

# Connecting

to the core needs of

**LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans**



MINNESOTA

COUNCIL ON LGBTQIA2S+  
MINNESOTANS

**2025**

ANNUAL REPORT





Legislators and Partners,

As Chair of the Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans, I'm honored to share this annual report at a moment when LGBTQIA2S+ people – especially trans and gender-expansive Minnesotans – are looking to our state for protection and leadership. Across the country, we've seen growing fear and confusion as debates about our lives play out in headlines. Here in Minnesota, we have the chance to lead with steadiness and humanity, and our Council is taking that charge seriously.

In 2025, our Council worked to make sure LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans feel that leadership in real ways. Through our historic Community Needs Assessment, we deepened relationships across the state, uplifted community voices, and created space for trans youth, elders, parents, and rural residents to be heard – not as talking points, but as Minnesotans who deserve safety, dignity, and the freedom to live authentically. Our work is rooted in the belief that every person should be able to live their life without fear and deserves to belong in their schools, workplaces, and community spaces.

Looking ahead to 2026, our priority will be fulfilling the Council's mandate to the state by deepening relationships with legislators and supporting legislative work with robust, community-driven data from our Community Needs Assessment. We will ensure that the voices and experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans inform policy, programs, and decision-making across the state, especially as we face growing challenges and uncertainty. I am honored to serve as Chair and deeply appreciative of my fellow Council Members and our dedicated staff for their partnership, expertise, and commitment to this important work.

**Theo Casio**

Chair, Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans

Cover Photo: Chair Theo Casio speaking at the Minnesota Capitol on 2025 Transgender Day of Remembrance

Inside Front Cover Photo: Mark Usspiske | Pexels





Legislators and Partners,

2025 was our agency’s first full calendar year in operation, and it was a year defined by building, listening, and laying the groundwork for long-term impact. We established core administrative systems, onboarded staff, strengthened community relationships, and launched a statewide LGBTQIA2S+ Community Needs Assessment – the first of its kind in Minnesota in 30 years. Thanks to thousands of survey responses, focus groups, and statewide outreach, and with the partnership of dozens of community organizations and the generosity of participants who shared their experiences, we now have the most comprehensive data Minnesota has ever had on the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ people.

In 2026, our focus will shift toward analysis, reporting, and implementation. We will turn these community insights into clear, actionable recommendations that can support legislators, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, and state agencies in making informed, equitable policy decisions. We will continue to strengthen our internal capacity, refine our processes, and ensure that the Council remains a reliable, effective partner in state government. Our mission is simple but powerful: center community voice, provide robust data, and help Minnesota make decisions that reflect the needs and experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ people across the state.

We are deeply grateful to all of the community members and partners who participated in this work. Their voices make this data meaningful, and their trust and collaboration ensure that it will guide policies and programs that improve lives. And thank you to our partners in the legislature who have entrusted our Council Members and staff with this critical work. We’re humbled to serve, and ready to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

**Emma Watts**  
Executive Director, Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans

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# Executive Summary



## About the Council

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 (and operational as of May 2024), 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 has a General Fund appropriation of \$558,000 in FY25 and \$566,000 in FY27.

## Rooted in real needs.

### Key Accomplishments

In 2025, our agency marked a year of significant growth and impact. We developed and launched a historic community needs assessment – the largest state-run LGBTQIA2S+ needs assessment in history – to better understand and respond to the evolving priorities of the diverse and vibrant communities we serve. Throughout the year, we also expanded public awareness of our agency and our mission, strengthening our visibility and connections across the state. At the same time, we deepened and built meaningful community partnerships that not only informed our work, but helped ensure that our strategies remain community-led, equitable, and rooted in real needs.



Angelica Gentile and Kelsey Waits tabling at St. Cloud Pride 2025



## 2025 Key Accomplishments



### LAUNCHED

a historic, three-part statewide LGBTQIA2S+ Community Needs Assessment, collecting 7,160 total survey responses and hosting 12 focus groups with 69 participants.



### EXPANDED

public presence and visibility, including attendance at 60+ community events, engagement with 14 Pride festivals, and 40 structured partnerships with community organizations to support outreach and survey promotion. Through attendance, providing physical materials, sponsorship, or verbal recognition, the Council had a presence at over 112 events, with an emphasis on promoting our Community Needs Survey.



### DEVELOPED

a comprehensive partner outreach toolkit for our Community Needs Assessment, receiving more than 450 unique views from community partners and stakeholders. The toolkit resulted in the sharing of the Council Needs Assessment materials across their social media channels, newsletters, and physical spaces, helping extend the survey's reach far beyond the Council's own networks.



### ADVISED

legislators on LGBTQIA2S+ policy issues, making 6 legislative appearances through testimony and letters of support or opposition.



### GREW

communication channels and public awareness with 30,419 unique website visitors, 36,909 total website visits, launched and grew our social media following and newsletter distribution list.



### UTILIZED

Council meetings as a platform to elevate public concerns and deepen shared understanding, offering educational sessions and expert perspectives.

# Introduction and Background

## Legislation

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.

