

Appendix A: How we engaged

Beyond Belonging: Building a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan

Safe and Healthy Communities,
Social Development Branch,
Community Services Department

June 2025

Edmonton.ca/**beyondbelonging**

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

How we engaged

This appendix provides a detailed overview of our approach to meaningful engagement, descriptions of the three phases of our community engagement activities, and provides a brief overview of who chose to participate¹.

Our approach to meaningful engagement

Throughout Beyond Belonging, we were committed to creating a process that centred the voices of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This meant using an approach that was equity-centred, human-centred, trauma-informed, and both adaptive and responsive to the diverse realities of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Edmonton. Recognizing the historical and ongoing marginalization and discrimination faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, every step of the engagement was designed to foster trust, prioritize lived experience, and ensure participants had meaningful control over their involvement. The following outlines how these principles were embedded throughout our work.

Equity-centered

Equity was at the core of this engagement process, centring the voices and experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals while acknowledging the historical marginalization that contributes to the systemic barriers they face today. We also approached this work with a strong intersectional lens, recognizing that experiences of safety and inclusion are shaped not only by sexual orientation and gender identity, but also by race, age, disability, newcomer status, and other identities. Targeted outreach efforts ensured that those living at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalization were prioritized and included. By intentionally creating space for diverse experiences within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, the engagement process worked to surface the complex realities that often go unseen. In addition, by ensuring a focus on a community-led approach, the project allowed 2SLGBTQIA+ community members to go beyond being participants to being leaders and decision-makers, helping to shape the recommendations that will result from this engagement. This equity-focused foundation is critical to dismantling systemic barriers and ensuring full civic participation for all Edmontonians. This approach aligns with the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Policy² and Framework, its commitments to reaching out to diverse communities in thoughtful and meaningful ways, understanding perspectives and building trusting relationships, and its principle of being equitable, inclusive and accessible³.

¹ A detailed overview of who was engaged in this project is found in Appendix C.

² [Council Policy C593D - Public Engagement](#)

³ [City of Edmonton Public Engagement Framework](#)

Trauma-informed

Recognizing that 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals may have experienced a wide range of trauma including discrimination, marginalization, and violence, it was imperative that the engagement process be built on a trauma-informed approach. This meant at every step of the project - from methodology selection to data collection and reporting - we took an approach to minimize harm, support agency, and create an environment of dignity and respect.

Examples of how this engagement project implemented a trauma informed-approach include:

- + Participants were offered clear information about the purpose and scope of the project and had access to support resources like mental healthcare, if required.
- + Community organizations were supported to carry out engagement in communities where they already had established relationships.
- + Community organizations helped ensure wrap-around supports and debriefing options were available throughout the engagement.
- + Organizations that facilitated Host Your Own Conversations were provided with training and resources - both material and financial - to support both the facilitation and documentation of their discussions.
- + Honoraria were provided to acknowledge the value of participants' time and contributions.

Informed by the understanding that 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals often face inequity and discrimination⁴, the engagement process prioritized consent and control. This trauma-informed design not only reduced the risk of re-traumatization but also fostered safer, more empowering spaces where authentic, honest sharing could occur.

Human-centered

At its heart, this project was about building relationships, trust, and connection. The engagement process was designed with the whole participant in mind; it was important to value not only what was shared, but to acknowledge that the experience created - and left behind - through participation was also important. We paid careful attention to starting the engagement well, knowing that early experiences with the project would set the tone for trust and openness throughout.

The initial phase of the project focused on deep listening, gathering feedback from service organizations and community experts that was used to shape how the following phase was designed and implemented. This approach ensured that the tools and methodologies used in the second phase were culturally and emotionally appropriate.

We designed all conversations throughout the engagement to foster agency, allowing participants to engage in ways that felt safe and meaningful to them. The approach recognized that people bring multiple, intersecting identities that shape how they experience safety and inclusion. By offering

⁴ [Government of Canada](#)

spaces for both light-touch conversations and deeper dives into complex issues, the project offered a variety of engagement opportunities for participants, ensuring that the engagement experience itself was welcoming, respectful, and responsive to diverse needs.

In an engagement setting focused on equity, trauma-informed practice, and inclusion, design choices can communicate that the organizers have considered the emotional landscape of participants and are committed to creating a space that feels affirming and safe. Our team included a number of seemingly minor touches to build trust and communicate that the process was not just transactional - it was relational. These small touches - rainbow stickers with the name of the project; engagement materials delivered in gift bags wrapped with a bow; and hand-written thank you notes to organizations hosting conversations - demonstrate that participants are seen as whole people, not just as sources of data, and that their well-being matters throughout the process. This care-driven approach helped shift the tone of engagement from extractive to invitational, encouraging deeper, more meaningful participation.

