

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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Table of Contents

3 Letter from the Council Chair

4 Executive Summary

5 Introduction and Background

5 Legislative Creation

5 Core Functions and Statutory Purpose

6 LGBTQIA2S+ Landscape and Demographics

7 LGBTQIA2S+ Issues in Minnesota

8 2023 - 2024 Timeline

9 Foundation-Building Milestones

10 Pride Survey Results

12 Strategic Planning

12 Overview

12 Emerging Purpose and Values

12 Emerging Strategic Priorities

13 Emerging Issue Priorities

14 Community Engagement and Research

14 Plans for 2025

14 Community Needs Assessment and State Scan

15 Expanded Staffing and Capacity Building

16 Long-Term Planning

16 Conclusion and Acknowledgments

17 Staff and Council Members

18 Sources and Citations

18 Contact

Photo by Leslie Hough,
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Letter from the Council Chair

Dear Friends,

The Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans is pleased to offer you this, our inaugural annual report, for your consideration. The year 2024 focused on creating the infrastructure needed for substantive success in 2025 and beyond.

Created by the Legislature in 2023, the Council’s first task was to assist in the hiring of an executive director. We were fortunate to be able to welcome Emma McBride to that position in April 2024; she brings years of experience working with our communities and with the Legislature, and has been instrumental in helping truly launch the Council on its path forward. In 2024, we engaged additional staff and external advisors to design and implement the Council’s future work. The Council also adopted bylaws to govern its meetings, received State training on pertinent legal requirements, began a strategic-planning process, secured office space, and created its initial website. While none of these may seem to be dramatic, each is essential in launching a new State agency and laying the groundwork for future success.



“In 2025, we will begin the process of compiling a comprehensive statewide needs assessment based on input from the LGBTQIA2S+ communities – **something the State has not attempted in thirty years.** It will be critical in helping to set a baseline against which future progress may be measured.”

Phil Duran
Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans, Council Chair

In 2025, we will begin the process of compiling a comprehensive statewide needs assessment based on input from the LGBTQIA2S+ communities – something the State has not attempted in thirty years. It will be critical in helping to set a baseline against which future progress may be measured. The Council is committed to ensuring that input is received from a cross-section of our communities, and that the input will be diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, sex and gender, socioeconomic status, geography, age, and more. The resulting findings and recommendations will be shared effectively with our communities, the Legislature, and the people of Minnesota as a whole. We will approach these efforts with inclusivity and transparency, in order to build confidence in and engagement with our work, thereby enhancing the Council’s ability to fulfill the Legislature’s directive to advance “economic, social, legal, and political equality” for Minnesota’s LGBTQIA2S+ communities. The Council looks forward to engaging with all Minnesotans who share our commitment to this vision.

Sincerely

Phil Duran



Executive Summary

The Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans works for the implementation of economic, social, legal, and political equality for Minnesota's community of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender expansive, queer, intersex, asexual, and/or two-spirit. The Council, created in 2023, is made up of 12 Governor-appointed public voting members and up to 4 appointed legislators. The public voting members have a proven dedication and commitment to Minnesota's LGBTQIA2S+ community and possess a broad and diverse array of expertise that is beneficial to the Council's mission.

The Council fulfills its mission by advising the Governor and legislature on issues confronting the LGBTQIA2S+ community, needed administrative or legislative changes, and the implications of proposed changes. The Council also conducts studies to identify issues and solutions and serves as a liaison between state government and organizations serving Minnesota's LGBTQIA2S+ community.

The Council was formed in 2023 and became operational in May 2024. The Council has a General Fund appropriation of \$500,000 in FY24 and \$499,000 in FY25. In its first operational year, the Council focused on establishing agency infrastructure, conducting strategic planning, and identifying key priorities.

Key accomplishments include:

- » Establishing governance structures, including adopting bylaws and electing Council leadership.
- » Hiring essential staff to enhance our capacity, including a permanent senior operations specialist and temporary specialists in community engagement, communications, and research.
- » Launching a strategic planning process to identify and refine priorities through one-to-one council member engagements, a retreat, and focus groups.
- » Conducting the Pride Survey, revealing critical issues such as discrimination in employment, housing, and healthcare access, and the importance of gender-affirming care.
- » Partnering with MNclusive for Transgender Day of Remembrance, the Council's first public speaking engagement.
- » Participating in a roundtable community conversation with Lieutenant Governor Flanagan to share key concerns and priorities for the LGBTQIA2S+ community.

