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RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

EMPLOYMENT AS A PATH TOWARDS GREATER FOOD SECURITY FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Convening Report

January 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (“LGBTQ+”) youth¹ experience disparities in accessing food. As many as one in five LGBT high schoolers experience hunger because there is not enough food at home and among 18-to-24-year-olds, approximately one in seven reported not having enough to eat the prior week. For many LGBTQ+ youth, insufficient access to food is connected to adverse life experiences, such as generational poverty, family rejection, homelessness, and employment discrimination.

Many organizations working with LGBTQ+ youth provide immediate access to food and other basic needs and, with older youth, support finding employment as a means to improve longer-term economic security. On September 12th, 2023, The Williams Institute, along with the Boston Alliance of LGBTQ+ Youth (“BAGLY”) and No Kid Hungry, a national campaign to end the root causes of hunger by the organization Share Our Strength,² convened a group of community-based organizations (“CBOs”) working at the intersections of food, employment, and LGBTQ youth to discuss effective strategies and common barriers to employment.

During the three-hour facilitated conversation, several themes emerged that outlined the role that LGBTQ organizations play in filling voids left by families of origin, the public safety net system, and other networks of support accessed by LGBTQ+ youth:

- **Stabilization.** Many LGBTQ+ youth don’t have access to basic needs, such as housing, transportation, work-appropriate clothing, and updated identity documents. These needs must be addressed as a precursor to focusing on employment.
- **Safety Net Insufficiencies.** Government programs that are intended to address economic insecurity and food insufficiency, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”), are inadequate to address food insecurity among LGBTQ+ youth. However, states, municipalities, and community organizations can adopt programs to improve the impact of SNAP and similar programs and supplement them with other innovative strategies to improve access to food.
- **Mentorship.** Some LGBTQ+ youth served by CBOs are estranged from family or other traditional support networks. One-on-one coaching by staff fills gaps in mentorship and guidance that adult family members often provide and supports these youth in developing problem-solving, employment, and other life skills.
- **Bridges to Inclusive Employment.** Not all employers offer inclusive environments where LGBTQ+ youth can thrive. LGBTQ+ organizations can provide essential services to assist LGBTQ+ youth with finding a job at a place where they can succeed. Employers can also take steps to ensure they are inclusive places for LGBTQ+ youth to work.

¹ At various points in this report, we will use subsets of this acronym, such as “LGBT.” This is due to limitations in the sources of data we are citing. For the purposes of this report, we focus on youth between the ages of 13 to 25, with a greater emphasis on those 18 and up who are more likely to be working.

² Share Our Strength. (2023, September 20). *Overview of our work*. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://www.shareourstrength.org/overview/>.

- **Barriers for Community-Based Organizations.** Capacity, resources, and funding constraints limit what programs can do to support LGBTQ+ youth. More flexibility in funding and program delivery, including room to adjust programs in response to LGBTQ+ youth feedback, and collaboration and coordination between organizations could broaden the reach and impact of these programs.
- **Promoting the Agency of LGBTQ+ Youth.** LGBTQ+ youth bring ideas and expertise to the table. CBOs in our convening emphasized the value of peer-to-peer support, youth leadership, and hiring LGBTQ+ youth. LGBTQ+ youth should be engaged at all levels of a program or organization, including economic stabilization activities.

This report presents findings from the convening, recommendations based on those findings, and more information about the organizations that helped make this conversation possible.

INTRODUCTION

Recent research conducted by the Williams Institute shows that inadequate access to food is an issue that impacts LGBTQ+ youth. As many as one in five (20.1%) LGBT high school students experience hunger because there is not enough food at home.³ Access to food is also an issue for older youth. Among 18-to-24-year-old LGBT youth who completed the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey from mid-2021 to late 2022, 13.9% reported not having enough to eat in the week, and 16.6% reported difficulty paying for household expenses the week prior to survey completion.⁴ Household expenses included but were not limited to food, rent or mortgage, car payments, medical expenses, and student loans. Among older LGBT youth experiencing food insufficiency, more than half (54.6%) indicated that they couldn't afford to buy more food.

Employment can be one avenue to increase access to food in the long term, particularly for older youth, who may be more likely to be in the workforce. However, finding and keeping a job that pays a livable wage can be difficult for youth, given that most have limited work experience. Good job opportunities for people with a high school education or less are even more limited.⁵ LGBTQ+ youth may also encounter LGBTQ-related workplace discrimination and harassment as obstacles to securing and sustaining employment.⁶ As compared to older LGBT people, 18-to-24-year-old LGBT people are more likely to be transgender, cisgender women, and people of color,⁷ all of which increase their vulnerability to discrimination and harassment in the workplace.⁸ And, despite a higher level of need for support to navigate this landscape, LGBTQ+ youth may receive less of it from families of origin than same-age non-LGBTQ peers.⁹

³ Macklin, M.L., Redfield, E., & Conron, K. (2023). *Food Insecurity among LGBTQ Youth*. The Williams Institute, UCLA: Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/food-insecurity-lgbtq-youth/>.

⁴ Macklin, M.L. et al. (2023).

⁵ Carnevale, A.P., Strohl, J., Ridley, N., & Gulish, A. (2018). *Three Educational Pathways to Good Jobs: High School, Middle Skills, and Bachelors Degree*. Center on Educ. and the Workforce, Georgetown Univ. <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/3pathways/>; Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., and Strohl, J. (2013). *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020*. Center on Educ. and the Workforce, Georgetown Univ. <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/recovery-job-growth-and-education-requirements-through-2020/>.

⁶ Sears, B., Mallory, C., Flores, A. R., & Conron, K. J. (2021). *LGBT People's Experiences of Workplace Discrimination and Harassment*. The Williams Institute, UCLA: Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-workplace-discrimination/>.

⁷ Herman, J.L., Flores, A.R., and O'Neill, K.K. (2022). *How Many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in the United States?* The Williams Institute, UCLA: Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states/>; Flores, A.R. & Conron, K.J., (2023). *Adult LGBT Population in the U.S.* The Williams Institute, UCLA: Los Angeles, CA. https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/?post_type=publications&p=2208.

⁸ Sears, B., Mallory, C., Flores, A. R., & Conron, K. J. (2021). *LGBT People's Experiences of Workplace Discrimination and Harassment*. The Williams Institute, UCLA: Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-workplace-discrimination/>.

⁹ Balsam, K. F., Rothblum, E. D., & Beauchaine, T. P. (2005). Victimization over the life span: a comparison of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual siblings. *J Consult Clin Psychol*, 73(3), 477-487. doi 10.1037/0022-006X.73.3.477; Factor, R. J., & Rothblum, E. D. (2007). A study of transgender adults and their non-transgender siblings on demographic characteristics, social support, and experiences of violence. *J LGBT Health Res*, 3(3), 11-30. doi 10.1080/15574090802092879.

Given the need to increase access to food for LGBTQ+ youth and the potential for employment to facilitate access to food for older LGBTQ+ youth, we organized the *Food and Economic Security for LGBTQ+ Youth Convening* to explore employment as an avenue to reduce economic barriers to food for LGBTQ+ youth. The purpose of the convening was to discuss experiences and considerations related to LGBTQ+ youth employment in the food industry with innovative food service organizations, LGBTQ+-focused job placement programs, and community organizations serving LGBTQ+ youth.

We focused on the food industry as a common, low-barrier source of employment for workers who have less formal education and work experience, with the potential to rise to higher levels of employment. More than half of all adults have worked in the restaurant industry at some point during their lives¹⁰ and nearly one in three Americans had their first job at a restaurant.¹¹ Further, one study of post-pandemic employment found that youth ages 16-24 made up two-thirds of all employees in limited-service restaurants and nearly half of employees in full-service restaurants.¹² The National Restaurant Association has found that 9 out of 10 restaurant managers started at entry-level positions and that restaurants employ more racial-ethnic minorities and more women as managers than any other industry.¹³

The three-hour virtual convening was held on September 12, 2023. The event was organized as three panel discussions—each focused on supporting LGBTQ+ youth along the work continuum—getting jobs, succeeding in jobs, and growing job opportunities.

