

Take Action and Set an Example

- Inform organizations with whom you do business that it is Colorado law to have a nondiscrimination policy inclusive of sexual orientation and gender expression.
- Offer programming that helps educate your members, constituents, and clients about all forms of discrimination and the impacts of unfair treatment on Coloradans.
- Align your volunteers and staff in order to be more reflective of your clients so that they can better relate to and serve your clients.



- Support awareness campaigns and initiatives that encourage underserved populations to get more involved in their community and speak up about inequities facing them and their families.
- Read about and understand the impacts of inequality on Colorado's economic future. In addition, understand the political landscape by informing yourself about political activities and legislation that impact people.
- Study the ways in which other organizations are pursuing diversity and inclusion initiatives. Adapt their practices to fit your own needs, and become a new model for others.

Equal treatment of all people and access to equal opportunities are critically important to the vitality of our state. Our economic welfare, our cultural well-being, and our social respectability depend on it.

The Gay & Lesbian Fund and our partners believe that as Coloradans, we can stand together and collectively succeed in encouraging more people in more organizations to pursue inclusion and stop discrimination. We welcome you to join us in building *Inclusive Workplaces* for all Colorado residents.



Appendix A, "Tools for Creating a More Inclusive Work Environment," includes many helpful tools, such as language for a nondiscrimination policy, sample nondiscrimination policies, model employment policies, inclusivity and diversity statements, a sample affidavit of domestic partnerships, a cultural competency facilities checklist, and other materials.

INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENTS

An organization can take the first step by simply writing a statement that communicates its values and its stance on inclusivity and/or diversity. Next, the organization should be genuinely prepared to act on its words. An organization's claim to diversity carries more weight when an environment is created that feels welcoming to everyone, and where each individual feels he or she is a valued contributor toward the organization's success.

The process used to develop these statements is a learning exercise for many organizations. Some groups may find it essential to listen to the input and contributions from staff, partners, and other stakeholders – and then incorporate this input during the creation of written public statements about inclusivity and diversity. Other organizations may consider creating their own definitions of common terms. For instance, as part of its inclusiveness initiative, The Denver Foundation has made a distinction between the terms “diversity” and “inclusiveness” with the description below:

What are Diversity and Inclusiveness?

Many people use the terms "diversity" and "inclusiveness" interchangeably. The Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative considers them to have very different meanings.

Diversity describes the extent to which an organization has people from diverse backgrounds and communities working as board members, staff, and/or volunteers.

Inclusive organizations not only have diverse individuals involved; more importantly, they are learning-centered organizations that value the perspectives and contributions of all people, and strive to incorporate the needs and viewpoints of diverse communities into the design and implementation of universal and inclusive programs. Inclusive organizations are, by definition, diverse at all levels.

Appendix A, “Tools for Creating a More Inclusive Environment,” offers sample inclusivity, diversity, and belief statements.

CREATING A DIVERSE STAFF AND BOARD

When an organization is composed of a diverse staff and has a diverse collection of board members, it sets an example for other organizations with which it does business, and communicates the message, “We believe in inclusion, and we value individuality.”

Putting into action its organizational values becomes a very effective way of attracting diverse staff and board members on a continual basis – thereby ensuring that the organization always has access to a supply of fresh, innovative ideas that appropriately meet the needs of its clients. Finally, creating and publishing an inclusivity statement, and leveraging that statement during the recruitment process, is an excellent way to attract the caliber of talented people who believe in the same types of values the organization does.

It is essential to note that putting into place policies, procedures, and statements that encourage diversity and inclusiveness are simply a step toward achieving equality. It takes more than words and actions to achieve equality. The creation of a sustainable culture that embraces these concepts and lives by them is the most challenging aspect of advancing equality.

Benefits of A Diverse Staff and Board

Increased Creativity – Creativity increases when people with different ways of solving difficult problems work together toward a common solution. The more ideas generated, the more likely an organization is to develop solutions that will appeal to a larger, more varied client base.

Improved Problem-Solving – A wide range of solutions can result when people with different ideas come together and collaborate. Diverse ways of approaching problems can cultivate more innovative solutions and a variety of action plans.

Increased Productivity – Productivity increases exponentially when people of all backgrounds work together toward a shared goal. A wide array of perspectives, abilities, and experience lends itself to expanded outcomes and improved organizational performance.

Reduced Interpersonal Conflict / Top Quality Teamwork – When workplace diversity is leveraged, people from various backgrounds become enabled to communicate more effectively – and respectfully – with a broad spectrum of clients. Inclusive attitudes can greatly reduce interpersonal conflict and improve teamwork as we accept, appreciate, and adapt to differences in culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, work space preferences, behavioral styles, experiences, and beliefs.

Strategies for Creating A Diverse Staff and Board

Ensuring a diverse staff and board composition has as much to do with the way in which an organization internally operates and communicates as it does with the way it attracts, recruits, and hires people. The strategies below outline a few things to consider when working to *create* and *retain* a diverse staff and board over the long-term. Once a diverse staff and board are created, there are myriad ways of celebrating and recognizing diversity on an ongoing basis. Please refer to the **Diversity Toolkit** created by the Colorado Springs Diversity Forum for ideas.

Hiring and Recruitment

When embarking on a hiring and recruitment process for staff and board members:

- Actively seek applications from a wide range of candidates and recruit from diverse groups, taking proactive steps to address underrepresented or minority groups.
- Advertise in publications that specifically target minority populations, for example, women, gay men and lesbians, people of color, and people with disabilities.
- Contact local Chamber of Commerce groups of which your organization is a member, and request that your employment announcements be communicated to members through chamber newsletters and websites. In particular, reach out to Chambers whose members represent specific populations (Women's Chamber, Hispanic Chamber, etc.).
- Offer applicants a copy of your organization's nondiscrimination policy.
- Assess the candidate's application based upon his or her experience, knowledge, and competencies rather than personal characteristics and background.

Training

To help your organization's staff and board understand ways they can support diversity in the workplace:

- Invest in a training program for staff and board members that incorporates concepts of diversity and inclusion.
- Offer leadership program training for staff and board members.
- Offer other trainings that address diversity topics you may not have considered, such as learning styles, behavioral styles, work styles, and generational issues.

Employee Representation

Evaluate whether members of your staff and board represent:

- More than three ethnic populations.
- Members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community.
- A wide variety of religious/faith-based practices.
- A wide range of age groups and experience levels.
- People with physical disabilities.
- People with varied socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

Communication

Evaluate whether your management group:

- Demonstrates patience with people who have trouble speaking and understanding English.
- Values face-to-face opportunities that enable them to interpret body language.
- Demonstrates sensitivity to the wide range of potential family arrangements, such as domestic partner relationships and single parent families.
- Helps employees learn to express themselves more effectively.
- Refrains from talking negatively about people when they aren't present.
- Makes an effort to provide bilingual services in order to improve customer service or staff relations.

