



Working with Pride Toolkit:

*Building LGBTQ+ Inclusive
Workplaces Through Best
Practices and Storytelling*

Employee Toolkit 2026



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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 What to Look For: Inclusive Employer

For over two decades, HRC's national Corporate Equality Index has served as the 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.

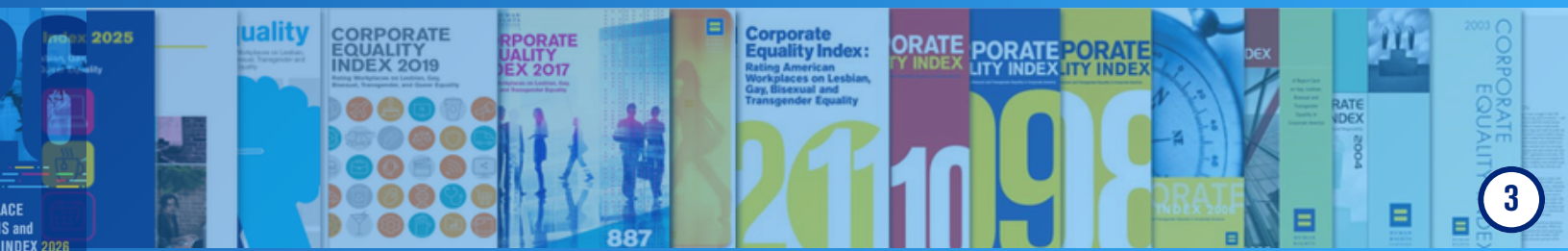
Visit the Corporate Equality Index's [Employer Search Tool](#) to review companies' scores in the most recent CEI report.

Workplace
Protections

Inclusive
Benefits

Inclusive
Culture

External
Engagement &
Accountability



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.

Ask This:

- Does the company support or partner with LGBTQ+ organizations?
- Are there inclusive standards for suppliers and donations?
- What outreach does the company do to the LGBTQ+ community as applicants (or as consumers)?

The Power of Storytelling in the Workplace

Using your voice to support LGBTQ+ inclusion is a powerful act both inside and outside of the workplace. Whether you are sharing your personal journey or standing in solidarity as an ally, your story can inspire change, build empathy, and influence decisions. Stories help people see one another more fully, connecting policies and principles to real human lives. They remind us that equality is not abstract- it is experienced, personal, and deeply felt.

Facts can inform, but stories transform. They open hearts, shift perspectives, and help us imagine something better together. In times of change, storytelling has always been a catalyst for progress, helping people move from awareness to understanding, and from understanding to action. That is why storytelling sits at the heart of this work and at the heart of building workplaces rooted in dignity, fairness, and belonging for all.

Today, you will begin to build your personal story and learn practical guidance on how and where to share it. This process is not about crafting a perfect message or convincing everyone to agree. It is about telling true stories; stories that invite reflection, create connection, and make space for change. You will explore how to use your voice with intention, honoring both your lived experience and your sphere of influence.

You are also invited to join HRC's nationwide effort to engage one million LGBTQ+ people and allies to share their stories and take action. Together, these stories help shift narratives, expand public support, and drive changes that impact workplaces and communities far beyond our own.

Throughout this workbook, you will learn how to shape your message for maximum impact by:

Know Your Audience

Tailor Your Message

Root Your Message in Universal Values

Focus on Common Solutions

Make a Clear Ask

How To Shape Your Message

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 and with Stakeholders:

- 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.

Framework for Storytelling

The following sections are intended to foster a thoughtful process of reflection helping you identify meaningful moments from your own experience and understand how to share them in ways that resonate. You will be introduced to the storytelling framework adapted for HRC's Voices for Equality trainings, which have been delivered in workplaces and communities across the country. Through our framework for storytelling, it guides you from personal experience, to a shared vision of the future, and finally to an invitation for others to act alongside you.

Also, you will be guided through a simple but powerful framework: I, WE, YOU.

I

Invites you to reflect on your personal past—what you have seen, felt, and learned, and how those experiences shaped your understanding of inclusion and equality.

We

Asks you to dream forward, to paint a picture of the future we are building together: workplaces where everyone can show up as their authentic selves, communities rooted in belonging, and systems that reflect equality for all LGBTQ+ people.

You

Encourages you to move from story to action—inviting your audience to reflect, to learn, and to take meaningful steps alongside you.

Storytelling is not a one-time act. It is a practice that evolves as we do. You will have choices at every step- what to share, how to share it, and where it feels most impactful or appropriate to do so. No one else can tell your story the way you can, and when you choose to use your voice, you help make equality feel not only possible, but necessary.

Your story has power. When shared with care and intention, it can change hearts, influence decisions, and help bring the future we are dreaming of one rooted in equality for all closer to reality.

