NORTHERN
MOSAIC
NETWORK

RAINBOW
WORKPLACE
toolkit

tips for making your workplace
a more equitable space for
2SLGBTQIPA+ people

The Northern Mosaic Network is dedicated to creating a safer space for 2SLGBTQIPA+ youth, through raising awareness about 2SLGBTQIPA+ issues and identities; helping 2SLGBTQIPA+ youth build confidence and capacity across the NWT; being actively anti-racist and challenging colonial systems when delivering programs and services, engaging with communities and collaborating with external partners; supporting families of 2SLGBTQIPA+ people to accept, love, and understand them; providing advice, support, and resources to community organizations and agencies about 2SLGBTQIPA+ issues; providing culturally safe and relevant programming and resources; advocating for a safer and more equitable territory and safer communities for 2SLGBTQIPA+ youth; and running a Rainbow Youth Centre in Yellowknife.

Electronic versions of this toolkit and other resource materials available online at **www.northernmosaic.net/resources**

Everybody deserves to feel safe at work.

According to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, almost one-third of LGBTQ+ Canadians have experienced discrimination in the workplace. A survey commissioned by Telus found that one-third of Canadians don't find their workplace safe or inclusive for gay and lesbian employees, and as high as 45% of Canadians don't find their workplace safe or inclusive of transgender employees. Looking at these statistics, we can assume that there is a likelihood that 2SLGBTQIPA+ employees in workplaces around the North experience homophobia, transphobia, or biphobia in the workplace or feel unsafe at work.

In order for people to be productive and to grow as professionals, they need to feel comfortable at work. For 2SLGBTQIPA+ people, a safe and comfortable workplace might look different than what it looks like for people who are heterosexual or cisgender. Often, people don't realize that their workplace even has 2SLGBTQIPA+ employees, but this is most likely due to the fact that over half of LGBTQ+ Canadians aren't open about their identity at work. This means that there are most likely 2SLGBTQIPA+ employees that you don't know about!

By reading and implementing some of the suggestions in this toolkit, you can create a safer work environment for 2SLGBTQIPA+ employees, as well as 2SLGBTQIPA+ clients or customers that might access your business, company, organization or agency.

Everybody deserves to feel safe at work, and you can help make that happen!

Tip #1: Have the knowledge.

Knowing which words to use and what questions to ask is really daunting, but it's really important. Without having a simple understanding of the challenges and issues of what your 2SLGBTQIPA+ co-workers, staff or employees might be experiencing, you won't be able to establish the policies, procedures and measures to ensure that 2SLGBTQIPA+ people are safe at work.

The Northern Mosaic Network creates and maintains resources on our website. Other good places to learn from are organizations like Pride at Work Canada, Egale Canada, and the Canadian Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity.

You can also contact Northern Mosaic Network about hosting a workshop in your workplace to help educate staff, co-workers, managers and employees about 2SLGBTQIPA+ issues and identities.

- Require that managers, including senior executive leadership, are regularly trained in 2SLGBTQIPA+ inclusion.

- Make books or articles related to 2SLGBTQIPA+ people in your sector available in any workplace libraries or databases.

- Incorporate 2SLGBTQIPA+ content into your organizational newsletter.

- Include 2SLGBTQIPA+ material and training in any staff on-boarding.

- Fund relevant professional development opportunities for all staff and managers that touch on 2SLGBTQIPA+ content.

Tip #2: Be accountable.

More and more, workplaces are creating equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies and procedures that aim to protect all employees from discrimination or violence. However, EDI initiatives often don't go far enough in ensuring meaningful accountability from employers.

Being accountable means ensuring that you aren't only engaging in performative actions (such as participating in a Pride event), but actually being willing to make changes and correct your mistakes when homophobia, transphobia or biphobia show up in the workplace.

Northern Mosaic Network can work with you on creating a safer workplace, where everyone is accountable to their colleagues when they perpetuate homophobia, transphobia, biphobia or other types of anti-2SLGBTQIPA+ violence.

- Instead of "positive space" signage, opt for signage that clearly indicates where people go if they experience workplace bullying or violence. It's impossible to ensure a space completely free from violence, but you can provide your team with knowledge of where to go if they do experience it.

- Ensure that there are strong policies that clearly protect 2SLGBTQIPA+ employees, that are anti-homophobic and anti-transphobic.

- Maintain a meaningful grievance procedure that is clearly communicated to all employees, and ensure that employees know how to put forward concerns.

- Invite everyone to talk openly about the systemic and structural ways that your organization or company could improve to better challenge homophobia and transphobia.

Tip #3: Create inclusive processes.

Most workplaces generally have policy and procedure manuals that include anti-discrimination, human resource policies, strategic plans or other aspects of work. These policies and procedures should be inclusive of 2SLGBTQIPA+ people, experiences and identities.

