

# STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE ONSLOW COUNTY LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY CENTER

For next (3) three years in the life of our Center  
2021 through 2023

*The strategic plan of the Onslow County LGBTQ+ Community Center articulates a vision for a future that is in constant motion. The methods for developing the strategic plan were multi-fold. The first evolved out of deep, significant conversations among the community. A second method was a process of appreciative inquiry that the entire LGBT Resource Center Advisory Board engaged in.*

*This strategic plan communicates the values of the community and the people who are the Center. However, as our methods of developing this plan revealed, the Center is much more than a building. It is a community that centers itself around LGBT issues in the Onslow County area. Often, but not always, the physical structure is the focus of that community. However, the community happens wherever our community finds itself, be that at the Center, or in online spaces.*

*This document describes opportunities based on the values of our community. The evaluation of success in meeting this strategic plan should be answering the question "Did we live our values?" It should not be "Did we do everything we planned to do?" However, specific metrics of success are provided, as well as a timeline to achieve our concrete goals. With that in mind, the following document serves as a way of understanding a moment in time, and an imagined future of the community of people who created it.*

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## Introduction

The Onslow County LGBTQ+ Community Center has experienced a significant amount of growth and change in a short amount of time. This strategic plan reflects the current stability of the 1) physical space, 2) professional staff and 3) current funding.

The plan itself is categorized in a specific way. First the elements of the process of developing the plan are discussed. Raw data from our shared peak experiences with the Center are presented. More synthesized information is shared as we articulate our possible future. The most designed elements are the programs and activities that will encourage our communities to live its values in the next three years.

A table succinctly summarizes the three year plan, the metrics for success, and the major steps necessary to live our values.

## Mission

**The Onslow County LGBTQ+ Community Center encourages, supports and advocates for the well-being and acceptance of sexual and gender minorities in the Onslow County NC region through service, recreational, educational and cultural programming.** (Adopted July 27, 2020)

## Process

The document represents a collective vision for the future. It attempts to innovatively address the issues of our community through an intentional focus of bridging what is the best and what can be the best for all members of the community.

## Diversity

The make-up of the Advisory Board is relevant to understanding the diversity represented. Community members who have been in the area for over 10 years were selected. Community members that have been in the area for less than two years were selected. Members of our named identity groups (that is, the L's, the G's, the B's, and the T's) were selected, as well as those who are our allies, and those who are fluid in, around and between those identity labels. Members of many ethnic and racial heritages were selected. The make-up of the Advisory Board cuts a cross-section of our community that at its best brings to the table all who are a part of who we want to be.

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Below are the unfiltered experiences of the community. The themes below were derived from the shared answers to these questions:

- Think back to a peak experience that you have had with the LGBTQ community. Tell a story about that time. What happened? What were you doing? What were others doing? What contributed to the success of that experience? Tell the story giving some detail.
- Without being modest, what did you value most about yourself in this experience?
- If you had three wishes that would ensure more peak experiences like the ones you described, what would they be?

Themes from “Honoring The Best Of What Is”:

| Journey   | Community                   | Courage  |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Mistakes + Learning   | Teamwork                    | Community – helping each other across boundaries |
| Family is Key! – Being embraced – people with different experiences | Open to diversity + change  | Reminding ourselves of what we’re here to do     |
| Pride   | Connections                 | Visible  |
| having a community to connect with                                  | Broader Spectrum            | Mistakes + Learning                              |
| Accepting community   | Finding the buried treasure | Dialogue with Leadership                         |

We must imagine a future by answering these questions Imagine that you have been asleep for three years, and when you awake, you look around and see that the Center has made incredible progress. In these three years the growth in community and program development has been tremendous. The Center is so successful that it has been announced that the Center will receive a national award for outstanding, phenomenal community and program development. As a result, you have been asked to be interviewed by “The Advocate.” You agree to be interviewed. Imagine that the interviewer asks what the community is like. How does community happen? How does the community sustain itself? What programmatic elements are involved? What do people do in community? What does being in the LGBTQ community feel like? What is happening on a daily basis at the Center?

The community imagined many futures. Most significant was the reality that every future was possible, but the focus of the community, through the representative Board present that day, had to narrow possible futures to those which most represented the values of what we do and what we can do.

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## Innovate

Getting from our peak experiences at the Center to the possible future takes much innovation. Four provocative propositions articulated are represented below.

