

Strong and Resilient: Navigating the DEI Backlash – Member Toolkit



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Table of Contents:

Introduction	1
What You Need to Know: President Trump’s Executive Orders.....	3
Additional Key Points to Note	6
What You Can Do: Guidance for LGBT Great Member Organisations	8
Conclusion and STAY Principles	11





“The DEI backlash isn’t a signal for organisations to retreat, it’s a wake-up call to rethink how they engage, measure, and communicate DEI’s value. The challenge is making it work for everyone, not just underrepresented groups, and ensuring it remains a key pillar of business success”.

Matt Cameron (he/him), CEO of LGBT Great, part of the Allied People Group

Introduction

On January 20th 2025, President Trump rescinded numerous Executive Orders and policy initiatives from previous administrations, a move that is expected to significantly impact government contractors working in fields like environmental sustainability, climate change, diversity and inclusion, energy infrastructure, public health, and immigration-related services. As federal procurement priorities shift, members who are US federal government contractors should remain alert to evolving obligations, emerging opportunities, and updated compliance requirements.

The environment created by President Trump both before he took office and afterwards, have undoubtedly presented significant challenges for organisations that value diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). The President’s Executive Orders have legitimised these challenges. However, the business, ethical, and moral imperatives for focusing on DEI remain strong, and are even more important in this challenging landscape. Organisations must re-examine their approach to DEI, ensuring it is strategically aligned and inclusive of everyone. By doing so, they can continue to foster environments where all employees feel a sense of belonging and are empowered to thrive.

This has been LGBT Great’s mantra since we started in 2019. With our 2025 theme ‘*The Belonging Advantage*’, LGBT Great is well-positioned to support its members in navigating these headwinds and building a future where belonging and inclusion are at the forefront and where all talent can thrive, including all parts of the LGBTQ+ community. Together, we can turn these challenges into opportunities for growth and innovation, creating resilient organisations that lead with strength and conviction. This toolkit seeks to provide you with a concise summary of the US Executive Orders, their implications, and recommended actions.



What You Need to Know: President Trump's Executive Orders

1. "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity"

Summary: [The Executive Order](#) aims to eliminate DEI programmes in federal departments, contractors and agencies, by repealing directives from the previous administration. It terminates DEI-related factors in all federal hiring, promotions, and contracting.

Implications:

- Revokes previous DEI-related Executive Orders, including those mandating affirmative action in federal contracting. Directs the Department of Justice to increase scrutiny of DEI practices in the private sector.
- Requires federal contractors and grant recipients to certify that they do not run DEI programmes that violate federal anti-discrimination laws and affirm they will not engage in illegal discrimination, including DEI-related practices.
- Federal hiring and promotions will focus on rewarding individual initiative, hard work, and excellence, excluding DEI-related factors.
- Performance metrics will be based on individual achievements and contributions. Federal hiring and promotions will now reward individual initiative, skills, performance, and hard work, without DEI-related factors.
- The order encourages private sector entities to adopt similar merit-based practices and end DEI programs that may be seen as discriminatory.
- Requires federal agencies to monitor and report on DEI practices in the private sector, identifying areas of concern and potential regulatory actions.

Our View:

- This order may limit the ability of organisations to incorporate specific and visible LGBTQ+ considerations into their people processes. Some private sector organisations could seek to move away from supporting the LGBTQ+ community. In our view, this would pose significant business, reputational and talent risks.
- Organisations should continue implementing and role modelling, objective assessment frameworks for all recruitment, promotions and assessment of employee performance.
- Organisations should ensure that they are visibly supporting communities and that they continue to cast the net wide for talent, whilst implementing robust and objective frameworks for assessing talent.



2. "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing"

Summary: [The Executive Order](#) mandates the termination of all DEI and accessibility programmes, policies, and positions within the federal government.