Adaptive and attuned

From the outset, we were committed to listening deeply, remaining open to feedback, and adjusting methods and strategies to respond to the diverse and evolving needs of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This meant shifting timelines when needed, offering a mix of engagement formats - i.e. in-person, virtual, and self-directed - and being mindful of the emotional and logistical needs of participants.

A key learning from the pre-engagement phase was the importance of existing, trusted relationships between 2SLGBTQIA+ community organizations and the people they support. These organizations were already holding space for connection, care, and conversation. Recognizing this, the engagement approach was designed to support—not replace—these relationships. This approach respected the connections already in place, empowered community leaders, and helped create more authentic and meaningful engagement.

By adapting our methods in real-time and staying attuned to what people were sharing, we were able to build trust, demonstrate respect for participants' time and experiences, and gather richer, more authentic insights. This approach reflects our belief that effective engagement is not one-size-fits-all - it requires humility, attentiveness, and a willingness to evolve in response to the community's needs.

Phase 1 - Listen and learn: Pre-engagement workshops

The first phase, conducted in February 2025, focused on consultation with representatives from organizations that serve the 2SLGBTQIA+ community through pre-engagement workshops.

The focus of this pre-engagement phase was to gather information from community organizations serving 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to inform the design of the engagement tools. We wanted to understand how the engagement activities could best serve the needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and

support participants to feel physically and emotionally safe during engagement activities. We knew that involving community experts and connectors early in the engagement process would help support more meaningful conversations with the public later in the project.

Who we engaged with

Before this project began, the City started connecting with organizations that offer services and support to 2SLGBTQIA+ people and communities. This early outreach helped introduce the project, build relationships, and create space for collaboration. As a result, a Register of Interested Parties was developed, bringing together contacts that reflect the diversity within Edmonton's 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Representatives from these organizations were invited to participate in the pre-engagement phase.

As part of Phase 1, we hosted two in-person workshops and one virtual workshop in February 2025. To ensure inclusivity and accommodate those unable to attend the scheduled sessions, we also conducted individual pre-engagement conversations with two separate organizations.

ACTIVITY	PARTICIPATION
In-Person Workshops (3) + February 5, 2025 + February 11, 2025	23 participants
Online Workshop (1) + February 4, 2025	10 participants
1-1 Interviews	2 organizations who were unable to attend the scheduled workshops

Many 2SLGBTQIA+ community activists, leaders and businesses participated in these initial sessions, including representatives from the following organizations:

- + Alberta 2SLGBTQIA+ Chamber of Commerce
- + ASPECC
- + Boyle Street Community Services
- + City of Edmonton
- + Community Initiatives Against Family Violence
- + Edmonton 2 Spirit Society
- + Edmonton Community Foundation
- + Edmonton Drag Festival
- + Edmonton Public Library
- + Edmonton Queer History Project
- + Evolution Wonderlounge
- + MacEwan University
- + Newcomer Centre
- + PolicyWise for Children and Families
- + Pride Centre of Edmonton
- + Pride Corner on Whyte
- + Queer & Trans Health Collective
- + Sage Seniors Association
- + Spirit of Hope United Church
- + Trans Rights YEG
- + University of Alberta
- + University of Alberta Students Union
- + Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS)
- + Zetna Collective

Phase 1: What we heard and how we responded

The themes and actions outlined below reflect what we heard from the pre-engagement conversations and how these learnings were incorporated into the project's second phase.

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT WE DID IN RESPONSE
Engaging the diversity of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in accessible, safe ways is essential.	Offered four different engagement methodologies to reach people where they are, both in-person and online. Developed a resource list of supports to share with individuals in the event that they need additional support. Mental health supports and Elders were funded to be a part of engagements where requested.
Organizations need support to lead engagement rather than outsiders entering their trusted spaces.	Organizations were supported to carry out engagements in ways that honoured the specific relationships they hold with their communities through <i>Host Your Own Conversation Kits</i> . Provided subsidies for staff time, refreshments, and honoraria for participants in recognition of the increased demand on energy and resources of carrying out the engagement.
A desire to gather as 2SLGBTQIA+ people and organizations that serve them.	Prioritized creating engagement tools and methodologies that helped build and strengthen connections between 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and supporting organizations. Incorporated a Community Meal at the end of the project to share and verify findings.
A desire for interactive and creative ways for people to provide input.	Creative elements were incorporated into both in-person and online engagement methodologies. Examples include: paper hearts at in-person engagements where participants could indicate who they were keeping in mind while participating; online mapping where colour-coded icons indicated various levels of safety at different locations; using collage to respond to a question in the <i>Host Your Own Conversation</i> .
A need for people to share strengths and joy, not just challenges.	Engagement tools were designed to provide opportunities to share what's working and what brings out queer joy, community, and strength, while also asking for suggestions on what changes need to be made.
'Belonging' is something that 2SLGBTQIA+ people want to determine for themselves.	Offered choice and respected the agency and experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals with the view to move beyond mere belonging to thriving. Reflected this approach in updating the project title from "Building Belonging: Creating a 2SLGBTQIA+

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT WE DID IN RESPONSE
	Safety and Inclusion Action Plan" to "Beyond Belonging: Building a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan."

