



Colorado LGBTQ+ Mental Health
and Substance Use Disorder Initiative

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)



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Land Acknowledgement

Envision:You operates on the stolen lands of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe. It is through their continued sacrifice that we do this work.

About Envision:You

The mission of Envision:You is to support, educate, and empower members of Colorado's LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning) community who are living with a mental health and/or substance use disorder. To actuate its mission, Envision:You educates the public about and builds awareness of mental health and substance use disorders and treatments; provides education, training, and resources to expand the availability of culturally affirming treatment services; and advocates for changes to local and state-wide policies to advance equity for LGBTQ+ individuals living with mental health and substance use disorders. Envision:You also collaborates with partners and allies to enhance training, research, education, and resources to support LGBTQ+ Coloradans in achieving optimal mental health and well-being.

Contributing Authors

Steven Haden, CEO

steven.haden@envision-you.org

Adriana Lopez, Program Coordinator

adriana.lopez@envision-you.org

Donaven Smith, Program Manager

donaven.smith@envision-you.org

Hayden Evans, Program Coordinator

hayden.evans@envision-you.org

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Letter from Steven Haden, CEO and Co-Founder

Today, issues of racism and social justice are finally seeing new light, illuminated by education and advocacy campaigns, visibility in the media, greater representation in public and government services, more allies than ever, and increased corporate social responsibility efforts.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) involves more than policies, programs, or headcounts. Nonprofits and foundations are talking about these issues in ways that we have not seen before. Multiple factors have influenced this conversation. First, recent social movements have pushed this issue to a higher priority, including Black Lives Matter, the marriage equality movement, and the movement to end mass incarceration.

As a mission-driven organization dedicated to providing innovative and impactful behavior change initiatives, public mental health awareness campaigns and tools, along with meaningful advocacy, we know that our human capital is our greatest asset and the key to our success. Along with our intellectual diversity, the differing life experiences and approaches we bring to our work help us understand our clients and meet their needs and the needs of our work's ultimate beneficiaries. With IDEA as a priority, we can achieve our mission.

Because our commitment goes beyond words, I am excited to inform you about steps we are taking to bolster IDEA at Envision:You. In 2020 we established a working group to explore how our organization can ensure that IDEA is a foundational value and drives our culture—both internally and externally. In 2021, we retained outside consultants to further this effort that includes engaging with community leaders and conducting focus groups to ensure we have programs and policies that respect and value individual differences along varying dimensions.

In addition, it is our commitment that our organization fosters a culture that minimizes bias and recognizes and addresses systemic inequities, which, if unaddressed, will create disadvantages for certain individuals. This is not a human resources issue; it is a strategic and systemic issue. These efforts are reflected in our



organizational mission, vision, and values; incorporated into strategic plans; and cascaded throughout the organization to ensure each of our programs support improved behavioral health outcomes for every member of the LGBTQ+ community.

People make Envision:You successful, period. I am grateful for the talent and contributions people share with our organization. Everyone here is responsible for our inclusive, winning culture. Along with the entire leadership team, that is a culture I am committed to upholding and protecting. For us, making the world a better place is not wishful thinking. With inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility as a priority, we will achieve our mission and accomplish more than we can even hope.

I am both humbled and honored to work at this organization and with its remarkable people. I have full confidence that we have an outstanding team leading this mission. They are a group of dedicated individuals with exceptional capabilities, character, experience, and wisdom. On behalf of all of us at Envision:You, I want to express my deepest gratitude for your interest in learning more about our work.

Warmly,

Steven Haden
Chief Executive Officer & Co-founder
Envision:You



Executive Summary

Why Does This Matter?

At Envision:You we recognize the health inequities the LGBTQ+ community faces. In fact, these inequities drive our work everyday. As an organization, we're committed to reducing these behavioral health inequities through our mission and programming. The LGBTQ+ community is disproportionately impacted by mental health and/or substance use disorders, and this especially rings true in Colorado, where LGBTQ+ Coloradans are three times more likely than non-LGBTQ+ Coloradans to have been diagnosed with an anxiety, depression, and/or a substance use disorder (*One Colorado, 2018*).

Moreover, we recognize that LGBTQ+ people are more likely than straight, cisgender people to lack sufficient resources to afford healthcare needs. Wherever mental and behavioral healthcare services are sparse in Colorado, those communities are often lower-income, with fewer LGBTQ+ affirming service providers, and with less opportunities for social connection due to a lack of *safe spaces*. The stigma, discrimination, and violence that LGBTQ+ folks face causes persistent harm to their health outcomes, especially people of color and those who hold marginalized identities outside of a queer identity. This acknowledgement of the intersection of identities drives our IDEA work.

For queer, transgender people, Black people, indigenous peoples, and other people of color (QTBIPOC), the oppressive forces of racism, homophobia, and/or transphobia result in even higher disparities than the ones mentioned above. QTBIPOC marginalization is further compounded for women, persons with disabilities, and folks with lower socioeconomic well-being. When left untreated, mental health and substance use disorders lead to crisis, hospitalization, and death by overdose and/or suicide completion. *The higher the disparities, the more frequently these tragedies occur.*

What Are We Doing?

We are committed to reducing these tragedies for all LGBTQ+ people. In order to make this goal achievable, we have intentionally entered the process of developing and maintaining a comprehensive understanding of the many intersecting identities held



by QTBIPOC people. Through this initiative, we are taking a critical look at how intersectional experiences within interrelated systems of discrimination, stigma, and marginalization impact overall well-being. Through this commitment to continually learn more, we are better able and informed to support, educate, and empower the LGBTQ+ community in Colorado. As an organization we are daily acknowledging and appreciating intersectionality, and fundamentally reconstructing the ways in which our organization functions. Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) are being operationalized at the core of our culture, making them more than just ideas.

Envision: You defines IDEA as follows (“Definitions of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion,” 2018):

1. *Inclusion* encompasses the intentional, continued effort to incorporate, value, and respect the lived experience of diverse individuals within our organization and throughout the community.
2. *Diversity* is an ongoing commitment to highlight and represent multiple perspectives of folks who are different and similar at individual and group levels.
3. *Equity* is the deliberate process of ensuring fairness and justice through resource allocation and support.
4. *Accessibility* bridges the gap of general compliance, and instead refers to equitable access to all folks along the continuum of ability and experience.

In the implementation of our IDEA initiative, we recognize the need for cultural relevance and responsiveness. To be culturally relevant through this initiative means to apply knowledge and content throughout our organizational structure and programming to be reflective of QTBIPOC and those with other marginalized identities. Moreover, to be culturally responsive means making our IDEA initiative an active, evolving process. As we continue to gain a stronger understanding of QTBIPOC experiences by listening to the community and looking at the research, we will re-evaluate the strategic goals outlined in this initiative.



External Components of IDEA Transformation (Programs)



FINDING HOPE

Finding Hope: A Community Peer Support Program

Program Overview

A hallmark of peer support programs is an opportunity to create connection and support within a relationship between a peer and a peer support worker who has similar lived experience (*Peers*, n.d.). It is critical to recognize the impact of culture on lived experiences, including on identity formation processes, access to resources, and access to supportive services for those on a recovery journey (Cerezo et al., 2020; Cyrus, 2017; Ikizler & Szymanski, 2014; Miller & Parker, 2009). Moreover, there are multiple pathways to recovery from a mental health and/or substance use disorder. Peer support helps provide continued care for those in recovery and for those seeking healing. By using a peer support model, studies have shown a decrease in the overall cost of mental health services, including decreased rates of re-hospitalization, a decrease in days spent in inpatient settings, and an increase in the use of outpatient services (Mental Health America, 2019). Along these same lines, peer support has been shown to increase quality of life, increase and improve engagement with services, and increase overall well-being (Mental Health America, 2019).

Finding Hope: A Community Peer Support Program is designed to support LGBTQ+ individuals through psychoeducational workshops and community building. These psychoeducational workshops will be facilitated by an Envision:You staff member and a Peer Community Organizer (PCO). Each PCO will possess lived experience in recovery and supportive helping skills developed in a Peer Support training. Our Peer Community Organizers will support workshop participants as a local voice from the community.



Opportunities Moving Forward

With this in mind, selected Peer Community Organizers will have training that fosters inclusivity and accountability. The Peer Community Organizers of this program will hold an LGBTQ+ identity, and preferably, other marginalized identities, as well. In addition, the program material and recruitment efforts will be delivered and conducted, respectively, in multiple languages, including a standard use of Spanish and English. Moreover, in order to best implement Finding Hope, it is crucial that the Program Lead has multiple marginalized identities. Lived experience simply cannot be replaced, and in line with our commitment to IDEA, this individual will be compensated accordingly for their expertise.



Q is for Questioning

Program Overview

Questioning is a term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. For those with multiple marginalized identities, the process of questioning one's identity is increasingly complicated due to familial, cultural, and/or religious/spiritual factors, expectations, and norms (Cerezo et al., 2020; Ikizler & Szymanski, 2014; Miller & Parker, 2009). Young people who experience uncertainty surrounding their gender identity, gender presentation, and/or sexual orientation often experience stigma, bullying, isolation, and even violence. They may struggle with internalized fear and unhappiness, which can resort to maladaptive coping mechanisms like self-harm, as well as an increased risk of suicide.

Acceptance and support from family is the first step in helping queer and questioning youth discover and express their authentic self. Q is for Questioning is designed to support parents and trusted adults of queer and questioning youth through psychoeducation, group discussion, Q&A, and community building. This 3-part workshop program will be facilitated by an internal staff member, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), and a co-facilitator. The co-facilitator will possess lived experience in navigating the coming out process within the family system, and they will support workshop participants as a local voice from the community. We define a community as folks who are geographically close.

Opportunities Moving Forward

The Q is for Questioning program will have increased representation of QTBIPOC and their lived experiences through program material and staff demographics. Primarily, the script that guides workshop staff through the programming will be reflective of



intersectionality by lifting up their experiences, with ongoing updates to collateral language being made whenever appropriate. In our search for co-facilitators, community partners (e.g., LGBTQ+ organizations, local libraries, PFLAG) will distribute Pitch Letters to potential co-facilitators in the communities we hope to serve, asking identified individuals if they would be interested in joining the Q is for Questioning team. To further integrate positive representations of people of color into this program, community partners will be informed to prioritize outreach to people of color and to those who experience the most marginalization (these co-facilitators will be compensated accordingly, keeping in mind that marginalization and poverty go hand-in-hand). Lastly, the resource lists that accompany Q is for Questioning will be community-informed through the feedback surveys associated with this program.



How to Have the Talk

Program Overview

One of the most difficult challenges any of us face is confronting a person we care about who is struggling with their mental health and/or suffering from an untreated behavioral health concern. We know that substance use and mental health conditions do not get better when they are ignored; in fact, they are likely to get much worse. Furthermore, stigma surrounding the receipt of mental health services is among the many barriers that discourage people from seeking treatment, especially among members of the LGBTQ+ community. This community has a long history of being pathologized. Individuals that identify as LGBTQ+ are often unable to find culturally relevant and affirming treatment services, and/or they may be fearful of facing discrimination by behavioral health providers. For those struggling, it is important they understand that help is available. To have “the Talk,” it is important to understand the challenges the LGBTQ+ community faces.

This public awareness and social media campaign spreads information on “How to Have the Talk,” along with supportive resources available throughout Colorado. The campaign targets traditional physical and virtual spaces, as well as LGBTQ+ specific spaces. The program has been, and will continue to be, promoted in paid print advertising placements. We received funding for this campaign from the Caring for Denver Foundation in Q4 of 2020 to increase our advertising capabilities and thus, reach more people. With that funding, we have sent out postcards and pocket-sized tip cards to members of the LGBTQ+ community, local libraries, behavioral health providers, pharmacists, nonprofits, businesses, and community clinics statewide. The pocket-sized tip card walks a person through the essential steps in reaching out to check in on a loved one and/or help someone in need of behavioral health services. Signage for the program has been created to display in businesses that attract a high



number of individuals from the LGBTQ+ community. Skits modeling the “Talk” will be put on by drag performers in LGBTQ+ safe spaces and in virtual safe spaces through a video.

Opportunities Moving Forward

How to Have the Talk will have captioning for any performances or presentations in English and Spanish, and any collateral materials will reflect these translations. Furthermore, advertisements will be targeted in an equitable manner through target keywords and through the collaboration with organizations that also serve marginalized folks. In implementing these changes, we will utilize the community, the Envision:You Board, and community partners to inform best practices for outreach, to help us find spaces to engage the community in the campaign, and to direct us to partner organizations that we may not yet have a relationship with.



