

# SUCCESS STORY: WEST DES MOINES, IOWA

Promoting a welcoming and inclusive community has been a priority for the City of West Des Moines. We have worked diligently to advance equitable policies and practices that center the needs of marginalized communities both internally and externally.

We take pride in our efforts to drive meaningful change. Our journey towards reaching a 100-point MEI score picked up considerable speed after we received our initial score of 42 points in 2016.



We proactively reviewed our policies, benefits, and programs to ensure our LGBTQIA+ employees had comprehensive access to gender-affirming healthcare, workplace protections, and a community of support that affirms their lived experiences. The Police Department also established an LGBTQ+ Liaison Officer to address the specific needs within our community.

In 2021, our City Council endorsed the establishment of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Department to help guide our commitment to becoming a more inclusive city. It allowed us to set clear guidelines and expectations for our shared values across the organization. In addition to implementing a new DEI training series, we also hosted a lunch and learn series on building an inclusive workplace for LGBTQIA+ employees and established an employee affinity group.

The West Des Moines Human Rights Commission has worked in partnership with community organizations and residents to amplify the voices of historically marginalized populations. In spring 2023, they

authored a white paper pushing for LGBTQIA+ legislation and issued an annual resolution for Pride Month to vocalize support for our community.

Additionally, to develop lasting and sustainable change, we must invite new voices and create new spaces for those historically excluded from the governmental process. The Human Rights Commission partnered with the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to host our first Community Engagement Institute, allowing City leaders and officials to hear the needs and concerns of our residents and provide residents with a deeper understanding of how local government impacts their daily lives.

While we have achieved significant milestones, we acknowledge there is still more work to be done. Nevertheless, the City of West Des Moines is committed to nurturing a community that celebrates our rich diversity, recognizes our shared humanity, and fosters a vibrant community where everyone feels they belong.