Current Workplace Environment:

- Describe a time when your workplace demonstrated exceptional support for LGBTQ+ employees. How did this support affect your job satisfaction and productivity?
- How do you envision an ideal LGBTQ+-inclusive work environment?
- 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 experienced effective LGBTQ+ allyship in the workplace directly or indirectly?
- What does LGBTQ+ allyship mean to you?

Reflection helps bring clarity to your experiences. Storytelling helps create change. The insights you've just uncovered about belonging and inclusion can help humanize workplace policies and give stakeholders a deeper understanding of how workplace decisions impact LGBTQ+ workers in real time.

Now you're ready to begin shaping your story using the **I, We, You Framework** on the next page. This approach will help you connect your personal perspective to broader shared experiences and invite others into meaningful action.

Pulling Your Story Together

Here, at HRC, we use the I - WE- YOU storytelling framework:

I – MY PAST

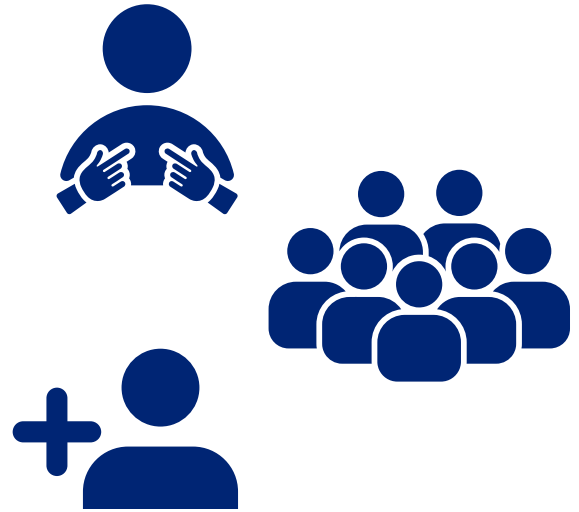
Sharing individual past experiences that built your understanding of LGBTQ+ people & issues

WE – OUR FUTURE

Painting a collective future that we are all fighting for in the LGBTQ+ equality movement

YOU – YOUR TURN

Asking your audience to tell their story and encourage a call to action for the LGBTQ+ equality



THE “I” - PERSONAL PAST STORIES

Impact Stories

- Harm, Benefit, Stakes (pro-/anti-LGBTQ+, potential policy)
- Showed you the impact of LGBTQ+ in-/exclusion

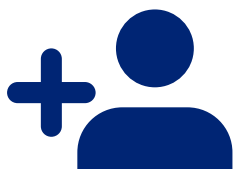


Journey Stories

- Acceptance, Allyship, Advocacy (personal support, interpersonal support, public support)
- Highlight journeys towards LGBTQ+ support

Portrait Stories

- Humanizing Details, Community Connections, Unique Intersections
- Humanize and contextualizing LGBTQ+ people



THE “YOU” - YOUR TURN NOW!

Who is your audience? What is your goal?

Reference “Common Ways to Share Your Story” for internal workplace audience(s).

Encourage individuals who aren’t with us yet to see things from a different perspective

- Why is it particularly urgent to take action in this moment?
- What can they do now to help make a change or difference?

Encourage existing allies and supporters to take a new or greater action

- What case would you make to change the audiences thinking on this subject?
- How can you invite them towards greater allyship?

Now try putting it all together:

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

My name is _____ and my pronouns are / /

I'm a [Identities]



[Personal Story]

That's why I dream of a workplace where...





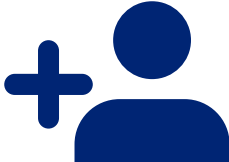
[What do your stakeholders need to understand about the real-world impact of this experience?]

[What action do you want them to take?]

My Personal LGBTQ+ Advocacy Story







Common Ways To Share Your Story

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.

Your Voice. Your Impact.

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

Visit hrc.im/1MVoices to learn more



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.

Conclusion

Using the Working with Pride toolkit and sharing your story can help you feel more confident, informed, and empowered at work while also making a difference for others. This work takes courage and intention.

Start by recognizing where you have influence and building connections with supportive colleagues, leaders, and allies. Your lived experience can help humanize workplace policies, giving stakeholders a clearer understanding of the difference between intent and real-world impact on LGBTQ+ workers.

Be thoughtful about how and with whom you share your story. The right conversation can build empathy, shift perspectives, and help decision-makers create more inclusive workplaces.

Creating change at work is a shared effort. When employees and employers work together, we move closer to workplaces where every person can show up fully.

Take action: Explore the Working with Pride toolkit, reflect on your experiences, and take one step this week: start a conversation, support a coworker, or use your voice to help drive change.



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN
FOUNDATION