## Core Functions

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:

			
<b>Advocacy:</b> Advising policymakers on legislative actions that impact LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, with a focus on equity and inclusion.	<b>Research:</b> Conducting studies and needs assessments to understand the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ communities and provide data-driven insights.	<b>Engagement:</b> Serving as a liaison between the state and LGBTQIA2S+ communities to amplify voices, build partnerships, and foster dialogue.	<b>Public Awareness:</b> Promoting understanding of LGBTQIA2S+ issues through education, outreach, and strategic communications.

## 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 Minnesota Compass, as of March 2024, approximately 11% of Minnesotan adults identify as LGBTQ+<sup>1</sup>, translating to over 600,000 individuals. A recent report by the Williams Institute further found that 1.2% of adult Minnesotans identify as transgender, making Minnesota the state with the highest proportion of transgender adults in the country.<sup>2</sup>

Disparities persist across multiple dimensions, including mental and physical health, housing, employment, and education. For example, LGBTQ youth are disproportionately affected by mental health challenges, with higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation compared to their heterosexual peers<sup>3,4</sup>. Transgender individuals, particularly transgender youth, face barriers in accessing gender-affirming care<sup>5,6</sup>, while LGBTQIA2S+ individuals in rural areas often lack visibility and support systems<sup>7,8</sup>.

# 2025 Timeline and Activities

## Priorities

### ORGANIZATIONAL

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. These priorities provide guidance for MNQT staff when considering which Pride festivals and other community events to attend and sponsor, and where to focus outreach when attempting to engage specific demographics of Minnesotans.

## Ensuring equity.



Governor Tim Walz speaking at the 2025 Transgender Day of Visibility

### LEGISLATIVE

Minnesota has a proud history of leadership on LGBTQIA2S+ issues, but significant gaps remain in achieving full equity for LGBTQIA2S+ residents. These gaps can be found in home ownership rates<sup>9</sup>, mental and physical health outcomes<sup>10,11</sup>, experiences of healthcare discrimination<sup>12</sup>, and experiences of violence<sup>13,14</sup>.

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<sup>15, 16, 17</sup> and physical health outcomes<sup>18, 19</sup> and contribute to economic vitality<sup>20,21</sup>.

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.



The full MNQT staff at the Minnesota Capitol building for the 2025 Transgender Day of Visibility



## COMMUNITY

- **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.
- **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.



Top left: Emma Watts and Mars Kamenski with the survey banner for the TC Pride Parade 2025



Top right: 2025 MNQT Pride tabling arrangement

Bottom left: MNQT ad in the May 1, 2025 issue of Lavender Magazine



Bottom right: Angelica Gentile and Mars Kamenski tabling at the Ag for All Conference 2025



**Community**  
action.

# 2025



Chair Theo Casio speaking at the Minnesota Capitol on Transgender Day of Remembrance

## Timeline of Activities and Accomplishments

JAN  
FEB

### January-February:

- Staff engaged in strategic planning to set priorities for the year and align internal work with the Council's statutory responsibilities.
- The team developed the Community Needs Assessment, including drafting and refining the survey, creating branding and a website landing page, producing outreach materials, and coordinating translation into multiple languages.
- The Council hosted two public information sessions on the Needs Assessment, drawing roughly 100 participants from across the state.
- Staff presented before the Senate State Government committee to provide updates on the agency's work and emerging community priorities.
- Staff moved into office space within the MPCA building, establishing a stable operational base for the agency.
- Council leadership met with legislators, attended hearings, and monitored shifts in federal policy with potential impacts on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans.

MAR  
APR

### March-April:

- The Council formally launched the statewide survey for the Community Needs Assessment, marking a major milestone in the project.
- Staff presented before the House State Government committee to provide updates on the agency's work and emerging community priorities.
- The Council awarded a contract through a competitive RFP process to Wilder Research to support survey promotion and administer focus groups.
- The Council launched a paid and digital media program to increase awareness of the Needs Assessment.
- Focus groups began across multiple regions and communities to gather deeper qualitative data.
- The Council co-hosted a Trans Day of Visibility event at the Capitol, celebrating Minnesota's vibrant transgender community and raising awareness of ongoing and pervasive discrimination.

## May-June:

- Staff and Council members attended and tabled at Rochester Pride, Youth Pride, Trans Joy Fest, Transforming Generations Pride, Twin Cities Pride Family Fun Day, and Twin Cities Pride to promote the Needs Assessment and engage directly with community members.
- The Council tabled at the 2025 Minnesota Rural Health Conference to strengthen connections with rural health partners and elevate concerns facing LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans outside the metro and at HIV Day on the Hill at the Capitol.
- The Executive Director delivered opening remarks at the Minnesota 2025 Statewide HIV conference, elevating Minnesota's responsibility in preventing HIV and ending the crisis.

## July-August:

- Two temporary staff positions concluded, while one converted to a part-time permanent role, bringing staffing to 2.5 FTE as the agency continued to adjust to workload and budget needs.
- The Council tabled at TC Black Pride's Family Day in the Park to celebrate Minnesota's vibrant communities.