External Relationships

Take steps to ensure that your organization:

- Actively reaches out to a multicultural consumer base.
- Forges relationships and partnerships with minority owned businesses.

- Offers innovative promotional programs that encourage a wide variety of populations to connect with the company.
- Practices diversity and inclusion within all levels of the organization in order to set a company-wide example.
- Strives to expand the diversity of the supplier/vendor base.
- Encourages partners, vendors, and clients to have a nondiscrimination policy inclusive of sexual orientation.

Organizational Leadership

Constantly reflect on the ways in which the organization's management and leadership demonstrate:

- An understanding of the principles of equality, diversity, fairness, and justice.
- Ongoing personal development in diversity awareness.
- Collaboration with mentors and consultants who have proven knowledge and experience in the areas of inclusiveness and diversity appreciation.
- A commitment to take the necessary steps to eradicate any structural discriminatory practices with relation to employee opportunities and benefits.
- Visible support for all employees both in the workplace and in the community.

Case Study

From Creating a Staff and Board to Affecting a Cultural Shift

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children of the Pikes Peak Region provides a voice in court for children who are victims of abuse, neglect, or domestic conflict. The children CASA serves come from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, but there is a particular overrepresentation of children of color. When CASA launched an aggressive campaign to better serve these children, it realized the secret to its success would be in the diversity of its staff, board, and volunteers. Ultimately, a cultural shift occurred that changed the way CASA does business.

“At CASA we try to create the means to better meet all children’s needs. When we looked at ourselves as a staff, we recognized the drawbacks of being composed of primarily white, middleclass women. Our clients came from a much broader set of backgrounds. We realized a need to make systemic changes so that we would have greater equity in working with our clients. As an agency, we had to become more inclusive ourselves,” said Trudy Strewler, CASA’s executive director.



Mother and child

CASA relies heavily on hundreds of volunteers who serve as children’s advocates, and places great importance on finding volunteers who can personally relate to families at many levels. By fostering trust, volunteers can help CASA better meet children’s specific needs. Hiring a more diverse staff was the first step in attracting a diverse volunteer base. When CASA created a plan to build a more diverse staff in 2003, it aimed to build a continuum of people with different types of diversity so it could better relate to all of its clients. This included advertising for staffing positions within different parts of the state, and in magazines and

newspapers that targeted diverse audiences. The same strategy was applied to attracting volunteers and board members.

The effects of CASA’s staff diversification strategies are evident. Today, CASA’s staff is more diverse than the people it serves. It has been very effective at drawing more people of color, men, gay men and lesbians, and people who have experienced poverty. And the board is 15 percent diversity.

But there is room for improvement. CASA is aiming for 20 to 25 percent diversity on its board. Its volunteers aren’t as diverse, as needed. Most children live with their single mothers, and they need male role models – but only 20 percent of CASA’s volunteers are male. And while CASA has a number of Spanish speaking staff and volunteers, and some who sign, it is need of resources who speak other foreign languages as well. To attract a more diverse volunteer base, it is launching a marketing campaign that will focus on men, African Americans, and Latinos, as those are the greatest areas of need.

In addition to diversifying its staff, CASA took a close look at the ways it was serving clients, and realized that its intake process were too cold and authoritative, and disengaged the clients. So CASA transformed its form-based intake processes and questions into a friendly, interactive orientation that made it easier for clients who had trouble reading or felt otherwise intimidated. By shifting the way it

brings people in the door, CASA makes it more comfortable for people who don't have the same skill sets its staff does to get oriented and utilize the organization's services.

CASA also began leveraging training tools and resources that make it easier to communicate diversity concepts with staff. A "TLC Committee" was formed to focus exclusively on understanding, promoting, and celebrating diversity. The committee watches inspiring videos about diversity and human relationships, shares stories, and engages in interactive activities illustrating the importance of diversity. The organization also relies on relationships and conversations with other organizations committed to diversity so that ideas and strategies can be shared. At each monthly All Staff Meeting, an interactive discussion takes place facilitated by the TLC Committee.

The impacts of CASA's diversity strategies have been felt most by the families. "Clients are involved in domestic violence, custody battles, and other challenges. It's angering to come into a court-ordered program and deal with forms. Now, they're more peaceful. They see that we're willing to listen and are working with them to ensure safety for their children." The underlying secret to diversity strategies, Trudy says, has to be based on a desire to serve clients better, "Which is at the crux of everything we do."

www.casappr.org

LISTENING AND LEARNING

How do you know when your organization is on the right path when it comes to creating a welcoming environment that embraces equality and diversity? Are there mechanisms in place to gather feedback? Are there opportunities for people to gather to learn from one another and share experiences? Below are some strategies your organization may consider leveraging to encourage open communications between your staff, members, constituents, and clients.

Community Quality Assurance Surveys

Consider creating a survey to gauge how well you are supporting the people or communities you serve.

- Are your members/clients/constituents greeted warmly when they walk in the door?
- Do they feel comfortable approaching you with questions?
- Do they feel they “belong” in the culture of your organization and are they inspired to get engaged in your activities and programs?
- Do they receive communications from you in their spoken language?
- Are your written materials useful and relevant to them?
- Do they feel your organization is effective in accomplishing its work?
- Do they value the services you provide, and do they have suggestions about what your organization can do better?

Make the feedback mechanism easy to access and available in a variety of media – for surveys, use postcards that can be dropped off in your front lobby, and online forms that can be submitted anonymously. For free-flowing feedback, publish a toll-free hotline phone number so that people can talk about their concerns with a person.

Learning Circles and Sharing Spaces

People and organizations may have the most potential to make impactful change when they can model after others, share experiences and “war stories,” share lessons learned, and celebrate their successes together. Learning opportunities may just be the key to creating a social justice movement that advances equality for all individuals.

- Consider setting up a mentorship program or “learning circle” that brings together organizing groups, advocacy groups, organizational leaders, and community members who are affected by the change you are trying to create. The participants will serve as mentors to each other when the model is designed to be a multi-directional learning opportunity.
- Offer a space at your organization where people can gather for the learning circles. Solicit the use of space that others in your community can also offer.
- Let the group decide what direction the mentorship program will take. Allow the outcomes to be generated in a way that represents the common interests of the group.
- Consider making outside professional resources available to the group, such as nonprofit consultants, advocacy experts, and technical assistance experts.

APPENDIX A: TOOLS FOR CREATING A MORE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

Sample Inclusivity and Diversity Statements

Gay & Lesbian Fund: *Inclusivity Statement*

In keeping with our dedication to equal rights and opportunities for all people, we commit to fostering an organizational culture where all people are treated fairly, valued for their differences, and given equal opportunities to maximize their success.