- Panel one included community-based LGBTQ+ youth programs and LGBTQ+ employment programs. These organizations were BAGLY (Boston, Massachusetts), JASMYN (Jacksonville, Florida), Breaktime (Boston, Massachusetts), and TransCanWork (Los Angeles, California).
- Panel two included organizations with experience providing employment services or training that help LGBTQ+ youth obtain work and succeed in the food industry. These organizations were the Ali Forney Center (New York City, New York) and ReThink Food (New York City, New York).
- Panel three included organizations focused on food policy and innovation that were invited to promote thinking about how existing (or promising) models might be sustained, replicated, and grown. These organizations were the Resnick Center for Food Policy, UCLA (Los Angeles, California), the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (New York City, New York), and Share Our Strength (Washington, D.C.).

¹⁰ *Restaurant Industry Facts at a Glance*. (2023). National Restaurant Association. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from <https://restaurant.org/research-and-media/research/industry-statistics/national-statistics/>.

¹¹ Wirth, S. R. (2019, March 25). *How Restaurants have Taught America to Work*. Restaurant Business. <https://www.restaurantbusinessonline.com/special-reports/how-restaurants-have-taught-america-work>.

¹² Snagajob & Black Box Intelligence. (2021). *The Post-Pandemic Restaurant Employee: Who Wants to Work and Why*. <https://d17822hgnjkakb.cloudfront.net/resources/Snagajob-Black-Box-Restaurant-Industry-Update-2021.pdf>; National Restaurant Association. (2022). *Restaurant Employee Demographics Data Brief – March 2022*. <https://restaurant.org/getmedia/21a36a65-d5d4-41d0-af5c-737ab545d65a/nra-data-brief-restaurant-employee-demographics-march-2022.pdf> (37.5% of restaurant employees were ages 16-24 in 2019, compared to 12.8% of total U.S. workforce).

¹³ *Restaurant Industry Facts at a Glance*, *supra* note 9. *Restaurant Employee Demographics*, *supra* note 11.

The convening was recorded via Zoom,¹⁴ transcribed via Parrot AI,¹⁵ and summarized by a member of the research team (MV) following transcript review and editing. Key themes are presented below. Participant bios, organizational descriptions, and the convening agenda are provided in the Appendix.

¹⁴ Zoom is a virtual platform for meetings and webinars. ZOOM, <https://zoom.us>.

¹⁵ Parrot AI is a transcription service using artificial intelligence. PARROT AI, <https://parrot.ai>.

ATTENDEES

Lexi Adsit, Executive Director, TransCanWork

Ken Baker, Culinary Director, Rethink Food

David Blitzman, Social Work Intern, BAGLY Inc.

Kerith J. Conron, Blachford-Cooper Distinguished Scholar and Research Director, Williams Institute, UCLA (Facilitator)

Aaron Gonzales, Director of Boston Programs, BAGLY Inc.

Diana Winters, Assistant Director, Resnick Center, UCLA

Liz Flynn, Stabilization & Success Programs Manager, BAGLY Inc.

Zy'Aire Kelly, Access Coordinator, JASMYN

Elana Redfield, Arnold D. Kassoy Scholar of Law and Federal Policy Director, Williams Institute, UCLA (Facilitator)

Farrah Ridore, Policy Director, Breaktime

Matthew Smith, Manager, National Partnerships Advocacy Engagement, No Kid Hungry, Share Our Strength

Liz Solomon, Executive Director of Nutrition Policies and Programs, NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Food Policy team

Jess Tell, Director of Culinary Programs, Ali Forney Center

FINDINGS: KEY THEMES

Across the three panel discussions, six major themes emerged:

- **Stabilization.** Basic needs—including housing, transportation, work-appropriate clothing, and updated identity documents—must be addressed as a precursor to employment.
- **Safety Net Insufficiencies.** SNAP and other government benefit programs, as implemented in most places, are inadequate to address food insecurity. However, municipalities and states could adopt innovative strategies to improve these programs and increase access to food.
- **Mentorship.** Youth, especially when they are estranged from family, benefit from one-on-one mentorship to develop problem-solving, employment, and other life skills. These skills are critical to finding and keeping a job or pursuing a career and contribute to long-term economic stability.
- **Bridges to Inclusive Employment.** LGBTQ+ organizations provide essential services to assist LGBTQ+ youth with finding a job at a place where they can succeed. Employers can take steps to provide inclusive places for LGBTQ+ youth to work.
- **Barriers for Community-Based Organizations.** Capacity, resources, and funding constraints limit the amount that programs can do to support LGBTQ+ youth. Coordinated partnerships or multi-agency approaches, including government partners, can help address the range of issues facing LGBTQ+ youth.
- **Promoting the Agency of LGBTQ+ Youth.** LGBTQ+ youth should be engaged at all levels of a program or organization, including economic stabilization activities.

STABILIZATION AS A PRECURSOR TO EMPLOYMENT: MEETING THE BASIC NEEDS OF LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Panelists discussed how addressing hunger and employment also means thinking holistically about the other issues that young people are experiencing, including homelessness and poverty. As one panelist said:

Here in New York City, we're compounded by various factors that, you know, when you're fighting food insecurity, food insecurity isn't just hunger, it's a symptom of poverty.

Panelists described a range of resources that their organizations provide to support the youth that they serve:

- Cash transfers¹⁶
- Clothing (including gender-affirming clothing)
- Help with updating or changing identity documents
- Medical and sexual health services
- Mental health support
- Peer support groups
- Prepared meals
- Shelter or housing navigation

Another panelist described the process of preparing youth to seek and succeed at a job, which includes attending to transportation obstacles and clothing for an interview:

Asking [youth], you know, do they see any challenges in having a part-time job?...are there barriers in regards to transportation, like with that, you know, with us providing a [Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority] card for the month [may] really be the thing that sort of gets them over that, that difficult hump of, of being able to find money to get to and from the job for the first month.....we also provide gender-affirming [clothing] for, for young folks who are in want or need....one of the next things that we talk to them about is, you know, when you get this job or, or another job, they are going to be asking you for identification. So, let's talk about what current identification you have. You know, is this an ID that you're OK showing, you know, are you in the process of going by a different name or a different pronoun series than is on your ID?

¹⁶ Direct cash transfers, without restrictions on how youth can spend the money, are currently being studied as an intervention into homelessness and economic security. Chapin Hall. (2021, June 17). *Public-Private Partnership Launches the First Direct Cash Transfer Study for Addressing Young Adult Homelessness* [Press release]. <https://www.chapinhall.org/news/public-private-partnership-launches-the-first-direct-cash-transfer-study-for-addressing-young-adult-homelessness/>.

SNAP INSUFFICIENCIES AND INNOVATIVE MODELS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO FOOD

Panelists described barriers that youth face when attempting to access economic safety programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP” or “Food Stamps”) and other benefits using the Electronic Benefits Transfer (“EBT”) system.¹⁷ While these programs can be beneficial to those who receive them, panelists described difficulties that youth face applying for and meeting eligibility criteria to receive benefits.

One panelist spoke about the cumbersome application process that youth may have a hard time navigating or that may result in youth getting denied assistance:

There's like just a bureaucratic guideline of like, 'this is what somebody needs...' and like no human being is actually gonna see that application unless all these forms are checked.

Other panelists described eligibility barriers for youth, including having too much income to qualify despite being food insecure or homeless:

*EBT is like an interesting example. You know, I work with homeless youth, and the number of folks who like aren't eligible for EBT because they make 'too much money'...*¹⁸

And another added:

We provide meals to under-resourced college students because EBT and SNAP they don't qualify for, which is mind-boggling to me when you have individuals who are taking the right direction to be upwardly mobile...

One panelist agreed with the barriers that others described and talked about the limits of SNAP, even for people who are eligible:

I one hundred percent agree with SNAP is just not enough. You know, not enough people can really access those benefits, and those that do, you know, the allotments are not enough.

Some municipalities and CBOs offer additional programs and incentives to increase food assistance offered to residents and to assist with participation in existing federal programs. A panelist mentioned some of the programs available to New York City (“NYC”) residents:

So, we provide folks who are purchasing fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets with extra, using SNAP with ... “extra” dollars to buy more fruits and vegetables.

