An effective way to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion is by normalizing the use of gender pronouns through your work, communications and interactions with employees and customers.

Today, the use of inclusive, non-binary pronouns is becoming more widely used across all industry sectors, including in the workplace, in community-based settings, and even in K-12 schools and post-secondary education. While it may be initially awkward and unfamiliar, it’s an important practice in promoting inclusion for individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ and ensuring all people feel welcomed and included regardless of their gender identity.

This report offers guidance around inclusive pronoun use and provides case study examples of what organizations and institutions are doing across industry sectors. A listing of additional resources is also included at the end of the report.
Guidance and Tips
The experience of being misgendered can be hurtful, angering, and even distracting. The experience of accidentally misgendering someone can be embarrassing for both parties, creating tension and leading to communication breakdowns across teams and with customers.

Gender pronouns (such as “he/him/his” and “she/her/hers”) refer to people that you are talking about. Gender pronouns are the way that we constantly refer to each other’s gender identity. Usually we interpret or “read” a person’s gender based on their outward appearance and expression, and “assign” a pronoun. But our reading may not be a correct interpretation of the person’s gender identity.

Because gender identity is internal -- an internal sense of one’s own gender -- we don’t necessarily know a person’s correct gender pronoun by looking at them. Additionally, a person may identify as genderfluid or genderqueer and may not identify along the binary of either male or female (e.g. “him” or “her”).

Some people identify as both masculine and feminine, or neither. These individuals may opt to use gender expansive pronouns such as “they, them and theirs” instead of the gendered “he, him and his” or “she, her and hers.” In addition, gendered honorifics such as “Ms.” or “Mr.” may change to the more inclusive “Mx.”
To better understand what it means to be transgender, it is important to understand the difference between gender identity - how people perceive their own internal sense of maleness or femaleness, and sexual orientation – which describes who people fall in love with and/or are sexually attracted to. An individual’s gender identity does not necessarily assume a particular sexual orientation. Transgender people can be straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual—gender identity is separate from their sexual orientation.

When asking a trans person about themselves, use the same boundaries you would use for talking to anyone in the workplace. If you wouldn’t ask a non-transgender person (cisgender) then it isn’t appropriate to ask a transgender person either.

It is irrelevant to a person’s gender identity and public life if they have or have not had any form of surgical procedure, sexual reassignment or otherwise. Therefore, using terms such as "pre-op" and "post-op" to describe a transgender person is offensive and should not be used.

Source: DiversityBestPractices
Sex and gender are not the same thing. Sex refers to the designation of a person at birth as either "male" or "female" based on their anatomy (e.g., reproductive organs) and/or their biology (e.g., hormones). Gender refers to the traditional or stereotypical roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society consider appropriate for men and women.

Transgender is an adjective and can be shortened to trans. The word “transgendered” should never be used, nor should someone be referred to as “a transgender.”

Always use a person’s most current chosen name and pronouns whether speaking about this person’s past, present or future. If you do not know, or are uncertain, do not assume - simply ask the person what their preferences are.
Gender Neutral Language

The use of gender-specific language is common in everyday life and conversation. Individuals regularly utilize gendered language when referring to others, even if the gender does not align with the subject. For example, the term “man” or terms ending in “-man” have been used since the early development of the English language to refer to human beings in general (e.g., mankind, “all men are created equal”).

Y’all Means All!

Greetings that include gender neutral language such as “friends, folks, y’all, you all, and everyone” ensure that you include all employees when saying hello or opening a meeting.

While many use these terms without the intention to exclude others, gendered language does not acknowledge or validate the existence of those who identify outside of the gender binary. Thus, it is important to rethink common gendered phrases and adjust by using more inclusive, gender-neutral language.

Source: OutandEqual
Example of Pronoun Use

• **She/Her**: “She is a writer and wrote that book **herself**. Those ideas are **hers**. I like both **her** and **her** ideas.”

• **He/Him**: “He is a writer and wrote that book **himself**. Those ideas are **his**. I like both **him** and **his** ideas.”

• **They/Them**: “**They** are a writer and wrote that book **themself**. Those ideas are **theirs**. I like both **them** and **their** ideas.” Please note that although “they” pronouns here are singular and refer to an individual, the verbs are conjugated the same as with the plural “they” (e.g. “they are”). Also note that in this singular pronoun set many use “themself” rather than “themselves,” although both are typically acceptable.

• **Ze/Hir**: “Ze is a writer and wrote that book **hirself**. Those ideas are **hirs**. I like both **hir** and **hir** ideas.” Please note that “ze” is usually pronounced with a long “e” and that “hir” and its forms are usually pronounced like the English word “here.” Some people instead go by “ze/zir” pronouns because of the more consistent pronunciation and spelling.

Source: mypronouns.org
Never make any assumptions about what pronoun someone uses based off of their appearance. There’s no such thing as “looking like” a he, a she or a they. The only way you can know what pronoun someone prefers is by asking them.