Gay & Lesbian Fund: *Statement of Beliefs*

The Gay & Lesbian Fund is dedicated to working with organizations and institutions which share our value of advancing equality.

- We believe that all people in Colorado possess civic, economic, and social human rights.
- We believe that the fair treatment of all people is critically important to the vitality of our society.
- We believe all people should enjoy the opportunities, rights, responsibilities, and benefits they merit.
- We believe our economic welfare, cultural well being, and social respectability depend on a society where all people are free from discrimination and safe from oppression and physical harm.

Kids Wish Network: *Diversity Statement*

In order to achieve *Kids Wish Network's* mission of improving the quality of life for ill children, management recognizes that we must build our network through partnerships. Illnesses afflict children from all walks of life, and *Kids Wish Network* is committed to building a network of people that are as diverse as the population we serve. Basic to this vision is our commitment to developing a network which reflects, values and respects diversity and which challenges all injustice.

Because we believe that diversity is strength, *Kids Wish Network* is committed to maintaining an inclusive, multicultural network that through hiring procedures, recruitment of partners, and strategic links with other organizations, reflects diversity within our board, staff, volunteers and network. This commitment insures diversity based on race, ethnicity, nationality, spirituality, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, disabilities and age.

Nurturing a truly diverse organization is an evolving process which enlivens our work and requires a long-term commitment of resources and leadership. *Kids Wish Network* promotes an environment of inclusiveness where all participants value and celebrate each other's different contributions, skills and experience and where all people are encouraged to thrive and fulfill their potential.

University Memorial Center of the University of Colorado at Boulder: *Diversity Statement*

As the heart of campus, the UMC provides an atmosphere of inclusiveness that allows for free and open exchange of ideas, as well as the development of significant relationships and understanding between all cultures in the university and the community at large.

The UMC creates and maintains an atmosphere where diversity is valued among us by maximizing the interaction of the diverse peoples in the University community. Through our experiences, programs, and events, the UMC values education and exposing the campus to new ideas.

Acknowledging that there is always room for continual improvement, the UMC commits to ongoing training and education for our staff and students.

The UMC's definition of diversity is all-inclusive, encompassing ethnicity, race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, national origin, religion/belief, ability, political views, and veteran's status. It is a definition that includes the valuing of individual and group differences, respecting the perspectives of others, and communicating openly.

[The Dennis Small Cultural Center](#), a special place in the UMC, is primarily dedicated to providing a gathering place for students of color and underrepresented student groups. Its programming and existence are in support of the UMC's commitment to cultural diversity.

Language for a Nondiscrimination Policy

An organizational nondiscrimination policy should include sexual orientation and gender expression. In Colorado, it is the law. The following template might be useful:

"This policy states [organization's name] position on discrimination. This policy applies to all [organization's name] employees, volunteers, members, clients, and contractors.

*[Organization name] does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, **sexual orientation, gender expression**, age, physical or mental ability, veteran status, military obligations, and marital status.*

This policy also applies to internal promotions, training, opportunities for advancement, terminations, outside vendors, organization members and customers, service clients, use of contractors and consultants, and dealings with the general public."

Sample Nondiscrimination Policies

Below are some examples of nondiscrimination policies published by well-known entities. Additional examples may be found at the [Transgender Law and Policy Institute](#).

CORPORATE SECTOR

***Apple Computer* Equal Employment Opportunity**

Apple is an equal opportunity employer, and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity characteristics or expression, disability, medical condition, U.S. Military or veteran status in

recruiting, hiring, training and promoting. All other aspects of employment such as compensation, benefits, transfers, terminations, layoffs, recalls, training, tuition assistance, social and recreational programs, etc., shall continue to be administered so as to reflect the above policy. Certain states may cover additional groups and, in those states, Apple extends its EEO policy of non-discrimination to those groups.

It is the responsibility of every employee to conform with this policy. This policy prohibits unlawful harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment, and slurs or jokes based on any protected class. Furthermore, Apple will not retaliate against any employee for filing a complaint and will not tolerate retaliation by management employees or co-workers.

Any employee who feels that he or she has been treated contrary to this policy, including any harassment by company personnel or work-related harassment by any other person, should contact his or her supervisor, any member of the Human Resources department or the Employee Relations office, or any line manager, up to and including the CEO.

Any employee who is found to have violated this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Hewlett-Packard Nondiscrimination Policy

Commitment to diversity, inclusion and nondiscrimination

Since its founding, Hewlett-Packard has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to people and to fair employment practices. As HP has grown and expanded throughout the world, its work force has become more diverse. HP believes that this diverse work force helps the company realize its full potential. Recognizing and developing the talents of each individual brings new ideas to HP. The company benefits from the creativity and innovation that results when HP people who have different experiences, perspectives and cultures work together. This is what drives invention and high performance at HP. We believe a well managed, diverse work force expands HP's base of knowledge, skills and cross-cultural understanding, which in turn, enables us to understand, relate and respond to our diverse and changing customers throughout the world, connecting them to the power of technology. Our overall commitment is reflected in our diversity and inclusion philosophy.

HP's Diversity and inclusion philosophy

- A diverse, high-achieving workforce is the sustainable competitive advantage that differentiates HP. It is essential to win in the marketplaces, workplaces and communities around the world.
- An inclusive, flexible work environment that values differences motivates employees to contribute their best.
- To better serve our customers, we must attract, develop, promote and retain a diverse workforce.
- Trust, mutual respect and dignity are fundamental beliefs that are reflected in our behavior and actions.
- Accountability for diversity and inclusion goals drives our success.

Compliance, equal opportunity and affirmative action

HP's policies and supporting practices are built upon this philosophy, as well as a set of values that include a strong belief that all employees should be treated with dignity and respect. In

accordance with this, HP does not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, creed, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, national origin, disability, age, or covered veteran status. It is also HP's policy to comply with all applicable national and local laws pertaining to nondiscrimination and equal opportunity.

GOVERNMENT SECTOR

Indiana State Government **Employment Policy Statement**

The State of Indiana is committed to recruit, select, develop, and promote employees based on individual ability and job performance. Our policy is to provide equal employment opportunity to all people in all aspects of employer-employee relations without discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, or veteran status. We will comply with the spirit as well as the letter of applicable state and federal law.

In addition, sexual orientation and gender identity shall not be a consideration in decisions concerning hiring, development, advancement and termination of civilian employees. Further, we will strive to maintain a working environment free of sexual harassment and intimidation.

We commit ourselves, the member(s) of the executive staff, the agency heads and the entire management team throughout state government to move toward ever more progressive affirmative action in state employment. Employment decisions will be made in a manner that will advance the principles of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action.