Looking ahead, the Council's focus will be on completing a comprehensive community needs assessment, conducting a state government scan, expanding stakeholder engagement, building public awareness, and formalizing our long-term research agenda.

Photo by Charlie Vaughn,
courtesy Minnesota Historical Society

Introduction and Background

Legislative Creation

The Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2023 under Minn. Stat. § 15.0147 to serve as a vital bridge between LGBTQIA2S+ communities and state government. The Council’s legislative mandate includes advising the Governor and Legislature on issues affecting LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and proposing data-driven recommendations to promote equity and inclusion. The Council became operational in May 2024, following the hiring of its first executive director.



Council Chair Phil Duran and Vice Chair KB Brietzke tabling at Trans Day of Remembrance

Core Functions and Statutory Purpose

The Council’s work is guided by its statutory purpose of ensuring that LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans are represented in state government and officials have expert advice on LGBTQIA2S+ issues. Its core functions include:

Advocacy: Advising policymakers on legislative actions that impact LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, with a focus on equity and inclusion.

Research: Conducting studies and needs assessments to understand the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ communities and provide data-driven insights.

Engagement: Serving as a liaison between the state and LGBTQIA2S+ communities to amplify voices, build partnerships, and foster dialogue.

Public Awareness: Promoting understanding of LGBTQIA2S+ issues through education, outreach, and strategic communications.





Council Member Theo Casio at Trans Day of Remembrance

LGBTQIA2S+ Landscape and Demographics

LGBTQIA2S+ individuals represent a diverse and growing population in Minnesota, encompassing people from all racial, ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. According to the Williams Institute, approximately 4.1% of Minnesota adults identify as LGBTQIA2S+, translating to over 200,000 individuals¹.

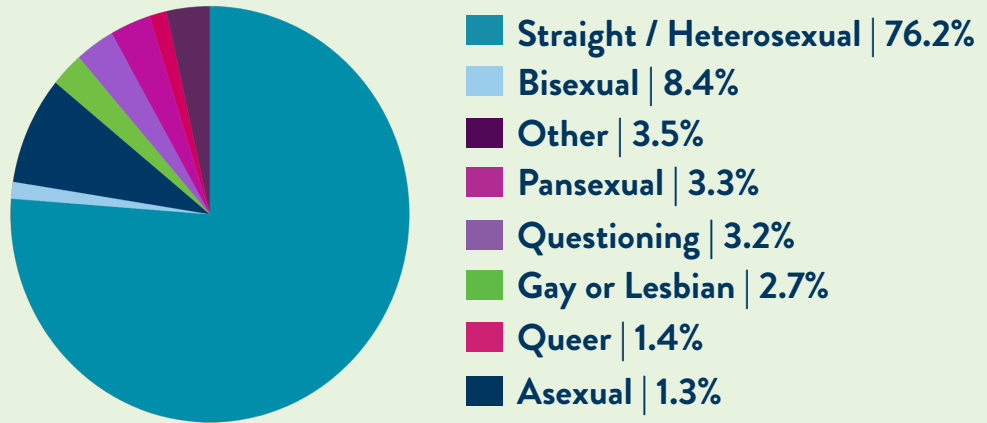
Disparities persist across multiple dimensions, including mental and physical health, housing, employment, and education. For example, LGBTQIA2S+ youth are disproportionately affected by mental health challenges, with higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation compared to their heterosexual peers². Transgender individuals³, particularly transgender youth, face barriers in accessing gender-affirming care^{4,5}, while LGBTQIA2S+ individuals in rural areas often lack visibility and support systems^{6,7}.