- We create comprehensive programs relating to the queer community
- We envision county wide outreach of Programs
- The center creates a progressive learning culture and community which integrates and radiates its/our ideals
- The community center will facilitate the informal interaction guidance with proper training, and transmission/sharing of LGBT culture among all members of the community

The final two propositions are further articulated into more distinct, concrete actions. Imagine these provocative propositions as clear articulations of the most cherished values of the Center. Living these values may look like some of the concrete statements above, or may look entirely different in three years. However, the evaluation of living these values can be done by examining the deeper intention embedded within them

*“Values are the link between emotions and behavior, the connection between what we feel and what we do... With everything changing around us we need something unchanging... to hang on to... Values are our moral navigational devices” ~ James Champ, 1995*

The values below are the collected words and sentiments of a broad cross-section of our community.

- We value an immediate connection with our community in terms of making them feel welcome
- We value service, and serving, listening, living in community, and relating to folks like family
- We challenge our community to look at itself, to grow; we challenge the Onslow County community to be aware of who we are
- We value difference, and acknowledge and value people for who they are
- We value our community in organization; we value the coming together of people in community
- We create multiple opportunities for dialogue and interaction
- We value struggle, and all of the messiness that come along with working through our issues, identity, intersectionality of identities, and engaging in the discourse of that struggle
- We value the struggle of multiple identities and fuller exploration of ourselves
- We value our history and our interconnectedness across generations of LGBTQ identified people

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- We value creating the opportunity for ownership in our community, for taking responsibility for themselves and their own power, empowering themselves and making our community richer for it.
- We value education, learning and the creation of knowledge about ourselves and our community
- We value loving our bodies, honoring ourselves as sexual beings by being sexually healthy and sexually positive

Implement Over the next three years, there will be ample opportunities to live our values and achieve our visions. The opportunities may reflect the provocative propositions above, or may look quite different. However, the end result of the three years should be significant achievements that reflect the values of the community that is the Center.

The table below represents major milestones that can serve as metrics for achieving our shared future.

Winter 2021 - identify funders by foundations, corporations, individuals and secure annual funding

Spring 2021 – secure physical center space, add part time staff - 2 people Encourage Academic participation colleges/schools/community organizations dealing with academics.

Summer 2021 event follow thru – what do we do and how do we do it? Explore grant possibilities for continuing programs

Fall 2021 - Begin formal relationships for outreach to high school students – work with GSLEN to complete high school conference Begin teaching and LGBT Studies out of the LGBT Resource Center annually

Winter 2022 - identify funders by foundations, corporations, individuals and secure annual funding Develop LGBTQ appropriate programming for county social service agencies

Spring 2022 - Add additional plans and implement targeted community building efforts grounded in our transgender community

Summer 2022 - LGBTQ appropriate programming and comprehensive implementation for social services - where are we at? Have we achieved safe housing for LGBTQ homeless youth and adults?

Fall 2022 - Strengthening LGBT RC as a learning space – evaluating two years of teaching LGBT courses Examine the opportunities for post-baccalaureate work at the LGBT Resource Center

Winter 2023 identify funders by foundations, corporations, individuals and secure annual funding Explore the idea of increasing full time staff

Spring 2023- Provide more concrete resources to our community – online/written/library/media Assess initiatives related to transmitting LGBT culture Continue discussion of the mission

Summer 2023 - Advisory Board Retreat to develop new strategic plan Begin broader community dialogue on Center's name and mission

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Fall 2023 - complete a Comprehensive Program Review using appropriate standards for the LGBT Center review all advertising and marketing promotional items for

By the end of this three year period, The Onslow County LGBTQ+ Community will begin to distinguish itself in many ways. It will be the largest of its kind in the Coastal Carolina region. Its intern program should be second to none. Three full-time, professional staff will be available. And its Board is a broad cross-section that truly is connected to the Center.

These together combine into a powerful community that can create an incredible future This strategic plan articulates the values of the organization that will guide it for the next three years. It provides concrete measures for achieving success, bridging the best of what is to the best of what can be.

However, as comfortable as the table of implementation is for measuring success, it can also be a prison. It may chain us to an imagined future that is no longer tenable. We must remain fluid, because the future is in dynamic flux. The true success in the life of the Center will be the continued ability to stay focused on our mission while navigating a future in constant motion. Only by constantly building the lesbian gay bisexual transgender community can we achieve our best.

“If not this, what? If not now, when? If not you, who?” – Dee Hock