



# BELONGING CULTURE

## Creating Gender Inclusive Environments

### ESTIMATED TIME REQUIRED



85 minutes

### OVERVIEW

This session will explore our own understanding and interrogate our thinking of transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive experiences. In this session, your service year corps members will be guided through a reflection of their individual biases and misconceptions related to gender inclusive thinking. Your corps members will practice gender-affirming and inclusive practices in your program's environment and explore strategies to support gender inclusivity at the intrapersonal and systemic levels.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES



By the end of this session, your corps members will be able to:

- Understand the importance of inclusive spaces that foster a belonging environment
- Understand the differences and similarities of their personal and collective values
- Identify and reflect on factors that influence and shape identities

### TRAINING SESSION RESOURCES

Before getting started with this training session, you should review the Preparation section below as well as familiarize yourself with this guide's Session Script. This session should be presented directly to corps members using this downloadable presentation:

- **Downloadable Presentation:** [\*B6: Training Session: Creating Gender Inclusive Environments\*](#)

The downloadable presentation includes speaker notes for program staff who are facilitating this session directly to corps members, making it easy for staff to walk through the presentations efficiently and effectively.

## PREPARATION

### Trainer Expectations

Throughout this training session, trainers will be asked to facilitate the group through small group discussions and full group discussions. Some of the topics may feel challenging for your corps members to engage with, and they may not want to engage in conversations on these topics at first. Part of fostering a belonging environment is making the space equal with corps members and program staff. Therefore, we recommend you, as the facilitator, prepare responses to the questions posed to the corps members throughout the session as a strategy to help spark conversation if needed. Before beginning this session, review the Session Outline & Script below and ensure familiarity with the content to be prepared to facilitate activities and answer potential questions from corps members. You'll notice in the Session Outline there are resources linked to provide background on the subject matters included in this training.

	<b>TIME ESTIMATE</b>
	<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b>
	<b>VIRTUAL MODIFICATION</b>
	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
	<b>HELPFUL TIP</b>

### Necessary Materials

- Distribute pen and paper for your service year corps members to take notes
- One printed copy for each corps member:
  - [B0: Glossary](#)

### Virtual Modifications

If you plan to facilitate the training session in a virtual environment, we recommend the following modifications:

- Use a whiteboard that can be displayed on camera or share your screen and work in a word or google document
- If you have group break out sessions, set up the groups in advance via your video conferencing software
- Don't forget to send an email with any necessary handouts in advance of your remote session

## SESSION OUTLINE

The following outline walks you through what to expect throughout this session and how to prepare.

### I. Objectives and engagement guidance

In this section you introduce the topic for this Belonging session, set a lens for the conversation, and provide tips for engaging throughout the session. You will also distribute the [B0: Glossary](#).

### II. Context

In this section you will discuss why this work is important and set context around how each of us has the power to shape hearts and minds as well as do real harm.

### III. Session principles

In this section you'll cover principles for creating gender inclusive environments including centering marginalized voices, reflecting on your own experiences, and exploring how we show up in the ecological systems around us.

**ACTIVITY:** Reflections on gender: journaling & full group discussion



### IV. Terminology

In this section you will introduce terminology and language related to sex and gender, and provide examples of different gender identities.

### V. Creating Gender Inclusive Environments

In this section you will discuss various strategies for creating gender inclusive spaces and discrete approaches for different working and learning situations. You will also cover the importance of understanding and using pronouns that the person you are talking with identifies as.

**ACTIVITY:** Gender Inclusive Spaces - full group discussion



**Preparation needed:** Spend a few minutes exploring [GenderSpectrum.org](https://www.genderspectrum.org). Use the homepage filters to familiarize yourself with the resources and material appropriate for your corps members. Be prepared to start the conversation with your own opinion or thinking.

**ACTIVITY:** Importance of Pronouns - journaling



**Preparation needed:** Read this article: [Pronouns 101: Why They Matter and What To Do \(and Not Do\) If You Misgender Someone](#) and watch this video: [Pronouns Video](#). You will be showing this video to your corps members during the session as well.

### VI. Creating affirming spaces

The last part of this session covers best practices for creating gender affirming environments.

### VII. Close out

You will close out the session by reflecting on all six of the belonging sessions as a whole – through journaling and a group discussion.

## SESSION SCRIPT

The following script should be used for presenting this session directly to your corps members. It is recommended that you review this script before beginning the session. *Italicized prompts* are intended to be guidance for you as the trainer rather than part of the script you will communicate to your corps members.