In practice, you should ask everyone what pronoun they use if you don’t know. When you don’t know someone’s pronouns and can’t ask them, it’s always safe to use the gender-neutral “they” until you hear otherwise.

Using someone’s correct personal pronouns is a way to respect them and create an inclusive environment, just as using a person’s name can be a way to respect them. Just as it can be offensive or even harassing to make up a nickname for someone and call them that nickname against their will, it can be offensive or harassing to guess at someone’s pronouns and refer to them using those pronouns if that is not how that person wants to be known. Or, worse, actively choosing to ignore the pronouns someone has stated that they go by could imply the oppressive notion that intersex, transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people do not or should not exist.

Source: mypronouns.org
Normalize: Use pronouns across your organization by adding your personal gender pronoun to email signatures and bios—this reinforces that people shouldn’t assume someone’s pronoun based on the traditional gendering of a name.

Ask: Ask everyone their pronouns, not just those that may be trans or non-binary.

Practice: Using gender pronouns frequently can help make it part of your normal day-to-day interactions. If you’re thinking of making an organization-wide change, consider using pronouns during introductions to meetings, trainings, and during ice-breaker activities.

Apologize: Mistakes happen. If you make a mistake when using gender pronouns, simply apologize and correct yourself.

One size doesn’t fit all: There are dozens of pronouns and terms people use to describe themselves. The best piece of advice, is to simply call people what they want to be called.

Use non-binary greetings: Instead of saying “Hey ladies” or “How’s it going, guys?” try to use gender neutral language like “folks,” “friends,” or “y’all.”

Source: NRPA.org
**Educate the Workforce.** There is limited knowledge around transgender issues in the wider community, and what information is available is often incorrect or misunderstood. Take training back to basics. Explain everything simply with as few buzzwords or jargon as possible. Use personal stories to highlight how people deal with being transgender in society and how society reacts to them.

**Publicize.** Make transgender awareness as ‘loud and visible’ as possible within the organization. Get senior leaders to actively and visibly support events. Provide awareness during team-building events, in social media communications, and bring in external speakers to talk to the issue. The more people hear, talk and participate in transgender awareness and education, the more they will understand challenges facing the community, and the sooner it will become normalized.

**Make it Safe.** Don’t constrain conversations or questions by putting rules in place on what people can ask, what words they can and can’t use, and what they can and can’t say. Let the conversation be open and honest; make people attending feel safe as well as the presenters. Provide support to transgender employees through workshops, confidential helplines, and develop practical transition guidelines for managers, staff and transgender individuals.

**Be visible. Be open.** PRIDE buttons and flags signal support. So do “I’ll go with you” buttons that show that you will walk with a transgender person to the restroom. Be familiar with terminology for LGBT and neuro diverse communities. Understand how to support colleagues coming out at work: Ask “How can I help you?” Don’t assume that a person is out to everyone, whether about their sexuality, gender, or mental illness.

**Ask questions and find common ground.** For example, Have you ever known someone who was gay? Transgender? Autistic? Bipolar? Questions can help coworkers with different backgrounds, experiences, and needs find common ground. For example: Did you grow up in the same area? Do you both have children? Do you do a similar kind of work?

Source: BP Transgender Guidelines; Bloomberg
It is important that organizations “walk the walk” inside their organizations. By facilitating a dialogue and educating employees about the issues facing the transgender and gender nonconforming community, an organization can provide the language and knowledge needed to be supportive and accepting of transgender colleagues.

The same is true for building a strategy for how to build and support an inclusive environment for customers and in the wider communities that the business serves. What is the pulse in those communities? How is it different from region to region?

Once you have that information you can consider the questions: Do you have gender neutral or unisex bathrooms in your business locations? What about the venues with your company’s name on it? Are bathrooms safe for transgender and gender nonconforming people?
Trends Across Sectors
United Airlines announced in March that it will be the first U.S. airline to allow customers to identify themselves with a non-binary gender.

The airline offers non-binary gender options throughout all booking channels in addition to providing the option to select the title "Mx." during booking and in a MileagePlus customer profile.

Customers now have the ability to identify themselves as M(male), F(female), U(undisclosed) or X(unspecified), corresponding with what is indicated on their passports or identification.

United Airlines has also teamed up with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and The Trevor Project to compile initiatives by which employees will be trained about preferred pronouns and the persistence of gender norms, LGBT competency in the workplace and other steps to make United an inclusive space for both customers and employees.
Airlines for America and International Air Transport Association, an airline trade group representing global carriers, recently approved a suggested standard to allow non-binary options in addition to "male" or "female." Those options include "unspecified" or "undisclosed". The standard will go into effect at the beginning of June, but it will fall on the airlines themselves to update their booking systems with alternative gender options.

