Creating More LGBTQ+ Inclusive Programs: A Resource

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AN OPENING STATEMENT AND EXPLANATION

Projects and programs are both great ways for Community Leagues to engage their members and their neighborhoods. Whether that is through sport programs for children and youth or projects to improve and enhance the community, these two terms cover a lot of ground. Covering all that ground means a variety of groups of community members will end up interacting and engaging with your program or project. These groups could be youth, seniors, single parents, First Nations, recent immigrants, refugees, and ethnic minorities. Each of these unique groups come with their own challenges and characteristics that are important to keep in mind when developing a project or a program, both in general and if it's targeted at a group. This resource will aim to address the LGBTQ+ community and how to develop projects or programs that are more inclusive and respectful of said community.

Table of Contents

This table of contents can help guide your search for information relevant to you!

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This resource will be broken down into four parts. The first part will address key terms and definitions related to the LGBTQ+ community to reduce confusion over any of said terms being used later. The second part will provide general tips and advice that would be generally applicable in all areas while the third and fourth sections will address sport programs and employee/volunteer environments respectively. Included at the end will be sources accessed in order to create this resource.

The explanation for this setup and the two specific sections for sport and employee's stems from the nature of those situations that many LGBTQ+ people have to struggle with. In terms of the workplace, a 2014 study by Pride at Work Canada found 30% of LGBTQ+ respondents felt they experienced discrimination in the workplace, compared to just 2.9% of the general population. As well, 4.1% of LGBTQ+ respondents reported daily discrimination compared to just to 0.8% of the general population. That type of extreme difference demands special attention in at least someway.

For sports the situation is arguably worse, with reports stating that 81% of respondents witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports, 84% of gay men and 88% of lesbians had received verbal slurs such as "faggot" or "dyke", and 73% of respondents believe youth team sports are not welcoming or safe for lesbian, gay or bisexual people. That is not including transgender people who are at risk of much higher rates of prejudice and transphobia. The breadth of this issue means that again specific attention should in someway be devoted to combating the misinformation, beliefs, and structures that contribute to these high rates of discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia.

DID YOU KNOW?
"30% of LGBTQ+ respondents feel that they experienced discrimination in the workplace compare to 2.9% of the general population."

DID YOU KNOW?
"84% of gay men and 88% of lesbians surveyed had received verbal slurs"

The information laid out in the second, third and fourth sections is not exclusive to just those areas. Each has information that could be applied in numerous ways to other projects and programs and for a full understanding of ways to create more LGBTQ+ friendly programs it is recommend reading all sections in their entirety. This document is by no means exhaustive in terms of its subject matter, so if there is an interest in more in-depth research the sources listed at the end would be an excellent place to begin.

LGBTQ+ KEY TERMS

Sex:
- Sex refers to the biological differences between males and females, such as the genitalia, genetic differences, and sex characteristics. This is different/separate from an individual's gender or gender identity.

Gender Identity (How someone feels):
- Gender identity refers to one's most inner sense of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither. This is how someone would perceive themselves and what they would call themselves. This is different/separate from an individual's sex.

Gender Expression (How someone looks and acts):
- Gender expression refers to how someone expresses or shows their gender identity. Gender expression is done using behavior, clothing, hairstyle or voice, and it may or may not conform to social norms regarding typically masculine or feminine behavior.

Cisgender:
- Cisgender refers to when an individual's gender identity aligns with the gender they were assigned at birth. This term is not a slur.

Transgender:
- Transgender refers to when an individual's gender identity does not align with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Genderqueer/Non-binary:
- A catch all term referring to a gender identity that is not exclusively masculine or feminine, or rather falls outside of the gender binary. This includes non-binary, gender non-conforming and other gender identities.

LGBTQ+ KEY TERMS CONT.

Sexual Orientation/Sexuality:
- This refers to who someone is attracted to and who they feel drawn to romantically, emotionally, and sexually. This exists along a continuum, rather than simply just homosexual or heterosexual.

Homosexuality:
- Romantic and/or sexual attraction towards someone of the same gender

Bisexuality:
- Romantic and/or sexual attraction towards more than one gender. This exists on a continuum and is not a simple 50/50 split of attraction between any two genders.

Two-Spirit:
- Two-spirit is a term used by some Indigenous people that describes their sexual, gender, and/or spiritual identity. It can refer to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit. Two Spirit is umbrella term and encompass same-sex attraction and a wide variety of gender differences and identities.

Homophobia:
- Homophobia refers to fear, hatred, discomfort with, or mistrust of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual

Transphobia:
- Transphobia refers to fear, hatred, discomfort with, or mistrust of people who are transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming.

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General Advice to Make Projects More Inclusive of the LGBTQ+ Community:

The use of gender-neutral language :
Gender neutral language refers to language that does not make assumptions about an individual's gender nor ascribes a gender to said individual. Examples of this would be referring to a romantic partner as 'partner' rather than boyfriend/husband or girlfriend/wife. Another example is referring to people using gender neutral pronouns if their preferred pronouns are not known. These would be 'they/them' pronouns, not he/she or his/hers. While use of they/them pronouns can be at first difficult, after a bit of practice it can start to come naturally.

Acknowledge and use an individual's chosen name and pronouns, no matter if there has or has not been a legal change :
If an individual request that you call them by a specific name or use a specific set of pronouns, you should do so as it is the respectful thing to do so. Even if legal documents do not align with the request names/pronouns, complying with this request is one of the best ways to be supportive. Alternatively, the action of not complying with this kind of request and calling the individual by a different name or a set of pronouns then requested, would be homophobic and or/transphobic.