Implications:

- Terminates all DEI-related positions, policies, and performance metrics in federal agencies.
- Orders agencies to remove any reference to DEI from funding applications, websites, and reports.
- Creates a federal review process to monitor and reduce DEI efforts in corporate settings.
- This order will impact federal funding for LGBTQ+ organisations and research.

Our View:

- The Executive Order overlooks the disproportionate challenges faced by some communities in the workplace.
- The Executive Order may undermine the importance of psychological safety and visibility of LGBTQ+ people and their allies in the workplace, while discouraging private-sector DEI programmes.
- Leaders are concerned for the impact that this Executive Order could have and are taking steps to double down.

3. "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government"

Summary: [The Executive Order](#) mandates that all federal policies and programmes recognise only two sexes, male and female, based on "immutable" biological characteristics.

Implications:

- Federal agencies are directed to remove all statements, policies, regulations, forms, and communications related to LGBTQ+ equity or work with LGBTQ+ communities.
- Agencies must rescind any guidance and terminate any contracts related to LGBTQ+ equity.
- Defines sex strictly as male or female in all federal laws and policies, eliminating gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language from government documents.
- Restricts the ability of trans and non-binary people to update gender markers on government IDs.



Our View:

- The Executive Order erases the existence, rights, and identities of transgender and non-binary people, increasing risks of workplace discrimination and barriers to legal recognition, and particularly impacting welfare and mental health.
- While the call to 'defend women' is undeniably important, it's vital that this defence encompasses every woman's experience, including transgender women, whose identities are integral to our community. We reject any narrative that seeks to simplify gender into a binary based solely on biology as opposed to gender identity and sense of self.
- Removing gender-inclusive language from federal documents could send a broader cultural signal that non-cisgender identities are less valued.
- The Executive Order could lead to more misgendering in workplace records and communications. It could also lead to an increasing the risk of discrimination and exclusion.
- With restrictions on updating gender markers on government IDs, trans and non-binary employees may face discrepancies between their personal identity and official records. Such mismatches can create hurdles during hiring processes, security clearances, and even routine administrative procedures like payroll or benefits enrolment.
- Organisations impacted should ensure that they provide safe spaces for LGBTQ+ talent, and those impacted by the issues, to confide and find support easily.



Additional Key Points to Note:

A reminder of the potential of the marketplace

- [The global LGBTQ+ marketplace](#) is worth approximately \$4.7 trillion US dollars annually. With 388 million LGBTQ+ people around the world.
- [The number of people who identify openly as LGBTQ+ is increasing. 10% of Americans identify as LGBTQ+.](#) The number of people that care deeply about equality is also increasing as societal attitudes change and evolve.

Some US federal contracting organisations have been forced to 'scale back' DEI

- Some organisations have announced they have pulled back on their initiatives, seemingly due to concerns about maintaining their lucrative contracts with the US federal government. These companies have reacted to prioritise their financial interests and the substantial value of their federal contracts. It appears that some of these organisations have taken this action grudgingly to comply with US law.
- Amazon has secured a significant \$20 billion contract over 10 years since 2022. Accenture has been awarded \$3.5 billion in contracts since June 2024. Google shares in a \$9 billion Department of Defence contract with Amazon, highlighting the competitive nature of these agreements.
- Boeing was awarded \$14.5 billion in contracts in 2024, further emphasising the high stakes involved. Citi, facilitates much of the U.S. government's payment network domestically and internationally, making it a major federal contractor and vulnerable to the administration's scrutiny. Meta, while also a contractor, does not have specific information available regarding the value of its contracts.
- These substantial contracts underscore the financial motivations behind some organisations' decisions to bring forward positioning which are perceived to have 'scaled back' on DEI efforts, as they aim to preserve their business relationships and revenue streams with the federal government. We expect the inclusion and belonging practices inside these organisations to largely continue. We also expect organisations will not 'drop' their support and engagement with the communities they serve.