In order to ensure this expectation is carried out, I direct all appointing authorities to place affirmative action on their list of agency priorities. In addition, I charge the Director of State Personnel to develop and maintain the necessary programs, record, and reports to comply with laws and regulations and with the goals and objectives of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action programs.

United States Postal Service **Postal Service Policy Statement on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identification, and Gender Stereotyping**

The Postal Service™ is committed to ensuring a workplace that is free of discrimination and to fostering a climate in which all employees may participate, contribute, and grow to their fullest potential. We recognize and value our diverse workforce and are committed to fair treatment of all employees.

Harassment and disparate treatment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identification, gender stereotypes will not be permitted or condoned in the Postal Service. Managers and supervisors must take appropriate steps to maintain a workplace free of discrimination against any person based on his or her sexual orientation or identity. Each of us should:

- Treat every co-worker, customer, and supplier with respect and dignity.
- Examine our attitudes and actions toward people who are different from us.
- Speak out when we see harassment and discrimination in our work environment.

Consistent with this policy statement, the Postal Service encourages employees to report any variance from this policy to a management official at the earliest opportunity. Managers and supervisors must assure that a prompt and thorough investigation is conducted when such conduct comes to their attention and take prompt and remedial action when warranted. Conduct investigations in accordance with the Initial Management Inquiry Process materials available in Publication 552, *Managers' Guide to Understanding Sexual Harassment*.

EDUCATION SECTOR

Columbia University

Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policies

Columbia University is committed to providing a working and learning environment free from unlawful discrimination and discrimination and to fostering a nurturing and vibrant community founded upon the fundamental dignity and worth of all of its members. It is an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer. It does not discriminate against or permit harassment of employees or applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, sex, gender (including gender identity and expression), pregnancy, religion, creed, national origin, age, alienage and citizenship, status as a perceived or actual victim of domestic violence, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, military status, partnership status, genetic predisposition or carrier status, arrest record, or any other legally protected status.

Nothing in these policies shall abridge academic freedom or the University's educational mission. Prohibitions against discrimination and harassment do not extend to statements or written materials that are germane to classroom subject matter.

All members of the University community are expected to adhere to the applicable policies and to cooperate with the procedures for responding to complaints of discrimination and harassment. They are also encouraged to report any conduct they believe to be in violation of these policies. Management and supervisory personnel in particular are responsible for taking reasonable and necessary action to prevent discrimination and harassment in the workplace and for responding promptly and thoroughly to any such claims. Those individuals include any officer having formal supervisory responsibility over employees. For the purpose of these policies, faculty are supervisors of other faculty when they are acting in a supervisory role as department chair, dean, academic vice president, institute director, center director, or similar position.

Faculty and officers of research who are the principal investigators on a grant or contract act in a supervisory capacity over the individuals in the lab they lead.

The University offers several options for those seeking the intervention of offices and individuals who are authorized to respond to their complaints. These include confidential guidance and assistance, informal counseling, mediation, and a formal process for having their complaints reviewed. In the event of a formal investigation conducted according to the appropriate University procedure, individuals found to have engaged in discrimination or harassment will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Retaliation against anyone who files a complaint or participates in an investigation is prohibited and may be addressed as a separate violation.

The University provides training programs to educate faculty, researchers, librarians, students, administrators, and staff about conduct that may constitute a violation of its policies and to

inform them of the procedures that are available to deal with alleged violations. While any member of the University may attend, management and supervisory personnel are especially encouraged to participate in these programs and are expected to be knowledgeable about the University's policies and procedures.

Requests for training as well as any questions about the University's policies and procedures should be addressed to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.

Ithaca College
Nondiscrimination Statement

It is the policy of Ithaca College that discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, marital status, national origin, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or military status will not exist in any activity, area, or operation of the College.

Middlebury College
Equal Employment Opportunity Policy

Middlebury College complies with applicable provisions of state and federal law which prohibit discrimination in employment, or in admission or access to its educational or extracurricular programs, activities, or facilities, on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, marital status, place of birth, service in the armed forces of the United States, or against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability. Retaliation against any employee for filing or supporting a complaint of discrimination or harassment in violation of this policy is prohibited. Employees are encouraged to report suspected violations of this policy to their managers or Human Resources for prompt investigation and response.

Model Employment Policies

It is essential to include the words “sexual orientation” and “gender expression” in all employment policies in Colorado.

Human resources policies and benefits packages should include a specific statement indicating that, any time “spouse” is referred to, same-sex partners are also covered.

The following spousal equivalency statement is borrowed from the City of San Francisco:

“Nondiscrimination in Benefits’ means the equality of benefits between employees with spouses and employees with domestic partners, between spouses of employees and domestic partners of employees, and between dependents and family members of spouses and dependents and family members of domestic partners.”

The following definition of “spousal equivalent” is borrowed from the City of Colorado Springs:

“The ordinance grants health and dental insurance benefits to the "spousal equivalent" of city employees. A "spousal equivalent" is defined as: an adult of the same gender with whom the employee is in an exclusive committed relationship, who is not related to the employee and who shares basic living expenses with the intent for the relationship to last indefinitely.”

A majority of Fortune 500 companies already extend protection based on sexual orientation, and consider it a best business practice to offer domestic partner benefits and create full spousal equivalencies for other employment policies such as Family Medical Leave, Bereavement Leave, Retirement, and Cobra.

Whatever their format, employment policies offer a **value statement** that reflects an organization’s stance on equality, inclusion, and fairness.

Sample Affidavit

Affidavit of Domestic Partnership and/or Common Law Spouse* Domestic Partner coverage is limited to same-sex partners

**Borrowed from The City of Denver*

I, _____ and _____
Please print (employee) (employee ID#) (partner/spouse)

Are domestic partners and/or common law spouses, and we:

- 1) are each eighteen (18) years of age or older;
- 2) share an exclusive, committed relationship and hold ourselves out as husband and wife or as committed partners;
- 3) are not married to anyone else and are not related by blood closer than would bar marriage in the State of Colorado;
- 4) share basic living expenses with the intent for the relationship to last indefinitely; and
- 5) were mentally competent to consent to contract when our partnership began.

Furthermore:

Each of us agrees to immediately notify the Human Resources Department in writing if there is any change of circumstances attested to in this Affidavit. For common law marriage this will include proof of declaration of invalidity of marriage, divorce decree or decree of legal separation for domestic partners this would include filing a statement of termination with the Employee Benefits section of CSA (Career Service Employees), or with the Human Resources Department of Denver Police or Denver Fire. (Note: Per Denver Revised Municipal Code Section 18-321, no new domestic partner can be declared for a period of six (6) months from the date of filing a statement of termination of domestic partnership of any prior domestic partner relationship.)

