



Upholding Gender Equitable Workplaces

A Handbook For Employers & Investors

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This Handbook Was Created In Collaboration

This Handbook is a collaborative initiative between [Adasina Social Capital](#) and [Trans Women of Color Collective \(TWOCC\)](#), and is designed to drive transformational change across workplace policies by embedding the lived experiences and needs of trans, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary people into practical and proven solutions for companies that create value for employees and shareholders.



Adasina Social Capital

Adasina Social Capital is an impact investing firm that believes investing with social justice values can deliver competitive financial performance and meaningful social progress.

Unlike other firms, Adasina partners with social justice organizations to inform our investment decisions. Our products incorporate our proprietary Social Justice Investment Criteria, a robust set of metrics and datasets that encompass community-defined racial, gender, economic, and climate justice issues. The results are products that only invest in companies that align with core social justice principles.

So, whether your priority issue is ending the climate crisis, advancing the rights of women and gender expansive people, ensuring economic equality, or upholding racial justice, Adasina's products align with your values and enable your portfolio to achieve impact at the scale of the public markets.



Trans Women of Color Collective (TWOCC)

TWOCC is a grassroots global initiative led by trans and gender non-conforming people of color. We work to uplift the lived narratives, experiences, and leadership of trans and gender non-conforming people of color, their families, and comrades while building toward collective liberation for all oppressed people through healing and restorative justice.

Our work is grounded in organizing, culture, and care. Located in Kansas City, our programs create opportunities for trans people to lead, heal, create, and thrive.

We are proud to operate Dee Dee's House, a trans-led transitional housing program named in honor of trans community leader Dee Dee Pearson. This space provides short-term housing, peer-led support, and education.

Introduction

The Upholding Gender Equitable Workplaces Handbook is a first-of-its-kind guide for employers looking to create, strengthen, or reimagine their commitment to affirming the needs of their trans, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary employees.

This handbook has been created for employers who value safe and equitable workplaces for trans employees as well as impact focused investors who recognize that affirming trans rights is not only a moral imperative, but also essential to long-term organizational health, talent retention, and risk mitigation.

Why Does This Handbook Exist?



FOR EMPLOYERS

To provide companies with resources to implement specific policies and practices that foster safe and equitable workplaces for trans employees.



FOR INVESTORS

To help investors understand the business value of trans-inclusive policies and strengthen their shareholder advocacy activities in support of such policies.

How To Use This Handbook

This Handbook is organized around key recommendations identified by trans workers themselves, including detail on why the recommendations are critically important to the safety and well-being of the trans community, insights into best practices for implementing the policies or practices, and real-world examples of corporations and organizations leading the way. It also includes a glossary of helpful terms and definitions at the end.

By leveraging data, firsthand voices, and proven best practices, this Handbook invites investors and employers to advocate for and implement robust policies in support of workplaces that ensure every employee, regardless of gender identity, has fair access to opportunities, resources, and recognition so they can fully contribute and grow.

The Handbook is primarily designed to serve as a set of informed recommendations for employers — specifically human resources professionals — to implement in pursuit of more gender equitable workplaces. For investors, this Handbook is intended to be an educational resource designed to share the business case for implementing trans-inclusive policies and to identify key issues for investors to address through shareholder advocacy work.

That said, in sharing such a resource, it is important that we acknowledge our background. The authors of this report (TWOCC and Adasina Social Capital) offer combined expertise in social justice organizing, advocacy, and impact investment. We are not legal or human resources professionals. The recommendations have been listed in order of feasibility for employer implementation – from most feasible to initiatives requiring more time, investment, or legal consideration.

We understand that every organization exists within its own unique context and constraints. So, we encourage you to move through this document thoughtfully and with intention. Take the time you need to review these recommendations, consider them in the context of your specific organization — the legal, budgetary, and organizational barriers you may be up against — and discuss them openly with trans employees.



We acknowledge that each of these recommendations require varying levels of effort, investment, and legal barriers to navigate. However, we also recognize that worthwhile pursuits are often the hardest to achieve.

Thank you for your commitment to creating accessible, affirmative, and safe workplaces. Transformative change starts here, with every one of us.

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

We primarily use the shorthand “trans” throughout this document to refer to the wider community of transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary individuals. We acknowledge the diverse array of individuals who identify as trans, and seek not to reduce those identities to a single term but rather to make this Handbook accessible to all – regardless of their familiarity with relevant terms.

In the spirit of accessibility, we’ve opted to provide some definitions at the outset of this document to build collective understanding that goes beyond the confines of this resource:

- **Transgender (Trans):** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.¹
- **Gender nonconforming (GNC):** An umbrella term referring to people who do not identify and/or present in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.²
- **Non-binary (NB):** Gender identity that does not conform to traditional binary beliefs about gender, which indicate that all individuals are exclusively either male or female.³
- **LGBTQ+:** a term that encompasses individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual or other orientations.⁴



Photo source: Vice Gender Spectrum Collection (Licensed)

RECOMMENDATION

Formalize an Inclusive Non-Discrimination Policy

A formal commitment by an organization to ensure that all employment-related decisions — such as hiring, promotions, compensation, benefits, and termination — are made without discrimination based on protected characteristics.

Developing and instituting inclusive non-discrimination policies, inclusive of gender identity and sexual orientation is usually easy, inexpensive, and often legally required.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Let's begin with the basics, because workplace inclusion starts with clarity. Drafting and adopting a non-discrimination policy that explicitly protects gender identity and sexual orientation signals to trans employees that they are valued, not just tolerated. When workers feel safe, they are more likely to stay, grow, and contribute meaningfully to their workplace community.

In states where non-discrimination policies are not already required by law, many fail to name gender identity and expression as protected classes, leaving trans employees without recourse. According to the Williams Institute, 82% of trans employees have experienced workplace discrimination or harassment.⁵ That statistic is more than a number — it's a call to action.



Photo source: Vice Gender Spectrum Collection [Licensed]

BEST PRACTICES

- Clearly define and include gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation as protected categories in your organization's non-discrimination policy.
- Ensure policies are applied consistently across aspects of employment, where legally permitted – hiring, termination, promotions, benefits, uniforms, contractors, vendors, etc.
- Establish reporting processes that are trauma-informed, and accessible to people with intersecting barriers.
- Provide ongoing training for supervisors to ensure reporting processes remain inclusive and responsive.

IN ACTION

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an organization that advocates for LGBTQ+ equality, has found that of the total 1,449 participating companies in its annual Corporate Equality Index (CEI) which includes 376 of the Fortune 500 — almost all (98%) participating businesses have gender identity and sexual orientation non-discrimination policies, up from only 5% when the index began in 2002.⁶ Dow has earned a perfect 100 rating from the CEI 19 years in a row, due to its policies explicitly protecting its workforce across sexual orientations and gender identities.⁷



Trans Worker Voices:

Policies mean nothing if they aren't seen, understood, and enforced. We've worked with trans folks who were fired while their companies touted diversity. So for us, a non-discrimination policy is a beginning, not an end. It should be specific, accessible, and backed up by training and action.

- Samantha Jo Dato, Former Director of Operations, TWOCC

LOOKING FORWARD

More than a legal safeguard, an inclusive non-discrimination policy sets the tone for the entire organization. These policies establish accountability and reinforce a culture where every employee knows their dignity and identity are respected. These policies must go beyond vague generalizations and include concrete language and clear enforcement mechanisms. A growing number of companies are making intentional shifts to prioritize trans employee wellbeing.⁸ Organizations that proactively revisit and revise their policies, listening to their staff along the way, are seeing stronger retention and deeper team trust.⁹ This is more than compliance — it's culture-building.

RECOMMENDATION

Offer Equal Family Formation Benefits

Workplace policies that ensure all employees — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or relationship status — have equitable access to resources and financial support for creating and expanding their families.

Offering equal family formation benefits is usually inexpensive, impactful, and easy to implement with minimal legal barriers.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The path to family formation is often more complicated and costly for trans people.¹⁰ Whether through adoption, surrogacy, fertility treatments, or co-parenting models, these family journeys are frequently excluded from standard workplace policies. According to the U.S. Transgender Survey (2022), many trans adults express a strong desire to have children, yet structural barriers — such as limited insurance coverage and restrictive leave policies — create inequitable outcomes.¹¹

Employers that offer inclusive family formation benefits not only support employee well-being but demonstrate a broader commitment to equity.¹² When all pathways to parenthood are valued, the message is clear: every employee's family matters.

BEST PRACTICES

- Use inclusive language in HR policies (e.g., “parental leave” instead of “maternity leave”).
- Ensure benefits explicitly include fertility services and adoption assistance for all employees regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status.
- Where permitted, provide paid parental leave that is inclusive of all family formations — including adoption, fostering, and non-gestational parenting.

IN ACTION

Wells Fargo and Medtronic offer LGBTQ+ and trans inclusive family-building benefits, such as coverage for adoption and surrogacy.¹³ By providing equitable financial and logistical support, these programs ensure employees of all genders and sexual orientations have access to resources for creating and expanding their families.



Trans Worker Voices:

Let's be real, trans and queer people build families differently. But when companies only support nuclear, hetero parenting models, they exclude the very employees who need support most. As a queer trans woman, I've seen firsthand how many of us navigate legal systems, health providers, and even HR departments just to be seen as parents. Equity means not having to justify your family. It means your job affirms you without making you prove your worth.

- Samantha Jo Dato, Former Director of Operations, TWOCC

LOOKING FORWARD

Every family deserves the opportunity to grow with support and care. LGBTQ+ families often navigate more complex pathways to parenthood; whether through adoption, surrogacy, or fertility preservation.¹⁴ Employers who acknowledge and accommodate these needs through inclusive coverage demonstrate leadership rooted in empathy and equity. Providing inclusive family formation benefits is more than fair, it's future-minded. As family structures diversify, so must the systems that support them. Employers who adapt now are building more vibrant, connected teams.¹⁵



Photo source: Kampus Productions (Pexels)

RECOMMENDATION

Draft an LGBTQ+ Benefits Guide

A comprehensive resource provided by an employer or organization that outlines all available workplace benefits specifically designed to support the health, safety, and well-being of LGBTQ+ employees and their families. It ensures transparency, accessibility, and equity by clearly communicating how LGBTQ+ individuals are included in all aspects of the organization's benefits structure.

Developing an LGBTQ+ benefits guide is usually inexpensive, impactful, and easy to implement with minimal legal barriers.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Even when benefits are inclusive on paper, many LGBTQ+ employees encounter challenges in navigating them. A well-designed, accessible guide ensures that TGNC+ staff understand their available benefits and how to access care without additional labor or confusion.¹⁶ When benefits are clearly outlined in an LGBTQ+ inclusive format, workers are more likely to utilize them, and organizations see a higher return on investment in their DEI infrastructure.¹⁷

BEST PRACTICES

- Use affirming visuals and language that represent a range of identities and family structures.
- Provide real-life scenarios or FAQs, with a focus on issues relevant to trans and nonbinary workers.
- Develop a plain-language guide that explains employee benefits, inclusive of those benefits specifically pertaining to trans staff, with an emphasis on accessibility, readability, and clear explanations of what's covered.

IN ACTION

Bank of America's Life Event Services (LES) group provides personalized support to employees during major life events, including gender transition.¹⁸ The team provides resources, benefits, counseling, and more, working with experts inside and outside the company. Additionally, Micron has a U.S. LGBTQ+ Benefits Guide that complements their standard benefits guide.¹⁹ It includes details and resources around health care benefits, family-building benefits, and contacts for support as well as gender-affirming care, dependent eligibility, and concierge medical services for LGBTQ+ employees.



Trans Worker Voices:

When I transitioned jobs, I had no idea what my coverage included. There was no clear path to figure it out. At TWOCC, we've learned that making resources visible and transparent — especially for folks with intersecting identities — isn't optional. It's critical.

- Gianna Salustro, Digital Equity Organizer, TWOCC

LOOKING FORWARD

According to qualitative research published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, lack of communication about trans-specific benefits is a major barrier to utilization.²⁰ Making information visible and understandable shows care beyond compliance—it creates clarity, trust, and access. When employees can see themselves in the materials, they are more empowered to thrive.



Photo source: Vice Gender Spectrum Collection (Licensed)

RECOMMENDATION

Host Gender Equity Trainings

Structured educational sessions — either live, virtual, or self-paced — that aim to increase awareness, build cultural competence, and promote inclusive behaviors toward LGBTQ+ individuals in the workplace or organizational settings. These trainings are a foundational tool for creating environments where gender diverse employees, clients, and community members feel respected, safe, and affirmed.

Hosting gender equity trainings for employees is usually inexpensive, impactful, and easy to implement with minimal legal barriers.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

For workplace equity to be sustained, staff must continually learn about the evolving experiences and barriers faced by trans employees, particularly those at the intersection of race, disability, class, and migration. According to the Williams Institute, trans employees are more likely than any other LGBTQ+ group to experience harassment and discrimination. Workplace education should be ongoing, holistic, and grounded in lived experience.²¹

“

Trans Worker Voices:

When we do trainings at TWOCC, we don't just talk about pronouns — we talk about power. My partner passed away while I was doing this work, and I still showed up because I know this work is life-saving. But we can't keep doing it in spaces that aren't willing to listen or grow. Training without accountability is just lip service.

- LaLa Zannell, Directory of Policy and Advocacy, TWOCC

BEST PRACTICES

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- Develop a plain-language guide that explains employee benefits, inclusive of those benefits specifically pertaining to trans staff, with an emphasis on accessibility, readability, and clear explanations of what's covered.

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Photo source: CC BY 3.0 US Mapbox Uncharted ERG

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RECOMMENDATION

Draft Gender Transition Guidelines

Workplace policies that provide clear, supportive, and respectful processes for employees who are transitioning their gender at work. These guidelines are designed to affirm trans individuals by outlining expectations, roles, and resources during a workplace transition — whether social, legal, or medical.

Hosting gender equity trainings for employees is usually inexpensive, impactful, and easy to implement with minimal legal barriers.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Transitioning on the job should never be a source of stress or stigma. When organizations fail to support gender transition at work, they reinforce harm and jeopardize the mental and emotional wellbeing of trans employees.²⁵ Establishing transition guidelines makes it easier for trans staff to access support without carrying the burden of educating HR or navigating unclear systems.

BEST PRACTICES

- Assign a point of contact (e.g., an HR ally or trained peer) for employees beginning a transition.
- Consider providing paid transition leave for medical or legal processes.
- Develop and circulate written guidelines for workplace transitions, including protocols for name changes, pronoun use, time off, privacy, and team communication.
- Ensure workplace facilities and environments are inclusive of all gender identities.

“

Trans Worker Voices:

A roadmap would have changed everything for me. When we transitioned internally at TWOCC, we built out a plan that wasn't just paperwork — it included dignity, care, and room for conversation. That's what a policy should feel like.

- Samantha Jo Dato, Former Director of Operations at TWOCC

IN ACTION

CVS Health released gender transition guidelines for employees who may be involved in a workplace gender transition.²⁶ CVS Health also offers gender affirmation surgery coverage with no lifetime maximum, that can include facial reconstruction, hair removal procedures, and voice modification therapy.²⁷ Travel benefits are also available for employees who must travel more than 100 miles from their home to receive gender affirming care. In 2011, Google created what many consider to be the gold standard for Trans care and communication.²⁸ Their trans employee feedback loop led to added supports like facial feminization coverage. In 2022, Google also helped create a Trans blog²⁹ that elevates best practices for companies and helps Trans folks enter the tech field at Trans Tech Social.³⁰

LOOKING FORWARD

Workplace transitions shouldn't be treated like uncharted territory or personal problems. When trans employees take steps to socially, legally, or medically transition, they deserve a roadmap from their employer — not confusion or bias. The absence of clear guidelines often forces trans workers to educate their own managers or HR teams while navigating deeply personal change. When transition policies are written in collaboration with trans staff and paired with action, organizations become meaningfully affirming spaces.³¹



Photo source: CC BY 3.0 US Mapbox Uncharted ERG

RECOMMENDATION

Create an Employee Resource Group (ERG) for Trans Individuals

Voluntary, employee-led group within an organization that centers trans identities and experiences to foster belonging, influence inclusive policy, and advance equity in the workplace. These groups serve as critical spaces for community building, advocacy, and institutional accountability.

Creating a trans employee resource group is usually inexpensive, impactful, and easy to implement with minimal legal barriers.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are catalysts for cultural change.³² When funded, empowered, and respected, ERGs amplify marginalized voices and ensure policies reflect the lived experiences of those most impacted. Without meaningful investment, ERGs can become symbolic at best or tokenizing at worst. Employees dedicate substantial personal time to leading ERGs, yet most companies offer little investment, authority, or compensation, with only 41% of businesses paying ERG leads in 2023, down from 43% the prior year.³³ According to the Associated Press, ERGs that are resourced and supported with leadership buy-in have been shown to boost employee engagement, inform policy changes, and provide vital peer support to all employees.³⁴



Trans Worker Voices:

I've seen what happens when voices from the community are invited into decision-making spaces — and I've seen what happens when we're left out," says. "An ERG should never be an afterthought. It should be a leadership incubator.

- LaLa Zannell, TWOC's Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy

BEST PRACTICES

- Encourage ERG-driven initiatives that extend beyond Pride Month.
- Regularly consult ERGs in drafting or revising workplace policies affecting LGBTQ+ employees.
- Provide dedicated funding, leadership stipends, and paid time for ERG responsibilities.
- Ensure ERG leads are represented on key committees or strategy teams.

IN ACTION

Nasdaq supports its LGBTQ+ employees through initiatives such as the OPEN (Out Proud Employees of Nasdaq) network, which offers resources, community, and advocacy for LGBTQ+ staff.³⁵ Furthermore, Dow's LGBTQ+ & Ally Employee Resource Group called "GLAD" plays a key role in advancing gender equity at the company by developing and promoting global standards that affirm transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse employees.³⁶ With ERG leads also empowered to represent a variety of key business activities at Dow, GLAD ensures that workplace practices, from non-discrimination protection to equitable leave policies, actively support trans safety, dignity, and career development.

LOOKING FORWARD

When ERGs are resourced and respected, they serve as both support networks and innovation engines.³⁷ Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) provide space for community, advocacy, and policy advancement.³⁸ Trans employees, particularly those facing multiple layers of marginalization, need space to process and lead from their lived experience. ERGs are most effective when their insights are integrated into organizational decision-making. ERGs that are meaningfully funded, structured, and empowered help trans and gender nonconforming workers connect, advocate, and shape the policies that affect them.



Photo source: CC BY 3.0 US Mapbox Uncharted ERG

RECOMMENDATION

Ensure Trans Inclusive Data Collection

Intentional and respectful gathering of information about sexual orientation, gender identity, and related demographic markers in a way that affirms trans individuals, protects their privacy, and helps organizations identify and address disparities.

Conducting trans inclusive data collection is usually inexpensive, impactful, and easy to implement with minimal legal barriers as long as it is self-reported. Additionally, some states may have different legal requirements around data collection.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

What gets measured gets addressed. Including trans self-identification in HR and organizational data allows for meaningful policy development and helps identify equity gaps in hiring, promotions, and retention.³⁹ However, this must be done respectfully, consensually, and securely.



Trans Worker Voices:

I've had jobs where I didn't know what HR was going to do with my info, so I stayed silent. Now I help folks fight to be seen — digitally and in policy. If you're asking for data, make sure it leads to something real. Otherwise it's just extraction.

- Gianna Salustro, Digital Equality Organizer at TWOCC

BEST PRACTICES

- Involve trans staff and LGBTQ+ employment experts in shaping survey language and in reviewing findings to protect sensitive and personal information.
- Use anonymous, voluntary SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) questions on employee surveys, benefits forms, and onboarding documents.
- Explain exactly why the data is being collected and how it will improve workplace inclusion.
- Provide an option to self-describe and update identity information as needed.

IN ACTION

PepsiCo maintains a data-driven approach to DEI that helps inform their understanding of the makeup of the company's workforce.⁴⁰ The anonymous information they collect helps them make programming more relevant, compelling, and inclusive for everyone. Furthermore, IBM has built out a system to address disparities and strengthen equity initiatives through their LGBT+ Self-ID program that allows employees to voluntarily record gender identity and sexual orientation in HR systems.⁴¹

LOOKING FORWARD

Many trans employees are hesitant to self-report if they're unsure how the data will be used, or if it could put them at risk.⁴² Collecting data on trans identity must be done with care, consent, and cultural competence. Successfully integrating trans self-ID into HR processes and collecting anonymous SOGI data to improve recruitment, retention, and internal education supports more equitable internal promotions and onboarding practices.⁴³ These practices foster environments where trans employees can bring their full selves to work, without fear or invisibility.



Photo source: Vice Gender Spectrum Collection (Licensed)

RECOMMENDATION

Engage Meaningfully with the Trans Community

Intentional strategies, programs, and partnerships an organization undertakes to engage with, support, and build relationships with trans communities — both internally (among employees) and externally (within the broader public). These efforts aim to promote equity, visibility, and trust while demonstrating a sustained commitment to trans inclusion and justice.

Engaging meaningfully with the trans community is usually inexpensive, impactful, and easy to implement with minimal legal barriers.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Workplace equity doesn't end at the office door. Companies that center trans inclusion should also contribute to the health and well-being of the communities from which their workers come. Community engagement efforts — when sustained, strategic, and organic — can strengthen a company's credibility, deepen trust, and address real-world disparities.⁴⁴ For trans and gender nonconforming communities, especially those of color, community-based efforts often fill the gaps left by public services. Yet many corporate giving programs focus only on large, mainstream LGBTQ+ nonprofits, neglecting smaller, trans-led organizations doing direct service work.⁴⁵ A report by Funders for LGBTQ Issues found that for every \$100 awarded by U.S. foundations, less than 5 cents (0.04%) goes to trans-led groups.⁴⁶ This statistic underscores the disproportionate allocation of philanthropic funds within the trans community.



Photo source: Julia M. Cameron (Pexels)



Trans Worker Voices:

We built TWOCC to serve and stand beside our people, not perform for systems that harm us. When a company funds mutual aid or makes space for community safety planning — that's where we start to see real commitment. Not rainbow logos in June, but support that shows up in courtrooms, shelters, and healing spaces year-round.

- Nyla Foster, Executive Director at TWOCC

BEST PRACTICES

- Commit to ongoing engagements or partnerships with trans, LGBTQ+, and BIPOC-led community organizations.
- Support grassroots efforts such as mutual aid, gender marker clinics, safety programs, or arts initiatives.
- Evaluate philanthropic priorities and, where adding new goals isn't feasible, ensure that giving strategies meaningfully support underrepresented communities.
- Consider providing unrestricted funds to local organizations, not just event sponsorships.

IN ACTION

Adobe has had an on-going partnership with the Transgender Law Center, including funding a name and gender marker legal clinic with the Transgender Law Center, reaching over 600 people in its first year.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Google.org, the philanthropic arm of Google, awarded unrestricted community grants to several grassroots organizations, including Transgender Law Center, Ali Forney Center, and TransLatin@ Coalition. These funds went toward legal clinics, housing support, and violence prevention efforts, with Google committing \$2 million specifically for Black and Latinx trans-led projects in 2023.⁴⁸ These are powerful examples of what intentional allyship and successful resource redistribution looks like.