¹⁷ EBT is catch-all term that is used to refer to a debit-card style system in which someone can receive SNAP and other benefits. USDA. (2023, October 3). *What is Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)?* Food and Nutrition Service. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt>.

¹⁸ Panelists refer generally to government programs that provide food support, including SNAP and Pandemic EBT, or P-EBT, a program created during the COVID-19 pandemic, as “EBT.” New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. (2023, October 2). *Frequently Asked Questions for the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Food Benefits.* SNAP COVID-19 Information. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from <https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/Frequently-Asked-Questions-Pandemic-EBT.asp#faq-q1-1>.

Other programs provide residents with free groceries even when they are not enrolled in SNAP:

We have a similar program in grocery stores as well, and we also have a program for folks who, you know, may, may or may not, be eligible for SNAP, which is a partnership with our city public hospital system called Groceries to Go. Where folks who are members of 'NYC Care,' which is their ... health service program for people who do not qualify or can't afford health insurance. So eligible members of that program can enroll in 'Groceries to Go,' and they get credits that can be used to purchase groceries on an online platform that connects them to hundreds of grocery stores...¹⁹

Among panelists who work on policy and in government, there is a desire to make safety net programs more accessible. A panelist described an example of a public health system that partners with CBOs in New York City to help community members access food assistance programs.

I think another interesting model—it's not under the health department, but our public health hospitals system, contracts with CBOs for 'Food Navigators.'²⁰ So that, that is, it's not a one-stop shop, but it is a hand holding through all the different ways that somebody can sort of access food.

MENTORSHIP: SUPPORT AND COACHING

Panelists described how LGBTQ+ youth programs fill gaps in traditional support systems and provide mentorship to assist youth in learning skills, setting goals, and navigating life – including accessing information and finding employment. As one participant noted,

I think there's a developmental piece that can be helpful to name and that's that young people, young adults, still need support finding information, accessing information. And, if they don't have parents who can do that, having adults who are able to support them in that is important... It's just a piece of human development that I think we fail to appreciate.

Another panelist explained their organization's approach:

Having a sort of, like, team for each individual person is something that we found pretty successful, because in a way, we are replicating family structures that they didn't have access to anymore. Like, if you think about all of the mentors that you've had in your life, who have helped you, like, make all of these decisions ... [many youth] didn't have that same support system. So, a lot of their knowledge of the world was coming from either word of mouth or things that they had seen on TV.

Several panelists discussed the value of doing consistent check-ins with their youth—particularly one-on-one:

We have [weekly] check-ins. So, I ask, 'Hey, how is work going? What is going good? What's going not so good?' And, 'What is something that you can improve on?'

¹⁹ NYC Health. (n.d.). Groceries to Go. Retrieved November 20, 2023, from <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/groceries-to-go.page>. Credits can also be used for delivery fees.

²⁰ NYC Health + Hospitals. (2020, February 5). OneCity Health Awards Community Partners \$4.3M to Address Food and Housing Insecurities Among NYC Health + Hospitals' Patients [Press release]. <https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/pressrelease/onecity-health-awards-community-partners-4-3m-to-address-food-and-housing-insecurities/>.

Another panelist added:

Something that we also do similarly is those individual meetings. I think that that has really lent itself to a lot of success in our community center and our drop-in—we have the space to sort of meet people in groups, but then also have the opportunity to really have an individualized meeting for, like, 30 minutes.

Several panelists discussed goal setting and developing plans with youth to support them in achieving goals and success. A common sentiment amongst the panelists was that the meaning of “success” depends on a person’s individual goals. One panelist explained how they build an understanding of an individual young person’s vision for themselves:

First, to understand a young person’s success, they have to have a meaning of what success looks like to them because there are very different versions of success for each young person. So, what I do is I sit my young person down, and I ask them, ‘What does success look like to you?’ And sometimes they don’t have an answer. They are like, ‘Oh, I don’t know what success is because I’ve never seen success.’ So, I give them examples of different successful people that they can relate to in the community.

After establishing a goal, several panelists described working with youth to develop plans. One panelist explained their process of working with youth by asking a series of questions:

What does success look like for you? But also like, what’s step one? If you have this as your goal, how do we, like, start breaking it down and, like, chipping it away?

For many, the bridge to employment starts with this kind of mentorship. As one panelist shared:

This is where our Navigators really kind of shine. As, like, providing ongoing support to our clients and really coaching them as they’re navigating some of these first-time jobs or internships or training programs.

Sometimes, staff provide information about the realities of certain types of jobs, such as those in the food industry, to help inform their decision-making about career paths. One panelist said:

Giving people, like, information specifically about the food industry. Like, we hear young people a lot say, ‘I love cooking.’ ‘I want to open my own restaurant someday.’ But having never seen the inside of, like, a New York City kitchen before and, you know, not wanting to divert someone from something that they feel is a dream, but also trying to give them a full picture of what that would be like and what those environments tend to still be like.

Another panelist described how helping youth break professional goals down into steps can help identify pathways for youth to obtain the skills needed to realize their goals:

We write a list down of what they’re good at, what they enjoy, and what kind of job do they see themselves in? ... And we make a plan, and I let them know, “Hey, just because you want to do 3 to 5 course cuisines doesn’t mean you’re at that level.” So, let’s find jobs that will help us get to that level.... Let’s help you get to a school that can help you with getting that goal.... We may look at programs that have culinary arts programs.

PROVIDING A BRIDGE TO SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Panelists described their efforts to identify appropriate job placements for LGBTQ+ youth and their work with employers to build more inclusive environments.

Several panelists talked about the need for employment environments where youth can feel comfortable being openly LGBTQ+. One panelist emphasized that youth should not have to “augment or typecast [themselves] into a role just for a profession.”

Another panelist said:

We have a lot of young folks who just lack the confidence to be able to enter as their own true selves in any kind of workplace and also keeping those jobs once they're in.

The food industry can present specific challenges for LGBTQ+ youth, especially transgender youth. As one panelist described:

We feel that the food industry can have really high visibility, especially being in front of the house. And that can be a barrier because as somebody is trying to transition or starting their transition, it can really become a site of discrimination or violence for some of our clients. And you know, obviously, at around this age, a lot of folks are trying to figure out deep and hard identity stuff while navigating the world as first-time adults.

The same panelist also elaborated that barriers in food industries might turn youth off, driving them toward other sources of income:

The food industry can have low pay compared to some of these other jobs they're pursuing, whether that's, like, sex work or tech or something else.

One panelist talked about the importance of employer flexibility:

I am just stressing again, like, partnerships that are willing to provide flexibility in terms of meeting specific needs. I think everybody here is familiar with just the particular blockades that somebody might come across when it comes to things like gender identity and things like IDs and just like paperwork and how non-essential that actually is to people's day-to-day lives, but how much power it can have on an individual.

Panelists discussed how they are intentional and strategic in identifying industries or fields of work and good employment partners for LGBTQ+ youth. CBOs looked for whether partners were sincere in their desire to welcome and incorporate LGBTQ+ people into their organizations and businesses. One panelist said:

Having community partners that are really invested in the communities that they want to work with and that it's not a one-time, you know, funding cycle sort of interest, you know, is this a one-time piece? Are you looking to actually incorporate programming and staff into, you know, your larger organizational piece?

Another panelist described looking at the mission and staffing of potential employers to see if there was a genuine commitment to representation:

I look at their mission, and then I look at the team and see is there a reflective intention to be diverse? ... And really, when we're talking about, you know, the condition that exists around you, job placement, it's not about ability or skill set. If we're honest, we're talking about a lack of confidence because we don't see ourselves in space. And so how, how are we rectifying that? What is the organization doing?

Employers may have made some progress or commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion without successfully creating an environment that will work for a young person. One panelist discussed the importance of vetting would-be employers and the risk that youth may lose trust in the organization itself when employers do not do their part:

We see how important trust is in working with young folks because they come to trust the staff and the organizations. So, outside referrals become a lot more challenging... We'll have a [job placement] partnership. Everything seems golden. They are saying all the right things and then a week later, the young person is just like coming right back to us about, you know, any myriad of reasons why that placement didn't work out.