## September-October:

- Staff attended South Central MN Pride, St. Cloud Pride, and Austin Pride, connecting with Greater Minnesota communities and expanding reach.
- Council staff presented on community engagement at the 30th Annual Rulemaking Seminar to provide perspectives on how to engage LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans in rulemaking processes.
- Focus group analysis began as part of the data synthesis phase of the Community Needs Assessment.
- The Council hosted three community workshops to prepare for analysis and sensemaking in collaboration with community partners.
- The Council established a partnership with Indigenous Roots to convene Two-Spirit community members and collaborate on culturally grounded data collection and engagement.
- The Council submitted a response to the Senate Select Subcommittee on Federal Impacts, outlining federal policy risks facing LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans.

## November-December:

- The Council Chair Theo Casio gave remarks at MNclusive's Transgender Day of Remembrance event at the Capitol to honor the lives taken by anti-transgender violence.
- The Council co-hosted a statewide Two-Spirit convening with Indigenous Roots and Sharon Day to deepen engagement and center community-led approaches.
- The agency hosted a stakeholder summit and end-of-year update call to share progress and celebrate a year of community partnership.

MAY  
JUN

JUL  
AUG

SEP  
OCT

NOV  
DEC



# Community Needs Assessment

## Overview

Our Community Needs Assessment marks a historic milestone for Minnesota and for LGBTQIA2S+ communities statewide. Queer and trans communities have not been comprehensively studied in Minnesota since 1995, and the Council's effort represents the largest state-run LGBTQIA2S+ needs assessment in history. Designed to capture both the breadth and depth of community experiences, the assessment used a three-part approach – an individual survey for people 18+ and parents of queer and trans youth under 18, a series of focused community conversations, and a survey of service providers and organizations that serve LGBTQIA2S+ people. Together, these components allowed us to reach thousands of Minnesotans, uplift underrepresented voices, and build the most robust, community-grounded picture of LGBTQIA2S+ needs ever produced by the State of Minnesota.



Original Outreach Graphic: Myrtle at SharkyLemon

## Three-Part Community Needs Assessment:



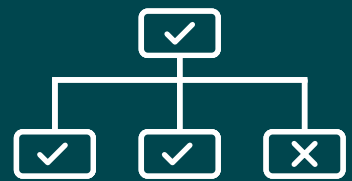
### Statewide Survey:

Collected insights on experiences, priorities, and challenges of LGBTQIA2S+ individuals in Minnesota. The survey was accessible online and promoted through partners, media, and different events.



### Community Conversations:

Hosted 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:

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

# Process and Accomplishments

## COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY PROCESS:

### PHASE 1

#### Phase 1: Pre-Design Consultation and Scoping

##### Objectives:

- » Assess feasibility and scope of a statewide LGBTQIA2S+ needs assessment.
- » Identify priority issue areas through early stakeholder input.
- » Ensure the project design aligned with state research expectations and community engagement principles.



Kelsey Waits and Emma Watts tabling at Twin Cities Pride 2025

##### Approach and Activities:

- » Conducted structured conversations with Council Members, community leaders, service providers, and other partners to understand interest in the project and identify key topics such as safety, discrimination, service access, and health barriers.
- » Worked with research staff to align community-identified priorities with existing validated survey measures and standard state data practices.
- » Hosted two public information sessions with 100 participants total to preview survey concepts, gather initial feedback, and increase transparency regarding the development process.
- » Developed engagement principles rooted in accessibility, equity, and Minnesota's existing community engagement frameworks.
- » Established a statewide outreach list consisting of LGBTQIA2S+ organizations, culturally specific groups, agencies, schools, coalitions, and other potential collaborators.

### PHASE 2

#### Phase 2: Instrument Development and Infrastructure Preparation

##### Objectives:

- » Finalize a survey instrument that reflected community priorities.
- » Assess the clarity, usability, and cultural responsiveness of the tool through community review and feedback.
- » Document and implement findings and recommended revisions to ensure the final survey aligns with research standards and community-informed best practices.

## PHASE 3

### Approach and Activities:

- » Finalized survey content in partnership with community reviewers and the Management Analysis and Development (MAD).
- » Submitted the survey to the Enterprise Translation Office for translation to Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Arabic and to Keystone Interpreting Solutions for translation to ASL.
- » Developed a Partner Outreach Toolkit containing customizable messaging, social media assets, print materials, and an FAQ to support consistent communication across partners.
- » Identified events and community gatherings across Minnesota where survey promotion would be feasible and beneficial.

### Phase 3: Statewide Survey Promotion and Engagement

#### Objectives:

- » Launch the survey statewide and maximize participation across diverse communities.
- » Ensure consistent and coordinated outreach among partners.
- » Support partners and community leaders in promoting the survey effectively to priority populations.
- » Use digital media tools to expand reach and access.

#### Approach and Activities:

- » Distributed survey information to hundreds of organizations, agencies, schools, and community partners across Minnesota using established contact lists.
- » Provided partners with the outreach toolkit and offered technical assistance to support consistent and accessible promotion of the survey.
- » Attended and tabled at statewide events, festivals, and community gatherings to increase visibility and engagement among priority populations.
- » Conducted physical outreach efforts by placing posters and flyers in businesses, health centers, libraries, community centers, and other public locations.
- » Launched a multi-channel paid media strategy including print, digital, email, social media, and radio advertising.
- » Generated earned media through press releases and interviews.



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS PROCESS:



Twin Cities Pride Parade by Thomas Parker | Pexels

The Council executed focus groups to capture qualitative data and gain a richer and deeper understanding of the communities most often left behind by state government. Conversations took place between April and June 2025 with conversation coding and analysis beginning fall of 2025. IRB approval was sought and approved for the focus groups with youth and people experiencing homelessness. In total, 12 focus groups were held with 69 participants. The identity-based groups included: Greater Minnesota residents, Black and African American community, Latino/Latine community, Asian and Pacific Islander community, Two-Spirit and Indigenous community, transgender and gender-expansive adults, people over 60, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA2S+ young adults aged 18-24, LGBTQ youth under 18 with parents present, trans and gender expansive youth under 18 with parents present, and people experiencing homelessness.

Throughout this phase of the assessment, agency staff took the wellbeing of participants very seriously. Participants were compensated for their time and questions were thoughtfully structured to be asset-based while still addressing critical issues. And finally, we provided mental health support at the end of the focus groups for those who were interested in processing their experience through re-grounding and re-centering work before exiting the conversations.

### Management Analysis and Development (MAD) Collaboration

For all components of the Community Needs Assessment, the Council partnered with Management Analysis and Development (MAD), a division of Minnesota Management and Budget. The Council selected MAD because of its long-standing expertise in research, evaluation, and facilitation, as well as its ability to provide technical capacity the Council does not have in-house.

MAD is also subject to heightened data privacy requirements under Minnesota law. While most data held by state agencies is public, information collected directly by MAD for research purposes is protected from public disclosure. This statutory structure allowed us to assure participants – many of whom are members of vulnerable or historically marginalized communities – that their individual survey responses and comments would be handled with strict confidentiality. Protecting their privacy was essential for encouraging participation and ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the needs assessment.

When MAD provides information to our agency or any other state entity, they are required to remove any potentially identifiable details. This means that only aggregated or de-identified findings are shared, while individual-level data remains confidential. This approach both complies with state law and supports our goal of creating a safe environment for Minnesotans to share their experiences and needs.

### Conclusion

Through this multi-phase, research-driven process, the Council implemented the most comprehensive and community-centered assessment of LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans ever conducted by a state government. Combining validated measures, multilingual translations, accessibility, statewide outreach, paid and earned media, and most importantly, community partnerships, the project generated a robust foundation of information to guide evidence-based policymaking, support resource allocation, and reduce disparities affecting LGBTQIA2S+ residents across Minnesota.

## MINNESOTA STATE GOVERNMENT SCAN:

Alongside the Community Needs Assessment, we created and executed a state agency scan to better understand how the state is engaging with and supporting LGBTQIA2S+ communities, where the gaps and strengths are, and identify ways MNQT can provide support and collaboration. This has laid a strong foundation for ongoing partnerships within the state. We'll continue this project through 2025 and will use the data to create recommendations for improvements, policy or administrative changes, and identify priorities for MNQT.

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



Right to left: Minnesota state flag, A selfie with Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, Event signage at the 2025 Transgender Day of Visibility



**Collaborative**  
approach.

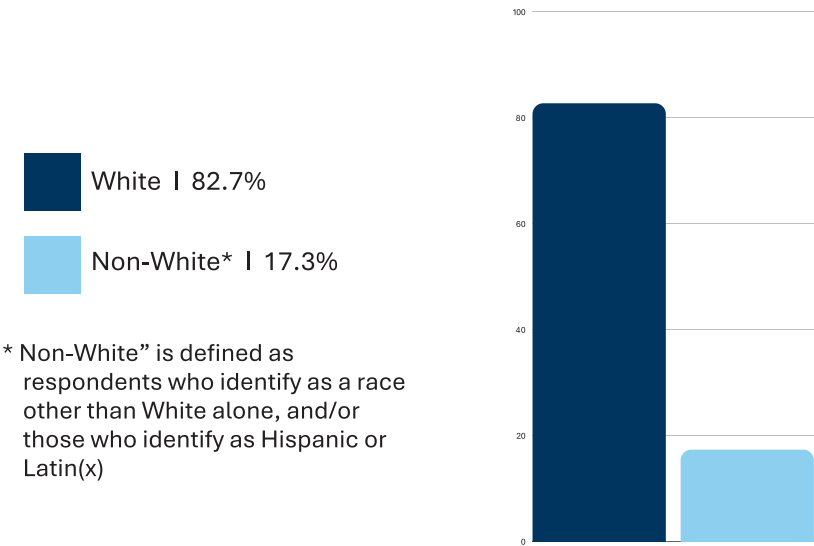
# CNA: Preliminary Demographic Snapshot

The Community Needs Survey closed on December 31, 2025. Survey data are currently undergoing cleaning and de-anonymization for Council use, a process expected to be completed in February 2026. For the purposes of this report, the Council and MAD have prepared a high-level, preliminary demographic snapshot, including race, age, geographic region, and migration to Minnesota. Full demographic findings will be available in spring 2026.

## Percent of Responses by Race and Ethnicity

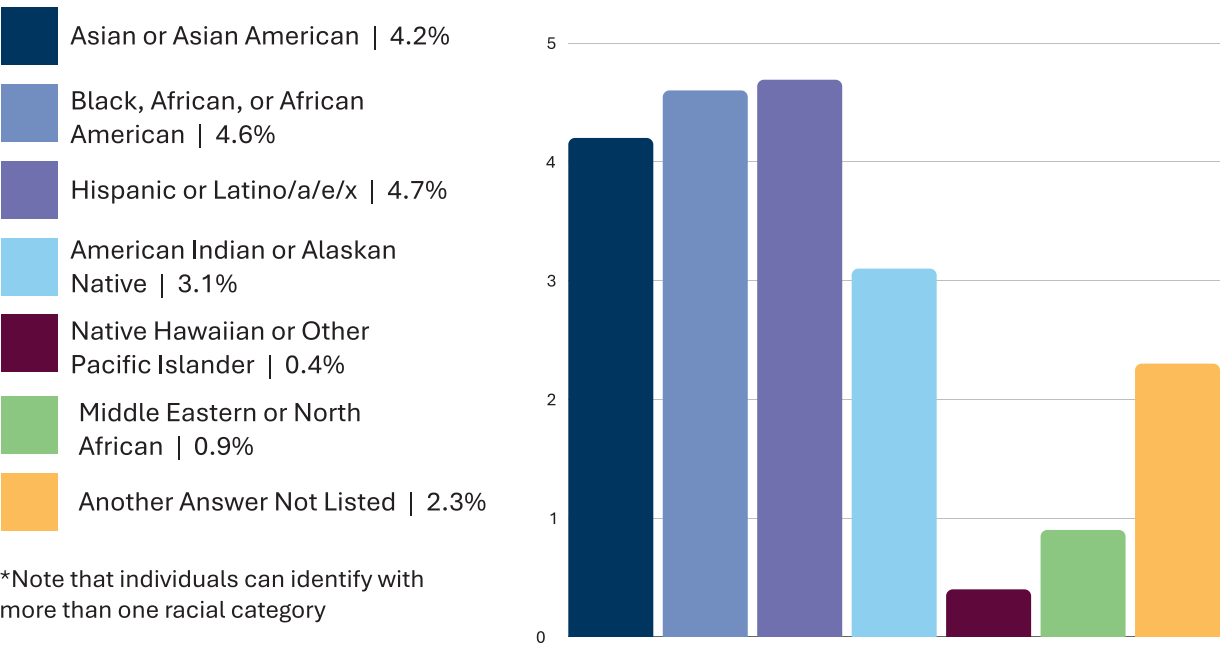
Total number of responses: 6,724

### Percent of Respondents Who Identify as White



### Disaggregation of Non-White Responses

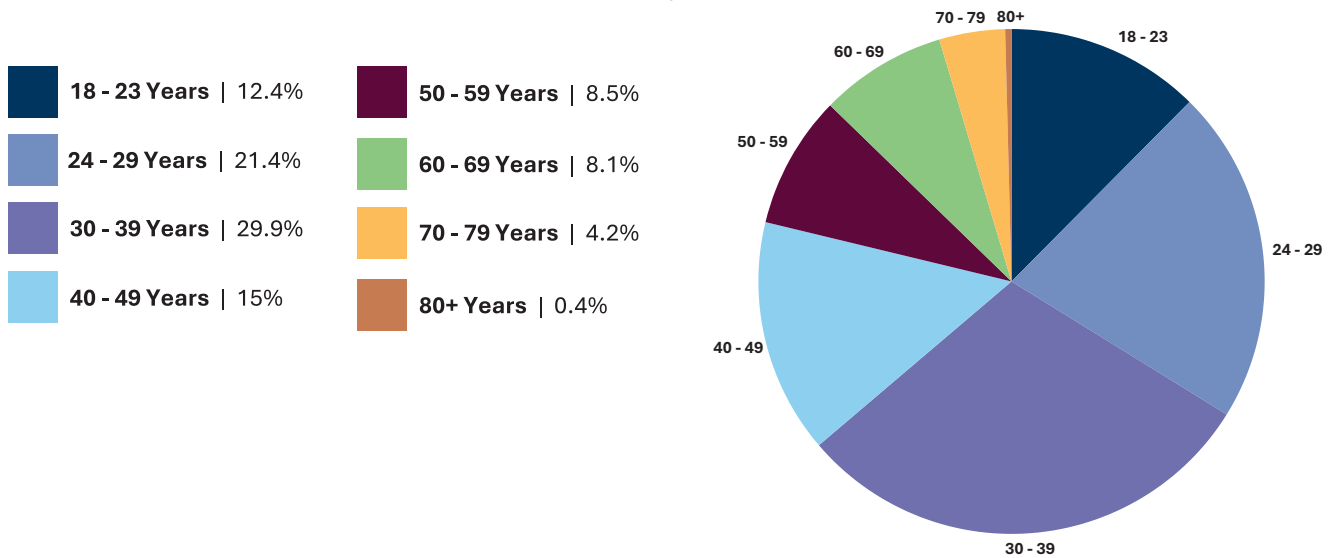
