

Working with Pride: Understanding Best Practices in LGBTQ+ Inclusion & the Power of Your Story

Spring 2025 Toolkit



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Purpose

Creating inclusive and respectful workplaces starts with understanding the policies and protections that support LGBTQ+ employees. This guide is designed to help you navigate key workplace practices—from non-discrimination policies and healthcare benefits to employee resource groups and inclusive leadership. Whether you're just starting your career or looking to better understand your rights and resources, this is a practical starting point for feeling informed, supported, and confident at work.

Know Your Rights Resources:

- [MAP - Movement Advancement Project \(Non-discrimination Laws\)](#)
- [Lambda Legal - Laws That Protect You](#)
- [A4TE - Advocates for Trans Equality \(Know Your Rights\)](#)
- [ACLU - LGBTQ+ Know Your Rights](#)

LGBTQ+ Job Seekers: Know What to Look for in an Inclusive Employer

For over two decades, HRC's Corporate Equality Index has set the national benchmark for LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion. Whether you're just starting your career or looking for your next opportunity, you deserve to work somewhere that respects and affirms who you are. This checklist, rooted in the four pillars of the CEI, offers key questions and indicators to help you evaluate whether a company will genuinely support your identity—on paper and in practice.

Visit the Corporate Equality Index's [**Employer Search Tool**](#) to review companies' scores in the most recent CEI report.



Workplace Protections

Look for a non-discrimination policy that explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

Ask This:

- Is sexual orientation and gender identity specifically included in your non-discrimination policy?
- Where can I find the company's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statement?
- Are employees informed about the non-discrimination standards at this company?

Inclusive Benefits

Inclusive benefits show that a company supports LGBTQ+ employees and their families equitably. Don't assume benefits are automatically inclusive, be sure to look for:

- Equal health benefits for spouses and domestic partners.
- Family-building benefits for all couples.
- Transgender-inclusive healthcare.
- A clear health benefits guide that highlights LGBTQ+ coverage.

Ask This:

- Are domestic partners eligible for the same benefits as spouses?
- Does your health plan include gender-affirming care?
- Do you provide a benefits guide that details LGBTQ+-inclusive services?

Inclusive Culture

Assess whether a company has additional inclusive practices that welcome and affirm LGBTQ+ employees.

Ask this:

- What guidelines do you have in place to support employees transitioning on the job?
- What data is collected about LGBTQ+ folks and how does that data affect the culture at this company?
- Does your company have an LGBTQ+ ERG group for LGBTQ+ members and allies?

External Engagement & Accountability

Check if the company walks the talk externally as well as internally. Look for:

- LGBTQ+-inclusive recruiting, advertising, or philanthropy.
- Supplier diversity that includes LGBTQ+-owned businesses.
- Donation policies that align with LGBTQ+ values.

Ask This:

- Does the company support or partner with LGBTQ+ organizations?
- Are there inclusive standards for suppliers and donations?

Tips for LGBTQ+ Job Seekers: Navigating Your Job Search with Confidence

While finding an inclusive employer is essential, deciding how and when to share your identity during the job search is deeply personal. There's no right or wrong way—only what feels safe and authentic to you. The tips below are designed to support your confidence, agency, and safety as you navigate resumes, applications, and interviews. Use this guidance to make informed choices that align with your values, goals, and sense of self.

> Know Your Values

Before you apply, ask yourself:

- *How important is it to be out at work?*
- *Do I want to live in a place with strong LGBTQ+ protections?*
- *Am I looking for a job that aligns with my identity and values?*



> Things to Consider Before Sharing

Ask yourself these questions to help you decide:

- *Do I feel safe and supported sharing this part of myself at work?*
- *Is this job or company known for being inclusive and respectful?*
- *Am I applying to a workplace where my identity might be valued or even an asset (like LGBTQ+ organizations, youth centers, or advocacy groups)?*
- *Will sharing this help explain my background, leadership, or passion for the role?*

You might feel proud to show how your experiences have shaped you—and that's powerful. But if you don't feel safe or ready, that's okay too.

> Finding Safe and Affirming Workplaces

Look for non-discrimination policies, inclusive language in job postings, LGBTQ+ ERGs, and trans-inclusive benefits.

Companies understand that recruitment starts long before you're hired. Look for signs on the company's career page that may share a company is inclusive. Look for phrases like:

- "All genders welcome"
- "Equal Opportunity Employer including LGBTQ+ individuals"
- Benefits that include hormone therapy, transition support, or domestic partner coverage

> Thinking About Sharing Your Identity

Decide if, how, and when to share your sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

When applying for a job, **you get to decide how much of yourself to share**—especially when it comes to your identity and how you express it. Some people feel proud and safe sharing parts of who they are in their resume or cover letter. Others may not feel ready, or may worry about how an employer will react.

There's no "right" or "wrong" choice—**you get to decide what's best for you.**

Sharing information about yourself

On Your Resume

Include your pronouns on your resume (or email signature) if you're worried about being misgendered.