However, another panelist expressed the importance of meeting partners where they are at, understanding that there may be missteps in the process of becoming LGBTQ+ affirming:

[There needs to be] ... a space for grace. Understanding that individuals who are not part of our communities or who are very much intentional allies may not have the full understanding of the vernacular or proper pronoun ascribing or whatever that may be that we're so deeply seeped in as being, this is our lived identity. We have to give that space and grace. If we want to create a more inclusive space, we have to give grace for ignorance, not ignorance in a derogatory manner, but just ignorance [in] not knowing what you don't know. People don't know what they don't know.

BARRIERS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Throughout the convening, it was evident that panelists were committed to maximizing support for LGBTQ+ youth and helping young people realize their personal goals, including economic security, housing stability, and food security. However, most panelists reported barriers to fulfilling these purposes, such as capacity limitations, insufficient resources, and restrictions on how they can use the resources they have.

I think it is a little bit of a nonprofit habit to want to check all of the boxes. So, for a while, we were definitely, like, doing too much without enough resources to do it. Including the kitchen. I was running that kitchen completely by myself when we were serving 60,000 meals a year, and, you know, I was just much younger back then and able to do it before COVID.

This includes funding for equitable compensation for staff and other overhead:

I think one thing that we didn't mention or talk about is the cost for staff. And especially in nonprofits, we know that like, there's this idea of trying to keep overhead low [so] everything can go to programs. But you know, especially in organizations where we're LGBTQ providers and BIPOC providers, we tend to be underpaid compared to White, cis, heterosexual colleagues.

One panelist expressed challenges with inflexible grant requirements:

I think sometimes, with as much work as it takes to get a grant, and then it comes with a lot of hoops to jump through and a lot of qualifiers, that funders sometimes, it feels like, arbitrarily put up.

Conversely, flexibility in a grant allowed them to revise their programming to better meet the needs of the youth in their training program:

You know, we will write these funding proposals to our best dreams available and then having the flexibility to change that model in a way that is serving the young folks who have, that come to us in that time has been something that's like worked really great with us. You know, I found when we were putting up funding proposals initially for our internship program, it was acceptable to, like, put in for 4 to 6 weeks of programming for young folks. But since we were taking in folks who might have never had any kitchen experience, 4 to 6 weeks just really wasn't enough time to get anyone really comfortable to what the flow of the kitchen is like. And I was able to, and like, change things around. And just on my own experience, I found like three months was actually a lot more of a comfort point for students to start feeling that confidence where they could transition, like, from a teaching space into a real-life workplace.

Another sentiment shared amongst the panelists was that some of this work may be beyond the scope of the CBO and will require additional resources, collaborations, or policy changes:

Like we, we recognize that, you know, whether it's food insecurity or housing insecurity or whatever it may be like, there's only so much that us as an organization or even all these organizations here that we can do.

Overall, there is a desire for CBOs to be able to further connect with other organizations to build coalitions and share knowledge and resources with each other. Towards the end of the convening, panelists were expressing gratitude for the information that was shared and that they felt a sense of solidarity amongst each other:

Now I know that I have other organizations I can call on, you know, ask questions, say, 'Hey how would you do XYZ? How does this look for you?'

One panelist described the impact of the convening and the positive effect of sharing ideas:

The rejuvenating part is hearing about the ways in which we are all sort of combating those things for our population. And, you know, it feels good knowing that there are other folks in the work in the same way that we are, we're trying to reduce the barriers, remove barriers, you know, change things locally and nationally and systemically.

PROMOTING THE AGENCY OF LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Throughout the convening, panelists discussed the importance of LGBTQ+ youth leadership, input, and participation in developing and executing programs. Panelists emphasized that LGBTQ+ youth and those with relatable lived experiences should be partners in all aspects of an organization's programming to make sure the programs are responsive to the needs of the youth and to promote the role of the youth themselves as agents of change.

For example, panelists expressed a desire for funders to empower youth-led and inclusive community organizations to decide how programs and services will operate. One panelist remarked:

Within the LGBT community, we have always taken care of each other and created the system so that we do know what is best for the people that we're serving, and giving more agencies the power to do the work that they see as necessary would be revolutionary.

Another panelist gave an example of how a government-supported program to support LGBTQ+ youth was more successful because it was directly informed by youth leaders:

We were able to partner with [New York City government] through [a program] called Unity Works,²¹ which involved a group of youth leaders who for a year met and talked about exactly this thing, like, how can you create systems that are actually going to support LGBTQ young people who are facing homelessness, and just thriving in general.

Panelists noted that hiring staff from LGBTQ+ communities and offering peer-to-peer programming allowed youth to connect to and learn from one another. One panelist described how this may afford youth an opportunity to see themselves in positions and workplaces where one may not traditionally see LGBTQ+ or Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (“BIPOC”) leadership:

I'm ... out as trans in my workplace, and without meaning to, my entire cohort is, like, a bunch of trans boys ... which showed me that folks may not necessarily be interested in specific kitchen work but just somewhere to feel a part of something and to feel accepted and that modeling, right? They're like, 'Oh, he did it, so maybe I can do it too.'

The inclusion of youth can happen at all levels and in all aspects of an organization. One of the youth programs in our convening described itself as a “youth-led and adult-supported organization,” framing how the organization’s structure and programs are designed from the ground up with youth at the center.

²¹ NYC Office of the Mayor. (2019, October 8). *De Blasio Administration Launches Nation's Most Comprehensive Workforce Development Program for Homeless and Runaway LGBTQI Youth* [Press release]. <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/468-19/de-blasio-administration-launches-nation-s-most-comprehensive-workforce-development-program-for>.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our convening focused on employment as a means of addressing youth food insecurity. The LGBTQ youth organizations that participated in this convening play a critical role in stabilizing youth, increasing work readiness, and identifying LGBTQ+ inclusive workplaces that increase the likelihood of job retention and break the cycle of economic insecurity. In the context of these conversations, limitations of the public safety net program, including SNAP, surfaced as did innovative municipal strategies to increase food access for LGBTQ+ youth. In this section, we will discuss the findings, make recommendations, and highlight areas where more research would be helpful.

STABILIZATION AS A PRECURSOR TO EMPLOYMENT

LGBTQ+ youth are vulnerable to family rejection, stigma, discrimination, and harassment in a myriad of environments.²² Exposure to these adverse life conditions increases the likelihood that LGBTQ+ youth will experience housing instability, poverty, lack of access to medical care, and many other challenges.²³ Stabilization of youth in housing was seen as a critical component of addressing both food and employment needs, in addition to services directly related to food and employment. Community-led studies have documented similar links between housing instability, employment, and economic security among LGBTQ+ youth.²⁴ Organizations also shared the need for services focused on benefit enrollment, transportation, clothing, health care, identity documents, and mental health support.

A primary barrier to economic security identified by panelists was the lack of support from a youth's family of origin. For many young people, especially transgender youth, coming out as LGBTQ+ may result in family rejection and lead to housing and economic insecurity.²⁵ Although not explicitly discussed by our panel, this risk may be compounded by other factors such as structural racism and network impoverishment,²⁶ over-involvement in systems of state supervision and custody,²⁷ and

²² See e.g. Sears, B., Mallory, C., Flores, A. R., & Conron, K. J. (2021), *supra* note 6; Balsam, K. F., Rothblum, E. D., & Beauchaine, T. P. (2005), *supra* note 9; Factor, R. J., & Rothblum, E. D. (2007), *supra* note 9.

²³ Fraser, B., et al., (2019). LGBTQ+ Homelessness: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(15), 2677. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152677>.

²⁴ Perez, Z. J. (2014). *Left Behind How LGBT Young People Are Excluded from Economic Prosperity*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/left-behind/>; Hunter, L.A., McGovern, A., & Sutherland, C. (2018). *Intersecting Injustice: A National Call to Action Addressing LGBTQ Poverty and Economic Justice for All*. Social Justice Sexuality Project Graduate Center, City University of New York. https://socialjusticesexuality.com/intersecting_injustice/.

²⁵ Choi, S.K., et al., (2015). *Serving Our Youth: The Needs and Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth Experiencing Homelessness*. The Williams Institute, UCLA: Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/serving-our-youth-lgbtq/>; Quintana, N.S., Rosenthal, J., & Krehely, J. (2010). *On the Streets: The Federal Response to Gay and Transgender Homeless Youth*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/on-the-streets/>.

²⁶ Network impoverishment refer to when a social network, rather than an individual or family, functions in an impoverished state. Olivet, J., et al., (2018). *Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities: Phase One Study Findings*. Center for Social Innovation. <https://c4innovates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SPARC-Phase-1-Findings-March-2018.pdf>.

²⁷ Wilson, B. D. M., et al., (2014). *Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Foster Care: Assessing Disproportionality and Disparities in Los Angeles*. The Williams Institute, UCLA: Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/sgm-youth-la-foster-care/>; Wilson, B. D. M., et al., (2017). Disproportionality and Disparities among Sexual

generational poverty.²⁸ These factors, in turn, contribute to food insecurity and challenges with getting and maintaining employment. Lack of success or accessibility of traditional income or employment avenues is also associated with an increased likelihood that LGBTQ+ youth will turn to alternative sources of income, such as sex work.²⁹

Recommendations

- CBOs working to address LGBTQ+ youth employment and food security should prioritize stabilizing housing, including by providing or helping find long-term affordable housing options for youth, and should be funded to do so.
- Funders and programs serving LGBTQ+ youth should also take into consideration the totality of social and economic experiences in a young person's life, including other needs they may have, such as transportation, clothing, identity documents, and physical and mental health.
- Programs that aim to help LGBTQ+ youth secure employment should be funded at a level to include staff who can address gaps in support and mentorship left by families of origin or other support systems.

SNAP INSUFFICIENCIES AND INNOVATIVE MODELS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO FOOD

The limitations of the current social safety net of government programs were identified as a barrier to the economic security of LGBTQ+ youth. Panelists from different sectors acknowledged that the application process and eligibility criteria for programs like SNAP are not responsive to the needs of LGBTQ+ youth. In some cases, youth may face income limitations—for example, young people may report income that makes them ineligible despite being homeless or food insecure. Young people may also face barriers to completing the application process, be overwhelmed by or unable to provide the information required to apply, or may not be able to keep up with the recertification process to maintain benefits once enrolled. Others have documented the inability of youth under 18 to open their own cases,³⁰ which would affect homeless and street-involved LGBTQ+ minors, and the inadequacy of benefits provided.³¹

Minority Youth in Custody. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(7), 1547–1561. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0632-5>; Samuels, G. M., et al., (2019). *Missed Opportunities in Youth Pathways through Homelessness*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/young-people-experience-significant-disruption-and-loss-both-before-and-during-their-homelessness/>.

²⁸ Wilson, B. D. M. et al., (2020). *Pathways Into Poverty: Lived Experiences Among LGBTQ People*. The Williams Institute, UCLA: Los Angeles, CA. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/pathways-into-poverty/>.

²⁹ Dank, M., et al., (2015). *Surviving the Streets of New York. Experiences of LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YWSW Engaged in Survival Sex*. *Urban Institute*. <https://doi.org/10.15496/publikation-8608>.

³⁰ Children's Health Watch. (2011). *Too Many Hurdles: Barriers to Receiving SNAP Put Children's Health at Risk*. Boston Medical Center. <https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/hunger-free-center/research-briefs/chw-hurdles.ashx>.

³¹ Carlson, S., Llobrera, J., & Keith-Jennings, B. (2021). *More Adequate SNAP Benefits Would Help Millions of Participants Better Afford Food*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/more-adequate-snap-benefits-would-help-millions-of-participants-better>.

Recommendations

- Federal and state policymakers should examine eligibility criteria for SNAP and other public benefits to assess barriers for LGBTQ+ youth, including but not limited to whether separation from families of origin or lack of affirming identity documents prevent LGBTQ+ youth from accessing these benefits.
- Federal and state policymakers should also examine whether the current benefit levels and program restrictions are tailored to address the needs of LGBTQ+ youth and other beneficiaries. Increases to SNAP benefit amounts could make a positive difference for eligible LGBTQ+ youth.³² Similarly, changes to SNAP spending restrictions,³³ such as the prohibition of spending on hot food, may better suit the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, particularly those who are unstably housed.
- Federal, state, or local policymakers should provide resources to support “food navigators” to assist LGBTQ+ youth in understanding various ways to access food,³⁴ including federal and local programs and supplementary community programs and resources. This is a way to ensure that more LGBTQ+ youth can make use of the programs that are available.
- Municipal-level programs should examine opportunities to supplement SNAP to provide broader access to a greater variety of foods, including fresh foods.
- Private funders and government entities should consider alternate ways to supplement the safety net, such as programs and benefits that have lower threshold criteria, provide flexible resources for youth to use on food, and support LGBTQ-specific food resources through LGBTQ+ youth organizations (e.g., meal programs or pantries).

MENTORSHIP: SUPPORT AND COACHING

Panelists reported that some youth with whom they work have never learned basic life skills such as goal setting. They shared examples illustrating how LGBTQ+ youth may encounter challenges in the workforce for which they are unprepared, including job environments that are not LGBTQ+ inclusive.

Several CBOs replicate a family-like structure by incorporating mentorship into their programming to provide youth with information and skills to help navigate life as an adult. These programs also create opportunities for youth to connect and learn from their peers. Panelists shared strategies about how mentors can work with youth one-on-one to prepare them for challenges such as meeting daily survival needs, addressing adverse workplace conditions, thinking long-term about their career and other goals, finding work placements that are affirming, and making critical decisions that will support their well-being. Panelists described the deep engagement this type of mentorship takes, including being consistent, present, and available in a young person’s life.

³² Pandemic relief efforts, which included increased benefit amounts and supplemental programs, are associated with improved access to food. Llobrera, J. (2022). *Food Insecurity at a Two-Decade Low for Households With Kids, Signaling Successful Relief Efforts*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved November 26, 2023, from <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/food-insecurity-at-a-two-decade-low-for-households-with-kids-signaling-successful-relief>.

³³ USDA. (2023, November 17). *What can SNAP buy?* Food and Nutrition Service. Retrieved November 26, 2023, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items>.

³⁴ NYC Health + Hospitals. (2020, February 5). *OneCity Health Awards Community Partners \$4.3M to Address Food and Housing Insecurities Among NYC Health + Hospitals’ Patients* [Press release]. <https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/pressrelease/onecity-health-awards-community-partners-4-3m-to-address-food-and-housing-insecurities/>.

Recommendations

- CBOs should be supported in providing one-on-one mentorship to teach LGBTQ+ youth basic life, problem-solving, and employment skills. These programs require adequate funding to ensure appropriate staffing levels that allow for consistent long-term support, including regular check-ins and goal setting.
- CBOs should hire staff members who are connected to, or representative of, the community served to help maximize youth engagement and success.
- CBOs should cultivate peer support networks so that LGBTQ+ youth can learn from and support each other.

PROVIDING A BRIDGE TO SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

LGBTQ+ youth face unique barriers to workplace success that can make it difficult to obtain and keep gainful employment.³⁵ Panelists described two barriers: (1) work readiness among LGBTQ+ youth and (2) a need to identify workplaces that were prepared and committed to inclusion of LGBTQ+ employees.

Panelist organizations helped LGBTQ+ youth establish reasonable expectations about what employment might be like, including jobs in the food industry. Several panelists described efforts to expose LGBTQ+ youth to food service environments, including the types of jobs a young person might expect to get at entry level and the kinds of concerns they should be prepared for, such as being “front of house” and having significant exposure to the public. Panelists also sought to help young people understand the pathway to more advanced positions, such as becoming a chef. They did this by talking about what pre-requisite experience would be necessary and what educational opportunities might be available to them, as well as the costs they should expect for this kind of training. By exposing young people to these components of career development before they begin careers in this industry, panelists aimed to help LGBTQ+ youth make more intentional and informed choices about their career paths.

Finding employers who are committed to LGBTQ+ inclusion was another key component of job placement and retention. Panelists discussed how they evaluate potential employers, including making sure the work environment is one in which a young person does not have to hide their LGBTQ+ status, reviewing the mission and the staffing of the organization to look for commitment to diversity, and looking at whether the employer will understand or assist with challenges that a young person might face because they are LGBTQ+, such as inaccurate ID documents for transgender youth. Panelists discussed the importance of representation of LGBTQ+ people in places of employment: When young people see themselves represented among potential employers, the young person can better imagine themselves working there. CBOs serving LGBTQ+ youth sought to build these partnerships with employers through sustained collaborations, which also sometimes benefitted from patience or perseverance when well-intentioned employers made mistakes, such as accidentally using the wrong pronoun.

