

WORKING TOWARD A FULLY-INCLUSIVE MUNICIPAL WORKPLACE

MEI STANDARD

Part II(D) – Inclusive Workplace

2 POINTS

This section assesses whether a municipality has LGBTQ-specific programming to attract LGBTQ applicants and promote diversity in the workplace. Cities will receive credit if they have:

- An LGBTQ employee pride alliance or resource group; OR

- An LGBTQ-inclusive diversity training for all city staff; OR
- A recruitment program that actively advertises available positions to the LGBTQ community.

INTRODUCTION

Promoting a diverse and inclusive municipal workplace should be a top priority of city officials. Diversity in the workplace is an important value that yields many benefits, including attracting the best applicants and increasing worker satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Governments are at their most effective when a multitude of ideas, informed by varied life experiences and backgrounds, come to the table with the same goal and mission in mind. Public servants should be reflective of the diversity that enriches the communities of those they serve. This issue brief explores specific ways that cities can attract and retain a diverse workforce—one that is representative of and embraces lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people.

THE FOUNDATION: COMPREHENSIVE CITY EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

Robust city policies ensuring that all applicants and employees are treated fairly and equally is at the foundation of diversity and inclusion efforts. Municipalities should ensure that their equal employment opportunity policies expressly cover sexual orientation and gender identity just as they do other characteristics like race, religion, sex, and disability. These policies should extend to all employment-related actions, decisions, and benefits—starting at the application stage. Other existing policies designed to ensure a safe and respectful work environment, like anti-harassment policies, should also explicitly cover sexual orientation and gender identity alongside other protected characteristics.

Moreover, cities should implement best-practice policies for transgender employees who transition during their employment.

Gender-Transition Policies

Gender-transition policies outline the critical components to successful on-the-job transition experiences for city employees. These policies should, at a minimum:

- Specify the people or roles charged with helping a transitioning employee manage their workplace transition;
- Outline what a transitioning employee can expect from management;
- Communicate management's expectations for staff, transitioning employees and any existing LGBTQ employee group in facilitating a successful workplace transition;
- Outline the general procedures for implementing transition-related workplace changes, such as adjusting personnel and administrative records;
- Provide a plan for how a communication strategy for co-workers and clients will be developed;
- Include educational material regarding transgender people, including a glossary of relevant terms; and
- Affirm an employee's right to be treated equally under the company's dress code policies as well as the employee's right to access sex-segregated facilities in accordance with their gender identity.

It is equally important that municipalities educate all personnel on these policies, including available complaint procedures, to ensure effective implementation and enforcement. City leadership must ensure that a respect for diversity and adherence to the policies that reify this value are followed and enforced equally at every tier of city employment.

REACHING FOR A DIVERSE APPLICANT POOL

With fully-inclusive employment protections in place, cities should be intentional and proactive about disseminating employment opportunities beyond the usual outlets to reach traditionally underrepresented communities like the LGBTQ community. For instance, cities can spread awareness of job openings in

LGBTQ periodicals, at Pride festivals, and at events for LGBTQ communities of color and the transgender community. Cities can partner with university LGBTQ student organizations and resource centers to reach diverse soon-to-be graduates and alumni. Additionally, city officials should participate in recruiting and career events sponsored by professional associations representing diverse groups. Making specific recruitment outreach to the LGBTQ community is one way for cities to gain full credit in Part II(D) - Inclusive Workplace.

INCLUSIVE ALL-STAFF DIVERSITY TRAINING

Diversity and inclusion efforts do not end with the diversification of a city's workforce. In order to retain employees and foster increased satisfaction and

productivity, cities must continually work to create a workplace culture that respects, values, and celebrates differences. This process starts immediately in the new employee onboarding process. Virtually every municipality has an established onboarding process that includes trainings on its values, policies, and procedures. Issues relating to diversity and inclusion should take a central role in this process, and particular attention must be paid to making sure new employees understand the unique issues facing LGBTQ employees and city residents. This includes cultural competency training on LGBTQ terminology, disparities, and needs. Moreover, all-staff training should thoroughly cover transgender-specific policies and issues, including employee transition policies.

In developing all-staff LGBTQ-inclusive trainings, human resources departments can enlist the support of community LGBTQ organizations, the LGBTQ liaison to the city executive, or the city LGBTQ employee resource group (discussed below). To maximize effectiveness, these trainings should be conducted at regular intervals and at least annually. This sends a clear message to employees that the city welcomes and values them for who they are, increasing worker satisfaction and thereby retention. Offering regular workforce-wide LGBTQ-inclusive diversity trainings is another avenue for cities to gain full credit in Part II(D) of the MEI.

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Another way a city can demonstrate its value for workplace inclusion is by empowering employees of diverse backgrounds to come together through city-facilitated employee resource groups. These groups provide a forum for employees of similar diverse backgrounds and their allies to discuss shared concerns about workplace experiences and policies, a platform for them to elevate those concerns, and a space for these employees to facilitate each other's professional development. Employee resource groups can also plan educational, cultural, and social activities for coworkers or the community to further awareness and appreciation of the various facets of their identity that make them who they are. Creating an LGBTQ employee resource group is the third way a city can garner points in Part II(D) of the MEI.

CONCLUSION

Promoting an inclusive and diverse workplace is vital to attracting and retaining the best and brightest employees. To achieve and maintain inclusive municipal workplaces, city leadership must ensure that all city employment policies relating to discrimination, professionalism, and safety expressly include LGBTQ people. Employment opportunities should be disseminated beyond the usual outlets to publications and venues targeted to LGBTQ people and other underrepresented groups. Lastly, equal care and attention should be given to building and maintaining an organizational culture that not only respects, but celebrates diverse perspectives and backgrounds. To this end, cities should conduct regular LGBTQ-inclusive all-staff diversity trainings and facilitate the development of LGBTQ employee resource groups.

POLICIES VS. LIVED EXPERIENCE

While these policies and practices help foster a diverse and inclusive municipal workplace, it is important to note that the existence of policies alone does not guarantee a work experience free from discrimination. The MEI rates laws and policies and is not indicative of an individual's lived experience. For more on this, see page 46.

Key Terms



Sexual Orientation

An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.

Gender Identity

One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Expression

External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Gender Transition

The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender with its outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions.