

Ottawa Senior Pride Network (OSPN) Foundational Document



**OTTAWA SENIOR
PRIDE NETWORK**
Generations of Pride
**RÉSEAU FIERTÉ DES
AÎNÉ(E)S D'OTTAWA**
Générations de fierté

Vision:

We envision a world in which LGBT seniors are honoured and included in their communities and have access to appropriate services and facilities as they come to need them.

Mission:

Through a network of LGBT community members and allies we work to create:

1. A strong, connected, visible senior queer community, and
2. LGBT culturally-appropriate and safe senior services and residential environments

Values:

- We are committed to human rights, safety, social justice, and social inclusion
- We build on the strengths and resiliency of LGBT seniors and treat them as active agents in their own well-being
- We recognize the diversity of the LGBT aging community, including those with disabilities, with lower incomes, who are marginalized, and who are less connected to social supports
- We build respectful working relationships by working across our differences, inviting open dialogue, and using substantive conflict as an opportunity to deepen mutual understanding
- We believe that all LGBT seniors have a right to culturally-proficient services in community agencies, long-term care organizations, home-care agencies, and palliative care services
- We value welcoming and discrimination-free environments for everyone
- We acknowledge and respect the varying degrees of self-acceptance of LGBT seniors

Philosophy:

OSPN is a volunteer-led organization that has been built on the interests and input of the community. OSPN's philosophy is that new ideas are always welcome and the ones where there is energy from the community will come to fruition, provided someone, or a group of people, are willing to initiate action. We encourage people to use the Facebook page or our Community Gatherings as a way to put ideas forward and determine interest. Someone else may pick up on an idea and assist, or run with it. Any new initiative needs to have a link with the Coordinating Committee.

Membership/leadership structures:

- **OSPN Network** – Membership is open to LGBT people & allies of any age with an expressed interest in and support for LGBT seniors. Members of the OSPN receive regular communication, through email or Facebook, about activities or initiatives of interest. These range from social activities and community nights organized by OSPN, to those in the wider community.
- **OSPN Coordinating Committee** - Membership is open to LGBT seniors (50 plus). Potential members are screened through an interview to ensure a good fit. Currently, the Coordinating Committee includes the chairs of the sub-committees and members at large.
- **OSPN Sub-committees** - Membership is open to LGBT people & allies (including families and friends) of any age with an expressed interest and/or competency in the sub-committee subject matter or area of focus. Potential members are screened through an interview to ensure a good fit.

Consensus Decision-Making

Consensus decision-making is a process that involves all members of a group coming to an agreement on a decision which all can support going forward. It means, in the OSPN's case that everyone can live with that decision and that they will support it now and in the future.

To achieve consensus, people need to:

- have an opportunity to express their thoughts
- take the time to understand other's position(s) in relation to their own, and
- believe they have been heard and their views considered
- When engaging in discussions leading to consensus, it is important to ensure that:
- People listen actively with an open mind
- People are honest about what are their views / concerns
- All views are welcomed and treated respectfully, including minority ideas and positions
- Critical thinking is welcome but only after a view point is developed; seek to understand first and then explore options
- Time is taken to understand the various options / alternatives
- Clarity is achieved on what are the various options before any decisions are made

A helpful tool to gauge the degree of consensus in the room is five finger consensus. Everyone is asked to indicate their degree of consensus/agreement using one hand and the following:

- All five fingers = strongly agree
- Four fingers = agree
- Three fingers = can see pluses and minuses, but willing to go along with the group
- Two fingers = disagree
- One finger = strongly disagree and can't support

This tool is not like voting; it is an indication on the degree of consensus and forms the basis of further discussion:

- if everyone is at three and above, you have good consensus
- If you have any ones or twos, more discussion is still needed on what would be acceptable to them, followed by further discussion
- If everyone is a three, you may wish to have some further dialogue on what would might be a stronger alternative that would gain a higher degree of support from all members

At the end of the day, the consensus decision may not be everyone's first (or even second) choice, but it is one that allows the group to move forward with the public support of each member of that group.

Source: Jennifer Birch-Jones and Judy Kent (2016). Facilitation Skills for Evaluators.