³⁵ NYC Unity Project. (n.d.). *Work It, NYC: A Comprehensive Guide to LGBTQI+ Workplace Inclusivity*. NYC Center for Youth Employment. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://lgbtqwork.cityofnewyork.us/DOH_Unity_Project_Workforce_Manual.pdf.

Recommendations

- CBOs that determine that employment-focused programming would benefit the youth served by their organizations should consider offering programming to assist youth in developing a clear understanding of the realities of entry-level positions and paths towards advancement within specific industries, as well as developing job search and workplace skills. Programs should be funded to include support through initial work experiences, and navigating the challenges, disappointments, and setbacks that may be part of the process of entering the workforce.
- Funders should support collaborations initiated by CBOs to increase the number of LGBTQ+ inclusive workplace opportunities for youth. Ongoing collaborations between CBOs and employers are necessary to establish trust and to build a network of employment placement sites for LGBTQ+ youth. Potential employers need to be screened to make sure they are genuinely committed to LGBTQ+ inclusion and supported to make sure they have the tools to fulfill this commitment.

BARRIERS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

CBO panelists described the need to obtain grants to keep their services running, but that sometimes grant restrictions create barriers to meeting needs that surface in the lives of LGBTQ+ youth. Some panelists talked about the limitations that CBOs face when applying for and distributing grant funds. These limitations include how funds can be spent and on what items (for example, prohibiting payments for food, prohibiting direct transfers to youth, or prohibiting use for general operating funds like staff salaries). Limitations also include rigidity in delivering programs as funded—even when evidence suggests that a modification to a proposed work scope could better meet the needs of youth. One panelist described how the flexibility of a funder was key to helping the CBO ensure success with an employment program to help LGBTQ+ youth develop skills to succeed in the food industry. The panelist explained how feedback from the youth and observation of their needs motivated them to adjust the program activities and timeline.

Although not discussed explicitly by the panelists, one model for community resource sharing is “mutual aid.” Mutual aid is a form of social support in which similarly situated people share resources to meet basic survival needs, including cash assistance, childcare, health care, clothing, and food.³⁶ Mutual aid is a framework that may create more flexibility for how CBOs serve their young people and intervene in immediate survival needs while also promoting dignity, self-determination, and independence among LGBTQ+ youth.

³⁶ Aberg-Riger, A. (2021, February 4). A Visual History of Mutual Aid. *Bloomberg*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2020-12-22/a-visual-history-of-mutual-aid>. As Miriam Kaba and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez write in a guide published during the COVID-19 pandemic, with mutual aid “we recognize that our well-being, health and dignity are all bound up in each other.” Ocasio-Cortez, A., & Kaba, M. (2020, April). *Mutual Aid 101*. https://mutualaiddisasterrelief.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NO-LOGOS-Mutual-Aid-101_-Toolkit.pdf. These types of networks have a long history among marginalized communities such as Black and Indigenous people, other people of color and LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. who may be excluded from traditional access to wealth. Spade, D. (2020). *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)*. Verso; Mineo, L. (2021, June 3). Racial Wealth Gap May Be Key to Other Inequities. *World*. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/06/racial-wealth-gap-may-be-a-key-to-other-inequities/>.

Recommendations

- Funders who wish to address LGBTQ+ youth employment and food insecurity should consider making multiple-year, unrestricted, general operating grants available to LGBTQ+ youth-serving CBOs.
- Funders should allow for and encourage innovation so that CBOs have the flexibility to change programs and goals in response to the needs of LGBTQ+ youth.
- In addition to traditional programs and services, funders could support programs or pilot projects that distribute resources to youth directly or provide resources through mutual aid networks.

PROMOTING THE AGENCY OF LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Throughout the convening, there was a focus on centering LGBTQ+ youth not just as clients but as leaders and thought partners for developing effective solutions. Many of the panelists discussed the unique value of community knowledge and expertise in addressing economic security, including opportunities for youth to connect and learn from peers and making sure that programs and services are youth-led and directly responsive to youth needs.

Several panelists discussed representation within their organizations and partner organizations as central to the process of building trusting relationships through which young people can develop skills and envision success. This is sometimes referred to as the “credible messenger” model.³⁷ Impactful messengers could include other LGBTQ+ youth, older LGBTQ+ people, and others who share similar life experiences or identities, such as race-ethnicity, culture, language, religion, disability, experience of homelessness, or immigration status. When young people saw themselves represented among community organizations, it helped establish trust in the services and guidance that were being offered. When young people saw themselves represented in a workplace, it helped inspire a sense of inclusivity and belonging.

Many models exist for centering youth leadership as a component of addressing youth food insecurity and economic stability among LGBTQ+ youth. For example, the Hype Center, based in San Francisco, is a youth-founded organization offering support services that include an open kitchen.³⁸ They publish and promote their founding process as a way to create a youth-centered organization, including program design by youth ages 16-24, a needs assessment survey developed by young people, and a youth advisory board.³⁹ Organizations participating in our convening, such as JASMYN, BAGLY, Breaktime, and the Ali Forney Center, have their own models integrating youth leadership development, youth empowerment, and support services. Please see Appendix B for more information about all participating organizations and their models.

³⁷ Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services. (n.d.). *Credible Messenger Initiative*. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from <https://dysr.dc.gov/page/credible-messenger-initiative>.

³⁸ HYPE Center. (n.d.). *On-Site Resources*. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://www.hypecentersf.com/what-we-believe>.

³⁹ HYPE Center. (n.d.). *The HYPE Center's Youth Founding Process*. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://www.hypecentersf.com/team-and-founders#:~:text=This%20founding%20process%20involved%20designing,space%3B%20and%20developing%20the%20Center%27s>.

Recommendations

- CBOs should center LGBTQ+ youth in their work, including through peer support networks, mutual aid programs, program development, decision-making, staffing, and organizational leadership.
- CBOs can look at and replicate existing models of youth-led program development, peer-to-peer support systems, and leadership development.
- Funders and policymakers addressing youth food insecurity and related issues, including housing and economic stability, should provide resources to CBOs to support LGBTQ+ youth autonomy, expertise, and leadership, including financial support (such as stipends) to enable their participation.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Our convening brought together a small handful of experts. However, in each of the categories we considered—LGBTQ+ CBOs, organizations focused on employment in the food industry, and food policy experts—there are likely far more ideas and experiences to document. Conversely, strategies that work in one community or with one organization may not be successful in a different context. Mixed methods research conducted in partnership with CBOs and LGBTQ+ youth could help better understand and evaluate the impact of these strategies. Research could also expand by considering culturally responsive and innovative food programs, such as NATIFS,⁴⁰ which promotes indigenous foodways, or the Okra Project, a mutual aid collective that began by connecting Black transgender people with culturally responsive food;⁴¹ and Homeboy Industries,⁴² which helps cultivate jobs in food industries for people coming out of prisons and jails.

Additionally, our panelists expressed strong interest in continuing to collaborate and support one another to make food and economic security more accessible for all LGBTQ+ youth. They would appreciate the opportunity to engage with other funders, municipalities, and think tanks engaged in policy conversations about food access. Where possible, funders should consider supporting coalitions to build knowledge and capacity and to collectively develop solutions to address these shared challenges.

⁴⁰ North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems. (2023, November). *Our Vision*. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://natifs.org/vision>.

⁴¹ The Okra Project. (n.d.). *About Us: Who We Are*. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://www.theokraproject.com/about>.