### Slide #1

Welcome to our sixth session: Creating Gender Inclusive Environments. Today we will work together to:

- Understand the importance of inclusive spaces that foster a belonging environment
- Understand the differences and similarities of our personal and collective values
- Identify and reflect on identities and factors that influence and shape identities

*Distribute the [B0: Glossary](#) to your service year corps members and have them review the key terms for the Session B6 so they are able to become familiar with the terminology used throughout the session.*

### Slide #2

Our agenda for today is:

- Review the topic for today and the lens for our session, and discuss how to engage with the material.
- Then we'll discuss guiding principles for creating gender inclusive environments.
- We'll introduce terminology and language related to sex and gender, and provide examples of different gender identities
- Then we'll cover what it means to create gender inclusive environments
- Finally, we'll debrief and wrap up.

### Slide #3

Today we are going to talk about creating gender inclusive environments. We will examine our understanding of the transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive experience. We will also identify ways to cultivate affirming and inclusive environments. We will then review best practices, tools, and strategies for supporting relationships among each other – especially in regards to gender inclusivity.

### Slide #4

We'll start our conversation the same way as others in this belonging curriculum - with suggestions for how to engage with today's content:

- Take note of terms and concepts that resonate with you during the workshop. These can be reviewed later for further reflection today and throughout the year.
- Consider your lived experiences and how they influence your understanding of the social identities we will be discussing today.
- Stay open. Some of the information we share might challenge your ideas around belonging and safety and that's okay. If we all stay open, then we can hold the container together.
- If you are more knowledgeable on this topic, challenge yourself to do some deeper reflection.
- There is always room to learn and grow. We are all a work in progress.

Any questions? Let's get started.

### Slide #5

Let's start with some context for today's session – Why is this work important?  
Because each of you interacts with humans – with people.

Each of us has the power to shape hearts and minds – to change lives – and we also have the power to do some real harm if we are not careful.

We're here today to explore the conversations that make you uncomfortable and to extend empathy and understanding to others who may be similar or different from you.

Everyone here is learning. It's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to have questions.

This community values service to others – that means cultivating spaces that embrace a culture and climate that is open to difference, and creating environments that are affirming to all.

### Slide #6

Before we dive into this session it's important for us to name the principles that inform and guide our work. The next couple slides and activity give us a chance to set up principles before diving into gender definitions and creating gender inclusive environments.

### Slide #7

During this session we will be confronting dominant narratives around gender and uplifting the lived experiences of marginalized people.

For example, the narratives and experiences of transgender and non-binary people of color are often excluded from conversations about gender.

Centering our experiences provides space to uncover the ways that transphobia, homophobia, and other forms of oppression inform our understanding while simultaneously creating space for honoring joyful moments of resilience and liberation.

### Slide #8

As service providers who engage with young people, families, peers, elders, community members – it is important to reflect on your experiences. Reflective practice is important because: it examines an experience rather than just living it, provides learning opportunities, reveals our own theories of success, and drives questions, dialogue, and stories.

Some questions to ask ourselves as we reflect:

- How am I responding to this moment?
- Do I have the skills I need to be successful?
- How will I respond to failure?
- How is identity showing up? How is power at play? How is oppression at play?
- Am I giving myself time to heal and restore?

If you're trying to be an equity driven individual, you must engage in reflective practice.

### Slide #9

Understanding this work from an ecological perspective allows us to highlight the ways this will extend out past our “Self.” As with the session on brain science, an individual is part of many mesosystems. And as we’ve learned throughout our sessions, how we show up in these systems will affect the system as much as the system affects us.

### Slide #10

As the ecological model illustrates it starts with you and me – the individual. Individuals have always been at the forefront of disrupting and changing organizations. Our work is shaped by our lived experiences and the social identities we hold.

In your journal, please reflect on the following prompts related to your experiences around gender.

- What games did you play as a child?
- When did you first learn about gender?
- What is your earliest memory of your gender?

*Set a timer for 10 minutes. Bring the group back after 10 minutes or when it seems like everyone is done.*

For some people these questions are easy to answer and for other people it can be difficult to recall these memories. The ways in which we understand ourselves and others can be deeply influenced by our upbringings.

For transgender and non-binary people, the self-discovery journey to can be especially challenging because of the oppressive systems and biases present in society. Finding the language to discuss our experiences can lead to increased agency and self-determination.

Please keep your reflections as we will use them later in the session.

### Slide #11

In order to create gender inclusive environments, we must first define and understand terminology and language surrounding gender. Let’s start by defining some things.

### Slide #12

Language is a tool. It can be used to affirm and uplift, challenge, or degrade.

Throughout history, we have examples of language being used to dehumanize groups of people in ways that make it easier for society to inflict and/or tolerate harm done to them.

Let’s us the LGBTQIA+ community as an example:

For the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, plus communities, terminology can be an avenue to build understanding and community. At the same time, it’s important to note that terminology...

- has not ended homophobia, transphobia, etc;
- is constantly changing
- Shouldn’t be used to police LGBTQIA+ communities; and
- can be defined by people differently.