ENVISION:YOU
LGBTQ+
Behavioral Health Provider
Training Program

LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program

Program Overview

LGBTQ+ affirming care training is necessary for staff working in behavioral health settings, hospitals, and social service organizations. LGBTQ+ individuals experience higher rates of mental health challenges and often experience troubling encounters with mental health providers who do not fully understand or appreciate the concerns that stem from being a part of a marginalized community (or being a part of more than one marginalized community). To address these needs, we developed a multi-phase, in-person, and online training program.

Alongside our research and training development partner OMNI Institute, we identified and reviewed relevant literature and curricula to determine best practices as it relates to training programs that assess and treat LGBTQ+ individuals who have a behavioral health concern. That research provided the foundation for the development of the Envision:You LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program. The program has been supported by behavioral health providers, public health experts, and a community advisory board of people with lived experience.

The training program is designed to help registered and licensed mental health clinicians, addiction counselors, and certified peer specialists develop new skills and gain critical knowledge to enhance the delivery of quality, culturally relevant, and affirming behavioral health interventions for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Topics include: spectrums of sexuality and gender; using inclusive and affirming language; intersectionality; the history of LGBTQ+ behavioral health care; barriers to treatment; health and mental health disparities; population-specific competencies; cultural relevance; trauma-informed care; effective treatment models; healthy coping skills; systemic biases; internalized oppression; coming out; gender dysphoria; administrative inclusiveness; and population-specific barriers to care.



Opportunities Moving Forward

The staff leading this program will collaborate with other program teams to maintain an in-house, affirming provider network that is representative of the diversity that exists within the LGBTQ+ community. The data show that it is particularly difficult to find QTBIPOC-affirming behavioral health providers, especially transgender-affirming providers and those that are low-cost and/or take state insurance (Colorado Department of Human Services Office of Behavioral Health, 2020; OneColorado, 2019). In order to gauge effectiveness of outreach efforts, we will track the communities that these providers are serving and the providers' demographic information via the training program's registration processes and post-feedback surveys that are built into the LMS. If feedback surveys indicate that the provider training program is serving only white providers, marketing and outreach efforts will need to be re-evaluated to target diverse providers. We want LGBTQ+ clients to have the option to connect with not only an LGBTQ+ affirming provider, but one who looks like them and/or shares a facet of their identity. In order for the feedback surveys to remain culturally relevant, they will be continually updated in response to community feedback.

An internal BIPOC Provider list was merged with the National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network in March 2021. A mass email will go out to these providers in late May 2021, offering them the training program at a 25% discounted rate. We will be outreaching to school counselors and straight providers of color, as well.



LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Smartphone App

Program Overview

Rates of mental illness and substance use disorder are considerably higher in LGBTQ+ communities compared to the general population (James et al. 2016, SAMHSA 2016). Contributing to this disparity is a large deficit in the number and accessibility of LGBTQ+ providers and clinics. Accessible, culturally affirming mental health resources are especially lacking for LGBTQ+ communities of color. LGBTQ+ individuals are also more likely to experience isolation and loneliness, increasing their risk for poor mental and physical health outcomes. During COVID-19, the Colorado LGBTQ+ community highlighted self-care resources, support groups, online information, and virtual connections as resources that would be most beneficial to their mental health and well-being (Our Community & COVID-19).

Studies have shown that phone applications targeting mental health are effective in supporting better mental health outcomes, especially when coupled with other mental healthcare. However, none of the 490 mental and behavioral health applications that exist today provide resources specific to the LGBTQ+ community. Our application will deliver centralized, tailored resources such as a provider directory, mood tracking tools, and community engagement opportunities to LGBTQ+ individuals who would otherwise not seek mental health support due to access barriers such as stigma, proximity to care providers, and resource flooding.

Our goal is to develop an application that will support the holistic wellness of LGBTQ+ individuals through behavioral health resources, health maintenance tools, and virtual community building opportunities. The development process will utilize human-centered design principles to ensure the application addresses the behavioral health needs of LGBTQ+ Coloradans living in rural, small, and mountain communities, as well as in urban centers. Focus groups will be organized to engage all members of the LGBTQ+ community, specifically marginalized community members, in the testing and quality improvement process before launching the app in 2022.