Number of Responses: 1,165\*





## Percent of Responses by Age

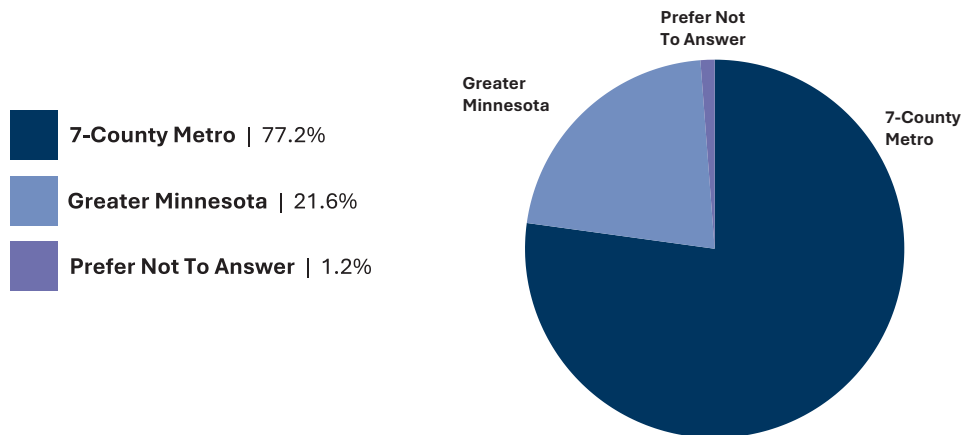
Number of Responses: 6,738



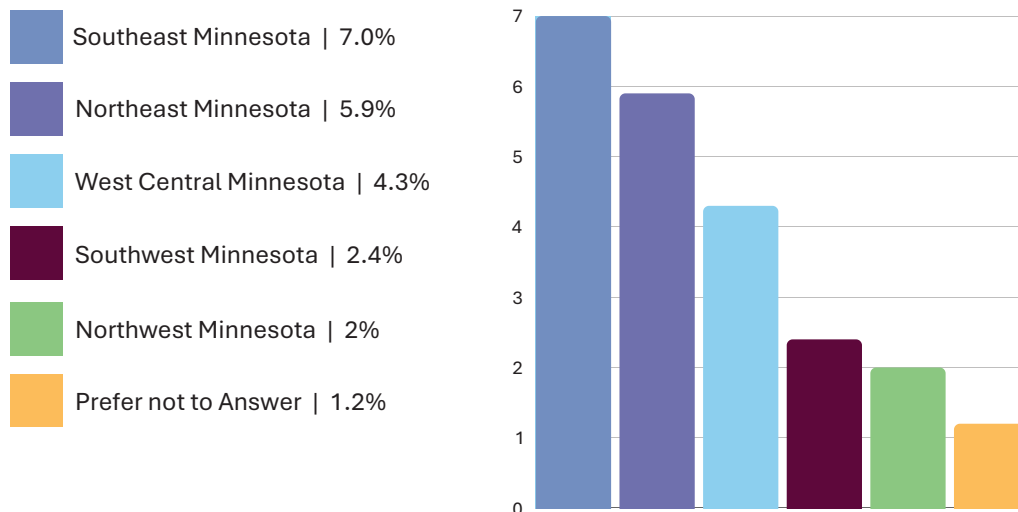
## Percent of Responses by Geographic Region