When thinking about language, we should think about what it means for the person who the language most deeply impacts. And when in doubt, ask questions. Ask questions like: Is the language I am using correct? Is the language I am using helpful or harmful?

### Slide #13

The title of this workshop is creating gender inclusive environments – so why are we talking about sex? Sex and gender can be conflated when they are actually not the same.

### Slide #14

Sex is a designation assigned, typically in the United States, by a medical professional. When you're born, a nurse or doctor will look at your genitalia and categorize you as male or female. This is your sex.

For intersex people, meaning people born with a combination of male and female traits, doctors will sometimes perform a surgery on the child so that they can more readily be assigned male or female. It's important to note that the intersex community has long been advocating for the end of these type surgeries on children because of the violent nature of the procedures and medical biases that necessitates them in the first place. In these scenarios, a decision is being made without the child's consent.

But how is sex different from gender?

Gender refers to "the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men."

To summarize: sex refers to physical traits and gender refers to the meaning we give to those physical traits.

To build upon this distinction even further – once your sex has been assigned, the gender socialization process starts. Gender norms for boys and girls can be reinforced on children so that they meet societal expectations. If a person does not adhere to their gender role, they can be met with bullying, harassment, and even violence. Gender norms vary depending on one's cultural, societal, and even generational context.

### Slide #15

Gender expression and identity are also important to distinguish from each other.

Gender Expression is the external manifestations of gender expressed through a person's clothing, hair, behavior and other physical characteristics. While we might attempt to look a certain way, how others view us is still largely based on their own biases and lived experiences. Think about dresses in American society. They have been deemed only appropriate for women. So a man wearing a dress makes an assumption that he wants to look like a woman. Instead of that line of thinking, maybe he just wants to wear a dress.

Gender Identity is the internal perception of one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be. This is how you see yourself. It's not based on what other people think, but how you have come to understand yourself.

## Slide #16

So let's dive into defining some examples of gender identity.

Cisgender is an umbrella term for individuals whose sex, gender identity, and/or gender expression fall within cultural norms and meet societal expectations based on their assigned sex at birth. For example, you are born and assigned a sex. Your caregivers start socializing you to a specific gender based on the sex assignment and dominant cultural norms. As you grow up, you feel aligned with your gender and continue to self-identify in the ways you have been taught.

Transgender refers to individuals with an affirmed gender identity different than their sex assigned at birth. The term transgender is an umbrella term that can apply to a diversity of gender identities and expressions.

So, perhaps as you started getting older, you felt the way you were being socialized with specific gender norms didn't align with how you felt and identified. You then might question and explore your gender identification more deeply and feel more aligned with a transgender identity.

## Slide #17

Transgender can be a specific gender marker and it can also be used as a term to describe gender expansive (or diverse) people more broadly which is known as the "Transgender Umbrella."

Two identities that can fall under the transgender umbrella are genderqueer and gender non-binary.

Genderqueer is someone who does not fall within the societally established gender binary. Some consider this a more inclusive term, especially if one feels that their gender often fluctuates.

Gender Non-Binary is an identity term for gender variant people whose gender identity is neither male nor female, it is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders.

## Slide #18

Additional examples of gender identities include:

- Transman/Transboy
- Man/boy
- Woman/girl
- Transwoman/Transgirl
- Two-Spirit
- Non-Binary
- Genderqueer
- Agender
- Genderfluid
- Cisgender
- And more...

If any of these terms are unfamiliar to you, I encourage you to write them down and research them more later. Creating inclusive environments means educating ourselves on people's different identities so that when they come into or are in community with us, they don't bear the entire load of responsibility for helping others understand or having to explain their gender identity.



### Slide #19

Gender and sexual orientation can also be conflated but are not the same type of identities. Sexual orientation describes the type of people, if any, you are sexual attracted. A group of people who share the same gender, might have different sexual orientations. It's important to note that some people don't experience sexual attraction or have varying levels of sexual attraction in a relationship, but might experience romantic attraction which can include other forms of intimacy.

### Slide #20

For us to build inclusive and belonging cultures, we need to create gender inclusive environments. For the LGBTQIA+ population as a whole, we know that:

- Nearly one-third (30%) of trans people have experienced homelessness.
- 31% of the LGBTQIA+ population experienced at least one type of mistreatment in the past year in a place of public accommodation.
- There are 26 states where people can be fired for being LGBTQIA+
- 40% of the LGBTQIA+ population attempted suicide in their lifetime – nearly 9x the average attempted suicide rate in the U.S. population (4.6%)

### Slide #21

So how can we create gender inclusive environments?

