

# Best Practices in Fostering LGBT Diversity in the Workplace

Cultural and Procedural Recommendations for LGBT Workforce Management

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## Cultural and Procedural Recommendations for LGBT Workforce Management

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This paper outlines cultural and procedural recommendations for fostering lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)<sup>1</sup> diversity in the workplace. First, it addresses actions that an organization can take to help create the necessary cultural environment for inclusion. Next, it outlines areas that IC elements or organizations can specifically focus on to attract and retain LGBT employees through the full talent cycle. Finally, it provides an example of an outward-phased approach for implementing the recommendations.

The guidelines contained in this paper are intended as an IC resource consistent with Intelligence Community Directive (ICD) 110, to promote equal employment opportunity, diversity, and a culture of inclusion to enhance the intelligence mission.

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<sup>1</sup> LGBT is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender and refers to these individuals collectively.

# Diversity & Inclusion Woven Into the Organization's Culture

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An organization can take a number of steps to signal its commitment to inclusion of all diverse groups, including LGBT individuals. Creating that inclusive environment requires an intentional, integrated approach with targeted efforts woven in at all levels.

## Visible Support and Accountability

To optimize employee belonging and productivity in support of its mission, organizations should demonstrate a highly visible, genuine, and continuous commitment to supporting diversity writ large, starting with its executive-level leadership and extending down to all levels within the enterprise. This commitment can be further reinforced with a focus on:

- A clear diversity and inclusion strategy that takes a critical look at where the organization is currently and where it would like to be in the future, with tactical steps that can be taken across the organization to achieve strategy goals. A good example of a cross-cutting strategy is the *Intelligence Community Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Enterprise Strategy (2015-2020)*.
- Workforce communications that consistently use inclusive language to promote the value that the organization and its senior leaders place on diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

- Inclusion ownership and accountability at all levels. Fostering inclusion should be considered a cultural competency for executive-level leadership. Executives should state their personal commitment to diversity and inclusion within the organization and encourage their subordinates and team members to do the same. The organization should promote a model of “allies for inclusion” at all levels.

## Diversity and Inclusion as a Mission Enabler

Organizations that have been successful at building an inclusive culture share a common message: diversity and inclusion make the organization stronger, more agile, and better equipped to meet mission. This requires an organizational mind-set shift—it means that diversity is viewed as mission-enabling and not as an EEOC or legal requirement with which the organization should comply. This mind-set shift should be championed by leaders at all levels and reinforced throughout all mission areas. As part of this mind-set shift, the organization can:

- Utilize Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) as resources equipped to provide the organization with strategic guidance and unique insights on diversity topics, as opposed to viewing them as “clubs” or

“employee activity groups.” ERGs can be leveraged and their perspectives sought to provide substantive knowledge about their specific diversity areas. They can give senior leaders insight into how diverse groups are impacted in the workplace. Executive-level leaders and champions should regularly interface with their organization’s ERGs to ensure that specific diversity areas are addressed in their units. ERGs may be leveraged as focus groups on proposed policy and process changes.

- Demonstrate its commitment to inclusion, working under the guidance of EEO and Diversity offices to integrate diversity and inclusion into the organizational culture. For example, an organization could do this by establishing formal inclusion leads across all units to champion diversity and inclusion in a mission area. This role could be a part of the inclusion lead’s duties and used to integrate diversity and inclusion as a way to strengthen the unit’s ability to meet its mission. These leads would ensure that their unit’s efforts adhere to the goals of the organization’s overall diversity and inclusion strategy.
- Examine its learning enterprise to ensure that training courses contain diversity themes and inclusion messages. This goes beyond providing sensitivity training for the workforce. Rather, it is an intentional look at weaving diversity and inclusion into training efforts whenever practical.
- Establish a diversity and inclusion awards program to further a commitment to inclusion.

# LGBT Inclusion in the Talent Cycle

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Through all stages of the talent cycle—recruitment, retention, and advancement—an organization can take steps to signal its commitment to fostering an environment that promotes LGBT inclusion.

