

BANNING THE BOYCOTT:

HOW TO DO BUSINESS IN TIMES OF DISCRIMINATION

*"Wherever you meet,
make a difference."*



An opportunity to create destination legacy, drive revenue, foster systemic change and enhance positive social impact, by championing DEI management principles, when executing events in destinations with anti-LGBT legislation.



FEATURES:

- PRACTICAL GUIDELINES,
- IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING TIPS,
- COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES.

FOR:

- MEETING PLANNERS,
- DESTINATIONS,
- BUSINESS.



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The guidelines are created and based on the research conducted by Peter Kakucska, – President, Global Diversity Alliance and Kris Towers, Council Youth Ambassador, Global Diversity Alliance and were mandated by the Global Diversity Alliance Council. More information on the Global Diversity Alliance is available on its website [here](#). For regular updates, follow on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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FOREWORD

We have recently seen countries, states, regions, and cities enact restrictive legislation targeted at the LGBTQ+ community. In protest, many organizations have called to boycott such destinations. While the intention behind a boycott is good, the reality is that they often impact the wrong people.

When visitor numbers suddenly drop, it's not just the governments that feel the pinch; it's the locals who rely on visitors purchasing their goods or rendering their services, that in turn supports them, their families, and communities. Boycotts often isolate vulnerable people even more. The watchful eyes of visitors can help keep governments and regimes in check, but once the global gaze leaves, the situation often worsens.

Global Diversity Alliance fundamentally upholds and values human connections, as meetings and events bring together, connections are formed. We must elevate awareness for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and LGBTQ+ empowerment and support events or select destinations where you convene with intent. We understand the importance of standing for fundamental freedoms and supporting DEI from all levels and we will continue to push for positive change. We also understand the power and influence of meetings on any economy, especially destinations, communities, and partners- those that we consider allies.

We believe that meetings can be a force of good and can build understanding, making us less prejudiced and more empathetic - all things we desperately need more of in the world right now. Events provide opportunities for real, genuine interaction as it exposes meeting attendees to locals and destinations and new impulses reminding us that we are all human and crave interaction. It encourages dialogue, something that can be quite powerful in places where censorship is prevalent.

We also recognize that our clients, partners, and team come from diverse backgrounds, and we want to leave destinations our diverse footprints and legacy creations. We also understand the importance and power of bringing our unique true selves and valued perspectives to the table. We want to make sure that there is a place at that table for everyone.

The decision to host an event or not at a particular destination can be a difficult choice to make. We respect the decision of those who choose to boycott a destination or simply relocate elsewhere because there are so many destinations in the world that events can have a positive impact on. That's why we believe the best thing that one can do is to ensure that wherever you meet, make a difference.

We hope you find these guidelines useful in your business decision-making.

Yours,



Dave Jefferys
Executive Director & Founder
Global Diversity Alliance

INTRODUCTION

After promising advances within the LGBTQ+ community which slowly snowballed after the historic 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City - the birth of the gay liberation movement, we have unfortunately recently seen a rollback of those advances. Discrimination and violence against people in the LGBTQ+ community are still all too common continuing to affect millions of people worldwide every day, and undermine the human rights principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Around the world, LGBTQ+ people continue to face widespread stigma, exclusion, and discrimination.

Advancing the protection of LGBTQ+ rights was the prerogative of many countries, though 69 countries still criminalize homosexuality and only a very few countries legally recognize the identity of trans people and even less protect the rights of intersex people. In many cultures homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic attitudes remain deeply embedded. Many LGBTQ+ persons face targeted physical attacks and extreme violence—they are beaten, sexually assaulted, tortured and killed.

In many countries, discriminatory laws criminalize consensual same-sex relations and trans people, exposing LGBTQ+ people to arrest, blackmail, extortion, and stigma and in 5 countries, even the death penalty, for consensual same-sex relations. In most countries, trans people have no access to legal recognition of their gender identity or face abusive requirements to obtain such recognition. Intersex children and adults may be forced or coerced to undergo medically unnecessary interventions, in violation of their human rights. And conversion therapy is still practiced in many countries.

Only 77 countries have employment non-discrimination laws that protect the rights of LGBTQ+ workers. LGBTQ+ individuals experience increased anxiety and mental exhaustion when concealing their orientation or identity at work. This can lead to performance and motivation issues, as they may not fully engage in their work, potentially appearing disengaged or unsatisfied compared to heterosexual colleagues. Some may withdraw from office conversations or social events to avoid questions about their private lives and weekend activities, potentially being seen as 'lone wolves' rather than team players. Overall, LGBTQ+ career paths may appear less stable and more fragile.

In the first few months of 2023, the USA has seen more anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced than in all of 2012-2015 combined. A recent report from Movement Advancement Project (MAP) an independent, nonprofit think tank points to 46 states having introduced more than 650 anti-LGBTQ+ bills. These bills are aimed at eliminating bullying and harassment protections, enacting school policies that target trans youths, regulating drag shows or bathroom facilities. Courts have also seen a rise in conservative religious organizations building campaigns and lawsuits to challenge civil rights laws with the aim of getting legal rulings that there are religious and free speech rights to violate these laws, with some rulings finding some state's nondiscrimination law violated free speech.

For the first time in history, in June 2023, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) officially declared a state of emergency for LGBTQ+ Americans due to the potential negative impact from the anti-LGBTQ+ legislation being introduced targeting the LGBTQ+ populations, which would be more burden to carry or drops in the ocean of dissatisfaction and intolerance that only further pressures or distances LGBTQ+ people.

Parallel to the increase of this legislation, the last few years have also seen the global market and business landscape change, with many organizations facing unwarranted and unexpected challenges. Especially hardest hit were the meetings, hospitality, and tourism industries. In efforts to regain posture, generate income and grow resilient, can these industries even consider boycotting businesses in destinations with legislation targeted against the LGBTQ+ community, or any other social minority for that matter?

The meetings, tourism, and hospitality industries have a unique opportunity and potential role to play in shaping the community and their narratives to create positive social impact at destinations where anti-LGBTQ+ legislation is being or is already enacted. While boycotting seems like the morally logical thing to do, a deeper dive will show that there are some golden opportunities for all to benefit: the meeting planner, the destination, the suppliers, event delegates and the local population if you really want to make positive change.



VISION

"Wherever you meet, make a difference."

MISSION

- Provide meetings ecosystem professionals a wealth of information through a thorough deep dive on how best to do business in a destination with anti-LGBTQ+ legislation being tabled or implemented in a particular jurisdiction, be that at a municipal, regional, state, or federal level and ensure that it benefits everyone.
- Address the concerns of all various stakeholders by giving multiple insights in the dialogue.
- Provide a blueprint for creating long term positive social impact in the communities at destinations where events are being hosted.
- Present meeting professionals the reasoning to avoid boycotting a destination.
- Educate the reader into understanding not only the ethical rationale of LGBTQ+ human rights but also the business case it presents.
- Be more inclusive and understanding of the LGBTQ+ community.

OBJECTIVES

- Gain knowledge from the research on global efforts to promote LGBTQ+ business inclusion.
- Discuss current events regarding anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.
- Suggest recommendations on how to conduct socially responsible business in areas with anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.
- Understand the various strategies needed to navigate through avoiding boycotts.
- Inspire entrepreneurial creativity in mitigating the adverse effects of anti-legislation by contributing positively to potential sustainable social change.
- Utilize external resources regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people within events.
- Recommend resource tools to assess, guide and/or evaluate destinations.
- Explore business tips on DEI management.
- Map tangible and realistic steps that can be undertaken to create destination legacy.
- Evaluate mitigation tactics to ensure that one is contributing to social impact.

While we acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all solution nor guarantee of success, we believe that with robust facts and knowledge, through open, transparent dialogue, and actively listening to all stakeholders and their needs, developing tailored strategies will reflect the various audiences and contexts, from the membership, Executive Boards, internal and external stakeholders, and the LGBTQ+ community.

SECTORS

This is for professionals working in the following industries:

- Destination Management Companies (DMCs), Convention and Visitors Bureaus, (CVBs), Destination
- Marketing Organizations (DMO's)
- Local city, municipal, regional, national government public tourist boards and authorities
- Meetings, Incentives & Conferences and Exhibition (MICE)
- Food & Beverage
- Hospitality
- Recreation & Leisure
- Transportation
- Travel
- Tourism

SERVICES

Also for those supporting industries, by providing services that include, but are not limited to:

- Accommodation and lodging
- AV
- Business travel
- Catering
- Community convention and visitor's bureau
- Events
- IT & Communication
- Public tourism support.
- Transportation (Rail/bus/flight)

DEI

DEI specialists, managers and consultants are also supported by this research. Especially if working in the implementation or development of organizational plans and management derivatives.

THE COMMUNITY

Members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies clearly have a marked interest in this paper and should examine carefully what can be done to contribute to the conversation and to purposefully, with the tools and information provided, be able to better themselves, situations and society. A proactive, informative, and collaborative outlook will serve those willing to make an effort to change. There is a special need and call for the LGBTQ+ community to be able to pick up the baton and provide the information and support meeting planners, destination managers, government officials and business will need if they are to truly commit to DEI in the LGBTQ+ arena.





Consider the information in this document as a starting point for making a positive impact in the LGBTQ+ community. There are three different stakeholders in this discussion and while there is some overlap, overlapping, we have divided those in the MICE ecosystem into three categories. For each of these three groups, there is a set of guidelines targeted and tailored for each stakeholder with their needs and requirements in mind. We recommend all three be read to understand the concepts in a holistic view.

Guidance

Guidance can be found on executing organizational and coordinating tasks in the management of, not only;

- Associations
- Budgeting & Finance
- City Destination
- Event
- Hospitality
- Human Resources
- Logistics & Planning
- Marketing & Public Relations
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Procurement & Vendors
- Safety & Security
- Sponsorship
- Venue & Facility

Meeting Planners / Event Organizers

Exhibition, congress, and conference managers planners.

Private or public sector, commercial, Non-for-Profit, NGOs, academic, research institutions, professional associations, staff and volunteers. Meeting planners will find step-by-step guidelines from information gathering to aid in deciding on contracting of the destination, to legal considerations, partnering with diverse and inclusive businesses, participant experience, and how to curate a successful, safe, and inclusive event.

