

# Introduction

## **OutFront Minnesota: Working Towards Equality for All LGBTQ Minnesotans**

Since 1987, OutFront Minnesota has worked to create a safe, equitable and affirming climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people in Minnesota. For almost three decades, we have been the catalyst for an expansive network of grassroots leaders throughout the state who speak out for equity and organize to create positive change in our state.

# What We Believe

## **Our Mission**

OutFront Minnesota's mission is to create a state where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people are free to be who they are, love who they love, and live without fear of violence, harassment or discrimination.

## **Our Vision**

We envision a state where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals have equal opportunities, protections and rights. We imagine the day when all Minnesotans can live with the freedom, power and confidence to make the best choices for their own lives.

# Why We Exist

Minnesota has made great strides in advancing legal protections and access to benefits for our community by prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQ people in employment, housing, education and public accommodations; by enacting one of the strongest anti-bullying laws in the country; and by passing legislation granting the freedom to marry for same-sex couples.

Despite these gains, we know many LGBTQ people in our state continue to face hate crimes, discrimination, violence, bullying, and rejection from their families, neighbors and faith communities.

Legal protections and access to rights are important, but they do not guarantee equity (a supportive and affirming culture for LGBTQ people). What will it take to ensure all LGBTQ people are able to experience equity - to be embraced for all of who they are? How do we eliminate obstacles to equity for all LGBTQ people? Our answer is in the work OutFront Minnesota will continue until all LGBTQ people in our state are truly free to be who they are and love who they love.

# Our Core Values Are the Keys to Our Success

**Community:** OutFront Minnesota values and strives to reflect the racial, economic, cultural, social, generational and geographic diversity within our LGBTQ and allied community. All voices are critical to achieving our mission, and OutFront Minnesota endeavors to represent the interests of our entire community.

**Collaboration:** We believe partnerships produce optimal results for and within our LGBTQ community. We work in coalition with our allies, and other progressive organizations, to make equity a reality for all LGBTQ Minnesotans.

**Influence:** We believe in our ability to influence individuals, communities and political outcomes by harnessing the power of supporters to help us change hearts and minds and move us toward true equity and full acceptance.

**Self-definition:** We value the right of all individuals to define who they are for themselves.

## Goals and Strategies

OutFront Minnesota commits to:

- Continuing to work toward changing the hearts and minds of Minnesotans in order to make our state a welcoming, accepting, and affirming home for all LGBTQ people.
- Defending the gains we have made.
- Building the power and influence necessary to build on our successes.

Our **strategies and tactics** to achieve these goals include:

- ✓ Educating the public about our community and our issues to increase the support and understanding of LGBTQ people and to address issues of equity.
- ✓ Educating the leaders, staff and volunteers of public and private organizations to promote the equitable treatment of all LGBTQ people.
- ✓ Expanding our leadership development work across the state to create sustainable and self-perpetuating community-based leadership and expertise dedicated to fighting for LGBTQ equity.

- ✓ Building strategic alliances with LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ organizations to support a network of leaders and advance our work for LGBTQ justice and equity, through a focus on:
  - Developing networks among our state's LGBTQ youth and their families to eradicate bullying and mistreatment, strengthen communities, and achieve equity for LGBTQ youth.
  - Eliminating legal barriers and the social and economic disparities among those in our state who are trans and gender non-conforming.
  - Fighting for racial justice for LGBTQ people of color.
  - Organizing for equity in Greater Minnesota.
  - Partnering with faith communities on LGBTQ issues to change hearts and minds.
  - Eliminating social and economic disparities among LGBTQ elders.
- ✓ Advocating for LGBTQ-positive policies, benefits, laws, ordinances, and judicial decisions, on the statewide, local and corporate levels, to advance equity for LGBTQ Minnesotans.
- ✓ Organizing and mobilizing statewide networks of supporters to elect pro-LGBTQ candidates to champion issues of equity and work to defeat attempts to repeal existing protections or to legalize discrimination against Minnesota's LGBTQ community.
- ✓ Provide support and assistance to LGBTQ Minnesotans who are facing fear, abuse, violence and discrimination, to keep them safe and help them thrive as members of our community.

## Conclusion

We will have met our goals when all LGBTQ Minnesotans have equal opportunities, protections and rights; can live with the freedom, power and confidence to make the best choices for their own lives; and can live freely and openly without fear of unjust treatment, harassment or isolation.

# Appendix I: Development of our Strategic Plan: Process and Research

In the fall of 2012, OutFront Minnesota set out to learn what community members, allies, coalition partners, funders and other stakeholders believe are the strengths, challenges and opportunities facing the organization and the movement for LGBT equality in Minnesota.

The first part of this research was used to refine our mission and vision. To inform this effort, we held listening sessions about our history, mission and vision in Duluth, Rochester, Moorhead and St-Cloud, as well as various Twin Cities locations. We also conducted surveys of our Board and staff and an online community survey, which generated responses from more than 300 OutFront supporters and donors.

In 2013, we conducted another survey asking about our future work and direction and met individually with more than 100 stakeholders from around the state. We also conducted another online survey which received over 500 responses from a broad spectrum of supporters and community members.

## **What we learned:**

- OutFront Minnesota's work to advance equity for all LGBT people is not done. While there have been many gains for LGBTQ equality, policy-wise, there is more work to do. Stakeholders advised us to direct our work toward advancing equity for trans people, LGBTQ youth and elders, LGBTQ people living in Greater Minnesota, and LGBTQ people of color.
- We should continue to organize, advocate and mobilize for LGBTQ equity. To create a powerful, durable, diverse and sustainable movement for LGBTQ equity, OutFront should maintain our current focus on organizing, leadership development, electoral work and advocacy for policy change on local, state and administrative levels.
- OutFront Minnesota should continue to build and strengthen our statewide presence.
- Collaboration with LGBTQ and allied organizations, through the building of effective, diverse coalitions, is critical for our work moving forward.
- Our brand is strong, representing our rich history of advancing equity and justice for LGBTQ people across the state.
- Stakeholders also challenged us to better reflect the racial, economic, cultural, generational and geographic diversity of Minnesota's LGBTQ and allied communities and to be more intentional about increasing our work in communities of color, trans communities and communities in Greater Minnesota

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# Appendix II: Theory of Change

OutFront Minnesota does not exist for any one specific policy change or issue affecting LGBTQ people.

Our work is complete when all LGBTQ people are able to live free from the adversity thrust upon them because of who we are and whom we love.

We work to make Minnesota equitable for LGBTQ people by working for positive change through political and grassroots action, public education, community organizing, collaboration, leadership development and by providing legal and anti-violence services to LGBTQ people.