If you've done leadership, volunteer, or community work that's connected to your identity, you can choose to include it like any other experience.

Examples of inclusive experiences to list:

- Volunteer, Trans Youth Support Group
- Peer Educator, Queer & Trans Student Alliance
- Organizer, Pride Month Events – City Community Center

Tip: Focus on what you did, not just the group name.

In your Cover Letter

A cover letter is where you tell your story. If your identity connects to your passion, career goals, or leadership experience, it can be powerful to include.

Example cover letter text:

“As someone who has helped build affirming spaces for queer and trans young people, I understand how important it is for everyone to feel safe, seen, and respected. That's why I'm excited to apply for this role.”

Tip: Keep the focus on what you bring to the job—your values, experience, and skills.

On Job Application Forms


Some applications ask about gender identity or sexual orientation. Here's what to know:

- You don't have to answer if you don't want to.
- Look for words like “optional” or “for data purposes only.”
- These questions are sometimes used to help companies track diversity—but they shouldn't affect hiring decisions.

Tip: If the options on the form don't reflect who you are, it's okay to skip the question or choose “Prefer not to say.”

Interview Tips for Trans and Nonbinary Job Seekers

Just like your resume, you will need to consider how out you want to be during the interview – both in how you answer questions about yourself and also how you ask questions about the workplace. If you've listed LGBTQ+ organizations on your resume, you should be prepared to discuss how that involvement prepared you for the job opening.



If you plan on being out in your interview you could use the information you've learned from researching the company (e.g., non-discrimination policies, existence of an LGBTQ+ employee resource group , etc.) to show that you are aware of the company's LGBTQ+ positions. You can also ask questions about LGBTQ+ issues directly or indirectly – for example, “What benefits do you offer same-sex partners?” or “How do you show your commitment to diversity?”

How should I dress? What you wear should depend on the industry in which you are interviewing. For most workplaces, dressing “professionally” in a business suit is appropriate. In other workplaces slacks, a jacket and tie, a dress or a skirt and blouse is sufficient. Most employers can have gender-based dress codes as long as they are not unduly burdensome to employees of a particular gender.

If you are transgender, you should dress in the attire that is consistent with your gender identity. Once you have been hired, keep in mind that there are some laws that protect transgender people from being required to dress in a way that is inconsistent with their gender identity, but it depends on where one lives.

Trust Yourself

You get to decide what parts of yourself to share during the hiring process. Your experience and identity have value, no matter what. You deserve to work somewhere that sees your full self as a strength—not a risk.

LGBTQ+ Employees: Storytelling in the Workplace

The following section is intended to foster a process of reflection on how to tell your story. Using your voice to support LGBTQ+ inclusion is a powerful act inside and outside of the workplace. Whether you're sharing your personal journey or standing in solidarity as an ally, your story can inspire change, build empathy, and influence decisions. Here's how to shape your message for maximum impact:



Know Your Audience and Tailor Your Message

Understanding who you're speaking to—whether it's a coworker, executive, policymaker, or community member—helps you connect more effectively.

- **Appeal to Reason:** Highlight shared goals like workplace productivity, innovation, or employee well-being. For example, explain how inclusive policies improve retention and morale, or how diverse teams drive better business outcomes.
- **Appeal to Emotion:** Share personal or observed experiences that humanize the impact of inclusion—or the harm of exclusion. Talk about the joy of being able to bring your full self to work, or the pain of hiding who you are. Emotion builds empathy.
- **Appeal to Authority and Credibility:** If you're respected in your field or have leadership experience, use that credibility to elevate your message. You can also amplify voices by aligning with respected allies or ERG (Employee Resource Group) leaders.

Root Your Message in Universal Values

When speaking to those who may not yet be fully supportive of LGBTQ+ equality, focus on universal values:

- **Dignity and Respect:**
 - “We don’t have to be the same to treat each other with dignity. Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected at work.”
- **Fairness and Freedom:**
 - “We all want the freedom to be ourselves without fear. That’s not just an LGBTQ+ issue—it’s a human one.”
- **Kindness and Community:**
 - “No one should be targeted just for being who they are. We need more compassion and less division.”

Focus on Solutions and Make a Clear Ask

Whether you're speaking to a manager, HR leader, or elected official, be specific about what you want them to do:

In the Workplace:

- Ask for inclusive policies, pronoun options in systems, participate in the CEI, or support for Pride events. Tie your request to company values or inclusion goals.

In the Community or with Lawmakers:

- Ask for support on specific legislation, or simply for a public statement of support. If they already support LGBTQ+ rights, thank them and encourage them to stay vocal and engaged.



Storytelling Reflection Questions

With all of that in mind, read through and answer the following questions. After that, start to piece together your story and how you want to tell it. *Remember: we don't have just one story and/or one way of telling it.*

Authentic Self/Out at Work:

What does being your authentic self mean to you? In a professional context?