Opportunities Moving Forward

One of the most crucial components of the behavioral health smartphone application is the resource directory. To be effective, it must reach the most marginalized of LGBTQ+ individuals, specifically QTBIPOC. To ensure that the resource directory is relevant to, and supportive of, all members of the LGBTQ+ community, it will be vetted by QTBIPOC within their communities. Culture is incredibly important in the identity formation of LGBTQ+ individuals of color (Cyrus, 2017; Ikizler & Szymanski, 2014; Kum, 2017; Miller & Parker, 2009; Truong et al., 2020a, 2020b; Zongrone et al., 2020, 2020). Therefore, it is essential that we honor culture by offering the application in both Spanish and English. For this application to have the largest reach possible, it will also include alternative text for images and captioning of video and audio content. The behavioral health smartphone application will be linked to Finding Hope: A Community Peer Support Program and the Envision:You LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program. Because of this, the cultural relevance and responsiveness of those programs are essential to the success of the smartphone application and vice versa.



Envision:You Website

Opportunities Moving Forward

An integral part of the work that we do at Envision:You to support, educate, and empower the LGBTQ+ community is creating access to relevant resources and programming. One of the ways in which we do this is through our website: www.envision-you.org. We will be sharing content that is reflective of our commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. These are more than just words to us. We will achieve this through a foundational use of English and Spanish, and by ensuring that our content is accessible and relevant, and that it decenters whiteness. This commitment will include the use of platforms like Userway.org to increase accessibility. This update to our website will happen no later than the end 2021. Our commitment is that our website will be in line with the standards set by the American Disabilities Act (ADA) (*Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services*, n.d.) and the Website Accessibility Content Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG 2.1) (*Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1*, n.d.). These practices will extend to our social media efforts, as well.



Internal Components of IDEA Transformation (Practices)



Technology & Innovation Initiative

Program Overview

In 2021, we began implementing strategic steps to develop a culture of innovation across the entire organization. By embracing values of technology, creativity, and self-reflection in the pursuit of our mission, we will increase the reach and efficacy of our programming, fundraising, and advocacy efforts. Monthly programming and development innovation sessions will set aside time for our team to critically analyze our operations, identify shortcomings, and brainstorm unique solutions. Quarterly Innovation Labs will also provide a space for our team to conceptualize new ideas and explore possibilities for improvement. Frequent inspiration bulletins, lunch & learns, and resource sharing will further solidify our commitment to innovation. Through this initiative, we hope to utilize our team's diverse skills and life experiences to enhance the ways in which we support, educate, and empower LGBTQ+ folks living with a mental health and/or substance use disorder. We recognize that these experiences are different for LGBTQ+ community members who hold various marginalized identities. Our Technology & Innovation initiative will work in tandem with our IDEA initiative as we design creative ways to reach the most marginalized folks in the LGBTQ+ community.

Opportunities Moving Forward

Our Technology & Innovation efforts will result in higher standards for equity in four target areas: organizational structure, outreach to community partners, recruitment, and programming. Team members will be expected to use their daily 4pm-5pm block to explore relevant articles and research surrounding QTBIPOC experiences while considering how our work can better reflect our commitment to equity, accessibility, and inclusivity (e.g., What does the research say? What are other successful organizations doing around IDEA? What community needs are not being met? How can we support other organizations' IDEA efforts?). Further, we will be intentional about using various mediums (e.g., podcasts, magazines) to communicate information in order to reach a wider audience, one that includes folks from diverse backgrounds.



Outreach & Partnerships

Opportunities Moving Forward

We will continue to prioritize outreach to communities of color, as they are historically left out of conventional outreach strategies. It is crucial that we continue to form longitudinal, cooperative partnerships with folks who serve people of color, especially queer people of color and queer folks with diverse levels of ability. These partnerships will include state legislators, mental and behavioral healthcare providers, and community organizations. Community partnerships are crucial to increasing engagement in our QTBIPOC-supportive content. This is especially important for the distribution of collateral, program materials, and surveys. Our partners serving QTBIPOC will always be included in focus groups and advisory committees, with appropriate compensation. In our outreach efforts, we will always take into consideration—and prioritize—publications, social media platforms, and websites that highlight QTBIPOC experiences.

Social Media Considerations

Again, when looking at how we use social media, we will take into account the distribution of content that is reflective of our commitment to supporting all members of the LGBTQ+ community. In the social media space, we will engage with our audience (i.e., LGBTQ+ community members from all walks of life) and other organizations in a manner that is intentional (e.g., vetting posts and language) and accessible (e.g., including captioning). By doing so, we actively practice our commitment to incorporating, and being representative of, those with multiple marginalized identities. Moreover, we will continually re-evaluate our social media strategies through an IDEA lens to ensure that we are doing what we say we are. Any individual managing our social media accounts will have proper training on how to interact with, share, and create content that is inclusive across multiple marginalized communities.



Research

State of the State Program Overview

We are working with OMNI institute to survey the mental and behavioral health outcomes and needs of LGBTQ+ Coloradans. This research project is entitled “State of the State.” Its goals are as follows:

1. Document critical aspects of LGBTQ+ Coloradans’ experiences of living with and seeking services for mental health or substance use disorders;
2. Demonstrate the desperate need for statewide funding, education, and training;
3. Apply the data to further inform our programming strategies and priority objectives, as well as to inform those of our partners; and
4. Establish baselines that can be used to set benchmarks for progress in achieving the longer-term goal of fostering equity in behavioral health outcomes for LGBTQ+ Coloradans with mental health and/or substance use disorders by 2040.

While engaging in this research effort, we must acknowledge areas for growth. In our 2020 COVID-19 impact survey, 87% of the respondents were white. *The outreach recommendations outlined in this proposal will, and must, be used in research efforts.*

Opportunities Moving Forward

For the most representative sample possible, we will ensure that our research questions are explicitly inclusive. We have set a target sample size of 750. We will ensure that everyone who should have access to the State of the State survey does have access. For example, we acknowledge that not everyone has a computer, and that some persons with disabilities are unable to engage in the survey in the same ways as able-bodied individuals. We will be on the ground delivering surveys and providing alternative methods to engaging with the survey. Lastly, we will maintain a Board that reflects the LGBTQ+ community’s demographics, of which we will have a better understanding of through State of the State. The Board will be engaged in the delivery of State of the State and all future research efforts.



Evaluating Organizational Accountability & Initiative Efficacy

Opportunities Moving Forward

The role of accountability in implementing the DEI initiative is crucial to ensure that we are being reflective about the manner in which we operate as a nonprofit and how our decisions impact, and are received by, the populations we serve (e.g., LGBTQ+ youth, young adults, adults, and older adults; QTBIPOC; queer persons with disabilities).

An integral part of incorporating accountability throughout our organization will be to develop language and tools for program and staff evaluation. These evaluation tools will be developed by Q3 of 2021. It is important that team members practice accountability to and intentionality in IDEA efforts daily in their professional identities, actions, and community engagement. This will be achieved, in part, through using inclusive language and by interacting with tools such as the Anti-Racism newsletter: <https://www.antiracismdaily.com/about>. This is one option of many others (e.g., [OutBoulder County's QTPOC Newsletter](#)). Team members will be asked to find their own resources, as well, and share them with the rest of the Envision:You team.

More details on this work are to come.



Budget Considerations

Overview & Opportunities Moving Forward

The mentioned recommendations will cost money and will be lengthy in implementation. As a fundamental part of our commitment to IDEA, we will prioritize these initiatives by impact and feasibility. Furthermore, an intentional section on funding inclusionary work will be added to the yearly budget and to program-specific grant budgets, including specific budget line items for more intensive and inclusive outreach and marketing. Additionally, budget considerations will ensure that disability accommodations are prioritized. In past events, such as the Colorado Behavioral Health and Wellness Summit (CBHWS), we failed to provide disability accommodations such as translations (e.g., ASL, Spanish) and closed captioning. The negligence to ensure these accommodations were implemented was not reflective of the culture we are fostering. In order to stay true to our culture while educating the community, engaging individuals in recovery, enhancing resources, and expanding training for all LGBTQ+ Coloradans, these budget items will be implemented as intentionally as the programs we deliver.



Conclusion

Decentering Whiteness

Historically, white LGBTQ+ individuals have had access to supports that serve their mental well-being. Thus, serving each and every member of Colorado's LGBTQ+ community necessitates that we prioritize diverting funds and energy to uncovering and addressing the needs of QTBIPOC.

