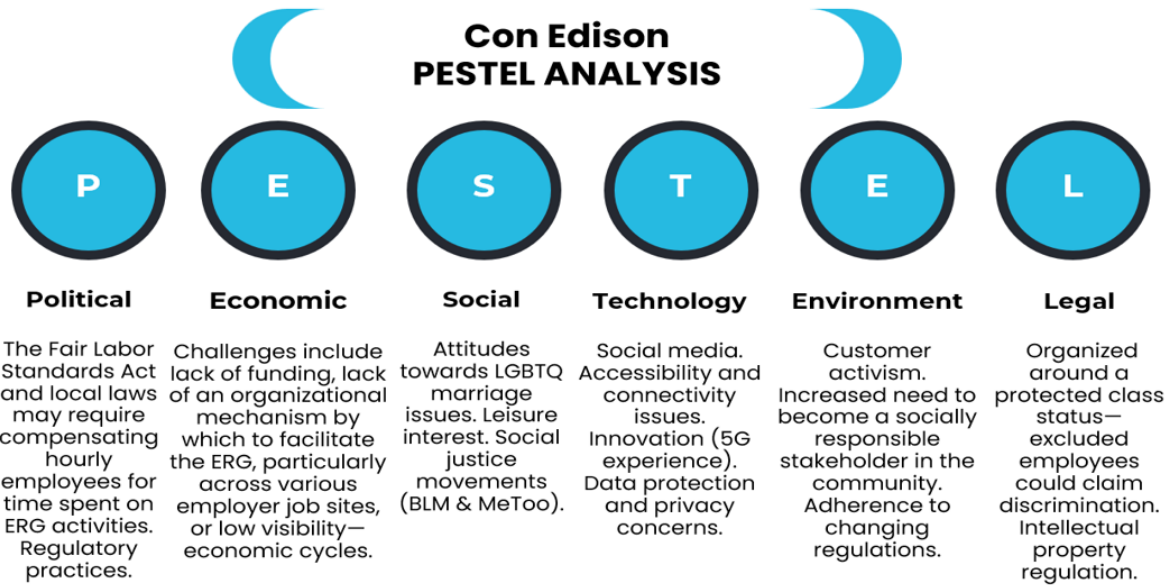
Q4. What is your favorite ERG activity/program/initiative you participated in within the last 12 months and why?

Q5. What was your least favorite ERG activity/program/initiative you participated in within the last 12 months and why?

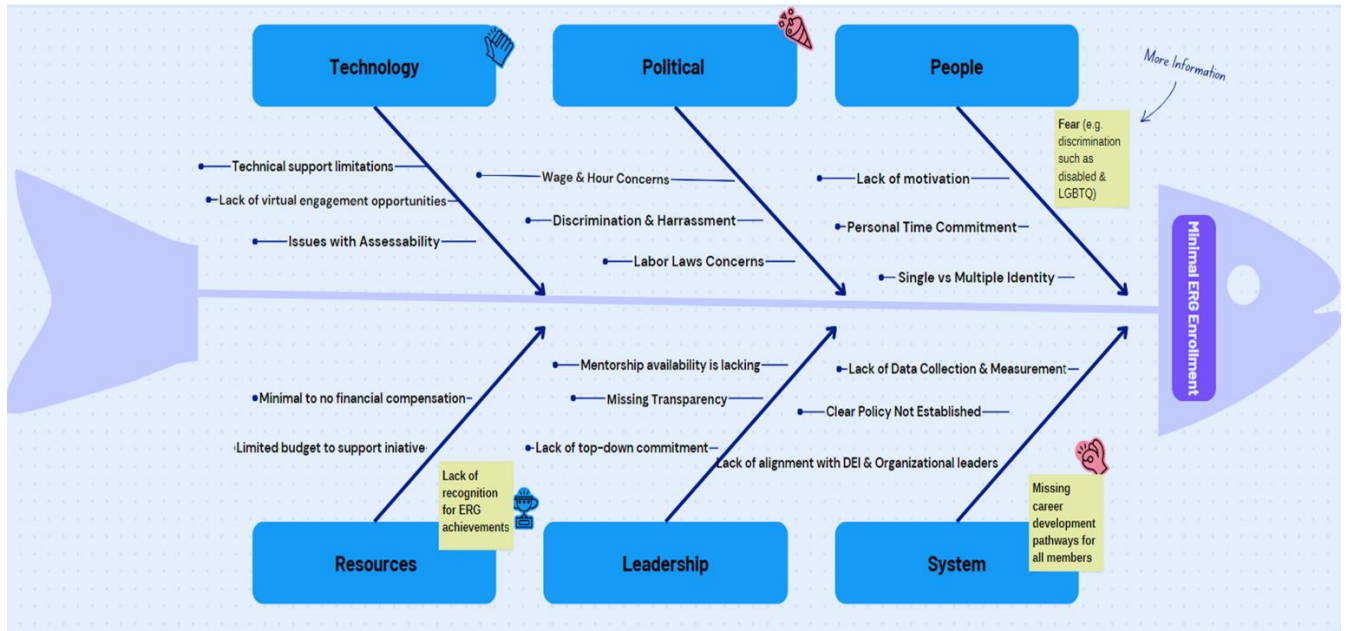
Q6. What topics would you like to see covered in a future activity/program/initiative?

Q7. Would you recommend joining an ERG to other organizational members? Why or why not?

### Appendix C: PESTEL Analysis



### Appendix D: Fishbone Diagram



Appendix E: Revised Logic Model



Con Edison ERG Recruitment Revised Logic Model