LGBTQIA2S+ Issues in Minnesota

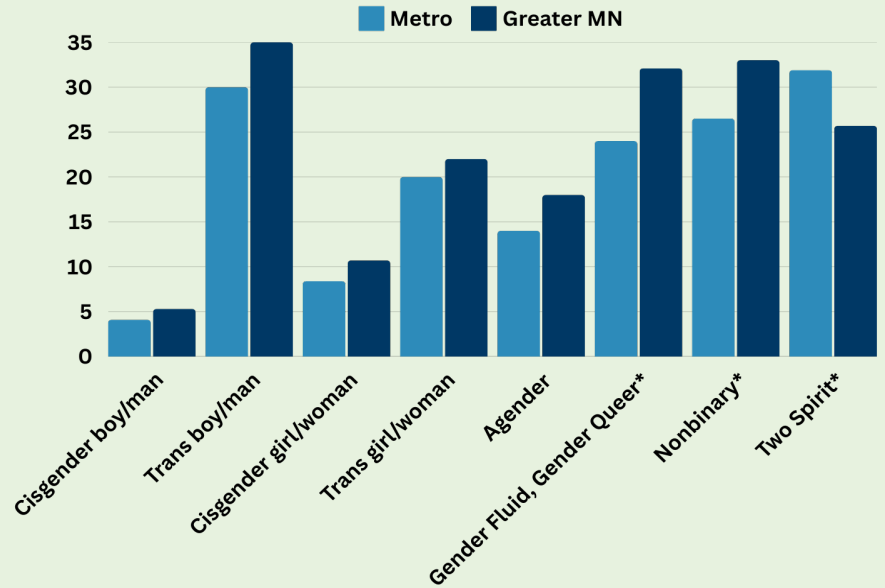
Minnesota has a proud history of leadership on LGBTQIA2S+ issues, but significant gaps remain in achieving full equity for LGBTQIA2S+ residents. Addressing these issues is critical not only for the well-being of LGBTQIA2S+ individuals but also for the state's overall prosperity. Research shows that inclusive policies and practices improve mental^{8,9,10} and physical health outcomes^{11,12}, and contribute to economic vitality^{13,14}.

The Council's work is essential to closing these gaps, advocating for policies that ensure equity in access to housing, healthcare, education, and employment while promoting awareness and understanding of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans. By addressing systemic inequities and elevating the voices of underrepresented groups, the Council aims to create a more inclusive and equitable state for all.

2022 Minnesota Student Survey Sexual Orientation Frequencies[^]



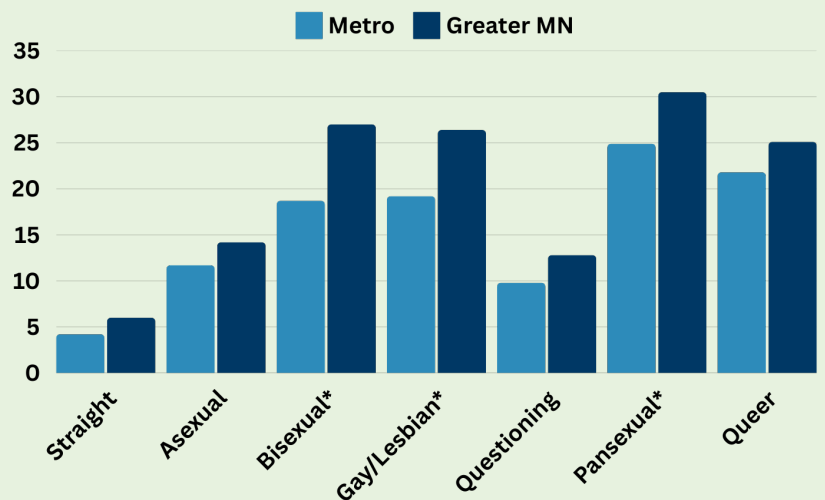
Percent of Students Who Have Ever Attempted Suicide[^]



The Minnesota Student Survey is state-wide, school-based survey that is administered every three years to students in grades 5, 8, 9, and 11. Questions regarding sexual orientation and gender identity are only given to students in grades 8 and above. In 2022, more than 135,000 public school students participated.

[^] Data comes from the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey

* Indicates a significant difference between metro and greater Minnesota for the gender group



2023 - 2024 Timeline

2023

The Council was established through legislation, marking a historic step toward institutionalized advocacy for LGBTQIA2S+ communities in Minnesota. The Governor appointed 12 members to the Council.

JUNE 2024

The Council partnered with MNclusive, the state's LGBTQIA+ employee resource group, to table and conduct a survey at Twin Cities Pride. The Executive Committee met to further develop council procedures, discuss strategic planning, and plan for its next meeting. On June 27, council members participated in a small conversation with community partners and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan at Mudluk Pottery.

AUGUST 2024

The Council hired its senior operations specialist and began its strategic planning efforts to begin crafting its long-term agenda.

OCTOBER 2024

Council staff and the Executive Committee refined the findings from Council interviews and the retreat to develop the Council's first draft of emerging priorities.

DECEMBER 2024

The Council added three temporary staff to its team using FY24 rollover funds – community engagement specialist, communication and outreach specialist, and research and policy specialist. The staff also engaged in an all-day planning retreat focused on the next six-month priorities and work plans to operationalize the council's emerging priorities.