Each of us understands that for the employee and his/her domestic partner, in accordance with federal law, 1) the money the employer pays for health insurance above that for coverage of the eligible employee and his or her legal dependents will be taxed if the partner and any children of the partner do not qualify as dependents of the employee as that term is defined by Section 152(a) of the Internal Revenue Code; and, 2) the cost of the health care premiums, extended to cover a domestic partner or children of the domestic partner, medical expenses or dependent care can not be "Flexed" on a pretax basis if the domestic partner or children of the domestic partner do not qualify as dependents.

We acknowledge that any misrepresentation of the above facts is grounds for termination of coverage. Furthermore, we understand that the City reserves the right to request documentation from the employee and/or partner to verify the affirmations made in this affidavit. We also understand that completion of this affidavit in no way guarantees approval of coverage.

We certify under penalty or perjury under the laws of the State of Colorado that the foregoing is true and accurate to the best of our knowledge.

Signature of Employee	Date	Signature of Domestic/Spouse	Date
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Address	City, State, Zip
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SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN before me this _____ day of _____, 20____

Notary Public

Notary Commission Expires _____

Cultural Competency Facilities Checklist for Service Organizations

Determining whether a workplace is inclusive is an important step in identifying the effectiveness, friendliness, and sustainability of an organization’s relationships with employees, clients, vendors, partners, and other individuals who walk in the front door.

The following checklist may offer a helpful gauge for service organizations that want to determine whether they have created an inclusive environment, and will hopefully offer some guidance for areas that need improvement.

It is essential to note that this checklist used on its own could never serve as a comprehensive or accurate tool for determining whether an environment is inclusive or not. Organizations have an opportunity to create their own mechanisms for measuring inclusiveness in a way that meets their own desired outcomes.

Credit for this checklist is due to Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children of the Pikes Peak Region.

REVIEWER (S): _____

ORGANIZATION: _____

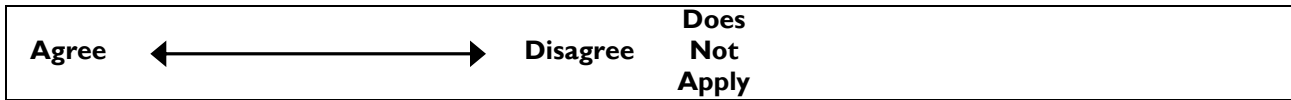
DATE OF REVIEW: _____

You may want to use a separate Facilities Checklist for each site you review.

SITE BEING REVIEWED: _____

Agree	←—————→				Disagree	Does Not Apply	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>		Organization accessible to people and community to be served
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>		Access to public transportation
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>		Convenient hours for people and families with non-traditional schedules
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>		Located in neighborhood that population lives or works in
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>		Child care facilities available
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>		Systems/structures allow ease of access for physically challenged individuals

Agree	←————→				Disagree	Does Not Apply	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bathroom facilities for physically challenged	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parking facilities for physically challenged	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wheelchair accessible facilities	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drinking fountains/sinks accessible to physically challenged	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Designated and clearly marked fire/escape routes for physically challenged	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Systems/structures allow ease of access for linguistically diverse individuals	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Floor/room and other signs in Braille and languages of populations served	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff in reception area can communicate in the languages of the people served	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Materials available in the languages of the people and community served	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interpreters available to communicate in primary or preferred language of consumers	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Facility appearance is safe, welcoming, and inviting for people from different backgrounds	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lighting in parking lots	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Security available if needed	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Controlled access facility if needed	



1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender-neutral bathrooms featured
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interior design of facility reflects cultural backgrounds of community and populations served. (e.g. artwork, photographs, calendars, furniture, and space distribution)
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pieces listed above produced in local community by populations served
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spaces in facility designed in specific cultural motif
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Facility offers both private and community space
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music played in common areas reflect populations served
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Periodicals, magazines, or other reading materials for the public embrace diversity
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Videos, films, or other media reflect the cultures served
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Toys or other play accessories reflect the backgrounds of children served
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Facility includes library or resource collection for staff that includes materials on diversity and cultural competence
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Facilities beyond central facility meet above criteria

REVIEWER COMMENTS:

APPENDIX B: WORDS AND DEFINITIONS

Messaging Reference Tool

The brief statements below may be helpful when communicating *Advancing Equality* concepts with key constituents and people within an organization's sphere of influence.

What is Advancing Equality?

Inequality affects everyone, directly or indirectly. Advancing Equality is a concept that is focused on making sure that Colorado is a place where all people are treated equally. A value that reaches far beyond the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) population, it is about advancing social justice for all.

Colorado will realize its full potential when everyone has an opportunity for equality. A core value of an Advancing Equality organization is the equal treatment of all people, including staff, clients, vendors, and others.

Advancing Equality is not a campaign, a program, or an initiative. It is a frame of mind, a value.

What does Advancing Equality success look like?

Equal treatment is important to the vitality of our state. When all people are treated equally, and discrimination stops, Advancing Equality will have succeeded. The actions of business leaders, public officials, minority groups, and others who have decision-making power, influence over their peers and colleagues, and the ability to vote will be critical to the success of Advancing Equality.

What can be done to encourage Colorado organizations to advance equality?

As an example, the Gay & Lesbian Fund requires grantees to have a nondiscrimination policy inclusive of sexual orientation and gender expression. And convenings are being organized to share best practices, identify the common discriminations that occur, identify common barriers and challenges, and discuss ways to jointly deal with unfair treatment.

Similar-minded organizations and individuals are encouraged to form alliances with one another so that collectively, we can all voice our values and put those values into action.

The implementation and results of Advancing Equality can take different forms within different types of organizations. For instance:

- In arts and culture organizations, programming can help educate members, visitors, or the public about discrimination or unfair treatment.
- In organizations that promote healthy families, volunteers and staff can be aligned in order to be more reflective of their clients so that they can better serve clients.
- In public broadcasting companies, different programming can be used to speak about or educate on issues of fairness, justice, and equality.
- In civic engagement organizations, campaigns or awareness initiatives can encourage underserved populations to get more involved in their community and speak up about the inequities facing them and their families.

What tools are available to talk about Advancing Equality?

An Advancing Equality toolkit has been created by the Gay & Lesbian Fund to include background materials and tools that grantees and other organizations can leverage in order to create a more inclusive environment and become a voice for Advancing Equality in the state. Tools include items such as language for a nondiscrimination policy and model employment policies, strategies for creating a diverse staff and board, case studies, and links to additional resources.

Glossary of Terms

gay The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, and emotional attractions are to people of the same gender (*gay men, gay people*). Many prefer *lesbian* to describe gay women. **Avoid** *homosexual*, an outdated clinical term that has become an anti-gay slur.

lesbian A woman whose enduring physical, romantic, and emotional attraction is to other women. Use as a noun to describe women (*a lesbian, lesbians*) or as an adjective in other contexts (*lesbian couple, lesbian fiction*).

bisexual The adjective used to describe a person who is capable of physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction to men and women (*bisexual people, bisexual woman*). The term *bi* can be helpful in contexts where an emphasis on sex is not appropriate.