### Slide #22

Let's start by asking: what are some ways you can intervene in your environment to make them gender inclusive spaces? You can:

- Recognize that gender impacts everyone
- Interrupt binary notions of gender
- Acknowledge and account for gender diversity
- Question limited portrayals of gender
- Support personal and professional development
- Advocate for institutional change

What do you think? Do all of these make sense? Do you understand how you would take action on some of these options? We're going to take a few minutes for a group discussion on these six opportunities for creating gender inclusive spaces.

*Pause and prompt: Give time for responses, pay attention, summarize details. If there aren't any volunteers, you can start the conversation by sharing your answer to these questions.*

### Slide #23

When considering the intentional development of gender inclusive spaces it can be helpful to think of discrete approaches. These discrete approaches can be adapted for various working and learning environments. You can enter any of these at any time, but know they are influencing each other in a clockwise way. So working on the internal will influence your interpersonal, and so forth.

Let's start with Internal: We all have to do our own work. We all must commit to reflecting on, questioning, and better understanding our own attitudes and beliefs related to gender expansiveness.

Interpersonal is the next entry point. This includes interactions, communication, and behaviors that reinforce a commitment to gender inclusivity.

Next, Instructional: How is learning facilitated? Are there opportunities for professional development, dialogue, and continued learning?

Finally - Institutional. What are the structural shifts that must be initiated to create a foundation for gender inclusive practices to take place?

Through deliberate work in each one of these four areas, gender inclusive practices can be woven into the fabric of an institution. Working on all four of these builds the foundation for gender inclusive environments.

### Slide #24

In the journey to create gender inclusive environments, one of the biggest topics in interpersonal relationships is understanding and using pronouns that resonate with the person you are talking with. The following video discusses the importance of pronouns from different people's perspectives and gives a basis for how to be more inclusive.

Play video: [Pronouns Video](#)

### Slide #25



Let's take a few minutes and reflect on the video in your journal. Here are a few prompts to answer in your reflection:

- What came up when watching this video?
- Why are pronouns important?
- How can you practice sharing your pronouns with someone in your home? Is it safe to do this?

I encourage you to think about these questions for a few minutes and invite you to journal about this. The last prompt is a challenge, but we recognize that the challenge is only effective if you feel safe doing so. If your home environment is not a safe space for you to share, think about sharing with this group or a different community you are a part of.

### Slide #26

For some, this may be a lot of new information. You might be asking yourself, what happens if I misgender someone? First thing is: don't panic.

- Calm your defenses. If you catch yourself misgendering someone, pause and take a breath. It's okay.
- Apologize. You should apologize as soon as you're able to calmly. Tell the person you just misgendered them and that you're sorry. Some ways to do this are: "I'm sorry for misgendering you, X" or "Oh! I remember your pronouns are Y, sorry about that."
- Express gratitude. If the person you misgendered corrects you, express gratitude for their effort. Similarly, if someone else witnesses the misgendering and corrects you, thank that person for pointing it out to you.

- Do better. After the interaction, you should spend some time asking yourself how you can work to make sure you don't do this again. Everyone learns differently so figure out what will work for you. Do you need to practice out loud? Write it out? Try to refer to the person by their name until you are better about their pronouns.

Remember, the best thing you can do is stay calm and not make it about you. It is about the other person and showing up the way they need you to in order to start learning.

### Slide #27

So how do all of these pieces come together? Creating affirming environments that lead to gender inclusive environments is all about doing the work and research to show up. A basic step in creating gender affirming environments starts with asking for pronouns and people's preferred name. Other best practices include:

- Use non-binary language when referring to groups
- Don't make heteronormative assumptions
- Include LGBTQIA+ historical and current examples in work, with colleagues and corps members
- Challenge your own implicit bias everyday
- Rethink facility set-ups to be more inclusive
- Recruit and retain LGBTQIA+ people for all types of positions and roles

### Slide #28

As we close out we want you to take a moment to identify one commitment you are willing to make based on what you experienced in this session. Write it down in your notes and revisit it in a few weeks. Check in with yourself. How am I doing?

### Slide #29



This session concludes our belonging sessions. Let's take the time to reflect on how these sessions helped build your understanding of belonging and the building blocks to create a belonging culture together. We will take about 4-5 minutes for everyone to reflect and journal about your answers and then 5-6 minutes for an open group discussion. The questions to think through are:

- As a whole, what does belonging mean to you? What do you need to feel a sense of belonging?
- Which sessions were challenging for you, maybe because of the content itself and/or because of how it pushed you to reflect on your own experiences?
- Which session would you like to go more deeply into and learn more about?

Take the next 4-5 minutes and reflect on this.

*Pull the group back from journaling after 5 minutes. Prompt a group discussion. Be prepared to answer yourself and try to get active participation from the full group.*

Who would like to share? You can respond to one question or all of them.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to continuing to build a belonging culture with you for the remainder of your service year.



*Read the questions on the slides, give everyone 4 - 5 minutes to journal their responses.*