MAY 2024

The Council became operational with the hiring of its first executive director, a pivotal milestone in building the organization's foundation. The Council officially met for the first time in May 2024 where it established initial bylaws and elected a council chair, vice chair, treasurer, and secretary.

JULY 2024

The Council held a meeting focused on approving updated bylaws, advancing strategic planning efforts, and addressing staffing and office space needs.

SEPTEMBER 2024

The council members participated in individual interviews to assess council member's goals and visions for the Council's work. The Council also held a regular meeting and a special meeting consisting of a strategic planning retreat.

NOVEMBER 2024

Following council focus groups to review and update the emerging priorities, the Council approved its emerging purpose, values, strategic priorities, and issue priorities.

Foundation-Building Milestones

In its first months of operation, the Council focused on laying the groundwork for a sustainable and impactful organization. Key activities included:

Infrastructure Development

- » Drafting and adopting bylaws, establishing an Executive Committee, and defining governance structures to ensure accountability and transparency.

Strategic Planning:

- » Engaging planners to facilitate a comprehensive planning process, including one-to-one council member meetings, a full-day retreat, and focus groups.

Staffing

- » Recruiting critical personnel, including a senior operations specialist, to support the Council's administrative and strategic functions, and temporary specialists to advance the Council's community engagement, communication, and research objectives.

Community Engagement

- » Conducting the Pride Survey to identify pressing issues and engaging stakeholders to refine the Council's priorities. Laying groundwork for a comprehensive community needs assessment in FY25.

State Government Scan

- » Working with Minnesota Management and Analysis Division (MAD), the Council began efforts to document state programs, policies, and funding that support LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and identify gaps or opportunities for collaboration across agencies.

Collaboration

- » Joined working groups on key legislative, administrative, and policy initiatives, including SOGIE Youth in Care workgroup, Collaboration for Data Disaggregation, and Minnesota LGBTQ+ and HIV Long Term Care Bill of Rights workgroup.

These foundational efforts have positioned the Council to effectively fulfill its mandate, addressing systemic barriers and advancing equity for LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans.

Pride Survey Results

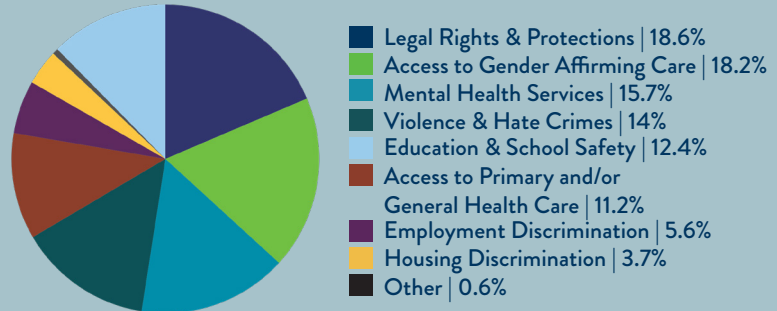
The Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans partnered with MNclusive to design and distribute a survey during Twin Cities Pride on June 29-30, 2024. The survey was distributed on paper and online via QR code at the State of Minnesota’s booth, which was hosted by MNclusive. Responses were collected from 167 participants who shared their experiences and insights, giving us valuable feedback to help guide our work. While the survey was not large enough to represent the entire LGBTQIA2S+ population in Minnesota, it was a meaningful starting point for understanding community needs, informing future engagement efforts, and shaping initiatives.

Assumptions & Takeaways

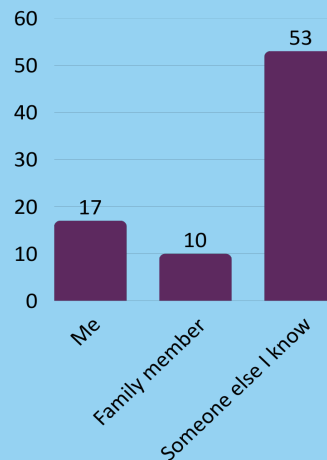
Participants were asked three multiple choice questions and one open ended question. The top assumptions and takeaways include:

- » Respondents noted legal rights & protections, access to gender-affirming care, and mental health services as the top three most pressing issues.
- » 44.9% of survey respondents have been impacted by Minnesota’s trans refuge policies, either by self, family, or other connection.
- » 67.1% of respondents have experienced discrimination or harassment in the last year. Public spaces, workplace, and online were the most common settings for maltreatment.