LGBT/GLBT Acronyms often used for *lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender* because they are inclusive of the larger community. Explain the acronym before using with unfamiliar audiences.

allies Straight (or non-LGBT) people who respect, support, and defend LGBT people and who work actively to help eliminate prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender expression.

sexual orientation The term for a person's attraction (emotional, physical, and romantic) to members of the same and/or opposite gender (*gay, straight, bisexual*). **Avoid** *sexual preference* or *gay lifestyle*, inaccurate, offensive terms used to suggest that being gay is a choice.

queer Traditionally a pejorative term, queer has been reclaimed by some LGBT people to describe themselves. However, it is not universally accepted even among LGBT people and should be avoided except in discussions with people who identify as queer.

coming out A lifelong process of self acceptance. People forge a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity first to themselves and then may reveal it to others. Publicly identifying one's own sexual orientation may not be part of coming out. LGBT people often begin by coming out to people they see as allies.

questioning Describes those who are in the process of understanding their sexual orientation or gender identity.

closeted When a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV/AIDS status is not widely or publicly known, he or she is said to be *closeted* or *in the closet*.

outing The act of publicly declaring someone else's sexual orientation or gender identity against his/her will. Considered offensive by many in the LGBT community.

same-gender loving (SGL) Used in some communities of color, this term refers to someone who experiences physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to people of the same gender. Do not use the term *gay* or *bisexual* to describe someone who identifies as same-gender loving.

homophobia, biphobia, transphobia
Terms used to describe feelings of fear toward

gay, bisexual, and transgender people. *Prejudice* or *intolerance* is usually a better description of broader anti-LGBT sentiment.

transgender An adjective to describe people whose gender identity and gender expression are different from the sex they were assigned at birth (*transgender people, transgender woman, transgender man*). Transgender people may be gay, lesbian, straight, or bisexual. Some people prefer the term **trans** because it is more inclusive of the wide range of transgender experiences. **Avoid** *transgenders* (noun) or *transgendered* (noun or adjective).

gender identity One's internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or a boy or a girl). For transgender people, their birth-assigned sex and their own internal sense of gender identity do not match.

gender expression Refers to the visible aspects (such as appearance, clothing, speech, and behavior) of a person's gender identity. Typically, transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex. Employment policies that include gender expression are designed to protect those (including non-transgender people) who express

their gender in ways that may not correspond with their biological sex.

transition Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step procedure but a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following cultural, legal, and medical adjustments: telling one's family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) some form of surgical alteration.

sex reassignment surgery (SRS) Refers to surgical alteration, and is only one small part of gender transition. Not all transgender people choose to or can afford to have sex reassignment surgery. **Avoid** *sex-change operation*, an offensive, outdated term for SRS.

cross-dressing To occasionally wear clothes traditionally associated with people of the other sex. Cross-dressers are usually comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and do not wish to change it permanently. *Cross-dresser* should not be used to describe someone who has transitioned to live full-time as the other sex or who intends to do so in the future.

pronouns and names It is important to use a transgender person's chosen name. Often transgender people cannot afford a legal name change or are not yet old enough to change their name legally. They should be afforded the same respect for their chosen name as anyone else who lives by a name other than their birth name (e.g., celebrities). **Never** put quotation marks around a transgender person's name.

We also encourage you to ask transgender people which pronoun they would like you to use (*he, him* or *his; she, her* or *hers*). A person who identifies as a certain gender, whether or not they have taken hormones or had surgery, should always be referred to using the pronouns appropriate for that gender.

APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Organizations and Web Sites

Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado: The Gay & Lesbian Fund financially supports nonprofit organizations that enhance the quality of life in Colorado and promote equality for all people, while highlighting the contributions of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. www.gayandlesbianfund.org

Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies – Civil Rights Division: Learn more about Colorado’s Employment Nondiscrimination Act and how to file a claim. <http://www.dora.state.co.us/civil-rights/index.htm>

Denver Foundation’s Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative: ENII is enhancing the effectiveness of Metro Denver nonprofit organizations by helping them become more inclusive of people of color. www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org

Equal Rights Colorado: Equal Rights Colorado promotes equal rights for Colorado's GLBT people and their families through non-partisan state legislative advocacy. www.equalrightscolorado.org

Colorado Springs Diversity Forum: Its vision is to create a community where diversity is embraced and inclusion is a way of life. www.cospdiversityforum.org

If your organization has a Web site or document about inclusion, diversity, and equality that you would like to see included in this list, please contact Joanne Kron at joannek@gayandlesbianfund.org.

Further Reading

Approaches to Advancing Equality

From the Lobby to the Legal Ease, Your Work Environment Says a Lot

By Mary Lou Makepeace, Executive Director of the Gay & Lesbian Fund
Reprinted with permission from *CausePlanet.org*, Oct. 15, 2007.

While most organizations would agree it's important to promote diversity and create a work environment that is welcoming to all people, many may not realize that they may be doing very subtle things that in fact do not feel welcoming to everyone. From the warmth of the reception area to the accessibility of the parking lot, an organization's approach to inclusiveness is plainly evident to those who walk in the front door. Creating a workplace that feels good to everyone is no small task, but is critical to every organization's success. It is also critical to what I call "advancing equality" for all people.

Diversity and inclusion

Diversity in the workplace is the representation of people from different backgrounds. Most organizations recognize diversity as essential to their ability to increase creativity and productivity, improve problem-solving, and inspire top-quality teamwork. But an organization that is also *inclusive* will proactively seek, accept, and use input and ideas from all people – placing a high value on human differences. Organizations that put into action their values regarding diversity and inclusion are helping to advance equality.

Advancing equality must start with an organizational desire and readiness to make change. Some may be inspired by a desire to improve customer service. For instance, making a decision to hire staff and volunteers who have had similar life experiences to the organization's clientele may help improve client relations. Other groups may be driven by a need to boost program memberships by expanding their reach to wider audiences and populations they might not have considered before. Whatever the scenario, change takes work. The rewards of advancing equality will be felt when the transformation is viewed as integral and necessary to the vitality of the business.

Determining whether a workplace is inclusive

There are many tools an organization can use to both determine whether it offers an inclusive environment, and identify the steps necessary to become more inclusive. This is a process that takes time. The key is to maintain a clear idea of the end goal, and prioritize change practices accordingly.

1. Policies, Procedures, and Value Statements

Every organization has an employee handbook or reference manual describing its policies and procedures regarding employee conduct, vacation and sick leave, benefits, and other human resource matters. This is the ideal place to also state values and position on issues the organization cares about.