"U.S. airlines value a culture of diversity and inclusion, both in the workplace and for our passengers, and we work hard each day to accommodate the needs of all travelers, while delivering a safe, secure and enjoyable flight experience," Airlines for America stated. The trade group represents American Airlines, United Airlines, Southwest Airlines, and Alaska Airlines, among other carriers.

American Airlines is "in the early stages" of adding another pronoun option, the Wall Street Journal said. Alaska Airlines and Southwest Airlines are currently considering changes to their booking processes as well.

Delta Air reported it plans to offer gender non-binary options, though it has not specified when that will happen.
The New York City Commission on Human Rights Legislation requires employers and covered entities to use the name, pronouns, and title (e.g., Ms./Mrs./Mx.) with which a person self-identifies, regardless of the person’s sex assigned at birth, anatomy, gender, medical history, appearance, or the sex indicated on the person’s identification.

All people, including employees, tenants, customers, and participants in programs, have the right to use and have others use their name and pronouns regardless of whether they have identification in that name or have obtained a court-ordered name change, except in very limited circumstances where certain federal, state, or local laws require otherwise (e.g., for purposes of employment eligibility verification with the federal government). Asking someone in good-faith for their name and gender pronouns is not a violation of the NYCHRL.

Covered entities may avoid violations of the NYCHRL by creating a policy of asking everyone what their gender pronouns are so that no person is singled out for such questions and by updating their systems, intake forms, or other questionnaires to allow all people to self-identify their name and gender. Covered entities should not limit the options for identification to male and female only.
Forms of Address: Names and Pronouns

Our institution's official policy states that "The University of Maryland recognizes that name and gender identity are central to most individuals' sense of self and well-being, and that it is important for the University to establish mechanisms to acknowledge and support individuals' self-identification." One way we can support self-identification is by honoring the name and pronouns that each of us go by.

Many people (e.g. international students, performers/writers, trans people, and others) might go by a name in daily life that is different from their legal name. In this classroom, we seek to refer to people by the names that they go by.

Pronouns can be a way to affirm someone's gender identity, but they can also be unrelated to a person's identity. They are simply a public way in which people are referred to in place of their name (e.g. "he" or "she" or "they" or "ze" or something else). In this classroom, you are invited (if you want to) to share what pronouns you go by, and we seek to refer to people using the pronouns that they share. The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity.

Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.
At DMV's across Nevada, people now have the option to choose from three gender options for their driver's licenses and/or identification cards: male, female, or gender "x," for a gender-neutral option.

“It’s the most frequently used document that people have to interface with bureaucracy, officials, and other individuals," Macfarlane said. "So, to have control of a gender identity on that document is one of the most important and accessible, and cost-effective steps that people can take to advocate for themselves and take control of their own gender projects. While this might not seem important to most people, that’s because it’s not important to them. It’s not something that they have to interact with on a day to day basis. But, for the people who need this, and the people who will be helped by it, this is a big relief," Macfarlane said. “This can help people, multiple times through their day, to be able to interact better with their world and better navigate everyday life activities that we have to do.”

Ray Macfarlane, Trans & Gender Diversity Program Manager, The Center
The use of gender pronouns is becoming more widely used across all sectors, including at schools, universities, businesses, community programs, and yes, even in parks and recreation! While it may be unfamiliar, it’s an important practice in promoting inclusion for those who identify as LGBTQ+. As public entities and community-based providers, local park and recreation agencies serve people from all races, ages, orientations and identities. To that note, we should ensure that all people not only have access to park and recreation places, spaces and programs, but that all people feel welcome and included.

A wonderful way to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion is by normalizing the use of gender pronouns through your work, communications and interactions. That’s why, for the first time, NRPA is providing gender pronoun ribbons at our annual conference! This year, all attendees will have the option of sporting their personal gender pronoun on their conference badge. You can pick up a pronoun ribbon near the registration area. We’ll be providing the following options:

- She/Her/Hers
- He/Him/His
- They/Them/Theirs
- Fill in your pronoun (blank ribbons provided to write your personal gender pronoun)
Additional Resources

- Human Rights Campaign Transgender Resource Page
- National Center for Transgender Equality Understanding Transgender People
- Out and Equal Workplace Resources
- Transgender Inclusion in the Workplace: A Toolkit for Employers; Human Rights Campaign
- Talking About Pronouns in the Workplace
- When it Comes to Transgender Workplace Inclusion Are You Resting on Your CEI Laurels?

- Straight for Equality’s Guide to Being a Trans Ally Resources and Tools
- Transgender Law Center’s Equality Maps
- HRC’s Transgender Inclusion: Start the Conversation
- National Center for Transgender Equality Take Action Page
- HRC’s newly launched Business Coalition for the Equality Act
- Athlete Ally’s Take Action Page
- HRC’s LGBT Marketing and Advertising Best Practices

Source: