

# LGBTQ CAUCUSING

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations can create space for staff and volunteers with one or more shared identities or experiences to gather in the form of a caucus or affinity group. LGBTQ-based caucuses can be an effective strategy for organizations interested in creating opportunities for staff to receive peer support, collectively offer feedback to the organization, and engage in planning and change making related to increasing LGBTQ access. Caucuses or affinity groups are often tied to broader organizational equity or social justice efforts, though many may stand alone in an organization. When used effectively, caucuses or affinity groups can both support staff and advance important change efforts within and outside the organization.

Below are some recommendations for organizations looking to implement or improve caucusing as a part of broader LGBTQ access goals:

- ❑ Create a clear statement from leadership on the value of caucusing and/or affinity groups within an organization. The statement should tie the function of the caucuses back to the organization's mission and values. The purpose of the statement is to incentivize participation while explicitly ensuring employee protections against retaliation as a result of participation. The statement should be provided to all new and existing staff members.
- ❑ Develop a clearly outlined purpose or goal of the group to ensure most effective utilization of these spaces. Some potential purposes might include:
  - Leadership development for caucus members in order to support greater advancement in leadership among LGBTQ employees;
  - Peer support regarding the impacts of oppression in the workplace and in the broader community;
  - Formalize feedback to the organization and its leadership related to LGBTQ access to services and community relations;
  - Strategic collaboration opportunities with other caucus groups to drive or inform an intersectional analysis of equity or social justice efforts.
- ❑ Work to increase participation in caucus groups by:
  - Providing information about groups during new staff and volunteer orientations, including contact information, meeting dates, facilitator information, goals of group, and expectations of participation;
  - Ensuring managers or supervisors, along with executive leadership, encourage new employees to join and support staff to attend meetings in balance with other job duties.

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- Being attentive to how intergroup differences among LGBTQ people based on race, class, gender, age, and other social locations may impact participation. Organizations can create a rotating leadership and/or facilitation structure to encourage a diversity of voices. In large organizations, caucuses for LGBTQ people of color or other subgroups may also be effective.
  - Ensuring that the choice to not participate is honored and that LGBTQ people are not pressured to join.
- Provide adequate resources for caucuses or affinity groups, including:
- compensation or other rewards for caucus leadership;
  - mentoring for caucus staff to develop facilitation, strategic planning, and leadership development skills;
  - helpful protocols for caucus leaders to work within an established structure including meeting expectations, facilitation, and documentation that protects employee anonymity;
  - formalized pathways for caucus leaders to bring feedback to the organization and its leadership;
  - regular interaction between/among caucuses and affinity groups; access to outside facilitators at the discretion or request of caucus staff.
- Ensure caucuses are effective and accessible across the organization. In large organizations, who frequently have multiple sites and a mix of exempt and non-exempt staff, be aware that people from marginalized groups (i.e., people of color, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities) are often overrepresented among line staff or direct service positions. These positions are often non-exempt, and these staff may have difficulty attending meetings in addition to their existing job duties. Programs may consider the following to increase accessibility:
- Offer satellite groups as a part of caucusing efforts in program sites that may be distant from a central administrative or program office;
  - Provide a caucus meeting calendar in advance to allow staff time to plan to attend; offer childcare;
  - Offer caucus meetings at rotating locations;
  - Publicize meetings in branch offices and direct service programs;
  - Work to ensure representation of exempt/non-exempt staff;
  - Incentivize participation in caucus groups into staff reviews and evaluation;
  - Active participation in caucus groups should be rewarded in staff evaluations;
  - Offer support to caucus members to attend outside trainings related to caucus priorities.