For instance, while we at the Gay & Lesbian Fund believe that all organizations have a moral

obligation to include “sexual orientation and gender expression” in their nondiscrimination policies, the Employment Nondiscrimination Act now makes it a legal imperative in the State of Colorado to treat all people equally with respect to sexual orientation and gender expression, and these terms must be included in all of our grantees’ nondiscrimination policies. Human resources policies and benefits packages can be easily altered to include these terms, as well as a specific statement indicating that, any time “spouse” is referred to, same-sex partners are also covered.

There are additional statements organizations can publish to communicate values regarding equality, inclusion, and fairness. Many groups publish “inclusiveness” or “diversity” statements expressing the importance they place on proactively welcoming thoughts, input, and contributions from people of all backgrounds. Organizations are encouraged to make all value statements readily available in front lobbies, on Web sites, and in company newsletters to ensure that all employees, clients, vendors, and the general public are aware of their stance on these issues.

2. *Cultural Competency Facilities Checklist*

Determining whether a workplace is inclusive is an important step in identifying the effectiveness, friendliness, and sustainability of an organization’s relationships with employees, clients, vendors, partners, and other individuals who walk in the front door.

The development of a facilities checklist will help an organization determine whether it has created an inclusive environment, and hopefully offer guidance for areas that need improvement. Categorical areas to consider in a checklist include:

- **Organization is accessible to people and community to be served:** Consider organization’s closeness to public transportation, childcare facilities, convenient hours, and location in an appropriate neighborhood.
- **Systems/structures allow ease of access for physically challenged individuals:** Check bathrooms, parking lots, wheelchair ramps, drinking fountains, and escape routes.
- **Systems/structures allow ease of access for linguistically diverse individuals:** Make signs and materials available in Braille and in languages spoken/read by populations served. Make interpreters and bi-lingual front desk staff available for effective communications.
- **Facility appearance is safe, welcoming, and inviting for people from different backgrounds:** Consider lighting, security, gender-neutral bathrooms, culturally diverse interior design, availability of private and community space, and reading materials and videos that embrace cultural diversity and reflect the cultures served.

3. *Diverse Staff and Board*

When an organization is composed of a diverse staff and board members, it sets an example for other organizations with whom it does business, and communicates the message, “We believe in inclusion, and we value individuality.” Putting into action its organizational values also becomes an effective way of attracting diverse staff and board members on a continual basis – thereby ensuring that the organization always has access to a supply of fresh, innovative ideas that appropriately meet the needs of its clients.

Ensuring a diverse staff and board composition has as much to do with the way in which an organization internally operates and communicates as it does with the way it attracts, recruits, and hires people. The strategies below outline a few tips to consider when working to *create* and *retain* diverse assets over the long-term.

- **Hiring and Recruitment.** Actively seek applications from a wide range of candidates and recruit from diverse groups, addressing underrepresented or marginalized populations. Outreach avenues to consider include advertising, local Chamber of Commerce groups, and business partners. Offer job applicants a copy of your organization's nondiscrimination policy, and assess the candidate's application based upon experience, knowledge, and competencies rather than personal characteristics and background.
- **Training.** Invest in a training program that incorporates concepts of diversity and inclusion. Offer leadership program training for staff and board members, and other trainings that address diversity topics you may not have considered, such as learning styles, behavioral styles, work styles, and generational issues.
- **Employee Representation.** Evaluate whether members of your staff and board represent multiple ethnic populations, members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community, a variety of religious/faith-based practices, a wide range of age groups and experience levels, people with physical disabilities, and people with varied socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.
- **Communication.** Evaluate whether your management group demonstrates patience and sensitivity when working with diverse individuals, helps employees learn to express themselves effectively, refrains from talking negatively about people, and makes an effort to provide bilingual services.
- **External Relationships.** Actively reach out to a multicultural consumer base, forge relationships and partnerships with minority owned businesses, offer innovative promotional programs, practice diversity and inclusion within all levels of the organization, expand the diversity of your supplier/vendor base, and encourage partners, vendors, and clients to have a nondiscrimination policy inclusive of sexual orientation.
- **Organizational Leadership.** Constantly reflect on the ways in which management and leadership demonstrate an understanding of the principles of equality, diversity, fairness, and justice; pursue ongoing personal development; commit to eradicating any structural discriminatory practices; and support all employees in the workplace and in the community.

Once again, adopting these approaches takes time. But more than anything, advancing equality is about engendering a frame of mind that has to do with putting into action one's values about treating people equally. When the focus is on this conceptual bottom line, the work it takes to get there will feel natural – not just because it makes business sense, but because it's the right thing to do.

Grantee Profile

Attitudinal Shifts: The Latina Initiative

Rhonda Solis has lived most of her life in Greeley, Colorado, a fast-growing city with an agriculture-focused economy and a substantial Latino population. A Latina herself, Rhonda is constantly struck by the divisiveness that is caused by adverse attitudes toward Latinos in the region. Whether the subject is education, politics, or society, Latinos are marginalized – largely invisible – except when they are in the spotlight for conversations about immigration, crime, or other controversial subjects. But Latinos have important contributions to make that aren't recognized by the average citizen. Rhonda, a naturally quiet person who didn't attend college, became determined to take a stand on the inequities that marginalize Latinos and contribute to an inadequate Latino voice in public discourse.

Rhonda's specific concern lies in the fact that there is a lack of Latino faces in elected office, representing a great void in Latinos' ability to shape public policy. Children have few Latino public role models to look up to, and thus, our society's disparities are allowed to continue through the generations.

Searching for a way to make a difference, Rhonda joined Hispanic Women of Weld County as a complement to her day job in a dental office. Through her involvement with that organization, Rhonda has discovered an entire network of groups dedicated to removing the barriers Latinos face. One of them is The Latina Initiative, an advocacy group that encourages Latinas to affect public policy issues through progressive action. The Latina Initiative has been the source of much of Rhonda's inspiration.



Rhonda Solis

“Making yourself heard on political and social issues is an intimidating realm. But I discovered that there is a powerful – and empowering – opportunity to affect change. The sisterhood engendered by The Latina Initiative and other women's organizations celebrates the strength, history, and experiences shared by all Latinos. When I first witnessed their work, I was in awe,” says Rhonda. Now, she is passing the energy on to others by making her own voice heard.

The Latina Initiative was started in 2002 by a group of women whose initial focus was to build community awareness about the importance of voting. According to Dusti Gurule, The Latina Initiative's executive director, “Latinas traditionally play an involved role within families, but when it comes to electoral and public policy work, the Latina voice is overlooked. Our idea was to build capacity among Latinas to encourage them to get more civically engaged.”