How has your journey to authenticity evolved throughout your career?

How has being your authentic self at work positively impacted your professional life?

Can you share an example of when being authentic led to a positive outcome at work?

What factors influenced your decision to come out (or not) in your workplace?

How did your company's policies and culture impact your coming out experience?



Supportive Work Environment:

Describe a time when your workplace demonstrated exceptional support for LGBTQ+ employees. How did this support affect your job satisfaction and productivity?

Workplace Challenges:

Can you share an instance where you faced or witnessed a lack of support or faced an undesired experience as an LGBTQ+ employee? What specific actions could your employer or colleagues have taken to address the situation?

Allyship in Action:

When have you seen effective allyship demonstrated in your workplace?

When was a time that you demonstrated allyship to the LGBTQ+ community in the workplace?

What does allyship mean to you?



Personal Assessment of Current Workplace Environment:

How inclusive is your current workplace for LGBTQ+ employees?

How would you rate your company currently in regards to how it does (or doesn't) support LGBTQ+ employees?

Future Workplace Environment:

What LGBTQ+ inclusive initiatives would you like to see implemented in your workplace?

What changes would make you feel more valued and respected as an LGBTQ+ employee?

How do you envision an ideal LGBTQ+-inclusive work environment?

Putting Your Story Together

Take the highlights or high points of from each section above to write out your story:

[illegible]

Common Ways To Share Your Story: Internally

Identify Stakeholders and Decision Makers: To achieve change at your organization, identifying the parties responsible for implementing the policies is essential. Below are a list of key departments in a workplace to share your story with:

ERGs

Employee Resource Group leaders (and their executive sponsors) know employees' needs, goals, and the impact of public policy at work and at home. Your insights are invaluable to your employer. Start here.

HR

HR leaders are intimately aware of and responsible for employees' ability to thrive in the workplace. They will be key stakeholders in demonstrating both the impact and potential benefits to employees of advancing LGBTQ+ equality outside of the workplace.

DEIB

The teams leading and supporting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging initiatives in the organization should be allies in your efforts. That team should also have a seat at the table for any advocacy discussions, both internal and external.

Corp. Comms

These teams provide branding, engagement, and brand perception management targeted toward various stakeholder communities. Given the attention of brand engagement with the LGBTQ+ community during Pride and year-round, they are important internal stakeholders.

Gov. Affairs & Policy Leaders

Your organization's government affairs and policy leaders are responsible for monitoring and advancing policies that benefit the business and its ability to operate and grow, create an optimal environment to recruit and retain talent, and reduce risk. While these leaders are often focused on business-specific issues, broader social issues have a real and measurable impact on the inputs of their analysis. Employees should ensure the company's government affairs team communicates the organization's goals, priorities, and outcomes to employees and creates space for dialogue when possible.

General Counsel

The legal authority for the organization is often at the center of decisions to minimize risk and ensure an optimal environment for the growth and productivity of a business. Ensuring the general counsel understands the risks associated with discrimination and the benefits of pro-equality policies will ensure that risk assessment includes a full picture of harm and benefits.

The CFO

As the senior advisor responsible for the financial health and growth of the business, ensure the CFO understands the impacts on business operations, the bottom line, and the company's future financial health.

The CEO

With the CEO and all senior executives, share your personal story and explain how you and your family are impacted—for good or bad. This awareness and buy-in will be critical to securing and sustaining support.

Common Ways To Share Your Story: Externally

Identify Audiences and Platforms: To achieve change outside your organization, identifying the key audiences that need to hear your story, your truth as well. Think about how you can use social media and other forms of communication to share your Story far and wide. Below you will find ways to share your story through HRC:

Your Voice. Your Impact. Your Movement

Scan the QR code to learn how HRC uplifts stories to drive change in our communities and to share your own story with us.

Why Your Story is Worth Sharing

- **Your Story Can Change Heart & Minds-** Facts inform, but stories transform. When people hear real experiences, they see issues in a new light.
- **Your Story Drives Action-** Policymakers and communities listen when we use our voices to bring issues to life. Sharing your truth can shape history.
- **Your Story Connects Us to One Another-** Personal stories create empathy, break down stereotypes, and bring people together across differences.
- **No One Else Can Tell Your Story-** Your story is unique and impactful. Sharing your journey helps others feel seen, supported, and can empower them to do the same.



Visit hrc.im/outreach to learn more and to share your story.

Conclusion

Working with Pride and sharing your Story is essential to empower yourself and others to enact positive change for society. It is a noble goal that requires both courage and thoughtfulness. Recognize your sphere of influence and seek to expand it by bringing in allies. Consider the tools of persuasion and bring the right people to the table to make your case. Both individuals and employers play an important role in advocacy, and working together will ensure we achieve fully-lived equality for all LGBTQ+ people, no matter where they live and work. Stay informed at hrc.org.