Destinations

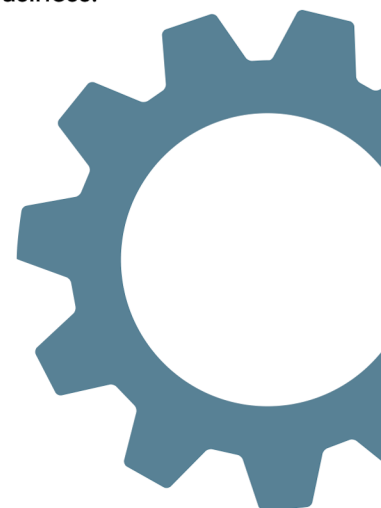
Local city, municipal, regional, national government tourist boards, public tourist boards, tourism authorities and sector. Private or public sector or a joint private/public partnerships. Local "hosts," volunteers, destination ambassadors, non-profit organizations, associations, academia, and other institutions.

Destinations will find considerations in raising the diverse and inclusive visibility of the destination, how to implement DEI management principles, and policy recommendations that are for cities of varying sizes, resources, and ranges of functions.

Business (Goods & Service Providers, Vendors, Suppliers)

All businesses that provide goods and services no matter who has engaged them.

This category can be seen as encompassing business in the broad sense of any commercial enterprise and applicable in any sector and will find information on how to be more diverse and inclusive in business operations and how to communicate those efforts effectively and genuinely. Also, advice on how to become a role model for diverse and inclusive business.



DIVERSITY SPECTRUM

While this paper focuses on the LGBTQ+ space of DEI, we understand the broader definition of diversity that includes and is not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity and expression, sexual/romantic attraction, religious affiliation, political belief, dietary selection and preference, mental and physical abilities, neurodiversity, age, thinking styles, body size and appearance, hair texture, socioeconomic status, marital status, parental status, language, spoken accents, educational levels and more.

DEI APPLICABILITY

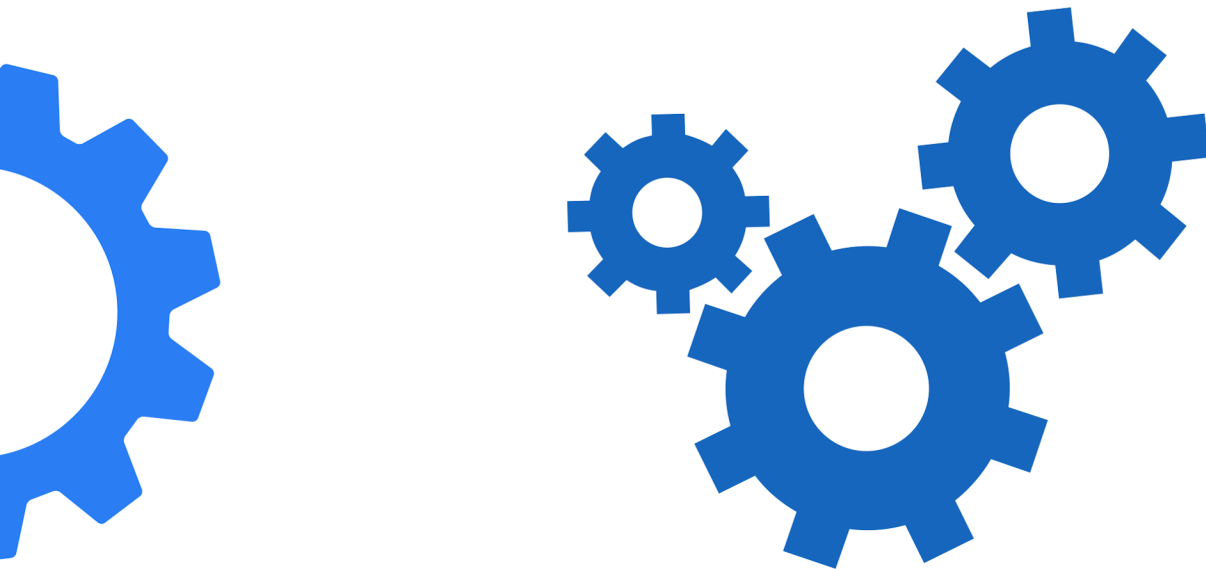
One can apply these recommendations to other populations on the diversity spectrum as the motive and approach are often interchangeable.

Naturally, those populations will have their nuanced sensitivities that must be taken into consideration and can be exposed by having detailed consultations with civil society groups that support those diverse communities.

STANDING TOGETHER UNITED

When anti-LGBTQ+ legislation is introduced and can potentially impact potential businesses, this is when destinations need to begin reaching out to their current partners and identifying opportunities in potentially partnering across non-traditional lines or areas. They need to explore options and assess flexibility and the ability to work outside the umbrella of state or local legislation.

This is also a moment for the meetings industry and the various stakeholders to come together with openness and transparency to work together to provide the best possible solution in which everyone's a winner.



GUIDELINES: MEETINGS PLANNERS



Meeting professionals are pivotal as they are often involved with the destination and site assessments and criteria reporting on the destination suitability for their events. Meeting professionals should be diligent in understanding what laws are present in the areas the program will be held.



Resources and tools can provide meeting professionals with an insight into the political climate of where an event is being held. Familiarizing oneself with municipal, local and state laws can prepare a meeting professional. The more a professional knows, the better able they will be to facilitate honest dialogue on organising an event in potential destinations.



Meeting planners need to assess delegate safety and security. This must be at the forefront of all conversations. If safety and security cannot be guaranteed to all participants, there needs to be a discussion if the client feels that they cannot ethically and morally hold a program in an area with anti-LGBTQ+ laws.



Meeting planners need to be prepared to have conversations on the legalities, mitigation activities, encompass DEI into the fold, even if clients believe that their ethics are more important than going to discriminatory areas, local LGBTQ+ communities should be consulted about their reality and to seek advice if boycotting would do more harm.

**Clients will need guidance on how to proceed with destination selection.
Top event professionals can provide that information.**

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Identify local LGBTQ+ organizations and communities with the aim of partnering with them to create a legacy by driving positive social impact. Convention bureaus may already have partnerships or have worked with such organizations. LGBTQ+ organizations will be crucial in your information-gathering activities in this initial stage to assess the destination's LGBTQ+ profile and to analyze:



1. The safety and security of LGBTQ+ delegates can be assured.
2. The promotion and visibility of LGBTQ+ DEI themes are legal.
3. The attention and focus would be welcomed by the local LGBTQ+ community.

If by engaging with the local LGBTQ+ organization the answers to these questions are positive, then we would **strongly recommend NOT boycotting this destination** but to rather commence with planning your event irrespective of the legal situation.

GUIDELINES: MEETINGS PLANNERS



INFORMATION GATHERING

Meeting professionals need to;

- Collaborate with the destination's political representatives.
- Collaborate with destination's MICE industries.
- Build relationships with local LGBTQ+ communities.
- Consider how enterprises can have a significant influence over destination visitors.
- Consider how destination visitor's behavior can impact diverse and inclusive populations.
- Exert positive influence through curating narratives and factual representation on the merits of DEI as a human rights shield and a revenue generation strategy.

You will need to assess the social situation of the local LGBTQ+ population. Namely;

- The state of social inclusion and integration of LGBTQ+ people, including access to and integration in the labor market, education, their access to services and health care.
- The prevailing attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people.
- The special situation of the most vulnerable LGBTQ+ people, namely trans and intersex people, those in intersectional situations, specific situations of LGBTQ++ women, youth, and those with disabilities.
- Do make sure to keep in consultation with your LGBTQ+ partners as this is just the beginning.



"Obstacles and challenges are opportunities and chances to achieve success."

CONSULTING WITH LGBTQ+ GROUPS

Engage with LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations and request information regarding LGBTQ+ citizens and human rights to assess, as appropriate, the national circumstances and legal context, including -

- the state of the legal protection of LGBTQ+ people.
- coverage of existing laws, both LGBTQ+ targeted and general equality acts.
- rights of rainbow families, children; and trans and intersex people.
- legal recognition of gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.
- existing remedies available to victims in cases of violations against the law.
- the feeling and experiences of unsafety.
- established discrimination cases and relevant national law.
- the legality of promoting LGBTQ+ lifestyles.
- status of hate crime, hate speech and violence against LGBTQ+ people.

When assessing destinations, evidence that destinations support the LGBTQ+ community can include:

- The availability of LGBTQ+ resources on the official city's website.
- Municipal or city offices have an LGBTQ+ advisory committee or employ a DEI/diversity/equality liaison officer.
- Positive public statements supporting LGBTQ+ communities and their activities from senior city officials.
- Pride parades take place with municipal support and without government restrictions.

GUIDELINES: MEETINGS PLANNERS

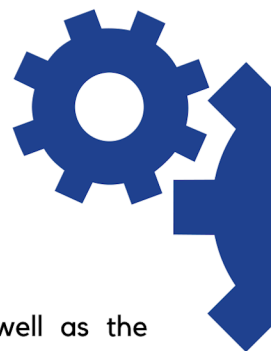


QUESTIONS ON ANTI-LGBTQ+ LEGISLATION

- Do laws exist that could affect or impact the delivery of your meeting, should you choose to promote the LGBTQ+ community and the LGBTQ+ lifestyle?
- How have laws impacted the day-to-day lives of LGBTQ+ people, their safety, and their freedom to be who they are?
- Has the LGBTQ+ community encountered obstacles in the implementation of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation?
- Are there possible differences in the LGBTQ+ equality situation across the country including between regions, municipalities, countryside, and cities?
- Does the city have LGBTQ+ inclusive policies or guidelines at the municipal level even if at the state or national level anti-LGBTQ+ laws exist?
- Can the municipality provide the means to ensure that the city and its services are LGBTQ+ inclusive?
- Can the city ensure that LGBTQ+ people are protected and cared for in their daily lives?
- How engaged are municipalities on LGBTQ+ rights and equality?
- What kinds of tools are available for local governments to foster inclusion?
- Are LGBTQ+ people treated as full citizens and considered a part of the community?
- Can municipalities contribute to positive, concrete change for LGBTQ+ people in towns and cities despite national or state legislation?
- Are LGBTQ+ people, their experiences, lives, and achievements a visible part of society and represented in the city?
- Are efforts of civil society to influence positive change hampered by municipality officials?

LEGAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CANCELING

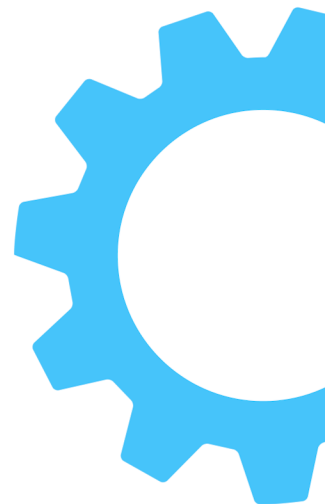
- Check if you have the option to cancel your contract without penalty.
- If there are no penalties then consider the financial, political, reputation, and cultural consequences of canceling the event.
- If the hotel venue is part of a national chain, check if options exist for transferring the event to a different destination.
- Consider all the parties who could be affected by the decision to cancel. This includes:
 - the members or attendees.
 - local members of the association.
 - the community hosting the event.
 - those employed in the MICE industry locally.
 - the impact on the local LGBTQ+ community.
 - the LGBTQ+ community benefits versus canceling.
- Consider policy decisions, and contracts and weigh the financial considerations as well as the organization's values, and the impact on those affected by the decision to cancel or not.
- Consider contracts with suppliers, vendors, and speakers.
- Evaluate if the decision to stay at the venue or cancel intersects with your organization's values statements, Code of Ethics, and/or advocacy positions.
- Consider if staying or canceling would undermine or advance your organization's reputation.
- Evaluate how many from the LGBTQ+ community make their living in the MICE industry.
- Consider how your stakeholders and/or members, and delegates are affected by the legislation.
- Have in-depth consultations with local LGBTQ+ stakeholders and request feedback and recommendations that should be considered in the decision-making process.





MAKING THE DECISION

- Have a diverse and inclusive RFP with DEI criteria and benchmarks.
- Calls for all suppliers should be based on competence, ensuring equal opportunities.
- Consider expanding your contract language by demanding a "Force Majeure/Excuse of Performance" Clause during negotiations. It allows you to back out of a contract without liability or damage costs if that city, state, or country begins enacting any anti-LGBTQ+ legislation between the time of signing the contract and the time of program execution.
- Request for the demographics of the DMO or hotels including C-Suite and Board of Directors
- Check if business partners have protection against discrimination policy.
- Request the current supplier diversity spend, specifically for LGBTQ+ businesses.
- Ask them to join the Global Diversity Alliance.
- Ask how destinations and potential service providers express interest in welcoming LGBTQ+ visitors.
- Investigate how the city and meeting stakeholders have worked to address discriminatory laws or regulations in their area.
- Check to see where local elected officials stand on the legislation/policy.
- Identify the position of the local authorities and how involved they are in the debate.
- Check if the local jurisdiction has an anti-discrimination policy.
- Check the local and state tourism/hospitality associations' stance on the legislation/policy.
- Check to see the city's ranking on the various available assessment tools, such as Destination International's Assessment Tool. (See Appendices)
- Consider if collaborating with local stakeholders to demonstrate to legislators the broad negative results from discriminatory laws and regulations would be a possibility.
- Have a conversation with potential venues with LGBTQ+ friendly events and any diversity training the staff has completed.
- Consult with local LGBTQ+ human rights defenders and civil society organizations at every stage of the process and listen to their advice.
- Make an informed decision based on satisfactory answers and research.
- Make sure that you have critical buy-in and commitment from the decision-makers.



GUIDELINES: MEETINGS PLANNERS



DECIDING TO STAY

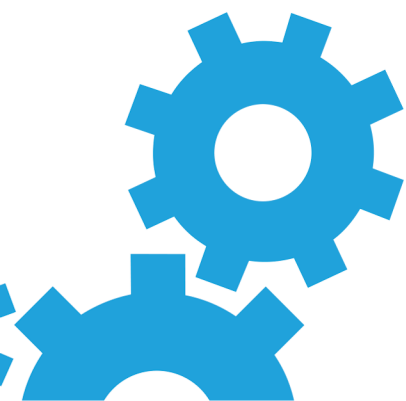
- Communicate with prospective attendees in advance of the event explaining the legislation, the effects, and the decision to stay.
- If there are safety concerns for LGBTQ+ individuals explain what the organization will do to ensure their safety once at the destination.
- Carefully consider involving the media to draw attention to the legislation.
- Consider meeting with local political decision-makers to highlight the concerns.
- Host an in-person activity, charitable fundraiser, or service project in the LGBTQ+ community.
- Remember to keep scanning regularly for any potential or pending legislation that negatively impacts efforts, policy statements or the community.
- Always consult with local LGBTQ+ groups in both the design and implementation of any support programs, to make sure their needs are met, and no harm is done.
- Encourage enterprises to support local LGBTQ+ social causes.
- Empower LGBTQ+ people to hold their governments and other service providers to account.

SAFETY

One of the most important aspects of not boycotting destinations is making sure that LGBTQ+ attendees feel safe attending events in those areas. Simple actions can be taken to ensure a sense of security is felt by members of the LGBTQ+ community. Below are ideas for ways to foster an inclusive and safe environment.

EVENT SECURITY AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- Conduct safety assessments of locations.
- Check if security upgrades are necessary.
- Contract reputable security companies.
- Support municipal security preparedness and prevention techniques.
- Build protective factors to identify and mitigate potential threats.
- Providing extensive training to volunteers and staff members on safety protocols, emergency response.
- Develop incident response plans, procedures and conflict de-escalation techniques.
- Take robust security precautions and appropriate measures to keep the event safe.
- Work with appropriate law enforcement authorities and the local security agency team to coordinate a comprehensive security plan to protect your delegates.
- Build trust with local security partners and raise awareness of potential threats.
- Help communities come together to address risk factors.
- Report concerns to emergency authorities to mitigate security risks.

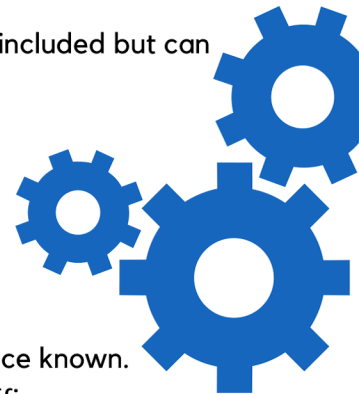


GUIDELINES: MEETINGS PLANNERS



FOR ALL MEETINGS SERVICES

- Request a list of LGBTQ+ local businesses that provide services for your meeting needs from the destination. If the list is not available, require that they develop one.
- Work with the local LGBTQ+ Chambers of Commerce to find local businesses to support your meeting.
- Reach outside regular networks to attract diverse participants.
- Request business partners to provide administration policy documentation, such as HR policy, recruitment policy, and purchasing processes.
- Check if business partners have protection against discrimination policy.
- Request for evidence on cooperating with local NGOs, certification, or awards for supporting LGBTQ+ communities.
- Check if business partners have signed or made a commitment to a global standard on DEI.
- Create a DEI pledge and Codes of Conduct that can also be included to explicitly state your expectations and standards.
- Acknowledging DEI pledges and Codes of Conduct as a requirement during registration, ensuring that all attendees are aware of conduct expectations.
- Set up a DEI committee/working group to help reach out to their networks.
- Share best practices and benchmarks to assist companies in meeting their commitments and responsibilities to global LGBTQ+ equality.
- Host an LGBTQ+ reception or networking event. This makes LGBTQ+ attendees feel included but can also create opportunities for partnerships, encouragement, and community building.



PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

- Advertise in LGBTQ+ media, as well as local and national media to make your presence known.
- Create a Code of Conduct and highlight it in emails pre-shows and place in high-traffic areas.
- LGBTQ+ inclusive language in all communications is important. Communications are some of the first contacts that attendees have with a program, so all language must be inclusive and non-discriminatory.
- Create an inclusive and accessible social media presence.
- Create an Inclusive Language Guide for communications with members.
- Develop special logos and campaigns to demonstrate LGBTQ+ inclusiveness and support.
- Encourage conference sponsors to consider promoting their diversity.
- Create a legacy by working with sponsors and partners by providing scholarships for increased access to your events, and host career fairs and other sessions to provide an on-ramp for access to careers in your industry.
- Identify public information on creating partnerships and projects with local LGBTQ+ NGOs.
- Plan a legacy project within the LGBT community that raises awareness and enhances social impact.
- Curate narratives and factual representation on the merits of DEI as a human rights shield and a revenue generation strategy.

GUIDELINES: MEETINGS PLANNERS



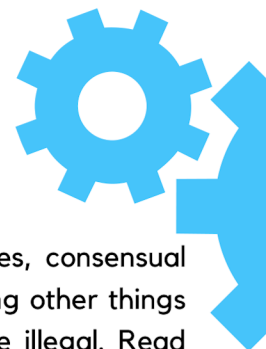
SPEAKER PROGRAM

Diverse speakers amplify voices that may not be heard otherwise. Consider:

- Include a wide variety of speakers from different backgrounds, including those in the LGBTQ+ community.
- Reach outside regular networks to identify new speakers and to attract diverse participants.
- Plan a "green room/area" for speakers to relax and prepare.
- Plan tech practice, dress rehearsals and give feedback on content for speakers.
- Create a mentor program for new speakers.
- Consider giving speakers a plus one complimentary entry for a supporter/friend.
- Use inclusive language for speakers/presenters at the event and avoid exclusive language like "guys", "Ops guys", "dudes", etc.

DELEGATE EXPERIENCE

- Instruct your security to identify potential visitors who may be intolerant or potential threats to diverse audiences.
- Use personal pronouns in email signatures to avoid assumptions based on name or appearance.
- Encourage staff to wear pronoun badges at events to create an open and inclusive environment.
- Make sure that gender-neutral bathrooms are present onsite. Even if it is converting one previously gendered bathroom to a gender-neutral bathroom, this must be offered for attendees. Attendees should be made aware of these bathrooms, which can be done in event apps. All staff should be made aware of where gender-neutral bathrooms are located to assist attendees.
- Pronouns can be included as a part of registration and included on name badges.
- As a part of the check-in process badges and LGBTQ+ ribbons can be added and displayed on lanyards, to show support, and pride and foster inclusion.
- Make sure your participants feel safe.