## Diversity Outreach and Recruitment

An organization can use the recruitment process to demonstrate its commitment to LGBT inclusion. LGBT potential applicants may have historical perceptions of how accepting the IC is of LGBT individuals. An organization should make an intentional, focused effort to message to the community that it is seeking LGBT employees and that they are wanted and appreciated in the workplace. IC organizations can do this by:

- Publicly promoting LGBT inclusion and demonstrating an understanding of LGBT-specific issues, such as by:
  - Hosting the organization's diversity statement on its public facing and internal websites, along with clear workforce policies against harassment.
  - Educating recruiters on LGBT-specific concerns in the hiring process.
  - Developing recruitment materials that represent LGBT diversity and/or have specific materials for LGBT diversity.
  - Adjusting terminology on application forms to be more inclusive of LGBT diversity.

- As appropriate, building strategic relationships with outside organizations and attending events that are connected with the LGBT community. For instance, an organization could sponsor a booth at a job fair or conduct a workshop at a conference for the LGBT community. This outreach will signal to the community that the organization is committed to hiring and being inclusive of LGBT individuals. In addition, it will give the organization access to a new talent pool through these relationships. The organization can further show its support by having executive leadership participate in community outreach events.
- Sensitizing security personnel to LGBT issues. The security process can be daunting for any candidate, but particularly for LGBT candidates. Training for security personnel on LGBT topics (such as terminology, family situations, and gender identity) and security processing measures that take these areas into account may strengthen an organization's ability to recruit and onboard LGBT employees.
- Collecting LGBT metrics. An organization can signal its commitment to recruitment for LGBT diversity by soliciting and tracking voluntary self-identification metrics from candidates to ensure that the organization is recruiting and hiring LGBT employees at a rate commensurate with their availability in the relevant labor pool. The IC organization should consider devising a strategy within its recruitment and talent acquisition center to seek out more LGBT employees.

## **LGBT Retention**

An IC organization can demonstrate that it is intentionally inclusive of LGBT employees and that it seeks to retain them in the workforce. They can do this by:

- Sending a clear signal from the top that LGBT diversity is valued by including it in its diversity and inclusion strategy, using terminology that is inclusive of LGBT employees in workforce communications, and supporting LGBT events and initiatives.
- Establishing clear EEO and anti-harassment policies that include LGBT individuals and terminology and regularly reaffirming these policies to the workforce.
- Educating management at all levels on LGBT issues and how to be supportive of LGBT employees and encouraging managers to establish and maintain an inclusive environment for all employees.
- Providing information, training, and resources to security personnel to sensitize security personnel to LGBT issues possibly affecting background reinvestigations. This is particularly important if something has changed in an employee's bio since the previous investigation.
- Evaluating facilities, benefits, and HR policies to enable the inclusion of LGBT individuals to the maximum extent possible.
- Continuing to solicit and track voluntary self-identification metrics to measure how well the organization is retaining its LGBT employees.
- Conducting barrier analyses utilizing available workforce data, identifying and analyzing potential barriers to LGBT workplace inclusion, and using the findings to develop strategies and initiatives to foster LGBT inclusion.

- Recognizing and rewarding employees who model inclusive behavior and leaders who champion and value diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences.
- Leveraging specific questions in the annual IC Climate survey to measure inclusion of components across the organization.