Number of Responses: 6,931

### Percent of Respondents In the 7-County Metro

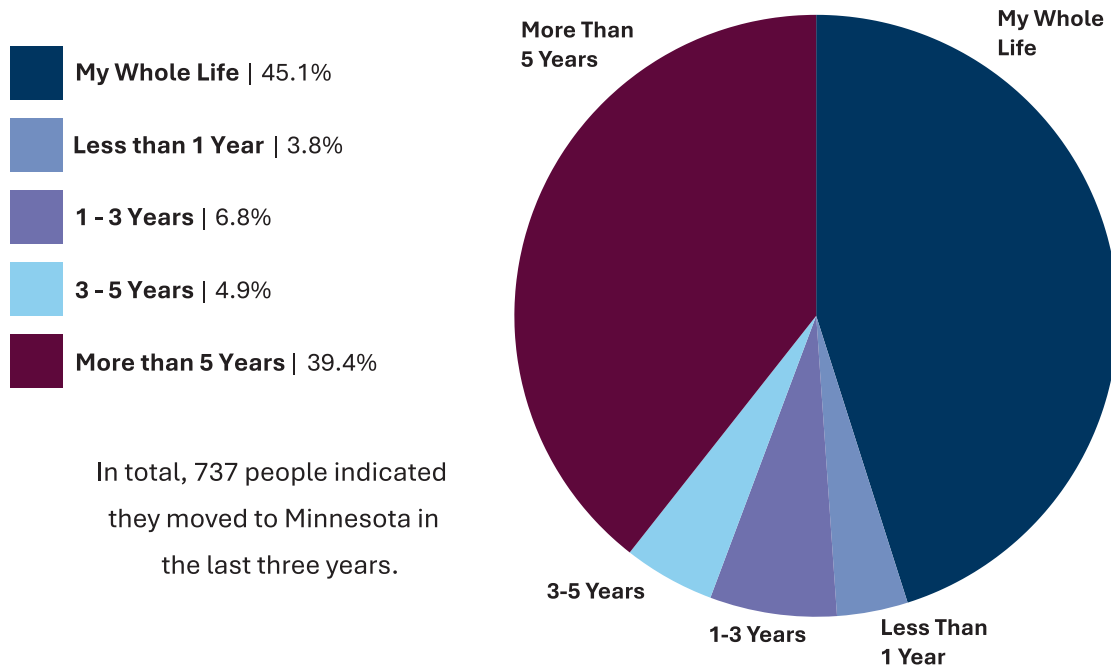


### Disaggregation of Greater Minnesota Responses



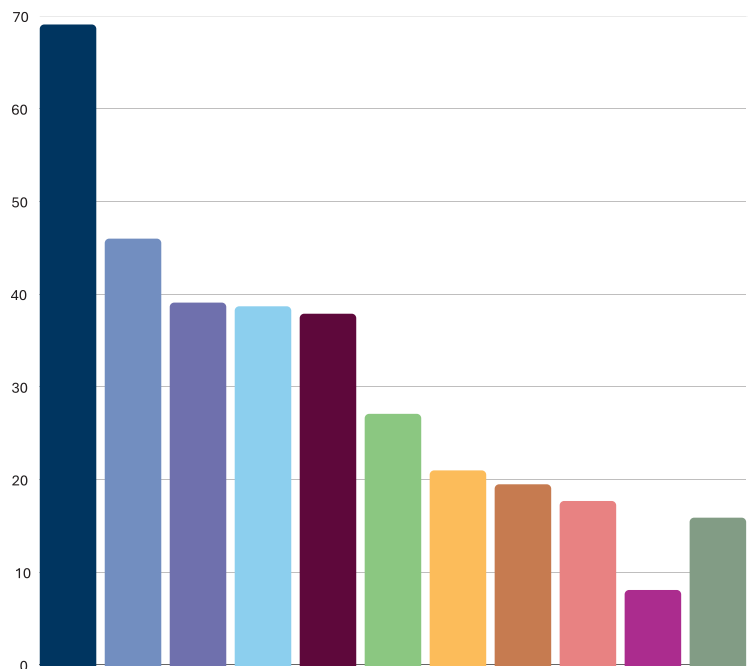
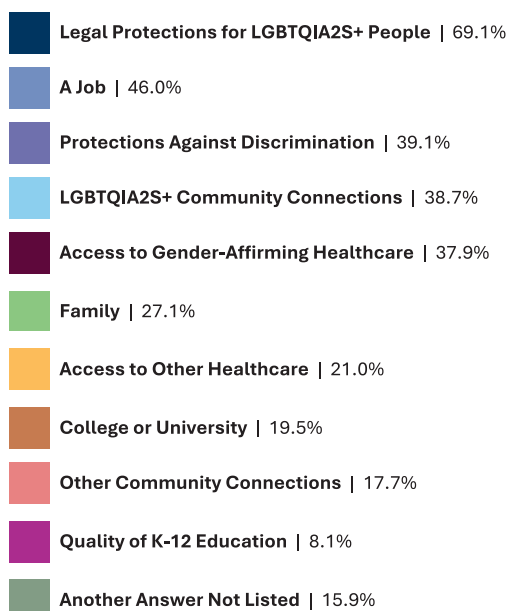
## How long have you lived in MN?

Number of Responses: 6,931



## If you moved to Minnesota in the last three years, why did you choose to move here\*?

Number of Responses: 728

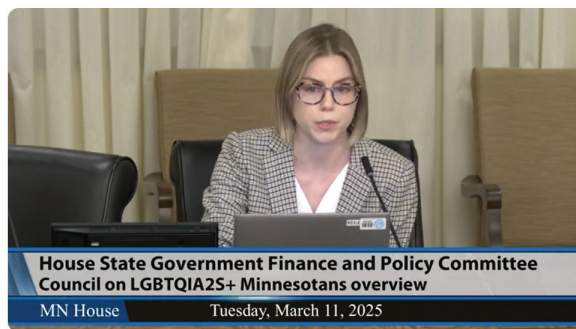


\*Individuals could select more than one reason

## Plans for 2026

In 2026, the Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans will shift fully into the data analysis, reporting, and sense-making phases of our statewide LGBTQIA2S+ Community Needs Assessment. Due to the volume and complexity of the data collected, the Council will release findings in phases throughout the year to provide timely, high-level information while deeper analysis continues. Each phase will address core research questions, including the greatest needs facing LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans; variations in those needs across race, geography, and age; recent migration patterns into Minnesota; barriers to mental and physical healthcare; and the educational experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ youth. This phased approach ensures that state agencies, legislators, and partner organizations have access to emerging data as soon as it is available.

Throughout 2026, the Council's Research Advisory Group, which is composed of researchers, policy experts, organizational leaders, legislators, and community representatives, will support the technical and methodological aspects of data analysis and help shape the structure and focus of each report. As the year progresses, the Council will transition from analysis to developing solutions and policy recommendations grounded in the findings. By the end of 2026, the Council will convene a Policy Advisory Committee to refine these recommendations and help shape a clear, actionable policy agenda informed by the assessment's results that will guide the Council's work for years to come.