ON-SITE PERSONAL SECURITY & SAFETY

- Consider sharing these practical tips to your delegates beforehand:
- Remember you are subject to the laws of the country where you travel. In many countries, consensual same-sex sexual activity, public gatherings, or dissemination of pro-LGBTQ+ material—among other things relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics—may be illegal. Read country information for your destination for more details.
- Be cautious of potentially risky situations.
- Watch out for entrapment campaigns. Police in some countries monitor websites, mobile apps, or meeting places, so be cautious about connecting with the local community.
- Be wary of new-found "friends." Criminals may target or attempt to extort LGBTQ+ foreigners.
- LGBTQ+ neighborhoods or resorts can be quite segregated. Be aware that attitudes in surrounding areas can be much less accepting.
- Be prepared for emergencies and remain aware of circumstances that may place you at risk.
- Assess, observe, and evaluate locations and suspicious behaviors, including information to mitigate potential risks.
- Obtain help when necessary.
- Listen to local authorities and public safety officials.

GUIDELINES: DESTINATIONS



These guidelines are for those working in municipal, city, local or regional authorities, Convention Bureaus, tourism offices, DMOs, DMCs and associated professions.

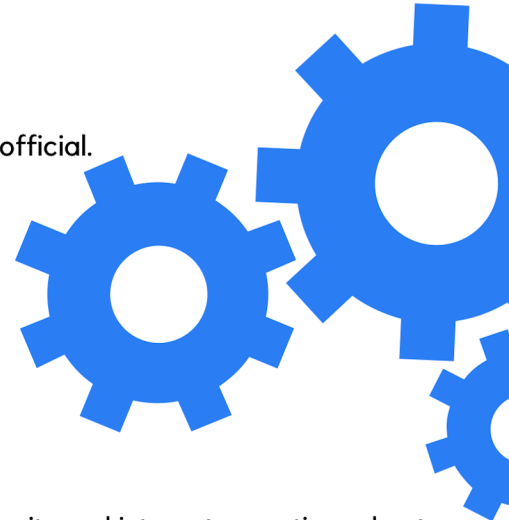
Measures of how supportive the city government is of the LGBTQ+ community incorporates:

- The development and management of the necessary appropriate and relevant public services to enable enterprises to be more LGBTQ+ diverse and inclusive.
- Adoption and promotion of LGBTQ+ friendly business certification.
- The identification and stimulation of good DEI practices.
- Providing economic instruments and coverage in marketing as incentives.
- Building capacity in providing enterprises and communities with the knowledge and skills to improve their DEI management.
- Availability of LGBTQ+ resources on the city's website.
- Functioning city LGBTQ+ advisory committee.
- Positive messaging, including a public statement from the most senior city official.
- Supporting Pride events without government restriction.
- Maintaining regular feedback from stakeholders on DEI efforts.
- Adherence to international standards on human rights.
- Helping LGBTQ+ businesses thrive.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Reach out to local LGBTQ+ organization's to:

- Create authentic relationships within your LGBTQ+ local community.
- Monitor experiences of LGBTQ+ people concerning well-being and safety in the city and integrate questions about acceptance of sexual orientation and gender identity into existing local surveys and monitoring instruments.
- Initiate or support networks, round tables, task forces or focus groups with relevant local stakeholders about issues faced by LGBTQ+ citizens and organize workshops, panel discussions and testimonies to share good practices and learn from others.
- Engage with LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations and request information about LGBTQ+ citizens and the LGBTQ+ people's human rights.
- Establish or develop partnerships with local NGOs for LGBTQ+ issues, human rights, and anti-discrimination.
- Collaborate through networks such as the Rainbow Cities Network or established city partnerships to promote the reduction of discrimination and the creation of equal opportunities for LGBTQ+ people.
- Join regional, national, and international networks to enable exchanges of good practice and experience.
- Ensure active, regular, and structured involvement of civil society and social partners in the understanding and management of LGBTQ+ matters.
- Create a dedicated LGBTQ+ forum or platform that includes civil society groups representing LGBTQ+ people.
- Use established international relations such as city partnerships or international networks of municipalities to encourage municipal LGBTQ+ inclusion in other cities and support other cities.
- Take LGBTQ+ NGOs into account and invite them to participate in municipal round tables, and working groups, in the development of action plans for relevant topics, including LGBTQ+ inclusive workplaces, families, youth, senior citizens, and cultural diversity.
- Identify local organizations that need awareness raising of specific issues that could be potential partners in creating community legacies.
- Encourage and support projects and events for the exchange between LGBTQ+ citizens.
- Consult your international "partner city" to see if aligning support can provide new avenues to solutions.





SERVICES

- Appoint a contact person or liaison officer, which could be the municipal LGBTQ+ policy advisors, for LGBTQ+ NGOs and citizens to input ideas, and report issues.
- Create an LGBTQ+ Inclusion Strategy and a Strategy Committee to oversee the strategy's implementation.
- Sign an international declaration or oath, committing to human rights on LGBTQ+ matters such as a Diversity Charter.
- Become more present in industry organizations that reflect communities that have been impacted by the expressed policies of the destination's legislature.
- Speak up and maximize your platform while meeting with your stakeholders.
- Provide or promote tourist services specifically targeted towards LGBTQ+ people through targeted distribution materials, websites, public information boards, the promotion of local LGBTQ+ events, city tours, guided and audio walking tours on local LGBTQ+ history and points of interest.
- Create a safer environment for the LGBTQ+ community and promote your destination as a safe and open one, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways and offering a satisfying and fulfilling experience for all visitors.
- Provide information on your efforts to create a safer, more secure environment for the LGBTQ+ community and maps including the location of LGBTQ+ friendly businesses, safe spaces, and no-go areas.
- Run awareness-raising campaigns on the state of LGBTQ+ equality and LGBTQ+ rights, ensuring the distribution and dissemination of factual information on the diversity of LGBTQ+ people, overcoming stereotypes, and specific national contexts.
- Ensure the use of positive images of LGBTQ+ people, events, and their contributions in publications.
- Use LGBTQ+ inclusive language in official communications, forms, and documents.
- Ensure LGBTQ+ representation and inclusion in your city profile.
- Advertise in LGBTQ+ media.
- Become a member of the Global Diversity Alliance.





VISIBILITY & EVENTS

- Sponsor national, regional, and local LGBTQ+ associations and their events.
- Host an event that promotes an international cause for LGBTQ+ equality such as Pride, Gaygames, Outgames and ILGA congresses.
- Support LGBTQ+ event organizing committees, contribute to the proposals for hosting an international event, host a welcome reception or deliver a keynote speech at the event itself.
- Create designated web pages on websites that refer to LGBTQ+ events.
- Demonstrate support for LGBTQ+ citizens and create visibility by observing days of LGBTQ+ importance through official declarations, regular press releases, participation in LGBTQ+ events (such as the local Pride parade) and the raising of the Rainbow Flag in front of the city hall, other public buildings or by illuminating public buildings or sights in rainbow colors.
- Consider LGBTQ+ organizations and individuals to present awards to organizations or individuals who have made a great contribution to the municipality.
- Honor the contribution of local LGBTQ+ organizations and individuals by inviting them to a reception in the city hall and/or by the mayor to thank them for their contributions.
- Include LGBTQ+ history and points of interest in general tourist services such as information materials, city tours, guided and audio walks, and public information boards.
- Support and fund LGBTQ+ events, queer arts, theater, film, or music festivals.



ENCOURAGING BUSINESSES

- Work with local LGBTQ+ organizations including the LGBTQ+ Chambers of Commerce to create a list of local LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+ friendly businesses.
- Create designated web pages on websites that refer to LGBTQ+ friendly businesses.
- Award certificates or labels for LGBTQ+ friendly establishments and for providers who have undergone training and are sensitive to LGBTQ+ clients.
- Create or support networks that foster exchange and education for LGBTQ+ inclusive employers, employment agencies and other stakeholders.
- Contribute to LGBTQ+ friendly hospitality sector by offering or supporting training for owners, managers, and staff.
- Develop guidelines for employers dedicated to LGBTQ+ inclusion and train staff and service providers on LGBTQ+ issues.
- Set standards or anti-discrimination clauses for LGBTQ+ inclusive employers and include them in all contracts with partners and service providers for the municipality.
- Include requirements on equal treatment of LGBTQ+ people in recruitment and purchase procedures for service providers.
- Give incentives to companies wanting to become LGBTQ+ friendly employers and hire LGBTQ+ people.
- Leverage your creativity positively in how you invest in organizations that were built on the principles of DEI.
- Raise awareness, provide information, and offer training to local businesses, stakeholders and employers about LGBTQ+ people, their lives and the experiences, challenges faced by LGBTQ+ employees, LGBTQ+ discrimination in recruitment processes and at the workplace as well as possible preventive measures and how to deal with LGBTQ+ employees adequately and respectfully.



GUIDELINES: SUPPLIERS, VENDORS AND BUSINESSES

Businesses should consider activities and advocacy that aims to cover all these:

- Improving LGBTQ+ people's lives throughout the world.
- Adhering to international standards.
- Showing your authentic and consistent commitment to the LGBTQ+ community.
- Helping your business thrive.

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Diversity management can amplify and strengthen the value of diversity in organizations. Many organizations use their existing corporate culture in this process. Such as;

- Guidance and a well-developed strategy are needed to achieve these goals.
- Diversity should be promoted within the organization through a variety of means.
- This could be a mentoring program, a workshop, a brochure at a company event, diversity week or diversity day.
- Signing up for a diversity charter should be communicated to employees throughout the year, as the very fact that the company has signed up for the charter helps to raise awareness among employees and partners alike.
- Benchmarking your DEI efforts, strategy, priorities and roadmap progress against global standards, and gain visibility and credibility through independent third-party verification and certification.

INFORMATION GATHERING

- Create authentic relationships within your LGBTQ+ local community.
- Engage with LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations and request information about LGBTQ+ citizens and the LGBTQ+ people's human rights.
- Educate yourself about LGBTQ+ lives and consider potential ways your actions might discriminate against them and identify ways to fix this.
- Become more present in industry organizations that reflect communities that have been impacted by the expressed policies of the destination's legislature.
- Engage with NGOs about the specific issues and experiences of the LGBTQ+ community, this offers the possibility for the community's needs to be considered in the decision-making processes.