The Latina Initiative's early efforts to mobilize Latinas to get out the vote were so successful – 4,000 Coloradans have registered to vote since August 2004 – that it saw an opportunity to broaden beyond electoral work. It has positioned itself as a cornerstone for the Latina voice and public policy issues affecting Latinas. And it has done so strategically and consciously.

“Many families in Colorado have been overlooked because people think they don't care. We are very conscious of creating and broadening the diversity of people who participate in our democratic society,”

says Gurule, emphasizing that Latinas serve as the entry point into families. “If Latinas understand who and what they are voting for, they are more likely to reach out to their circles of influencers – sisters, neighbors, and others – to get more people to participate. Latinas are the catalysts in their families and communities. They are our capacity builders.”

By forming partnerships with groups such as 9to5 National Association for Working Women, Women’s Foundation of Colorado, White House Project, COLOR, and the Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado, The Latina Initiative taps into the strengths and resources such collaborations afford. Focus groups help the organization dive deeper into the needs and wants of Latino families and communities. Civic education classes help Colorado Latino residents prepare for citizenship exams. The organization’s recent appointment to the Pay Equity Commission will provide recommendations for both the public and private sector on how to address pay equity inequities related to gender, race, and ethnicity. And the reinstatement of the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit is an important public policy issue The Latina Initiative supports and promotes, as it will have a positive impact on helping Latinas and their families work toward economic self sufficiency.

These are powerful examples of the road The Latina Initiative is paving toward greater equity for all people. In the end, they all strive to give Latinas and their families greater visibility and voice.

The Gay & Lesbian Fund donates an annual average of \$5,000 to The Latina Initiative. The two organizations have formed a powerful collaboration – and a dialogue with a purpose. “My vision is to bring the Latino population to parity with the rest of the state on issues that disproportionately impact us. The Gay & Lesbian Fund shares the same goals for civic engagement among all Coloradans. Working together, I believe we can accomplish this,” says Gurule.

In Rhonda Solis’ experience, Dusti Gurule’s approach to affecting change is “contagious.” Looking to Dusti as a role model, Rhonda is now president of Hispanic Women of Weld County, and a strong, passionate voice for Latinas. She even sees a political avenue in her future. Equipping herself with experiences ranging from the Latina Debate Boot Camp – a joint effort between the Latina Initiative and the White House Project – to the Progressive Majority’s leadership program, she is considering a run for City Council or the School Board, with an eye toward unity and leadership.

“I want Latinos to work better together. We tend to get in each other’s way, and it’s counter productive. In Greeley, the people in power need to be able to backup their attitudes with facts, actions, and solutions, and realize that all people count. I intend to be an example of what the Latino community is all about.”

www.latinainitiative.org

Grantee Profile

Hands-On Activities and Teachable Moments Offer Valuable Experiences for Kids

Lowry Elementary School in Denver has a mixed population, with students representing an array of socio-economic backgrounds. While many are fortunate enough to go on weekend excursions and fancy vacations with their families, a group of Lowry's students who live in nearby homeless transitional housing rarely, if ever, leave their apartment complex. For those students, whose poverty is so high that hot school lunches are unaffordable, activities such as going to the museum or the zoo are mere dreams.

Recognizing that economic disparities have a harmful impact on children's learning opportunities, the Children's Museum of Denver offers programs that aim to give low-income children access to fun, enriching experiences. Many of the programs are featured in the Museum's exhibits, but others take a more proactive approach by being directly integrated into the curricula of local schools. One such offering is *Growing Respect by Observing Our World*, or G.R.O.W., an environmental science and literacy program in which Lowry Elementary participates.

Combining hands-on classroom activities and fieldtrips to the Museum and the Butterfly Pavilion, G.R.O.W. offers an engaging opportunity to learn about lifecycles. The six-month program culminates in the creation of a book, written and illustrated by the kids. With titles such as "The Great Butterfly Escape" or "Insect Versus Mammal," the books are published and provided to the children's families as well as to the school's kindergartners.



Teacher Aileen Regan

"G.R.O.W. is a powerful extension to the work I was already doing – and offers a much more meaningful method of teaching about lifecycles," said Aileen Regan, a second grade teacher at Lowry. "Our dream is to put more books into the homes of less fortunate students. When homeless children move, they don't take hardcover books with them. Because our books are printed off the computer, they are lightweight and small, making them easy to stuff into backpacks. They are an easy way to promote literacy at home."

An added perk of G.R.O.W. – available to schools with 50 percent or more children who qualify for free-and-reduced lunch – is Family Night. Hosted at the Museum, Family Night is a venue for kids to show off their work. Given free one-year memberships to the Museum, families are encouraged to contribute to the educational process. Last year, the Museum provided dinner and free transportation to the event, making it easy for families who didn't own a vehicle.

The Children's Museum is tireless in its efforts to make sure all children feel included. Tom Downey, executive director, works closely with the staff to ensure a welcoming learning environment – and says this in itself is a learning process. "Not long ago, we were seen as an institution that was inaccessible to some families in the community. We heard a loud and clear message that we needed to make a change. Now we meet with city councils every year to identify the most needy schools and communities," he says.

The Museum's fresh commitment to diversity and inclusion goes deep. Bilingual staff, signage and

literature, an increasingly diverse board, and free parking were the first outward signs of change. Outreach to communities through corporate and philanthropic relationships became critical, as well as the ability to offer benefits such as free memberships for qualifying families, free “Target Tuesday” nights for working families, and LGBT Family Night to encourage gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender parents and their kids to openly enjoy time at the Museum.

Taking inclusiveness one step further, Downey is investigating an opportunity to offer parenting classes to provide an infrastructure of support to LGBT families. “LGBT individuals are more likely today than they were two generations ago to have a child on their own. They are facing different issues that only compound the everyday challenges related to parenting.”

Since 2000, the Gay & Lesbian Fund has awarded the Children’s Museum of Denver an annual average of more than \$6,000 in support of its initiatives to create an inclusive environment for all children.

According to Downey, the ultimate way to promote inclusion and educational parity for kids of any background is to leverage experiences that take place in daily life. “Teachable moments,” or educational opportunities parents have every day, are essential to a child’s learning process. Setting the table becomes a lesson in symmetry and counting; drawing chalk shadows in the street illustrates movement of the sun; cutting out grocery coupons and finding the items at the store becomes a matching exercise.

“There are expensive tools and educational toys out there. But they are not realistically available to kids with lower incomes. Teachable moments are essential for kids who don’t have the opportunity to go to preschool – and they are available to every parent,” Downey says.

For the kids at Lowry Elementary, those teachable moments are priceless. With a chance to touch and observe caterpillars at school, kids may find that the most valuable lessons in life can be found right in their own backyard.

www.mychildsmuseum.org