The insights and expertise shared by community leaders and representatives from organizations supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities proved to be invaluable to the initial phase of the project.

Phase 2 - Explore and Engage: Beyond Belonging Implementation

The focus of our second phase was to build on what we heard during the pre-engagement to hear from participants about their ideas for creating spaces, places, services, and programs that feel safe, inclusive, and welcoming to all. A flexible engagement approach was used to support broad participation—offering space for both brief, informal conversations and deeper, more focused discussions. This approach helped surface a wide range of voices and experiences, allowing for a rich exploration of the many ways safety and inclusion are understood and felt within Edmonton's 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. The second phase of the project took place throughout March and April 2025 and involved engagement with members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and allies.

During the pre-engagement phase, we heard that tailoring conversations to specific audiences would be essential to building trust and encouraging meaningful participation. We took that feedback seriously and designed our approach accordingly.

WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW	THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED
1 - Understand what contributes to safety and inclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Edmonton	<p>From everyone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The City of Edmonton is building a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan. What advice would you give us to help build a city that is safer and more welcoming for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?
2 - Identify what needs to change within City spaces, services, and programs to improve these experiences	<p>From 2SLGBTQIA+ communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + What of the following City of Edmonton services, programs, spaces and places are you aware of? + What of the following City of Edmonton services, programs, spaces and places have you accessed? + We want to know how safe and included you perceive these City of Edmonton services, programs, spaces and places to be. Please rate each of the services, programs, spaces and places below on a scale of 1 to 5.

WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW	THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + In order for you to feel safe/included with these services, programs, spaces and places, what would you change? + What makes you feel safe and included with these services, programs, spaces and places? <p>From 2SLGBTQIA+ communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + What can the City of Edmonton do to help you feel more safe and included when accessing city spaces and services as your full self? + What gaps in current City services and/or spaces need to be addressed to ensure you feel safe and included as a 2SLGBTQIA+ person? <p>From service providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + What can the City of Edmonton do to help the communities you serve feel more safe and included when accessing City of Edmonton spaces and services as their full selves? + What can the City of Edmonton do to support the services your organization provides to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?
3 - Explore how existing supports can be strengthened to increase safety and inclusion for all	<p>From 2SLGBTQIA+ communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + We recognize that there are important non-City led initiatives that support people in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Which types of programs and spaces have you accessed in the past 5 years?
4 - Generate ideas for addressing the rise in hate against 2SLGBTQIA+ community members	<p>From service providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + How can the City contribute to addressing the rising hate towards members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community? + What training, tools, or resources are needed to empower individuals and organizations to prevent, safely intervene or respond to hate targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ people?
5 - Gather input on the composition and structure of an advisory committee to City Council	<p>From service providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + What lived experiences and perspectives does your organization think are important for advisory committee members to have in order to ensure the committee represents the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities of Edmonton? + What barriers might prevent 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals from applying to or participating in the committee, and how can these be addressed?

WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW	THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED
6 - A look to the future, through the eyes of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities	<p>From everyone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Imagine Edmonton in 10 years. What do inclusive services, programs, spaces and places look and feel like for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton? <p>From 2SLGBTQIA+ communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + What is one hope you have for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton that you would like to share with the broader community?

To engage as many and as diverse a representation of 2SLGBTQIA+ participants as possible in this important conversation, we hosted multiple opportunities for input and involvement. These included:

Online survey - Public

A “Share Your Ideas”, online survey using the City of Edmonton’s survey platform, was available from March 25 to April 21, 2025. The survey link was hosted on Engaged Edmonton as well as on edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging. Members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and allies were asked to share their experiences of safety and inclusion when accessing city places, spaces, services and supports and how feelings of safety and inclusion could be increased. This survey also collected detailed demographic information.

2SLGBTQIA+ Experience Map

[Engaged Edmonton](#) also hosted a mapping tool from March 25 to April 21, 2025. Participants were invited to drop colour-coded pins on a map of the city marking locations in Edmonton where they experience safety and inclusion (green), discomfort but not a lack of safety (yellow), and a lack of safety or inclusion (red). This point-in-time tool allows us to visualize areas for improvement for City Services and spaces, as well as highlight spaces across the City that are currently modeling innovative ways to include 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton⁵.