POLICIES

- Develop organizational policy guidelines with an intersectional approach, considering race, sexual orientation, identity, gender, income, and social class, including refugees, BIPOC, migrants, and handicapped people.
- Promote the deployment of international norms and standards, such as the ones suggested by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), through their Diversity in the Workplace national organizations. For instance, ISO 26000 on Corporate Social Responsibility has human rights as a core subject.
- Promote equality in all business relationships, preventing discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics.
- Establish regulations and provide guidelines for specific situations encountered by LGBTQ+ at the workplace, where regulations do not yet exist by law, such as parental leave for LGBTQ+ parents; leave for gender-affirming surgeries for trans employees; free choice of gendered work attire; change of name, the form of address, e-mail address, etc. for employees reporting a change of their gender identity (transition guidelines).
- Appoint a staff member or a manager for DEI.
- Provide guidelines and a contact person within the administration to help managers and employees deal with specific needs or possible conflicts concerning employees' sexual or gender identity or expression.
- Define operational action plans to establish a more inclusive workplace for LGBTQ+ persons.
- Support international agreements on equal rights for LGBTQ+ persons in the workplace.



GUIDELINES: SUPPLIERS, VENDORS AND BUSINESSES

LEADERSHIP

- Search for and apply for seats as Board members or working group representative positions on committees aiming to educate, advocate, engage and empower the tourism and events industry.
- Encourage leadership to commit to valuing DEI throughout the organization and message this publicly as well as internally.
- Ensure that leadership exhibits behaviors that align with DEI principles.
- Become an LGBTQ+ inclusive employer and set an example for other local employers.
- Connect other businesses with the LGBTQ+ business community.

HUMAN RESOURCE ISSUES

- Establish a company culture that embraces LGBTQ+ diversity, e.g. by establishing an LGBTQ+ employee network or taking part in the local Pride parade as a company and inviting all employees to join.
- Adopt a zero-tolerance culture for discrimination of staff based on their sexual or gender identity or expression.
- Include discrimination against LGBTQ+ staff in the administration's anti-discrimination and compliance regulations.
- Include requirements on equal treatment of LGBTQ+ people in recruitment.
- Train the human resources department about LGBTQ+ discrimination in recruitment processes.
- Advertise job offers on platforms and participate at job fairs targeted towards LGBTQ+ people.
- Provide LGBTQ+ awareness-related training on the implementation of diversity inclusion programs, challenges, and experience, and monitor the achievements.
- Promote awareness among members and other employees about the value of DEI in the workforce.
- Provide restrooms, changing rooms and shower rooms for all genders.

COMMUNICATION

- Ensure fact-based communication that contributes to improving the social acceptance of LGBTQ+ people.
- Create visibility for LGBTQ+ communities and raise awareness about sexual orientation and gender identity via media campaigns.
- Issue annual progress assessment reports and studies regularly, including actions and future steps promoting LGBTQ+ communities and businesses.
- Communicate company values and culture that explicitly values the diversity of its staff including LGBTQ+ staff.
- Represent the company values of LGBTQ+ diversity, equity and inclusion in company communication, i.e. using a language including all genders, LGBTQ+ individuals, relationships, and families in oral, written, and pictorial language.
- Advertise in LGBTQ+ media.
- Join professional networks for LGBTQ+ inclusive employers and learn from other employers.

AUDITING AND CERTIFICATION

- Sign pledges or mission statements for LGBTQ+ inclusive employers.
- Take part in audits for LGBTQ+ inclusive employers.
- Apply for awards for LGBTQ+ inclusive employers.
- Recognize best practices via prizes, labels, and public presentations.
- Promote LGBTQ+ role models in the workforce.
- Become a member of the Global Diversity Alliance.





ARE BANS AND BOYCOTTS THE SOLUTION?

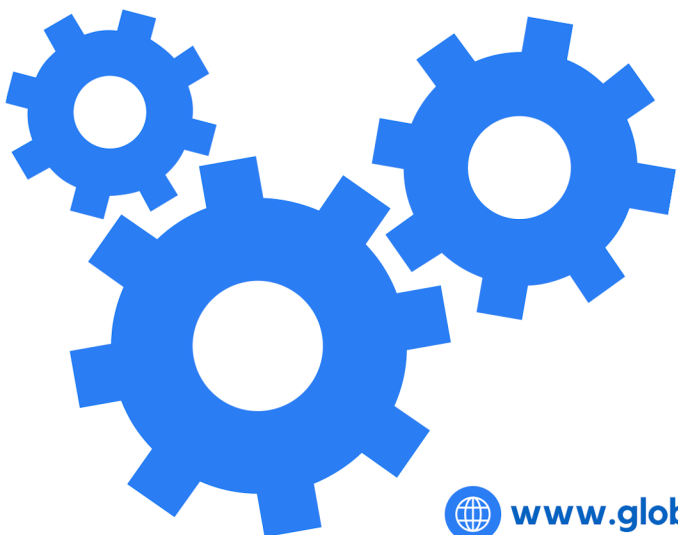
When legislation is introduced impinging on LGBTQ+ rights, it is not only the LGBTQ+ community that opposes such laws. It is usually their allies and corporations that raise concerns too. Some of the most ardent opposition comes from the business sector. Corporations have leveraged their potential capital gain and employment opportunities that they can bring to a state or a country and pushed back on legislation with various threats of action, all aimed at the detriment of the political lawmakers. Many of these corporations feel that it is their corporate duty to ensure their business is also engaging for the good of society. Many believe that they appeal to a broader base in the community and seem "people friendly" by these actions. Some are guided by their CEO's personal conviction or narrative. Whatever the reason, we have seen corporations taking a stand against legislation that they deem to go against the current social grain and trends.

Many other questions, arise when looking at boycotting, such as when companies apply pressure, do governments halt anti-LGBTQ+ legislation or revert them? Do boycotts benefit those that are targeted by anti-LGBTQ+ laws? Can boycotting businesses be an effective tool or weapon in combating discriminatory laws being enacted? How effective are corporate boycotts in impacting countries?

Boycotts are an act of nonviolent, voluntary abstention from a product, person, organization, or country as an expression of protest. It is usually for moral, social, political, or environmental reasons. The purpose of a boycott is to inflict some economic loss on the target, or to indicate a moral outrage, and to try to compel the target to alter an objectionable behavior. In our case, compelling heads of state, Presidents, or Governors to alter their behavior is a far cry, perhaps even futile.

Boycotting is not a new idea. The first boycott was by Irish nationalist leader Charles Parnell and the Irish Land League which successfully employed the tactic against the agent of an absentee landlord in Ireland – Captain Charles Boycott in 1880.

Since then, the boycotting of destinations has been also used as a tool in diplomacy. One of the most notable destinations and event boycotts was the XXII Summer Olympic Games in Moscow, Soviet Union, where 66 countries boycotted the games (45% of countries) in 1980, at the initiation by the U.S.A. to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979. As the Soviet army withdrew 10 years from Afghanistan on 15 February 1989, one would concur that the boycott was unsuccessful. Most academia point to the fact that most boycotts do not have any appreciable impact.





BOYCOTTING : THE CASE FOR

In the case to boycott or not, one should consider that:

- Boycotts can draw attention to specific issues or injustices happening in a particular location.
- Help educate people about the underlying problems and encourage discussion and action.
- Put pressure on the local government or authorities to address the concerns raised.
- Mobilize those suffering any economic consequences into demanding and creating change.
- Show solidarity with marginalized or oppressed groups within a destination.
- Display a sense of support and encouragement for those struggling against injustice.
- Inspire locals to continue their fight for change.

BOYCOTTING : THE CASE AGAINST

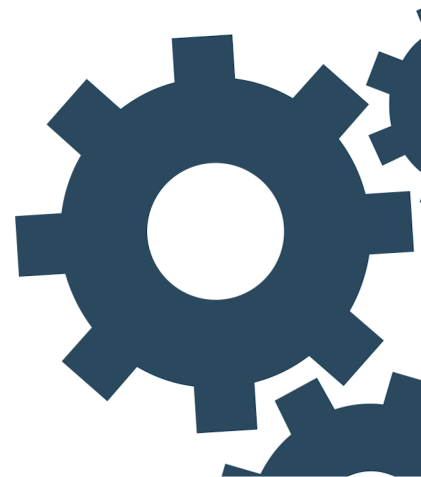
While these sound very noble and worthy reasons to boycott a destination, one needs to consider:

- Competing space: there are hundreds of boycotts every year, and people lose interest quickly.
- The large amount of effort constantly needed for "boycotters" to maintain a public presence around the boycott can be exhausting and overwhelming.
- Usually, the number of people typically involved is too small to make a market difference.
- Impacts typically revolve around the more modest goal of attracting media attention, not the loss of income.
- The power still lies in the decision-makers and not the local community.
- Boycotts usually impact those most vulnerable.
- The potential lashback by governments into further punishment or stricter measures on those very communities the boycotts are planned to support.

LACK OF ETHICAL DESTINATIONS

Another rather compelling reason to reconsider boycotts is that when under scrutiny, it would be hard to find a single destination that is ethically sound and has a clean record. If we were to boycott every nation, due to either human rights violations, lack of environmental protection, animal cruelty, social injustice, maltreatment of citizens, human trafficking, anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, sweatshop labor, illegal wars, capital punishment, government corruption or political imprisonment, we would be left with just a handful of destinations which we would be comfortable visiting. Even destinations that seem to be ethically foolproof have issues of concern like Australia with its treatment of its indigenous populations or Norway which has opted out of the commercial whaling moratorium.

Destinations would do best in understanding the perceptions and social narratives being circulated about your destination's image and reputation. Early identification of potential negative backlash can be curtailed with a successful implementation of PR strategies together with action related impact.





10 REASONS WHY DESTINATION BOYCOTTS FAIL

1 Negative Impact on the Local Economy.

Boycotts can have unintended consequences and inadvertently harm the local population, especially those who rely on visitors for their livelihoods. Businesses may suffer the most with job losses or financial hardship due to a decline in visitors, while government authorities may be less affected. The boycott's negative economic impact could disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, creating a power imbalance and reducing the leverage of the boycott.