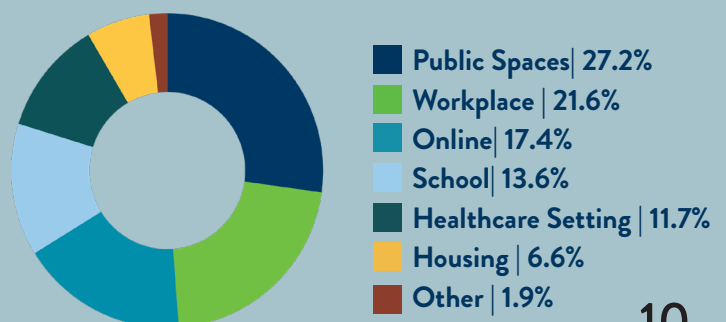
What are the most pressing issues facing the LGBTQIA2S+ Community today?



Have you or someone you know moved to Minnesota in the last two years to seek safety as an LGBTQIA2S+ person?



If you’ve experienced discrimination or harassment in the past year, where did it occur?



Additional Insights and Feedback from Respondents:

“Providing more free or low-cost group therapy for LGBTQ+ individuals in communities without as many hoops to jump through may be a really positive impact for the cost.”

“The State of MN is a good employer. I really appreciate MNclusive and wished I knew about it much, much sooner in my career.”

“Thank you for accepting and passing the law for MN to be an LGBTQIA2S+ refuge state <3”

“I love MN, I feel very safe here, but I have run into queer discrimination.”

“Need more youth support for kids in unsupportive households.”

“Single payer healthcare would be so helpful for queer folks. Also changing laws to make it so marriage isn’t such a needed thing to access rights, financial incentives, and insurance.”



Strategic Planning

Overview

Strategic planning has been the cornerstone of the Council's work to align its efforts with the pressing needs of LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans. Guided by a strong purpose and a commitment to equity and inclusion, the Council adopted its emerging purpose, values, strategic priorities, and issue priorities in November 2024. As the Council continues strategic planning and expanding stakeholder engagement, these priorities will be further refined. The Council's priorities will serve as a roadmap for its advocacy, research, and community engagement in the years ahead.

Emerging Purpose and Values

Purpose

Elevate LGBTQIA2S+ issues and Council priorities within state government, serve as a liaison between the community and policymakers, and provide research-backed, data-driven recommendations to improve the lives of LGBTQIA2S+ individuals.

Commitment

Build awareness of the needs of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, facilitate community education, and support legislative action reflecting LGBTQIA2S+ voices.

Values

Equity & Inclusion • Clear Communication • Transparency • Community Care
Boldness & Authenticity • Sustainability

Emerging Strategic Priorities

The Council identified three emerging strategic priorities to guide its operations:

Conduct Research

- » Position the Council as a key resource for policymakers through data-driven insights.
- » Undertake research to analyze the impacts of legislation on LGBTQIA2S+ communities and identify opportunities for improvement.
- » Partner with academic and research organizations to enhance the credibility and scope of studies.

Engage Community

- » Serve as a bridge between the community and legislators by gathering and utilizing community perspectives.
- » Focus on underserved groups, including but not limited to transgender, rural, and BIPOC LGBTQIA2S+ populations.
- » Create feedback loops to report back to the community on the impact of their input.

Advance Community Interest

- » Actively advocate for policies that address LGBTQIA2S+ priorities within state government.
- » Collaborate with advocacy groups to amplify diverse voices and avoid duplicating efforts.
- » Use the Council's platform to support legislative initiatives that align with community needs.

Emerging Issue Priorities



Roundtable discussion with Lieutenant Governor Flanagan, Council Members, and community leaders at Mudluk Pottery

The Council identified the following issue areas as critical for advancing LGBTQIA2S+ equity:

Support for Transgender Youth

» Advocate for increased protections and access to education, healthcare, and mental health services, with a focus on gender-affirming care.

Equity for LGBTQIA2S+ People in Rural Areas

» Improve access to services and community support networks for rural populations through targeted legislation and funding.

Addressing Racial Disparities within the LGBTQIA2S+ Community

» Center the experiences of BIPOC LGBTQIA2S+ individuals by addressing systemic barriers in healthcare, housing, and employment, and more.

Support for Aging LGBTQIA2S+ Communities

» Enhance access to inclusive senior services, affordable housing, and targeted healthcare for elderly LGBTQIA2S+ individuals.

Economic Development

» Promote equitable access to economic opportunities through workforce development and support for LGBTQIA2S+ small businesses.

State Funding for Community

» Advocate for increased funding to expand critical services like mental health support, crisis intervention, and legal assistance.

Access to Mental and Physical Healthcare

» Expand access to affordable, culturally competent care tailored to LGBTQIA2S+ needs, particularly in mental health.

The Emerging Purpose, Values, Strategic Priorities, and Issue Priorities provide a robust framework for the Council's future work. By combining research, community engagement, and advocacy, the Council is committed to addressing systemic inequities and driving meaningful change for LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans. These priorities will inform the Council's initiatives, ensuring its efforts are impactful, inclusive, and aligned with the needs of the communities it serves.



Minnesota State Pride Flag

Community Engagement and Research

Staff dedicated the final months of 2024 to laying the groundwork for major initiatives aimed at enhancing community engagement and research efforts in 2025. This planning process focused on creating strategies to ensure meaningful outreach, incorporate diverse voices, and develop research-driven approaches to address systemic barriers faced by LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans. By investing in thoughtful preparation and capacity-building, the Council set the stage for impactful actions in the coming year.

Plans for 2025

Community Needs Assessment and State Scan

Leveraging \$420,000 in rolled-over funds that expire June 30, 2025, the Council is implementing research initiatives that will advance the Council's three emerging strategic priorities: conduct research, engage community, and advance community interests.

Three-Part Community Needs Assessment:

Statewide Survey

» Collect insights on experiences, priorities, and challenges of LGBTQIA2S+ individuals in Minnesota. Survey will be accessible online and promoted through partners, media, and events.

Community Conversations

» Host focused discussions with underrepresented and/or understudied groups including but not limited to older adults, transgender and gender expansive individuals, BIPOC communities, people with disabilities, and Greater Minnesota communities.

Organizational Scan

» Assess strengths, gaps, and challenges among organizations serving LGBTQIA2S+ communities.



Lieutenant Governor Flanagan with Council Members and community leaders at Mudluk Pottery

Minnesota State Government Scan:

Purpose:

- » Document current programs, policies, and funding that support LGBTQIA2S+ communities, both explicitly and broadly.
- » Understand language, definitions, and categorizations of “underserved communities” across state agencies.
- » Identify gaps in state-level support for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals.
- » Inform the Council’s legislative priorities and foster inter agency collaboration.
- » Create a public-facing tool for LGBTQIA2S+ communities to navigate state programs and services.

Goals:

Collaboration

- » Build stronger partnerships with state agencies.

Insights

- » Provide actionable recommendations for legislative and agency-level priorities.

Support

- » Equip agencies with cultural competency, research, and resources.

Accessibility

- » Develop a resource guide highlighting LGBTQIA2S+-focused programs and services.



Interpreter Nik Zapko and Council Member Theo Casio at Trans Day of Remembrance

Expanded Staffing and Capacity Building

Temporary hires, including specialists in community engagement, communications, and research, will focus on:

- » Building stronger connections with stakeholders.
- » Developing a public awareness campaign and digital presence.
- » Creating actionable recommendations for the Legislature and the Governor.

Long-Term Planning

The Council recognizes the importance of establishing a sustainable framework for its work to ensure its impact extends beyond immediate priorities. The research and policy specialist will spearhead the development of a multi-year research agenda, which will include identifying key areas for future exploration, building partnerships with academic institutions and advocacy groups, and creating a roadmap for addressing evolving community needs.

This agenda will serve as a foundation for the Council's advocacy efforts, providing data-driven insights to inform policy recommendations and funding allocations. By planning research initiatives two to five years ahead, the council will be better positioned to anticipate emerging issues and respond proactively to shifts in the socio-political landscape.

Additionally, the Council aims to institutionalize mechanisms for continuous feedback and adaptation, ensuring that its work remains aligned with the voices and experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans. By prioritizing a forward-thinking approach, the Council seeks to not only address current challenges but also to lay the groundwork for a more equitable and inclusive future for LGBTQIA2S+ communities across Minnesota.

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

As the Council continues to evolve, we are committed to transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration. This inaugural year has set a strong foundation, and we are eager to build upon it in the years ahead. Thank you to our staff, council members, and community partners for their invaluable contributions.



MNQT 2024 Staff Members L-R: Kelsey Waits, Mars Kamenski, Emma McBride, Brittany Wallman, Angelica Gentile

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Chair



KB Brietzke
(They/Them)
Vice Chair



Dr. Jess Garcia
(She/Her)
Treasurer



Bibi Black
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Theo Casio
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