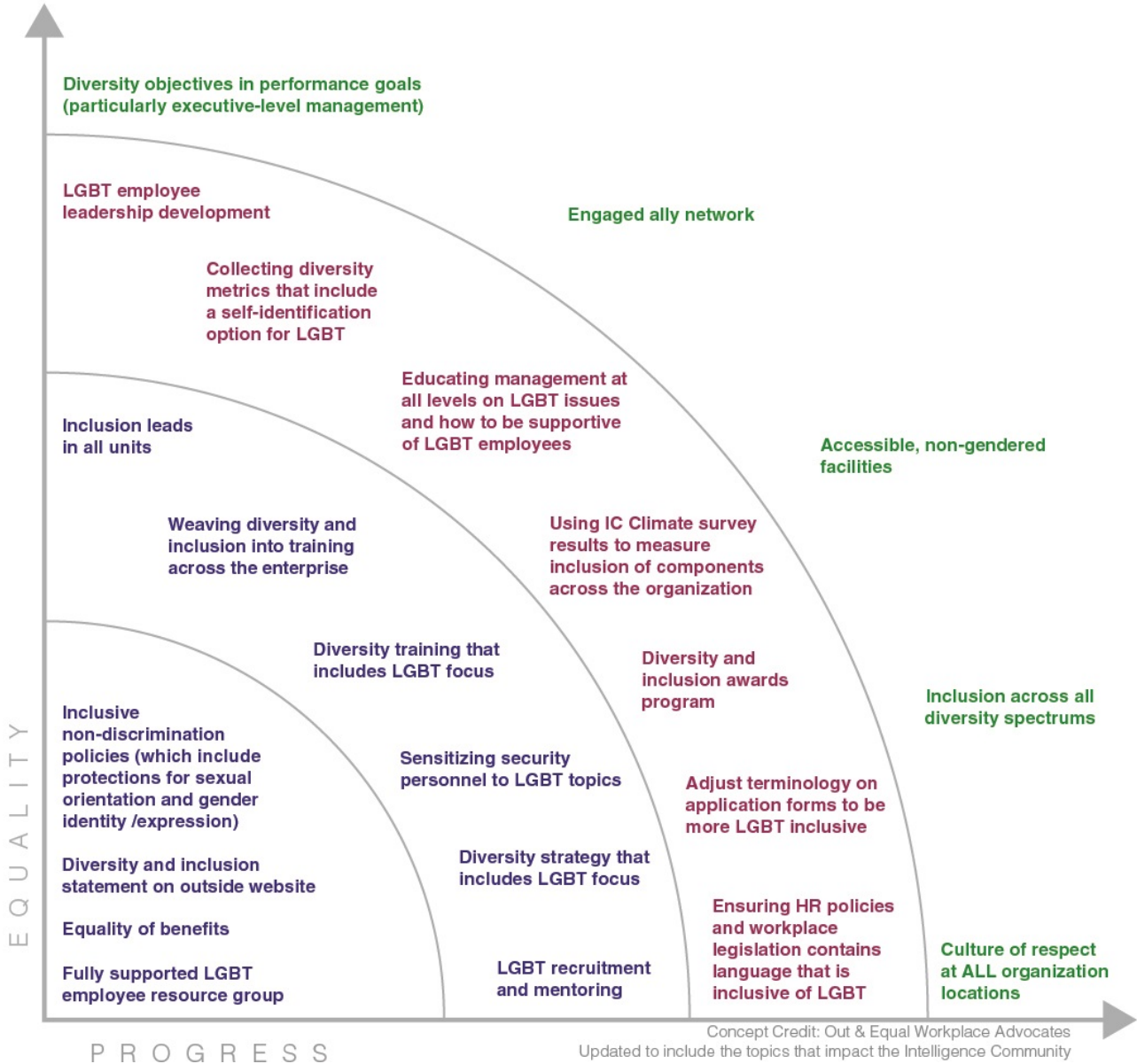
## **LGBT Advancement**

An IC organization should take steps to ensure that the promotion and advancement process does not disadvantage LGBT employees and should measure its success in these efforts. They can do this by:

- Encouraging all managers to attend unconscious bias or other appropriate training to raise awareness about the need for fair judgment in performance reviews of all employees, including LGBT employees.
- Including equity representatives who are familiar with LGBT issues in promotion panels to help eliminate LGBT biases in the panel discussion.
- Continuing to solicit and track voluntary self-identification metrics to measure how LGBT employees are advancing in their careers.
- Creating mentoring and training programs for all employees to strengthen the pool of future leaders.
- Conducting workforce-wide diversity and inclusion studies that capture LGBT diversity and advancement and publishing the high-level findings and conclusions for the workforce.

# Outward-Phased Approach

This visual outlines a phased approach that an IC organization can take to be more inclusive of LGBT employees. The inner ring represents early steps that can be taken on this path; as the organization progresses, its efforts may broaden in scope and touch on areas in all rings, particularly the outer ring.





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IC Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity thanks IC Pride's Recruitment and Retention Working Group for its work on these best practices. IC Pride, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Intelligence Community Affinity Network (ICAN) is chartered under the authority of Intelligence Community Directive (ICD) 110, *Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity* and in accordance with DNI memorandum on *Intelligence Community Charters* (E/S 00206) dated 18 April 2009.