2 Limited Effectiveness.

The success of a destination boycott largely depends on its visibility and the level of support it receives. If the boycott fails to garner significant attention or participation, its impact on the destination and the targeted issues may be minimal. Moreover, governments or authorities may be resistant to external pressure, and change might not occur as quickly as desired.

3 Loss of Cultural Exchange.

Tourism and events often facilitate cultural exchange and understanding between visitors and locals. By boycotting a destination, the opportunity for dialogue, learning, and mutual understanding may be lost. Engaging with locals can provide insights into their perspectives, potentially contributing to positive change in the long run.

4 Alternative Economic Consequences.

While a boycott may aim to exert economic pressure on a destination, it may inadvertently redirect economic activity to neighboring destinations that might have their issues or challenges. This redistribution could create winners and losers among destinations, potentially exacerbating disparities.

5 Lack of Widespread Support.

For a destination boycott to have a significant impact, it needs broad support from various stakeholders, including visitors, travel companies, and local communities. If the boycott fails to generate sufficient awareness and participation, its effectiveness may be limited. A lack of consensus or conflicting views on the issue can also hinder the success of a boycott.

6 Difficulty in Sustaining Momentum.

Boycotts require sustained commitment and effort to exert pressure on the targeted destination. Over time, maintaining the momentum and engagement of boycott participants can become challenging, particularly if the issue fades from public attention or if the boycott lacks a clear strategy or leadership.



7 Complexity of Issues.

Many social, political, or ethical issues that trigger destination boycotts are complex and deeply rooted. Resolving these issues often requires comprehensive and long-term solutions that go beyond the impact of a boycott alone. If the underlying problems are deeply entrenched or if they involve systemic issues, change may be slow and difficult to achieve through a boycott alone.

8 Lack of Alternatives or Viable Substitutes.

In some cases, boycotting a destination may not offer clear alternative options for travelers who still want to engage with the culture or support the local population. This can make it difficult for boycott participants to redirect their tourism spending and actions elsewhere, limiting the effectiveness of the boycott.

9 Government and Authority Resistance

Governments and authorities in the targeted destination may resist external pressure and attempt to change their policies or practices. They may be unwilling or unresponsive to the demands of the boycott, making it difficult to achieve the desired outcomes.

10 Counterarguments and Competing Interests.

Destination boycotts can generate debates and counterarguments from various perspectives. People with differing opinions may challenge the reasons for the boycott, creating a complex dialogue that dilutes the impact or effectiveness of the boycott.





PARTNER WITH LGBTQ+ CIVIL SOCIETY

Your most important partner is the local LGBTQ+ advocacy organization. Engaging in a meaningful, consistent, and open dialogue with them will be able to open many doors and create solutions in ensuring that you are making the best possible decision with the most applicable information. Most larger destinations do have advocacy groups, with many city tourism offices employing a DEI manager or liaison officer. They can help advise on the local situation in helping you make your decision. They also can provide information on how to potentially mitigate any concern about supporting the destination despite anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. LGBTQ+ organizations often provide useful information and good resources including tools for evaluating national human rights records.

LGBTQ+ organizations can:

- Explain the background of local discriminatory legislation.
- Advise you best on whether you should continue with planning your event in the destination and how you can really make meaningful change.
- Discuss current events regarding anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.
- Suggest recommendations on how to conduct socially responsible business in areas with anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.
- Inspire entrepreneurial creativity in mitigating the adverse effects of anti-legislation by contributing positively to potential sustainable social change.
- Provide external resources regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people within events.
- Advise on tools to assess, guide and/or evaluate destinations.
- Recommend service providers and businesses, in general, business tips on DEI management.

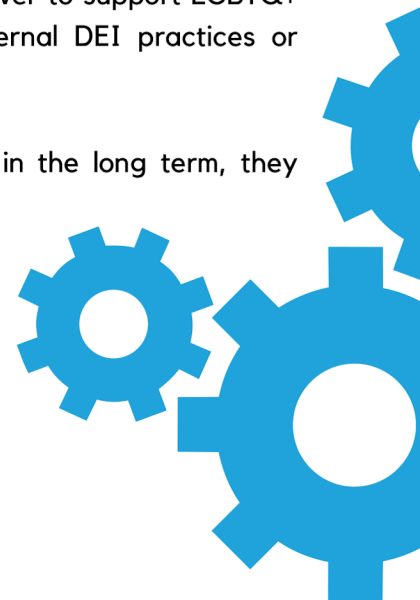
WHAT IF THERE IS NO ACTIVE LGBTQ+ SOCIETY?

Check with regional LGBTQ+ organizations or general human rights organizations. Regional organizations or general human rights organizations that work on LGBTQ+ issues may exist that can provide information about the situation for LGBTQ+ people in a particular country and what businesses can do to best support them.

Consider other forms of support for the LGBTQ+ community beyond advocacy in very high-risk contexts without civil society, advocacy may not be the most effective support businesses can offer or may actively be harmful. Businesses should then consider other ways to use their power to support LGBTQ+ people, such as working with other businesses in the region to improve internal DEI practices or providing funding to regional organizations working on LGBTQ+ equality.

For organizations to be best prepared when navigating through social issues in the long term, they should note that these could spell disaster:

- Leaving decision-making to a small insular group.
- Lacking company values.
- Underinvesting in internal and external advisory services on social issues.
- Having no crisis management plan.
- Lacking long-term vision.





UTILIZE DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION PRINCIPLES

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have become more than just buzzwords in the business world. Some of the leading economic research and business think tanks, have been churning out reports noting that should companies seriously want to remain cutting edge and to be a top performing organization, then they cannot underestimate the multiple and rippling effect of embedding DEI into the company's corporate cultural DNA. Many organizations have incorporated DEI policies into their annual goals, sales targets, KPIs, communication activities and strategic plans. Initiatives are now part of the event-sourcing strategies of several companies, which, in the end, drive positive change for all. Sourcing decisions need to be based on well- formulated criteria and relevant data capturing in the site selection process. Using DEI criteria in the procurement of goods and services throughout the event life cycle and meeting's supply chain are just one way to guarantee contributing to social impact.

Companies have been making great progress in their DEI efforts in recent years. By employing DEI management principles effectively and communicating those, corporations have not only seen a return on their investments through hiring, product development, and attracting a broader clientele and have also contributed to the betterment of society. At the same time bringing LGBTQ+ issues to DEI teams can bring awareness of the fight that is taking place for equality and hopefully create a positive social impact.

Creating space for conversations on whether boycotting a destination within companies and organizations can put LGBTQ+ issues at the forefront of everyone's minds when thinking about their own areas of responsibility. Whether this is through serving on DEI committees, supporting DEI activities, or bringing these issues into public debate, there are great opportunities to create allies who will join the cause of speaking up for the LGBTQ+ community in destinations.

CREATE A DIVERSITY COUNCIL

To support your efforts, consider assembling a Diversity Council to support your DEI efforts. You should include any of the following individuals as members.

- Various, relevant government departments and agencies
- Regional and local authorities
- Different segments from MICE, hospitality, tourism industry—hotel associations, tour operator bodies
- International MICE, hospitality, tourism trade
- The transport sector (all forms)
- DEI and community-based NGOs
- Cultural heritage bodies
- National parks and other protected areas
- MICE, hospitality, and tourism user groups
- University and educational institution in MICE, hospitality, tourism education and training





MITIGATE SOCIAL IMPACT BY OFFSETTING

Just like companies and individuals that are environmentally conscience offset their carbon credit when they fly, one way to help balance out the unintended consequences of attending a meeting hosted in a destination that doesn't support the values and concerns you, your organization or clients hold, is to "socially offset". By identifying a socially conscious alternative to event and destination boycotts, one has the possibility to make a real and valued impact where it matters. There are communities of people determined to stay true to their values when they travel to or host events. One can have event attendees and business travelers offset spending in destinations where laws do not align with their core values by making it easy to donate to local charities that do. The reference section includes organizations that work in social offsetting.

TRAVEL ADVISORIES

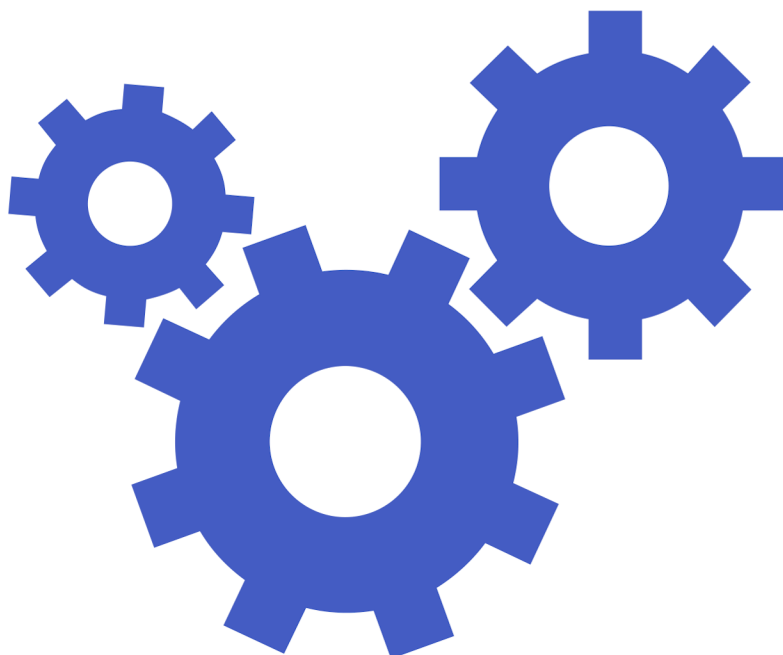
Meeting planners must consult and refer to travel advisories and security reports issued by government bodies (departments in internal/home/foreign affairs) before making decisions. When it comes to legal or insurance purposes, only official government-issued travel warnings are taken into consideration when canceling meetings based on security situations.

TIP: Regularly consult government webpages for travel advisories and local security situations, including threats. Download reports, save URLs and record the date and time accessed. These can be useful in any potential legal proceedings.

Courts of law will not uphold non-governmental issued travel warnings, should you use them to justify an event cancellation.