Emma Watts speaking to the Minnesota House in March 2025



Council member Jessica Garcia at the 2025 Mankato Pride Festival



Community Needs Assessment Flyer



Graphic created as a temporary tattoo and sticker used as an event giveaway

# FY25 Budget & Expenses

## FY25 BUDGET

FY25 general fund appropriation.....	499
Actual balance forward in.....	419
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>918</b>

DESCRIPTION	EXPENDED
Full Time – Salary	\$354,487.01
Part-Time-Seasonal-Labor Serv	\$42,988.03
Overtime and Premium Pay	\$1,138.25
Other Employee Cost	\$1,155
Space Rental and Utilities	\$16,432.60
Printing and Advertising	\$61,019.09
Prof-Tech Serv-Outside Vendors	\$175,859.98
Communications	\$108.35
Trav-Sub-InState-Border Comm	\$3,653.75
Employee Development	\$1,724.79
State Agcy-Prov Prof-Tech Serv	\$132,808.39
Rate-Based MNIT Services	\$10,874.05
Supplies	\$25,750.44
Equipment	\$700
Other Operating Costs	\$8,248.33
Equipment-Non Capital	\$1,200.93
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$838,148.99</b>



## Staff



**Emma Watts**

Executive Director  
(She/Her)

Emma Watts is the Council's first Executive Director and brings extensive experience in statewide LGBTQIA2S+ policy, government relations, and coalition strategy. She has led and supported major legislative efforts, including statewide work on marriage equality, conversion therapy, and LGBTQIA2S+ economic and health equity. At the Council, she oversees all agency operations, directs strategic planning, and ensures fulfillment of the Council's statutory mandate.



**Angelica Gentile**

Senior Operations Specialist  
(She/Her)

Angelica Gentile manages the Council's day-to-day operations and administrative systems. She brings experience in program coordination, organizational administration, and advocacy support. At the Council, she oversees financial processes, maintains agency operations and workflows, and provides program and administrative support to ensure effective implementation of the Council's work.



**Kelsey Waits**

Research Director  
(She/They)

Kelsey Waits leads the Council's research and data initiatives, bringing expertise in public policy, statistics, and LGBTQIA2S+ policy analysis. Their background includes advancing gender-inclusive and equity policies at local, state, and federal levels and providing testimony and analysis on key LGBTQIA2S+ legislation. At the Council, Kelsey directs statewide research, data reporting, and evidence-based policy development.

**Former 2025 Council Staff:** The Council was able to temporarily increase its capacity with funds that rolled over from FY24 to FY25. With this additional capacity, the Council was able to plan for and execute the statewide Community Needs Assessment. These efforts would not have been possible without Mars and Brittany who brought visionary leadership and advanced the community engagement and marketing work of the Council. Their contributions cannot be overstated, and the Council is immensely grateful to them for all their work. Their investments and expertise will live on in the Community Needs Assessment and the impact it has on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans for years to come. Thank you, Mars and Brittany!

**Mars Kamenski**

Temporary Community  
Engagement Specialist  
December 2024 - July 2025  
(He/They)



**Brittany Wallman**

Temporary Communication  
and Outreach Specialist  
December 2024 - July 2025  
(She/Her)

# Council Members



**Theo Casio**  
Council Chair  
(They/He)



**KB Brietzke**  
Council Vice Chair  
(They/Them)



**Bibi Black**  
Council Treasurer  
(She/Her)



**Phil Duran**  
Acting Secretary  
(He/Him)



**Dr. Jessica Garcia**  
Council Member  
(She/They, Ella/Elle)



**Dr. Jonathan Poquiz**  
Council Member  
(He/Him)



**Francesca (Mounkoka) Goma**  
Council Member  
(She/Her)



**Kat Rohn**  
Council Member  
(They/She)



**Alyson Rodway**  
Council Member  
(She/Her)



**Reneka Evans**  
Council Member  
(She/Her)



**Oby Ballinger**  
Council Member  
(He/Him)



**Representative Brion Curran**  
Council Member  
(They/She)



**Representative Leigh Finke**  
Council Member  
(She/Her)



**Senator Lindsey Port**  
Council Member  
(She/Her)

# Conclusion, Acknowledgements, Citations

We are deeply grateful to everyone that collaborated with us this past year, particularly as we conducted the Community Needs Assessment. We continue to prioritize partnerships, inclusivity, and transparency in our work and are honored to be doing this work on behalf of and alongside our exceptional community.

## Council Acknowledgements:

Phil Duran (Council Chair from July 1st, 2024 – June 30th, 2025)

Dr. Jessica Garcia (Council Treasurer from July 1st, 2024 – June 30th, 2025)

Bibi Black (Council Secretary from July 1st, 2024 – June 30th, 2025)

Thank you for serving on the Council: Ogichidaakwe (Selena Garza), Randy Stillday, Maxwell Hall

## Citations:

- <sup>1</sup> Megan Chmielewski, "A Picture of LGBTQ+ Minnesotans, Part 3: LGBTQ+ Adults in the Household Pulse Survey, MN Compass, June 17, 2024, <https://www.mncompass.org/data-insights/articles/picture-lgbtq-minnesotans-part-3-lgbtq-adults-household-pulse-survey>
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- <sup>3</sup> "Minnesota Student Survey Results Released," Minnesota Department of Health, December 23, 2022, <https://www.health.state.mn.us/news/pressrel/2022/stsurvey122322.html>
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- <sup>14</sup> CWGPP analysis of American Community Survey 2017-2021, "American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates."
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