Instead of asking someone to identify their sex, ask instead for them to identify their gender identity:
If asking for this can give a list of options though this can create some possible issues as someone's identity may not be listed. A list of options understands with would be as follows: Girl/Woman, Boy/Man, Non-Binary/Genderqueer, Not covered by these options, and Prefer not to say. As well it can be left as a blank that someone can fill in with their identity. If a person chooses to not say their identity, then there should be no punishment or consequences for them.

Aim to only ask questions about a person's gender identity and/or expression when it is critically important to the relevant project or program:
As note, this should not stop anyone from politely asking about pronouns or gender identity to be respectful or if it is needed. However, asking to satisfy personnel curiosity can be mildly intrusive and rude.

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Do not share information about transgender or non-binary people without their consent:
This information would include their gender identity or gender expression, transition status or related health information. This should be done to protect them from being targeted or forcibly outed against their will.

Do not use slurs:
Even if they are slang or not aimed to be offensive or homophobic/transphobic, slurs have a history and connotation to specifically target, degrade and attack the LGBTQ+ community. A short example list of slurs not to use would be "tranny", "dyke", "fag", "shemale" and "he-she".

Do not ask about certain body parts, areas of the body, or status of medical transition:
It's disrespectful and often uncomfortable for people to be asked about personnel areas of the body, simply to satisfy someone else's curiosity. As well, it is best to avoid asking questions about surgeries and status of transition as again this is a personnel matter. A question to avoid in general is 'Have you had "The Surgery"?'.

Share policy and training staff, volunteers, and generally all those involved:
If possible aim to have your staff (or organization depending on the size) informed and educated about the information presented above, as well as other information that could be relevant. This can reduce numerous issues that could arise.

After a project or later in a program, review operations to see if any issues have arisen:
If a problem has arisen, aim to address it fairly and quickly

If possible, avoid engaging with or bringing on someone with a known history of intolerance towards the LGBTQ+ community:
People should be given a chance to educate themselves or be educated but not in a setting that could result in problems or at the cost of the service being provided. If it is a known factor ahead of time, then it would be work considering not bringing such a person onto the project or program.

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Specific to Sport Advice

Make the policy for involvement for the level of competition or seriousness the participants would be at involved in:
Individuals should be allowed to compete and participate in the gender they identify as and should not be required to disclose more than what would be required by a cisgender athlete. In addition to this there should not be a requirement for hormone replacement therapy among trans athletes unless it is for very high levels of competition.

Do not discriminate involvement or separation based off speculative or personnel knowledge. Use evidence based, considerably research info to make decisions:

- An example of this would be the perception of trans female athletes (those who are transitioning from male-to-female) and their ability to perform in sport.
  - Trans female athletes are often perceived as being always more skilled, stronger, and bigger than their cisgender teammates and opponents. The reality is however, overlap in skill and performance in sports among males and females and the wide variance within each gender are important considerations.
  - Another perception is that of testosterone and the competitive edge that it gives. However recent studies have shown no significant link between testosterone and performance for elite female. Furthermore, while participants in men's sport outperform participants in women's sport on average, current science is unable to explain why this is the case.

- Continuing with the example of trans female athletes, there is often a worry that trans female athletes are really just male athletes seeking an "easier" playing field, despite their affirmed gender identity or expression as girls or women:
  - In reality the gender identity and expression of a trans female athlete is just as intrinsic and deeply rooted as a cisgender female athlete. As well the process and decision to acknowledge this identity is not a simple one nor one taken lightly and is not something done as a snap decision. There have been no reported cases of a male athlete attempting to pass themselves off as a trans female athlete in order to win or to be more successful.

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If they are available, consider options and amenities that would be respectful and helpful for trans people:
These sorts of amenities would include gender neutral bathrooms and private changing areas. If a trans athlete chooses to use the change room/bathroom in line with their identity, this is not a cause for concern. There are virtually no examples of trans people being predatory in change rooms/bathrooms, while there is a great deal of evidence showing that trans people are at high risk of being targeted and harassed in change rooms/bathrooms.

Specific to Employees/Volunteers Advice

The dress code for both workplace and formal events should not be gender specific and should instead be respectful of different identities and expressions:

- An example of what to avoid would be "men wear collared shirts and dress pants, women wear dresses". An example of what to do would be "dress appropriately formal for this style of event"

- Another way of doing this would be to have a dress code that is uniform across all genders, thus eliminating the chance for an issue to arise.

Aim to facilitate a culture of respect and inclusivity towards the LGBTQ+ community:
Support organizations that advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, present symbols of acceptance when possible, and have explicit protection for the community.

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Resources for Training:

Often times training for LGBTQ+ inclusivity can be costly or difficult to organize depending on location and time. Fortunately, there are options available online that can solve those issues. Personnel research is important with this as different groups and communities may require different types or levels of training. However here are two good free options that can be found online or through the provide links.

GBA+ Training:
- GBA+ Training is free through the Government of Canada and provides an analytical process of how minority groups are affected by policies, programs and initiatives. As well it provides strong foundational knowledge about different minority groups and engages multiple identity factors for well rounded training.

- Link: https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/course-cours-en.html

Self-Guided Foundational Safe Zone Training:
- The Safe Zone's Foundational Training is specifically LGBTQ+ focused and aims to address gaps and knowledge that may be present when addressing the LGBTQ+ community. It allows for the exploration of various identities and experiences of those who identify as such.

- Link: https://thesafezoneproject.com/courses/self-guided-foundational-safe-zone-training/

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