

## Community Dialogue Guide

Depending on your grasp of the needs of your community and the needs of queer youth in your program, you may want to explore, provide, or maintain opportunities for meaningful dialog among program staff, community partners, and members of your program community.

If you are unsure or unclear about the nuance behind discussions of [gender identity](#) and [sexual orientation](#) consider starting [here](#).

### Prepare

- Who will be in the room? Staff, families/caregivers, community partners, funders/donors?
- When will it take place? Standing meeting or a special event?
- How will you set up the room? Using the resources you have, how can you set up an environment that supports dialog?

*We recommend a setup with chairs in a circle or semi-circle, with opportunities for participants to move between structured pair, small group, and large group discussions.*

### Intentions and Agreements

Start the discussion in a way that allows everyone to:

- **Understand underlying assumptions and intentions.** Be clear and direct, why are you talking about this topic? What assumptions do people bring with them?
- **Be committed to working through tension.** Many (even opposing) worldviews may be in the room, the purpose of this dialog is to find understanding and connection. Tension and conflict are expected and workable; this does not make room for violence or disrespect.
- **Create consensus for dialog agreements.** Spend time to spell out values and guidelines that the group can agree to respect during the dialog.

#### Suggested materials

- Post-its or index cards for participants to brainstorm values and guidelines.
- Large poster paper to write values and guidelines and post it somewhere visible.

### Sharing Experiences and Perceptions

Once agreements are set, invite people to consider and share their answers to the following questions. *You may choose to ask these in individual rounds or ask them all at the same time as a singular prompt – the best approach will depend on your community’s culture and time constraints/considerations.*

#### Prompts for sharing experiences and perceptions:

- How are you impacted personally by the way our community engages in topics about gender identity and sexual orientation?
- How do you manage these impacts?
- What is your greatest concern about this issue now?

#### Suggested materials

- Post-its or index cards for participants to write down individual answers.
- Large poster paper to capture responses and post somewhere visible.

### Exploring Diversity and Commonalities

*You may choose to ask a portion of these as individual rounds or combine them into a singular prompt – the best approach will depend on your community’s culture and time constraints/considerations.*

#### Prompts for exploring diversity and commonalities:

- How is the community being impacted by the conflicts that come up from the way we engage in topics about gender identity and sexual orientation? What changes are we seeing?
- How has this conflict affected the way we connect with each other? What is the harm that keeps us from addressing the root issue?
- What is causing the problems? What is the history of this conflict? Do we have a different understanding of the history of this issue within our community?
- What values in/from our community can we draw on to address these conflicts? What do we need to know from an opposing point of view in order to address this issue?
- How does our group benefit from and/or suffer from things as they are?

#### Suggested materials

- Post-its or index cards for participants to write down individual answers.
- Large poster paper to capture responses and post somewhere visible.

### Exploring Action

*You may choose to ask a portion of these as individual rounds or combine them into a singular prompt – the best approach will depend on your community’s culture and time constraints/considerations.*

#### Prompts for exploring action:

- What is needed to build relationships with each other, share our experiences, and deepen our understanding of how we are impacted by the issues we discussed?
- What can we do individually and as a community to improve relationships among ourselves?
- What resources do we already have available to us?
- What do we think about current policies and how they promote or prevent solutions? Which policies can address everyone’s needs? What other policy options can we brainstorm together?

#### Suggested materials

- Post-its or index cards for participants to write down individual answers.
- Large poster paper to capture responses and post somewhere visible.

### Closing

As appropriate, thank everyone for their participation. If the organization has follow-up tasks to hold itself accountable (ex. make resources available, change an existing policy, create more opportunities for community building), verbally review what those action items are and set realistic expectations.