⁴² Homeboy Industries. (2021, June 18). *Our Mission*. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://homeboyindustries.org/our-story/our-mission/>; Homeboy Industries. (2023, May 4). *Homegirl Cafe*. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://homeboyindustries.org/social-enterprises/cafe/>.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT BIOS

Food and Economic Security for LGBTQ+ Youth Convening: Participant Bios



Lexi Adsit is a fierce, fat, and femme translatina born and raised outside of Oakland, CA. She has a Master's in Ethnic Studies from San Francisco State University and a Bachelor's in Women and Gender Studies. She has worked for over a decade for transgender equity and liberation through organizations, such as Peacock Rebellion and TAJA's Coalition, and now serves as Executive Director of TransCanWork. transcanwork.org



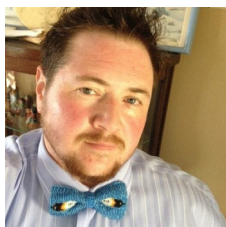
Ken Baker is the Director of Culinary Operations at Rethink Food. Ken grew up in Baltimore as one of four children; he spent significant time (especially Sundays) at his grandmother's—Miss Debbie's—house. He has cooked for just about everyone: a former president of the United States and college students at Johns Hopkins. rethinkfood.org



Kerith Conron is the Blachford-Cooper Distinguished Scholar and Research Director at the Williams Institute, UCLA. She is a social and psychiatric epidemiologist whose work focuses on documenting and reducing inequities that impact sexual and gender minority populations. She is committed to altering the landscape of adversity and opportunity for LGBTQ communities, particularly through collaboration. williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu



Liz Flynn is a nonbinary, gay, LCSW in MA (and is currently pursuing LICSW licensure). Liz has worked with LGBTQ+ kids, teens, and their families for over 8 years in clinical and programmatic settings. Liz's background in clinical mental health has focused primarily in working with folks experiencing severe mental illnesses, anxiety, and phobias. Liz has focused their practices on creating affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ people to access mental health care and increase access to resources for success. Liz currently serves as BAGLY's Stabilization & Success Programs Manager. bagly.org



Aaron Gonzales is the Director of BAGLY's Boston Programs, where he is responsible for developing the leadership capital of Greater Boston's LGBTQ youth to make positive change in their communities. In this capacity, he oversees the implementation of BAGLY's state-wide AGLY Network, BAGLY's Community Center, which houses youth-led community building, social support, advocacy programming, Host Homes, Behavioral Health services, and a comprehensive HIV and STI clinic. In addition, Aaron has previously held seats as a community funder for the Queer Youth Fund, the Board of Director for the North American Indian Center of Boston and the American Express Leadership Academy. Aaron currently sits on the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, representing the North American Indian Center of Boston. bagly.org



Zy'Aire Kelly, originally from Tallahassee, Florida, has been advocating for the LGBTQ plus community for over 10 years. They earned their Associates in Digital Cinematography. They are the Founder of GeminiVibez Productions created to help young POC learn about digital media and bring their visions to life. Zy'Aire continues their LGBT advocacy work as the Housing Care Coordinator at JASMYN, a Jacksonville, Florida organization that supports LGBTQ young people by creating a safe space. jasmyn.org/



Moriah L. Macklin is a Research Data Analyst at the Williams Institute. Her research interests center around social policy, equity, and social insurance programs, including childcare access and federal food assistance. She also enjoys using quantitative and qualitative methodologies in her research. Her previous work at the Brookings Institution's Hamilton Project examined why the median incomes of same-sex households differ from each other and their opposite-sex counterparts. Moriah holds a B.A. in Economics from California State University, Long Beach.



Elana Redfield, J.D., is the Federal Policy Director at the Williams Institute. In this role, she coordinates the Institute's legal research and analysis related to federal and state policies that impact lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and intersex people. Before joining the Williams Institute, Elana worked with the New York City Department of Social Services, where she oversaw the agency's initiative to improve safety net services and homelessness interventions for LGBTQI communities. Prior to this, Elana served as a staff attorney for the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, where she utilized direct legal representation, impact litigation, public education, and policy strategies to help meet survival needs and promote the self-determination of low-income transgender people and transgender people of color. Elana is a 2008 graduate of CUNY School of Law and a 2003 graduate of New York University.



Farrah Ridoré is the Policy Director at Breaktime. She joined the organization in January 2023 with several years of experience in government and politics at the local, state, and federal levels. Among her previous roles, Ridoré worked as a Regional Director in the office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, where she provided constituent services to residents of the Greater Boston/MetroWest and South Shore regions. She recently completed a fellowship program with the New Leaders Council (NLC) Boston chapter in June 2022. Ridoré is a proud daughter of Haitian immigrants and is an avid classical music concertgoer and former double bass player. She is a graduate of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, where she studied Sociology and is currently studying Human Services Management at Cambridge College in Charlestown, Massachusetts. breaktime.org/missionandmodel



Matthew Smith is the manager of national partnerships, advocacy engagement for Share Our Strength, which leads the No Kid Hungry Campaign. Matthew brings a wealth of experience in government relations, advocacy, and policy to the role. He is responsible for building relationships with external organizations to further Share Our Strength's advocacy goals and the priorities of partners. Matthew also leads the LGBTQIA+ strategy for No Kid Hungry, developing partnerships to determine the best strategies to address hunger among LGBTQIA+ youth and working alongside the community to execute these priorities. nokidhungry.org



Elizabeth Solomon, M.S., R.D., is the Executive Director of Nutrition Policies and Programs within the Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention at the NYC Health Department. She oversees education and food access programs and strategic and policy initiatives that all aim to help make healthy eating easier for New Yorkers, with the goal of eliminating racial inequities and reducing overall premature mortality. Her unit spearheads innovative projects such as Health Bucks, the NYC Food Standards, and the National Salt and Sugar Reduction Initiative. She is a registered dietitian by training, a mother of two, and has been at the NYC Health Department for over 15 years. nyc.gov/health • nyc.gov/nutrition



Jess Tell (He/They) is the Director of Culinary Programs at the Ali Forney Center in New York City. This program serves four meals a day, seven days a week, with a focus on nutrition and creating loving meals from raw ingredients. The Ali Forney Center's mission is to protect LGBTQIA youth from the harms of homelessness. aliforneycenter.org



Diana Winters is the Director of the Health Law & Policy Program (HLPP) and the Deputy Director at the Resnick Center for Food Law & Policy at UCLA School of Law. Her research interest lies in the intersection of food law and health law. Before she moved to Los Angeles with her family in 2016, Winters was an Associate Professor at Indiana University McKinney School of Law, the Health Law Scholar Visiting Assistant Professor at Boston University School of Law, and an Assistant Solicitor General at the New York Attorney General's Office. Winters holds a J.D. from New York University, a Ph.D. in American Studies from Harvard University, an M.A. in History from Harvard, and a B.A. from Brown University. law.ucla.edu/faculty/faculty-profiles/diana-r-h-winters

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

TRANS CAN WORK

Trans Can Work is a nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, California, committed to advancing workplace inclusion through innovative training strategies and workforce development. Their programming can be broken down into two categories: employer services for employers looking to build more LGBTQ+ competent and affirming workspaces and workforce development for individuals seeking job training and placement assistance. Their unique and affirming approach can be attributed to their trans-led organizational structure, which brings in years of lived and learned experiences on how to create trans-affirming and competent workspaces.

RETHINK FOOD

Rethink Food exists to bridge the gap between excess food and the communities that need it. Rethink Sustainability is a food recovery model that offers zero-waste services via excess food pickup and creates meals in their commissary kitchen. The Rethink Certified program helps fund partner kitchens to deliver nutritious, culturally celebrated food meals—at no cost to communities. The Rethink Certified network includes 60 restaurant partners across five operating cities and has provided 9M+ meals to date since March 2020. Rethink also prides itself on its ability to foster an open and inclusive workspace that allows community members to enter and learn the ropes of the culinary industry.