Many organisations have also clearly reaffirmed their commitment to DEI and community

- In contrast to those ‘scaling back’ on DEI, many organisations have publicly reaffirmed their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. [A recent survey](#) has revealed that 7 in 8 organisations plan to continue with diversity, equity and inclusion programmes in 2025.
- [Citi CEO Fraser](#), whilst dropping diversity representation goals, has affirmed a set of four principles that guide the firm’s approach. (1) The best talent pools to serve clients and communities globally (2) enabling colleagues of all backgrounds to feel valued and thrive (3) celebrate vibrant cultures and communities (4) complying with the law in which the firm operates.
- Despite dropping Board diversity targets, Goldman Sachs emphasises diversity's role [in driving innovation and business success](#). Costco's shareholders [overwhelmingly rejected](#) a proposal to halt DEI initiatives, showing strong support.
- [JP Morgan’s CEO Jamie Dimon](#), said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last month, “Bring them on. We are going to continue to reach out to the Black community, the Hispanic community, the LGBT community, the veterans community.”
- Apple maintains its DEI commitment, urging shareholders to [reject anti-DEI proposals](#) and reinforcing its dedication to an inclusive work environment. Kroger has [established programs](#) to support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of underrepresented groups, demonstrating its ongoing DEI commitment for the future.
- These organisations, amongst many others, have chosen to publicly reaffirm their commitment to DEI practices and communities, currently, which highlights the importance to them of supporting and empowering their people.



What You Can Do: Guidance for LGBT Great Member Organisations

The backlash isn't a signal to retreat, it's a wake-up call to rethink how organisations can engage, measure, and communicate DEI's value. The challenge is making it work for everyone, not just under-represented groups, including the language, and ensuring it remains a key pillar of business and organisational success. When all your people prosper, everyone thrives. LGBT Great has set out six principles to support Members:

1. Ensure DEI Speaks to Everyone

- ✓ In this charged environment, it is essential to reflect on everyone, providing equal opportunities and support for all employees to create 'belonging advantages' for all. DEI must rethink to unite and work for all employees, not just a few, to be effective.
- ✓ Auditing your strategies, language and communications to ensure alignment across everyone is crucial. This can be done to ensure any US federal contractors, avoid legal risk. To read more, [see here](#).
- ✓ Support LGBTQ+ belonging and inclusion should always extend beyond the community to reach a wider audience. This has always been and remains our steadfast approach.

An example of how we are supporting you: We have commissioned the 2025 global research roadshow: '*Seeing is Believing: The Power of Allyship and Belonging*'. This inspiring programme will support Members to build awareness of the case for belonging and inclusion for all. The programme will work to engage talent from all backgrounds and Members will have access to the report plus an insights awareness course. We can provide you with support in the following areas: audits, awareness building with executives, and benchmarking insights to help you future proof your strategies and align with 'belonging advantages' for all.

2. Intensify Focus on Engagement and Community

- ✓ Continue to visibility support the clients and communities you serve.
- ✓ Ensure your communities and talent has a place to get support and share concerns.
- ✓ Cement connections across internal employee network groups and partnership organisations to enhance unity and strength.



An example of how we are supporting you: Our [membership platform offers safe spaces](#) where your talent can connect, share experiences, and find support. Key features include community forums, a resource library, and specialised support groups. Additionally, our mentoring programme pairs your talent with experienced mentors for personalised support and career development. We also provide visibility and recognition through member events and webinars. By offering these resources, we help your talent thrive and achieve their professional goals. We have also extended access to the Careers platform which is proven to engage a broad set of talent communities.

3. Affirm Your Support of All Your People

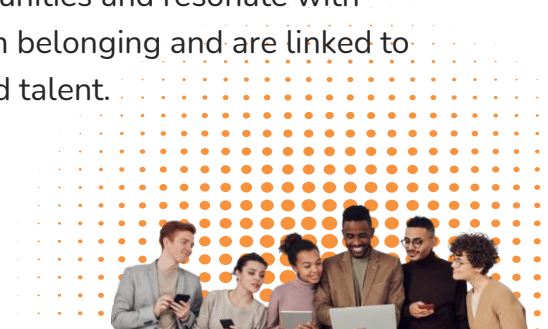
- ✓ Ensure your leadership has clearly articulated the support for all your talent and communities.
- ✓ Highlight the potential of a workplace where all communities are empowered to thrive.
- ✓ Encourage leaders to sponsor programmes and role model successes across your firm.

An example of how we are supporting you: We are engaging leaders through our 2025 research programmes and a new Executive Sponsor's community space. This community provides a bridge across organisations, allowing leaders to share insights and perspectives. By fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange, we support your leaders in driving innovation and achieving their goals. We can also provide a presentation of how-to reimagine DEI.

4. Reimagine Diversity as an Innovation and Performance Lever

- ✓ Articulate diversity as multi-dimensional: thinking, background and perspectives.
- ✓ Articulate the importance of cognitive diversity by promoting different ways of thinking and problem-solving.
- ✓ Integrate belonging and psychological safety into culture by embedding these values into policies, practices, and leadership messaging.

An example of how we are supporting you: We are supporting with broadening the scope of policies to ensure that they support specific communities and resonate with everyone. All our CPD insights awareness courses underpin belonging and are linked to increasing results for the benefit of business, reputation and talent.



5. Reflect the Clients and Communities You Serve

- ✓ Conduct a risk assessment to understand the potential impacts of retreating from DEI on brand loyalty, talent pipelines, and investor trust. Develop strategies to mitigate these risks and communicate the importance of belonging and inclusion to stakeholders.
- ✓ Leverage market research to quantify your organisation's client and spending potential.
- ✓ Engage with communities through sponsorships, partnerships, and events to build relationships.

An example of how we are supporting you: From an LGBTQ+ lens, we are providing you new toolkits on the business case for LGBTQ+ inclusion and a new insights course launching in Pride Month focussed on the '*Economic Potential of the LGBTQ+ Marketplace*'.

6. Meet Legal and Regulatory Requirements

- ✓ Ensure that belonging and inclusion remains a top priority in governance. Regularly review and update governance policies to reflect this commitment.
- ✓ Stay informed about evolving DEI regulations and expectations outside of the US. Implement effective programmes to meet the requirements of regulators and stakeholders in the UK, EU, and APAC regions.
- ✓ Adapt initiatives to navigate the changing legal regulatory landscape in the US.

An example of how we are supporting you: Engagement with regulators to keep you informed about considerations for LGBTQ+ belonging and inclusion. Building best practice insights and new recommendations through the Inclusion Index Benchmarking Tool (iiBT). This ensures your policies are up-to-date and effective.



Conclusion

As we navigate the challenges posed by recent US federal policies, it is crucial to remain steadfast in your commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). To ensure your success, we must STAY Focused, Aligned, Connected, Transparent, and Supportive.

- **STAY Focused:** Design strategies that support your people and provide opportunities for everyone. This focus ensures that all employees feel valued and empowered.
- **STAY Aligned:** Align initiatives with the long-term growth and prosperity of your organisation. This alignment will help integrate DEI into the core of your business strategy.
- **STAY Connected:** Utilise the LGBT Great platform to foster unity and share valuable insights. By staying connected, we can learn from each other and strengthen our collective efforts.
- **STAY Transparent:** Ensure that your DEI efforts drive real business impact and clearly communicate these achievements. Transparency builds trust and demonstrates the tangible benefits.
- **STAY Supportive:** Empower leaders to effectively articulate and champion belonging within your organisation. Supportive leadership is key to building success.

Together, by adhering to these principles, we can ensure our organisations remain committed, supportive, and resilient. Let us move forward with determination and confidence, knowing that together, we are an indomitable force for change.

To discuss any of the issues in this toolkit, please contact us:

members@lgbtgreat.com