SAFETY AND SECURITY FIRST

One cannot ignore that the tone and atmosphere have become more dangerous and volatile, especially when LGBTQ+ people's lives are threatened. We also cannot stress enough the importance of being vigilant when in public spaces. Meeting planners have a responsibility first and foremost to ensure the highest possible standards of visitor safety and security for meeting delegates. Only once a planner has a fully robust and in-depth security and safety plan and system in place, can they move to the next stage of planning their event.



COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES



One of the most critical pieces in pulling off an event in a destination with anti-LGBTQ+ legislation is ensuring a robust and bullet-proof communication strategy. As we are dealing with topics that can be difficult or precarious, it is best to ensure that emotions and personal morals do not taint the messaging. Communication needs to be factual, and narratives need to be founded in truth with solid data adding to the messaging. Telling the story embedded in facts is critical to ground people's emotions and allow them to move ahead and into action.

You are also going to need some counterarguments to combat pre-conceived notions and clearly explain the complex issues you are facing. There are organizations that have done substantial work in this area and produced research and reports that we can borrow from to back up our narratives. Here are some facts, narratives and background information that can be utilized in your messaging and communication tactics.

WORLD GOVERNMENTS FIGHT FOR GLOBAL ACTION

The issue of international LGBTQ+ discrimination has been receiving unprecedented attention at the inter-governmental level, with the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights repeatedly calling attention to the need to protect LGBTQ+ persons from violence and discrimination. Political campaigns, parliamentary debates and public manifestations revealed social prejudice and misconceptions about the nature and moral character of LGBTQ+ persons in all regions of the world. Ultraconservative and ultranationalist groups also reclaimed so-called identities at the expense of sexual and gender minorities, challenging advances, and preventing the development of laws and policies inclusive of LGBTQ+ people. LGBTQ+ issues are often used by political and religious leaders to promote a threat to national cohesion, culture, and tradition, during periods of political and socio-economic instability.

In response, world governments started designing and implementing creative strategies and frameworks to promote the social inclusion of LGBTQ+ people. Many countries had made a determined effort to strengthen human rights protection for LGBTQ+ people. In some countries, an array of new laws has been adopted and passed with legislation explicitly protecting LGBTQ+ people from discrimination in housing and access to social security, banning discrimination, penalizing homophobic and transphobic hate crimes, granting recognition of same-sex relationships, and making it easier for transgender individuals to obtain official documents that reflect their preferred gender. Training programs have been developed for police, prison staff, teachers, social workers and other personnel, and anti-bullying initiatives have been implemented in many schools.

Additionally, some countries, regional human rights bodies, and multilateral institutions have made efforts to increase the level of knowledge about LGBTQ+ people and the discrimination and violence they face. Governments are increasingly including aspects of sexual orientation and gender in routine data collection. Concrete actions and statements formulated under the auspices of the United Nations include:

- Adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic bullying.
- Promoting a culture of non-discrimination and acceptance at schools, universities and wider society.
- Emphasizing that LGBTQ+ rights are human rights.
- Asserting that LGBTQ+ people must be afforded dignity and human rights evident in the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 17/19).





ACKNOWLEDGE POSITIVE LGBTQ+ IMPACT ON TOURISM

The UNWTO reported that destination marketing associations were successfully attracting the LGBTQ+ market and were working proactively at gay-targeted expos and fairs. It was found that not only was this market lucrative, but the LGBTQ+ community could combat homophobia in repressive tourist destinations.

Findings and recommendations from the United Nations and LGBTQ+ community included:

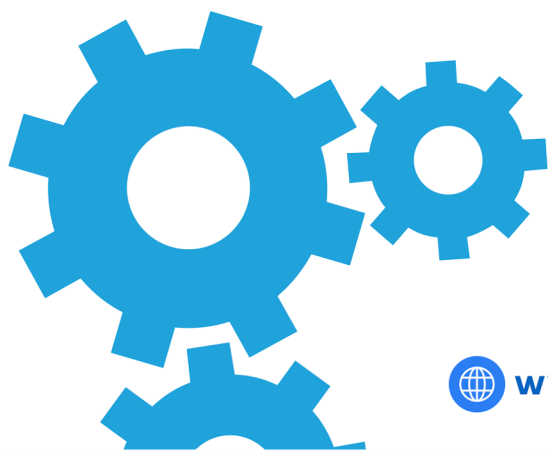
- Tourism has the potential to strengthen the acceptance of LGBTQ+ locals within travel destinations.
- Every step towards equality is a step towards social acceptance and therefore a direct impact on the travel industry.
- Offering responsible tourism in politically challenging countries has been an issue taken up by the United Nations.
- UNWTO developed the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism collaborating with Tourism Watch.
- UNWTO should be obliged to report regularly on the human rights situation in tourism.
- Respecting and protecting human rights is not at odds with economic success, but is a prerequisite for fair, durable, and sustainable development.
- Impact assessments and transparent information on human rights projects.
- Consistent application of human rights with focus on needs and interests of local people and a commitment to strengthening the social and cultural diversity and inclusion dimensions.
- Dialogue with relevant policymakers and tourism professionals.

BUSINESS HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROMOTE LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

Business has a responsibility to respect human rights. Several standards and frameworks also specifically state that businesses should actively work to promote LGBTQ+ equality. Advocating for LGBTQ+ rights mean businesses can meet the duties set out within these standards. It wasn't long before various documentation was produced by various United Nations agencies on LGBTQ+ inclusion, fair equity, and respect for diversity in the business context.

Pioneering the landscape with large global enterprises and the United Nations, collaborations have delivered:

- UN framework for doing business ethically UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- UNDP and World Bank published LGBTQ+ Inclusion Index with Proposed Set of LGBTQ+ Inclusion Indicators.
- International Labor Organization's (ILO) project on dealing with LGBTQ+ discrimination Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: Promoting Rights, Diversity and Equality in the World of Work (PRIDE)
- The World Bank developed research titles Equality of Opportunity for Sexual and Gender Minorities
- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) developed the Standards of Conduct for Business in Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, & Intersex People.
- All countries to develop and enact a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP).



COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES



THROUGH UN SDGS, WE CREATE BETTER SOCIETIES

The United Nations created a set of global goals to end poverty and inequality by 2030. Many LGBTQ+ human rights organizations pushed for the rights and needs of LGBTQ+ people to be considered during the development of this work.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed in 2015 and signed by 193 governments on the basis that they apply to everyone, everywhere. Although the SDGs could have gone further by explicitly calling for LGBTQ+ equality, there is potential to advance equality for all, especially the 'leave no one behind' principle that is relevant for LGBTQ+ people. The goals are a shared responsibility for all – the private and public sector. There are many ways to respond to the needs of LGBTQ+ people in international development and the SDGs provide tangible actions that can be executed in the MICE industry.

INTERNATIONAL TOURISM INDUSTRY STRIVES FOR EQUALITY

When it comes to human rights and tourism, the United Nations has been instrumental in providing policies and guidance in ethical tourism through the official United Nations travel authority – the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The major principles consist of:

- Governments must regulate human rights protection as corporate responsibility and ensure reporting obligations for companies.
- Giving those affected by human rights violations committed by companies access to complaint procedures and courts.
- Governments in tourism destinations must enact laws against human rights violations in tourism.
- Associations should create incentives and sanctions to develop human rights standards.
- Companies must carry out and publish independent social, environmental, and human rights impact assessments of their work.
- Non-governmental organizations must demand compliance with human rights.
- For many businesses in the tourist industry, it no longer matters whether but rather how they address their human rights responsibility.

LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE DESTINATIONS DRIVE BUSINESS

The benefits of an LGBTQ+ inclusive tourist destination have been gaining traction. It was also noted that gay friendliness is an asset in building resilience for urban destinations, even in unstable geopolitical regions. LGBTQ+ tourism is considered a significant market segment, accounting for more than an estimated 6% of the global tourism market.

Little attention had been paid to LGBTQ+ friendliness within the hospitality service marketing research, but a recent study indicated that when a hotel is perceived as being LGBTQ+ friendly customers, the overall perception of the hotel and future stay intentions are increased. The benefits of an LGBTQ+ inclusive tourist destination and the significance of LGBTQ+ tourism is a catalyst for change. Further to this, there is a need to explore issues beyond the demand/supply aspects of LGBTQ+ tourism and shed light on the general context of LGBTQ+ vis-à-vis non-LGBTQ+ tourists in an urban destination.



THE UN PROMOTES LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

The United Nations has been pivotal in supporting LGBTQ+ individuals. It was apparent in the Human Rights Charter, part of the UN's founding charter and one of the first international binding treaties that LGBTQ+ rights were human rights.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has been very active as the forum for national stakeholders to provide updates to the United Nations on the status and development of LGBTQ+ populations and issues. The office notes that discrimination remains a primary obstacle to the enjoyment of basic human rights in all parts of the world.

The first UN resolution on LGBTQ+ (resolution 17/19) at the Human Rights Council expressed "deep concern" at acts of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and requested a study documenting violence and discrimination with appropriate recommendations.

A growing number of governmental bodies and national human rights institutions worked on developing the use of human rights indicators, global initiatives to promote the use of human rights indicators to monitor the implementation of international human rights commitments.

LGBTQ+ HUMAN RIGHTS ARE GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Through Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the promotion of corporate social responsibility and trillions of dollars in ESG financing has boomed. All this evidence that businesses not only have a responsibility to respect human rights but also have an economic case to do so. Governments introducing laws impinging on the rights of marginalized individuals do so at the risk of economic disturbances in the form of boycotts. For meeting planners this poses a dilemma when governments introduce anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

While anti-LGBTQ+ legislation not only violates universal basic human rights but is disastrous to those that suffer directly. Many do not realize the adverse impacts of discriminatory legislation and the loss of long-term economic prospects for individuals, businesses, and countries. It is estimated that the global cost of LGBTQ+ discrimination is USD 100 billion per year.

The potential economic significance of the LGBTQ+ tourism market has caught the attention of researchers, destination marketing organizations and tourism, accentuating the perception of the LGBTQ+ community as a lucrative market, while also indicating the special needs of the LGBTQ+s, especially concerning the need for inclusion and feelings of safety."



CONCLUSIONS



In reading through all this information, one may ask themselves, "Can one person make a change?", While one person cannot completely change the whole world, there are specific actions that can be taken to increase inclusion within your organization and externally with your stakeholders, be that clients or communities. Each action taken builds upon another to bring about large-scale change. Laws against the LGBTQ+ community have become more frequent and more restrictive. These laws not only affect the groups living there, but they affect those who are traveling in for business meetings. With all these laws being passed, groups are having tough conversations about whether to boycott these areas.

While they can be very effective, one must look at the impact of boycotts on those in the affected areas. When marginalized groups live and work in an area being boycotted, they are hit by both the unjust laws as well as losing potential business. Being knowledgeable about what has taken place in the past is important in being prepared when faced with questions from groups holding programs in anti-LGBTQ+ areas.

"Great acts are made up of small deeds." - Lao Tzu

You can be catalysts for change within your company or community by engaging with the topics discussed in these guidelines. From getting involved with DEI efforts to the engagement of management, there are many ways to lead in transformational empowerment. One also has the unique opportunity to impact change in relationships with stakeholders, such as clients. Some clients may be apprehensive about hosting programs in areas with anti-LGBTQ+ laws and rightly so. With many destinations enacting harsh laws that are strongly impacting the LGBTQ+ community, it is understandable that groups are hesitant. There are several different actions that meeting professionals can take to soothe these fears and hesitations.

Active involvement in the community is crucial in fighting against boycotting destinations, especially when those who work and live in destinations with discriminatory laws. Getting involved with local organizations such as LGBTQ+ chambers and other associations can be the first step to making an impact locally. Involvement in the community also increases a professional's network and strengthens partnerships.

Partnerships with LGBTQ+ friendly venues, DMCs, and vendors are vital, especially in areas with discriminatory laws. Having an extensive network of diverse suppliers, you can partner with can help make the event more inclusive and successful. In addition, partnerships with diverse suppliers' support businesses that are part of marginalized communities. Listening is one of the most important things you can do. Be willing and open to having conversations about whether a group feels comfortable about the location of the event. Groups must feel like they have been heard regarding their reasoning for not wanting to hold an event in a specific area. In facilitating a conversation, one can make a positive change in the destination, for their client, a community or simply prevent unnecessary harm.

All stakeholders in the MICE industry need to work together to create meaningful events in areas while protecting those in marginalized communities. Just as they work to intertwine sustainability into events, they can work to intertwine anti-discrimination and DEI principles as well. True change can come if the correct actions are taken for the good of others so that they too can bring their full selves to the table, which has a place for everyone.

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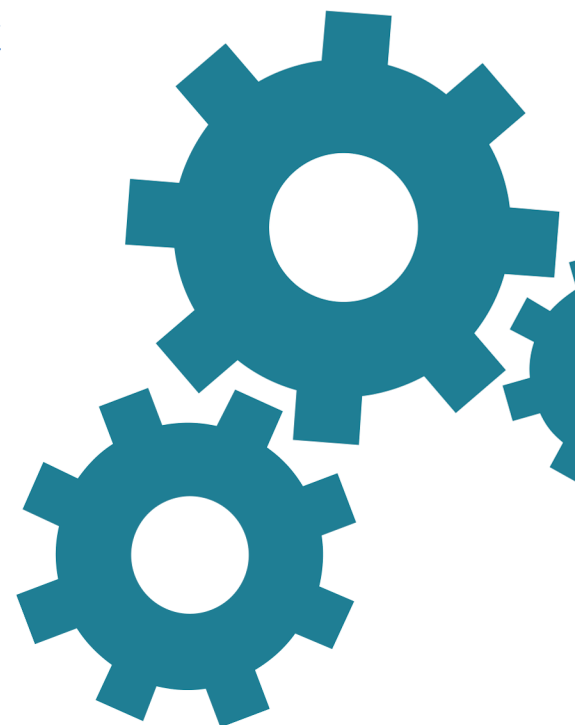
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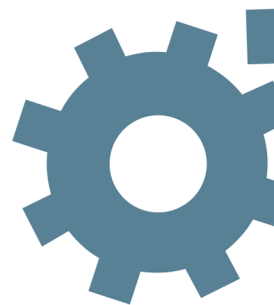
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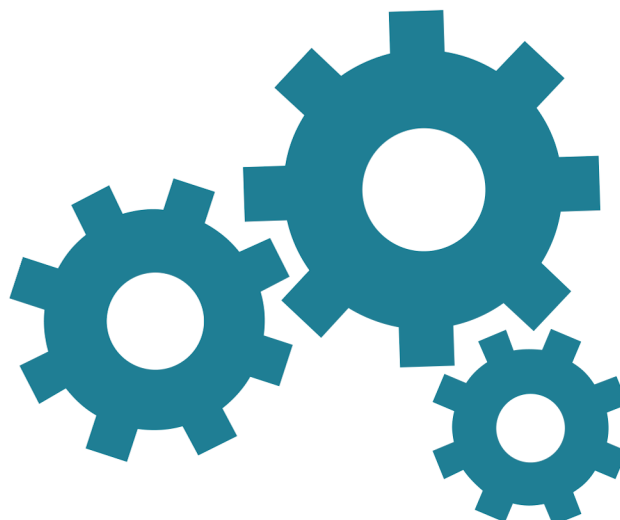
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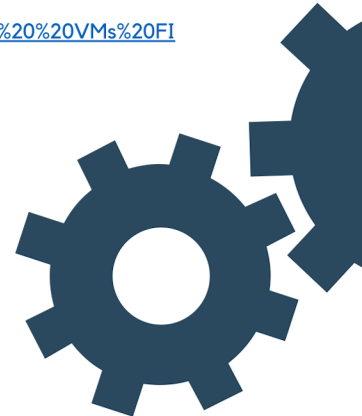
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ABOUT GLOBAL DIVERSITY ALLIANCE



The Global Diversity Alliance (GDA), is committed to connecting, advancing, and empowering the diverse meeting professional. While the LGBTQ+ community is well known for its inclusive and diverse culture, Global Diversity Alliance provides the opportunity for our unique voices to be uplifted, representing, and educating the industry on a broad range of topics about equity, inclusion, and diversity. Our research-driven data provides a more meaningful understanding of our community while sharing best practices for industry leadership.

As a community-based association, with an international membership, we provide exposure across all established meeting sectors. As an inclusive association, we provide an opportunity for all meeting professionals to be a part of the larger goal of inclusion throughout the industry.

VISION STATEMENT

Creating a Global Events Community Where All are Equal, Included and Welcome.

MISSION STATEMENT

Global Diversity Alliance is committed to connecting, advancing, and empowering the meetings and events community through education, research, and idea exchange.

EDUCATION

As one of the pillars upholding its mission, education plays an integral part not just for Global Diversity Alliance or the LGBTQ+ community, but also for the meetings industry and society. Relevant thematic issues, trends, business studies and research are explored and disseminated through various avenues.

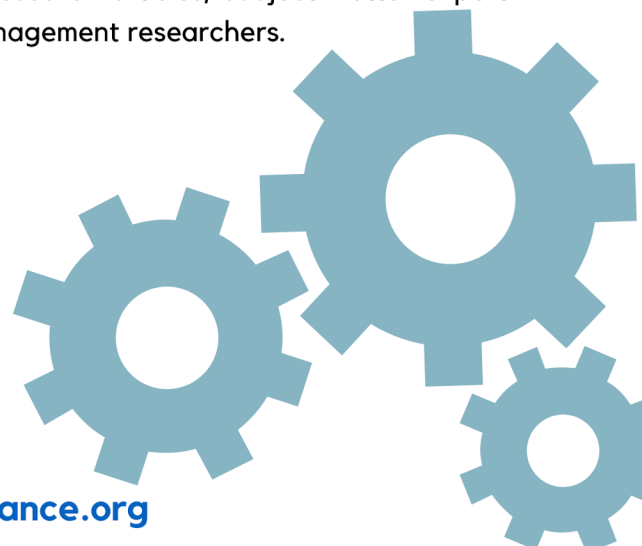
Topics of interest are divided into three categories:

- Professional development in the event, hospitality, and business tourism industry.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion in the event management and meetings industry.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion for businesses.

Our three primary audiences include:

- Diverse meeting professionals.
- the meetings ecosystem.
- businesses, corporations, and organizations.

A specific goal of GDA is to provide up-to-date practical and theoretical education on developments in diversity, equity, and inclusion as management principles to its members. The planning and development of these guidelines are a product of GDA and are based on research articles, subject matter expert scholarly works including from the DEI profession and event management researchers.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Peter Kakucska

Based in Berlin, Germany, Péter Kakucska's life work has been dedicated to shaping a better, more sustainable, inclusive world. Having spent nearly two decades in event management at the United Nations, Péter is a veteran diplomat in sustainability, where he provided crucial support in strategic implementation and international negotiations to world leaders during the landmark Paris Agreement on climate change. Péter has also been instrumental in benchmarking corporate social responsibility, promoting sustainable development and social justice in the event industry amongst others.

Beyond diplomacy, Péter is a keynote speaker and opinion contributor whose dedication extends to championing causes that unite people for the common good and for a better world and has been a driving force in fostering the fusion between diversity, equity and inclusion principles and corporate governance. Péter has managed councils and corporate advisory boards, on diversity and leadership where he creates platforms for positive change by promoting DEI best business practices and management principles. Péter is the President of Global Diversity Alliance, a member of the Association of LGBTQ+ Corporate Directors and Senior Fellow at the Foundation of Global Governance and Sustainability.



Kris Towers

Kris Towers is an experienced event management expert at LEO Events, based in Nashville, Tennessee. He is skilled in planning and executing a diverse range of events, including large conferences, private convenings, luncheons, banquets, trade shows, concerts, and camps. Kris is passionate about creating memorable and impactful experiences for attendees. He excels in both nonprofit and corporate events and has a strong background in leadership, and strategic planning. Kris holds a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Health Promotion and graduated Magna Cum Laude at the University of Georgia, where he also earned recognition as a Presidential Scholar and Dean's List honoree.

Kris's accomplishments extend beyond his professional realm, Kris is committed to community welfare, supporting causes spanning health, human rights, education, economic empowerment, science, technology, and social services. In all his endeavors and with his diverse background in event planning, strong organizational skills, and dedication to creating exceptional experiences, Kris Towers remains a dedicated and accomplished figure in the field of event management.