Intersectional Challenges for the LGBTQ+ Community

While individuals with multiple marginalized identities have an increased capacity for resiliency and strength, the challenges that they face are pervasive and integrated deeply within social systems (Cerezo et al., 2020; Crenshaw, 1991; Cyrus, 2017; Ikizler & Szymanski, 2014; Kum, 2017; National Academies of Sciences, 2020; Truong et al., 2020a, 2020b; Zongrone et al., 2020a, 2020b). We recognize the wide-reaching impact that these challenges have on our community. Although these consequences are preventable, they endure as a result of systemic disadvantage and oppression (National Academies of Sciences, 2020).

From the inception of Envision:You, we have been able to identify the presence of these systems in our work. As a response to the nature of these systemic challenges, Envision:You has strived to work intentionally and diligently to incorporate an intersectional lens through our programming and outreach strategies. While this work has not been met without barriers, we are determined to continuously reflect and reevaluate our initiatives to be in line with our commitment to IDEA.

As an organization committed to a culture of inclusivity, we recognize that this work is a continual process and a "one size fits all" approach will never be comprehensive enough to meet the needs of the diversity within the LGBTQ+ community in a just and equitable manner (Crenshaw, 1991; Cyrus, 2017; Kum, 2017). In light of this, we will utilize a strengths-based approach when working within QTBIPOC communities. By building upon the resiliency and strength that already exists, and is often thriving within these various communities, we have the ability, when invited to do so, to enact sustainable, intentional, and impactful change through our programming and outreach.



Future Areas of Focus

We still have the time to grow in the domains of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. However, we don't want to wait any longer, as our community – in all of its beautiful diversity – is struggling at a disproportionate rate than their cisgender, heterosexual peers. Further, we don't want to launch our programming nationally until we have thoroughly integrated IDEA into the core of who we are as an organization. In the near term, we will expand the responsibilities of our community partners and consultants to support us in better serving the disabled and aging queer populations. Our staff and programming will undergo quarterly IDEA evaluations which, again, will be developed by Q3 of 2021.

We will develop an LGBTQ+ IDEA training that we can deliver across the state as we set a “gold standard” for IDEA not only in Colorado, but ultimately, in the United States as a whole. This may sound like a lofty goal, but it is important to understand that our “gold standard” is actually the minimum. Being equitable and inclusive by honoring the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ folks with multiple marginalized identities through listening, learning, and innovation is an inherent requirement of all organizations. Our mission is to foster a national culture that turns this “gold standard” into the norm.



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Recommendations for IDEA Proposal
Watson Wenk Group
May 5, 2021

1. **Prioritize work within and across initiatives.** Decide which initiatives are urgent and which initiatives might wait. Recognize that Envision:You has a dedicated but small staff and limited time, mental energy, and resources. What is most important to do well?
2. **Develop an action plan with a timeline for each initiative.** The action plan should spell out the benchmarks for each initiative, who is responsible for what action and by what date, and measures of success. The benchmarks can serve as part of an employee's evaluation.
3. **Utilize models and incorporate resources from other organizations.** There is no need to invent the wheel and to build from scratch when other organizations have already completed the task, and have completed the task well. What can Envision:You learn, for example, about using IDEA principles to evaluate employees? Surely other organizations have already completed this work.
4. **Rope up with other organizations to accomplish goals.** To avoid redundancy and maximize resources, consider collaborating with other organizations who may have similar goals and who may be able to offer time, money, and thought partnership to increase the viability of achieving Envision:You's ambitious goals.
5. **Spend money on high need and/or high skill services.** Initiatives might suffer if too much time and energy is spent by staff trying to implement aspects of the work that can be accomplished more quickly and more professionally by an individual or business that specializes in marketing or web design, for example. Also, consider hiring short-term help to complete clerical work, like data collection or some other aspect of project support.
6. **Capitalize on volunteers.** Some of the projects could benefit from the involvement of trained volunteers. Canvassing for the State of the State survey, for example, would ensure widespread and representative participation. A cadre of volunteers, composed perhaps of college students who are working on a class project, would supplement staff and consultant efforts to reach survey participants and boost survey completion.