Even if a workplace doesn't have formal documentation of these processes, they still exist. It's important that the systems within the workplace, whether they're recruiting and hiring processes, day-to-day operational procedures, or forms and documentation, are all considerate of 2SLGBTQIPA+ realities.

Northern Mosaic Network can support you in re-imagining your processes to ensure that they're as inclusive as possible.

- Add 2SLGBTQIPA+ people under your equity hiring practices or policies, and recognize the value that 2SLGBTQIPA+ can bring as members of your team.

- Update forms and policies to include gender neutral options for honorifics (e.g. "Mx."), pronouns (e.g. "they/them"), and other language (e.g. "dependent" instead of "son/daughter").

- Create processes where people who may not use their legal name, such as trans people, are able to use a chosen name in their workplace. This might mean allowing somebody to use a chosen name in their email address, or on their business cards, but could also go further in ensuring confidentiality of employee's legal names in things like staff directories.

- Ensure that employee benefits include unique realities that may apply to 2SLGBTQIPA+ people, such as expanded "family" leave, and coverage of gender-affirming treatment.

Northern Mosaic Network's Rainbow Workplace Toolkit
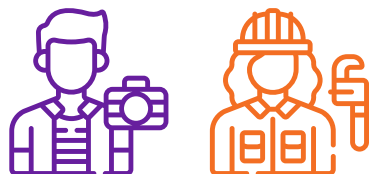
Tip #4: Tangibly support initiatives.

There are tons of ways that your organization can tangibly and meaningfully support 2SLGBTQIPA+ related initiatives and projects. When a company or agency actively supports 2SLGBTQIPA+ causes, it communicates to both your employees and the public that you recognize the value of 2SLGBTQIPA+ communities and experiences.

When it comes to initiatives, there are options for your workplace to support internal activities, meaning things that are happening within your organization, or for your workplace to support community initiatives that might not be specific to your company.

- Start a 2SLGBTQIPA+ employee resource group (ERG) or affinity group that invites 2SLGBTQIPA+ identified employees to collaborate and network within the company.

- Provide significant funding to 2SLGBTQIPA+ initiatives in the workplace, such as your ERG or Pride celebrations.

- Offer employees paid days off to volunteer with 2SLGBTQIPA+ initiatives or events in your community.

- Support 2SLGBTQIPA+ employee-led initiatives that challenge homophobia, biphobia or transphobia in the workplace, or that aim to improve realities for their 2SLGBTQIPA+ colleagues (e.g. a mental health program specific to 2SLGBTQIPA+ people).

- Sponsor or donate to 2SLGBTQIPA+ organizations in your community.

Tip #5: Put a stop to workplace violence.

No matter how many anti-homophobia policies you have, it's still very likely that anti-2SLGBTQIPA+ violence will come up in the workplace. While it's important to remember that allowing anti-2SLGBTQIPA+ discrimination could be ground for a human rights complaint, creating workplaces free from violence should be a priority for all employers simply because it's the right thing to do.

It's important that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour is purposefully addressed by workplace supervisors and managers. This means that employees who report instances of anti-2SLGBTQIPA+ violence or discrimination should be believed and offered protection within the workplace.

- Anti-discrimination policies should explicitly name that discrimination based on gender, gender expression, gender modality, intersex status, sexuality, or relationship status is prohibited.

- Ensure employees have the information they need about how to file a human rights complaint.

- Make sure that management, leadership staff and human resources professionals are trained in spotting and challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the workplace.

- Have policies in place that encourage and protect staff when they stand up to clients, customers or their colleagues who engage in homophobic, biphobic or transphobic behaviour.
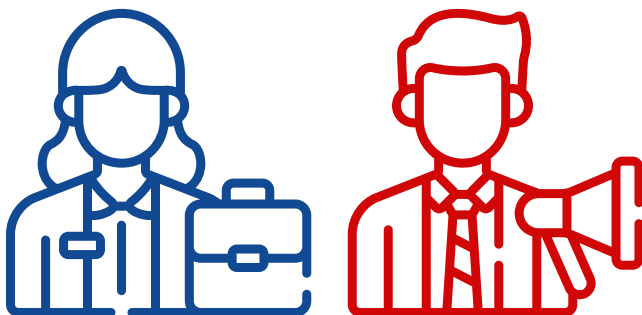
Looking for more help?

If you're looking for even bigger ways to implement 2SLGBTQIPA+ inclusion in the workplace, don't worry. The Northern Mosaic Network is always willing to work with Northern employers in creating safer places for 2SLGBTQIPA+ people.

Get in touch with us

Northern Mosaic Network

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Find more resources

We encourage all employers to check out Pride at Work Canada, an organization that empowers Canadian employers to build workplaces that celebrate all employees regardless of gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

www.prideatwork.ca