BAGLY

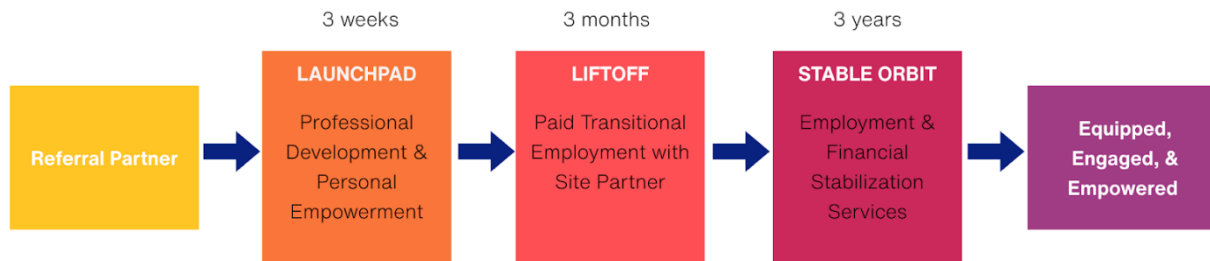
BAGLY (Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth) is a youth-led, adult-supported social support organization committed to social justice and creating, sustaining, and advocating for programs, policies, and services for the LGBTQ+ youth community. BAGLY provides a suite of comprehensive services and resources that aim to help community members build community with each other and to work towards their personal goals. BAGLY centers youth experiences and voices by creating opportunities for youth who engage with BAGLY to help shape the services offered to them and how they're offered.

JASMYN

JASMYN is a NE Florida-based nonprofit that supports the empowerment of LGBTQIA+ teens and young adults through leadership, advocacy, resources, and a safe and affirming community. JASMYN provides mentorship programs, which help queer youth and young adults learn more about their own identities, build community with one another, and start planning for their career and life goals. JASMYN provides weekly wrap-around services for youth experiencing housing insecurity. Services include access to showers, laundry, hot meals, food & hygiene pantry, cyber center, mental health services, HIV testing, and one-on-one support.

BREAKTIME

Breaktime is a Boston-based nonprofit that has a mission to break the cycle of homelessness by equipping young adults with the job and financial security they need to establish housing security. Breaktime’s program (Launchpad, Liftoff, and Stable Orbit) is a three-part Supported Transitional Employment program that utilizes community partnerships to empower young adults aged 18-25 experiencing/at risk of housing insecurity. The Breaktime model is uniquely and intentionally designed around the 6 Essentials of Success (6ES) to support young adults to access job opportunities at a liveable wage while equipping them with the skills, financial knowledge, and support necessary for them to acquire long-term stable housing.



ALI FORNEY CENTER

The Ali Forney Center is a New York City-based nonprofit with a mission to protect LGBTQ+ youths from the harms of homelessness and empower them with the tools needed to live independently. The 24-hour drop-in center at Ali Forney serves as a one-stop resource hub where community members can access food, medical care, mental health services, and much more. The kitchen at the center serves 70,000 hot meals annually, with another 40,000 meals being served through their housing programs. Additionally, 35 youth have obtained their Food Handler’s License and 29 additional youth have participated in internships through the culinary program at the center.

NO KID HUNGRY

No Kid Hungry is a national campaign run by Share Our Strength, a nonprofit working to solve problems of hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world. No Kid Hungry is working to end childhood hunger by helping launch and improve programs that give all kids the healthy food they need to thrive and strengthen the safety net through advocacy and awareness campaigns. They have led and provided support to many movements, which have increased participation in breakfast, afterschool, and summer meals. Share Our Strength is committed not only to ending hunger and poverty but also expanding work to address the root causes.

NYC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE NUTRITION SERVICES

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Health Department) works to protect and promote the health of all New Yorkers and seeks to eliminate racial and other inequities that result in premature mortality and inequitable rates of life expectancy. The Health Department works to address inequities in nutrition and food security through innovative policies, initiatives, and programs, including surveillance and data dissemination, Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff, Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) incentive programs at farmers markets, participating grocery stores respectively, and Groceries to Go, which provides eligible New Yorkers with credits to purchase groceries through an online platform. The Health Department is also the technical advisor for the NYC Food Standards, nutrition criteria that apply to all food and beverages purchased and served by New York City agencies and their subcontractors.

RESNICK CENTER FOR FOOD LAW & POLICY

The Resnick Center publishes and contributes to scholarship that is foundational to food law and policy, stimulating discussion about global food system approaches and governance strategies while also providing solutions for local communities through campus connections and experiential education. To forward its mission, the Resnick Center works with UCLA Law students and faculty and the broader UCLA and UC communities, and engages with national and international scholars, experts, and policymakers. The Center also maintains a robust slate of outside advisors, including its Outside Advisory Board and its Research Affiliates, who are recent law school graduates working to better the food system who will consult and assist on various Resnick Center research projects.

APPENDIX C: CONVENING AGENDA

Food and Economic Security for LGBTQ+ Youth Convening Agenda

September 12, 2023

10AM to 1PM PT (1PM to 4PM ET)

I. Welcome. Kerith Conron, Williams Institute & Matthew Smith, No Kid Hungry (5 minutes)

- Each participant share a brief description of their organization
 - ◆ **Sample sentence about one's organization:** The Williams Institute is an interdisciplinary center at UCLA School of Law that produces research about LGBTQ people to inform law and public policy.
- Logistics:
 - ◆ Please include your pronouns next to your name. Use the rename feature.
 - ◆ Please use the raise hand feature to communicate an interest in speaking.
 - ◆ We will take one 15-minute break 1 hour, 30 minutes into the convening. If you need a break beforehand (or afterwards), we understand! Step away for a few minutes to take a break when you need it.
 - ◆ We will record the meeting to facilitate the preparation of notes and the development of an 8–10-page convening report. We plan to summarize themes and might include a few quotes – but will not identify speakers by name or organization.

II. Panel 1. LGBTQ-Focused Organizations. Kerith Conron, moderator. (55 minutes)

- **Aim:** To articulate what it takes to support LGBTQ youth (ages 18 to 25) in getting, succeeding at, and growing in jobs in food industry. (Lessons from other industries, communities)
- Moderated panel (40 minutes)
- Moderator review of panel aim and introduction of panelists (name, title, organization).
- **Moderator:** In a sentence or two, can you share what your organization does or its mission?
- **Moderator:** From your experience, what does it take to support LGBTQ youth (ages 18 to 25) in getting, succeeding at, and growing in jobs in food industry?
- LGBTQ youth organizations:
 - ◆ Aaron Gonzales, Director Boston Programs, & Liz Flynn, Stabilization & Success Programs Manager, BAGLY Inc. (10 minutes)
 - ◆ Zy'Aire Kelly, Access Coordinator, JASMYN (10 minutes)
- Employment-focused organizations:
 - ◆ Farrah Ridoré, Policy Director, Breaktime (10 minutes)
 - ◆ Lexi Adsit, Executive Director, TransCanWork (10 minutes)
- Group discussion (15 minutes)

III. Panel 2. Innovative Food Organizations. Elana Redfield, moderator. (45 minutes)

- **Aim:** To identify models that can be replicated or expanded to employ more LGBTQ youth (ages 18 to 25) in food industry, and to support their growth. (Lessons from other industries, communities)
- Moderated panel (30 minutes)
- Moderator review of panel aim and introduction of panelists (name, title, organization).
- **Moderator:** In a sentence or two, can you share what your organization does or its mission?
- **Moderator:** How does your organization support the success and growth of LGBTQ youth (ages 18 to 25), or youth in general?
 - ◆ Ken Baker, Culinary Director, Rethink Food (10 minutes)
 - ◆ Jess Tell, Director of Culinary Programming, Ali Forney Center (10 minutes)
- BREAK (15 minutes)
- Group discussion (15 minutes)

IV. Panel 3. Policymaking, Capacity-Building, and Funding. Elana Redfield, moderator. (50 minutes)

- **Aim:** To explore how existing (or promising) models might be sustained, replicated, and grown.
- Moderated panel (40 minutes)
- Moderator review of panel aim and introduction of panelists (name, title, organization).
- **Moderator:** In a sentence or two, can you share what your organization does or its mission?
- **Moderator:** From your experience, how can existing (or promising) models be sustained, replicated, and grown?
 - ◆ Elizabeth Solomon, Executive Director of Nutrition Policies and Programs, NYC Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene, Food Policy team (10 minutes)
 - ◆ Diana Winters, Deputy Director, Resnick Center, UCLA (10 minutes)
 - ◆ Matthew Smith, Manager, National Partnerships Advocacy Engagement, No Kid Hungry (10 minutes)
- Group discussion (10 minutes)

V. Closing thoughts and next steps. Kerith Conron, moderator. (10 minutes)

- **Moderator:** What one thought or comment would you like to share with the group?