LOOKING FORWARD

Companies should strive to move from performative allyship to real, material support if they are able. That means showing up year-round, especially for trans-led and BIPOC LGBTQ+ organizations. Resource distribution initiatives like supporting name change clinics, trans mutual aid networks, and community safety initiatives yield lasting community impact and signal real commitment beyond corporate messaging.⁴⁹

RECOMMENDATION

Ensure Supplier Diversity

Complementary strategies organizations use to promote equity and inclusion by intentionally supporting diverse businesses and communities, especially those historically marginalized, including trans owned enterprises and organizations serving diverse populations.

Ensuring supplier diversity is usually relatively inexpensive, impactful, and easy to implement with minimal legal barriers.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Where and how a company spends its money reveals its true values. Supplier diversity is a powerful tool for advancing equity when done with intention. Yet trans-led organizations and vendors remain grossly underfunded and underutilized in procurement strategies.⁵⁰ Supplier diversity programs that include trans-owned businesses help close racial and gender wealth gaps, create inclusive economic pipelines, and send a clear signal that trans communities are not just consumers—but partners, leaders, and innovators. Most corporate DEI strategies, however, focus on internal hiring without extending those values into external contracts or vendor relationships.



Photo source: Jenna Smith

BEST PRACTICES

- Seek feedback from community partners on grantmaking approaches.
- Adopt an LGBTQ+ inclusive supplier diversity program that actively recruits trans- and BIPOC-owned businesses.
- Include trans-led businesses in RFPs and vendor databases.
- Publicly report on supplier diversity and giving practices.

IN ACTION

Humana Inc. has been recognized by the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) for its supplier diversity initiatives, including its Mentor-Protege Program, that support the growth and development of businesses that reflect the diversity of Humana’s members, patients, and employees.⁵¹ In 2018, Ford expanded its supplier diversity program to include LGBTQ+ owned businesses, reflecting a commitment to inclusive procurement practices.⁵²



Trans Worker Voices:

Don't just ask us to show up on your panel — show up in our budget. As a Black trans-led nonprofit, we've seen how rare it is to receive unrestricted funds or be invited into procurement conversations. Equity means changing who gets the contract, not just who gets the invite. Where you spend your money shows what you value. Trans people run businesses. We run nonprofits. We build. Fund. Create. Hire us. Partner with us. Invest in us.

- Samantha Jo Dato, Former Director of Operations at TWOCC

LOOKING FORWARD

Economic justice must be part of workplace equity. Many trans people are business owners, artists, vendors, and service providers, but without inclusive procurement policies, they are often locked out of opportunity.⁵³ As companies integrate trans inclusion into their procurement strategies, they have the opportunity to help build a more sustainable, inclusive economy, where diverse voices and perspectives shape the future of the marketplace.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide Trans-Inclusive Health Coverage

Workplace health benefits policy that explicitly covers and affirms the medical needs of TGNC+ employees. This coverage ensures equitable access to comprehensive, medically necessary care without discrimination based on gender identity or expression.

Providing trans-inclusive health coverage requires significant capital investment and leverage in negotiations with insurance companies, and may not be legal in some states.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Trans individuals often face discriminatory exclusions in employer-sponsored health plans. Even when covered, care is frequently limited, inconsistently applied, or framed as “cosmetic.”⁵⁴ This creates significant mental, emotional, and financial stress for trans employees — many of whom delay or forgo medically necessary treatment.⁵⁵ The National Center for Transgender Equality’s 2022 United States Transgender Survey (USTS) report found that 48% of trans people had a negative experience with a health care provider due to their gender identity, and many reported denial of coverage for gender-affirming care.⁵⁶

BEST PRACTICES

- Educate HR and benefits staff on how to support trans employees navigating healthcare systems.
- Cover procedures according to WPATH’s Standards of Care, ensuring access to services without arbitrary denials.⁵⁷
- Remove all exclusions for trans-related care, including hormone therapy, surgeries, mental health care and voice training — keeping in mind that these benefits may be covered by different insurers.

IN ACTION

Etsy offers generous and holistic benefits to its employees, with insurance coverage supporting trans healthcare and gender affirming surgeries.⁵⁸ Additionally, MarketAxess, a leading fixed income trading platform offers comprehensive, inclusive coverage for a range of health care and prescription needs, including gender affirmation services, including hormone therapy, puberty suppression, voice therapy, reconstructive, and complementary procedures.⁵⁹



Trans Worker Voices:

I can honestly say I would not be here without access to gender-affirming care, it has been lifesaving. I recall the trauma of explaining to my previous employer's HR department and insurance company why certain care was medically necessary and not cosmetic. It was humiliating and it took a toll on how I showed up as an employee. Unfortunately, this is the experience of many trans employees. If you have the ability and power to negotiate with insurance companies, you should. Ensuring your employees are physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy has always seemed like a good business objective to me.

- Roberto Thornton, Managing Director, Investments and Impact, Adasina Social Capital

LOOKING FORWARD

When employers actively choose to offer comprehensive, accessible, and affirming health benefits, they signal to current and prospective employees that trans wellness is not up for debate — it's a priority. These policies also reduce turnover, absenteeism, and long-term healthcare costs.⁶⁰



Photo source: Alex Green (Pexels)

RECOMMENDATION

Provide Equal Partner Medical & Auxiliary Benefits

Workplace policies that ensure employees' partners — regardless of gender, marital status, or legal recognition — receive the same health and wellness benefits as legally married, heterosexual spouses. This practice affirms relationship diversity and promotes equity for employees, particularly those who may not have access to traditional forms of legal recognition.

While providing equal partner medical and auxiliary benefits often requires significant capital investment and leverage in negotiations with insurance companies, it is also required in multiple states.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Love and partnership come in many forms, and benefits should reflect that. Equitable access to medical, relocation, and bereavement benefits for same- and different-sex partners helps build a workplace where all families are seen and supported.⁶¹ When employees know their partners will be treated fairly, they can show up more fully and authentically. Trans workers often forgo necessary care due to inconsistent or inequitable benefits, leading to avoidable health disparities and challenges with employee retention. Employers should ensure equal benefits for individuals in the same roles, without exception.⁶²



Photo source: RDNE Stock Project (Pexels)

BEST PRACTICES

- Replace gendered marriage terms with inclusive ones such as partner, significant other, and chosen family.
- Provide written policy language and onboarding materials that reflect this inclusivity and clarify eligibility.
- Offer full parity in all partner-related benefits (e.g., medical, relocation, family leave, bereavement) regardless of marital status or gender identity.



Trans Worker Voices:

As a trans woman and a lesbian, I've been crushed by benefit policies solidified in heteronormative language. Family often looks different for queer folks, and many policies fail to recognize domestic or polyamorous partners, or members of our found family; policies like these can make a profound impact on our life, and make us feel respected in our workplace.

- Aspen Belew, IT Operations Lead at Adasina Social Capital

IN ACTION

Accenture offers equal access to medical plans for same-sex partners and recognized domestic partners, where legally allowed or available in the market.⁶³ Coverage for trans-inclusive health care benefits is accessible to all Accenture employees. Additionally, Henkel, a manufacturer of well-known consumer brands, such as Dial Soap, has expanded its parental leave policy for all U.S. employees, regardless of gender or family structure.⁶⁴

LOOKING FORWARD

Workplaces that embrace inclusive benefits often find that trans staff feel more loyal, engaged, and empowered — inclusive benefits also positively impact a company's recruitment, retention, engagement and revenue.⁶⁵ When trans employees are offered different or lesser benefits based on who they love or how their families are structured, the message is clear: they are not equal. This contributes to increased stress, financial insecurity, and even job attrition.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Incorporating inclusive policies and practices is not just a matter of compliance; it is a reflection of a company's commitment to equality, social responsibility, and long-term success. For investors and companies alike, the integration of Employment Non-Discrimination Policies, equitable benefits for same and different-sex spouses, comprehensive transgender healthcare coverage, and robust internal programs and training sets the foundation for an inclusive, respectful, and innovative workplace that benefits everyone.

By adopting inclusive policies — from gender transition guidelines to Employee Resource Groups and community outreach — companies can ensure that every employee has the opportunity to thrive without facing barriers based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The commitment to equity also extends to supplier diversity and philanthropic efforts, reinforcing a company's reputation as a leader in fostering a diverse, inclusive environment.

The actions outlined in this guide are essential for shaping a future where trans individuals are not only protected but empowered in the workplace. With these inclusive practices, companies will enhance employee satisfaction, foster innovation, and create stronger relationships with customers and communities.

Using the recommendations outlined here as a guide, investors can identify the companies to support, and those with which to engage to do better. This document also empowers investors to build collective momentum and advocate for trans inclusive policies and benefits at the scale of their own portfolios.

If there's one thing this document makes abundantly clear, it's that trans inclusive policies truly benefit everyone by building workplaces that enable all team members to be their authentic selves at work. By implementing and/or advocating for the recommendations in this Handbook, companies and investors are paving the way for a more robust, resilient, and inclusive workforce well-positioned to lead in our increasingly diverse world.

Acknowledgements

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- Nyla Foster (she/her) – Executive Director, longtime trans rights organizer and equity strategist.
- Samantha Jo Dato (she/her) – Former Director of Operations, cultural organizer and systems thinker with a background in trans wellness programming.
- Lala Zannell (she/her/they) – Director of Policy and Advocacy, a national leader on gender justice and anti-violence policy.

The specific recommendations laid out in the Handbook are informed by the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index. We are grateful for their partnership and continued advocacy for gender equity in all workplaces.

Take Deeper Action

This Handbook is intended to be read, shared, and implemented as a standalone document. Authored by TWOCC and supported by Adasina Social Capital, it also occupies an important place in ongoing initiatives of both organizations. This Handbook is a core resource of Adasina Social Capital’s investor mobilization campaign in support of upholding gender equitable workplaces, and for TWOCC, this document is vital in helping achieve their long-term social justice strategy.



Photo source: Vice Gender Spectrum Collection (Licensed)

If you share our objective upholding gender equitable workplaces, we would love to hear from you:

- To contact Adasina Social Capital: impact@adasina.com
- To contact Trans Women of Color Collective: info@twocc.org

A Note About Cited Links

We have attempted, to the best of our ability, to add linked citations throughout this document to support claims and statistics. Due to the shifting environment in which we write this report– in which corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs face sustained political attack – there is a risk that within weeks or months of publication, the links included will no longer be publicly available. To account for this possibility, we have downloaded the cited sources at the date of access, and linked them here as PDF documents.

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Helpful Terms & Definitions

Asexual - Often called “ace” for short, asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and asexual people may experience no, little or conditional sexual attraction.

Auxiliary benefits - Rewards, perks, or benefits employers offer their employees that fall outside of wages. This could include benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, paid time off, gifts, or other non-cash perks.

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) - a term specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color. The term “BIPOC” is more descriptive than people of color or POC. It acknowledges that people of color face varying types of discrimination and prejudice. BIPOC aims to bring to center stage the specific violence, cultural erasure, and discrimination experienced by Black and Indigenous people. It reinforces the fact that not all people of color have the same experience, particularly when it comes to legislation and systemic oppression.

Employee Resource Group (ERG) - Voluntary, employee-led diversity and inclusion initiative that is formally supported by an organization. ERGs generally are organized on the basis of common identities, interests, or backgrounds with the goal of supporting employees by providing opportunities to network and create a more inclusive workplace. Organizations use many naming conventions to refer to ERGs, such as business resource groups, affinity groups, inclusion resource groups or network groups.

Gender - Gender is framed by a society’s understanding of masculinity and femininity as related to roles, behaviors, expectations, activities, identities, and attributes. The key elements of an individual's gender are gender identity, gender attribution, and gender expression.

Gender attribution - The act of attributing a gender to another with or without knowledge of that person’s gender identity. In Western culture, these assumptions are rooted in a cultural understanding of gender as a binary system and how gender is socialized. Assuming a person’s gender pronouns is one example of gender attribution.

Gender expression - External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender nonconfirming (GNC) - A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

Gender identity - One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender transition - A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all, or none of these processes.

Heteronormative - The assumption of heterosexuality as the given or default sexual orientation instead of one of many possibilities, and that the preferred or default relationship is between two people of “opposite” genders.

Intersex - Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of difference among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.

LGBTQ+ - An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer” with a “+” sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community.

Microaggressions - Verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights that are the results of an individual's implicit bias. They are often automatic or unintentional and occur on a daily basis. Microaggressions communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative viewpoints.

Non-binary (NB) - An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

Outing - Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender or gender non-binary identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situations.

Polyamorous - A sexual and/or romantic relationship comprising three or more people. Polyamorous can also describe a person in a polyamorous relationship. Sometimes abbreviated as poly.

Pride Month - a celebration during the month of June for the queer community and allies. The word “pride” is typically associated with notions of honor, respect, dignity, and appreciation of one's achievements. Pride is also love, resilience, acceptance, affirmation, and wholeheartedly

living in one's truth. Pride Month often fosters a sense of community, support from allies, and is a source of empowerment to those who need it most.

Pronouns - A pronoun is a word used to refer to either the people who are talking (like "I" or "you") or a person being talked about in the third person (like "she/her," "he/him," and "they/them"). Since some pronouns are gendered ("she/her" and "he/him"), it is important to be intentional about the way we use pronouns as we all work to create as inclusive an environment as possible.

Queer - A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.

Questioning - A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sex assigned at birth - The sex, male, female or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

Sexual orientation - An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.

SOGI data - Data regarding a person's sexual orientation and gender identity.

Transgender (Trans) - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Unrestricted dollars - Financial contributions received by a nonprofit organization that are not earmarked for a specific program or project. This type of funding provides the organization with the flexibility to allocate the resources where they are most needed, such as operational costs, administrative expenses, or emerging priorities. Given their versatile nature, unrestricted funds allow nonprofits to better respond to unforeseen challenges and opportunities, ensuring a more agile and resilient organizational structure.

World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) - an international organization that sets standards of care and guidelines to promote the health and well-being of transgender and gender-diverse people.

Additional Resources

- [Human Rights Campaign Foundation - Definitions to Help Understand Gender and Sexual Orientation](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign - Glossary of Terms](#)
- [LGBTQIA+ Education Center - LGBTQIA+ Glossary of Terms for Health Care Teams](#)
- [Michigan State University The Gender and Sexuality Campus Center - Glossary of Terms](#)

Endnotes

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