Online survey - Service Providers

An online survey using the City of Edmonton’s survey platform was available from March 25 to April 21, 2025. Representatives from organizations that serve the 2SLGBTQIA+ community were invited to share their perspectives on: changes that could be made to City of Edmonton spaces and services to make them safer and inclusive, how to address the rising hate towards members of the 2SLGBTQIA+

⁵ Detailed feedback from the 2SLGBTQIA+ Experience Map can be found in Appendix D.

community, and their recommendations for the composition and structure of a 2SLGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee.

Host Your Own Conversation

The *Host Your Own Conversation* initiative was developed to create flexible, community-led opportunities for 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations to engage their own networks in conversations about safety and inclusion in Edmonton. The goal was to honour and centre the lived experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ people by allowing organizations to guide discussions in ways that felt most meaningful and accessible to them. This approach responded directly to community feedback that emphasized the need for multiple participation options and the importance of meeting people where they are.

Participating organizations received a *Host Your Own Conversation Kit*, which included a structured but adaptable guide to support dialogue and consistent data collection. Service providers captured insights from their conversations by completing an online Google Form, responding to a set of shared questions to ensure comparability across sessions. To further support participation, the project team offered online training for hosts ahead of their sessions, in-person facilitation assistance upon request, and both posters and custom stickers to help create welcoming environments. Financial supports included subsidies for staff time and honoraria for participants, recognizing the additional energy and resources required to support this engagement.

Who we engaged with

To include as many 2SLGBTQIA+ voices and experiences as possible in this important conversation, we offered multiple opportunities for input and involvement between March 25 and May 3, 2025. These included:

ACTIVITY	PARTICIPATION
Public Survey	538 responses 463 that identify as 2SLGBTQIA+
Service Provider Survey	18 responses
Map Your Experience	103 contributions from 40 contributors
Host Your Own Conversation	15 conversations hosted 204 individual participants

Given the diversity within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and the importance of intersectionality in conversations about identity, outreach efforts were intentionally designed to include individuals living at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalization.

The *Host Your Own Conversations* were community-led discussions designed to create safer, more accessible spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals to share their experiences and insights in ways that

felt comfortable and relevant to them. The following service providers hosted these conversations with their communities:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| + Aging with Pride | + Edmonton Drag Festival |
| + Boyle Street Community Services | + Fyrefly Institute |
| + CHEW Project | + Jewish Federation of Edmonton |
| + Comité franco-queer de l'Ouest | + Okimaw Kihêw Mêkwanak |
| + Community Initiatives Against Family Violence | + Pride Corner on Whyte |
| + Edmonton Community Foundation | + Pride@TheCity |
| | + Rainbow Refuge |
| | + The Landing |

This tool helped us connect with a wide range of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, including those who also self identified as:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| + Youth | + Racialized minorities |
| + Seniors | + Individuals experiencing housing precarity |
| + Indigenous individuals | + Members of faith communities |
| + Newcomers to Canada | + Neurodivergent individuals |
| + People with disabilities | |

Approximately 86% of those who responded to the public survey⁶ self-identified as 2SLGBTQIA+, with the following gender identities and sexual orientations represented⁷:

Gender Identities

- + Agender
- + Genderfluid
- + Genderqueer
- + Man
- + Non-binary
- + Tran man
- + Trans woman
- + Woman
- + I prefer to self describe as: 2SLGBTQIA+, A normal person, Bigenderflux?, Cis, Cis woman, Confused, Demimasc, Gay man, Gender non-conforming, Genderfluid non-binary transfem person, Indigiqueer, Intersex, Multi-gender, Non-binary trans masculine, Nonbinary without the dash between, Non-binary woman, Queer, She/they, Trans masc, Trans neutral, Transfemme, Transmasculine, Two Spirit transman, Two-spirit

Sexual Orientation

- + Asexual
- + Bisexual
- + Gay
- + Heteroflexible

⁶ See Appendix C for detailed demographic information about those who participated in the public survey.

⁷ For more information on definitions related to gender, sexual and romantic minorities, please visit the Community-Based Research Centre's [General Information](#) resource.

- + Homoflexible
- + Lesbian
- + Pansexual
- + Queer
- + Questioning
- + Straight
- + I prefer to self describe as: 2 Spirit, Aromantic, Aro-spec, Demi-bisexual, Demisexual, Demisexual/Pansexual, Fluid, Indigoqueer, Omnisexual, Poly-romantic, Sapphic, Trans, Two spirit, Two spirited woman

The diversity of voices represented through these engagement activities brought essential perspectives and will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the unique needs and strengths of 2SLGBTQIA+ Edmontonians who face compounded barriers to safety. This understanding will be vital in shaping an Action Plan that reflects the diverse realities of those most impacted.

Phase 3 - Reveal and Confirm: What We Heard Report and Community Meal

The third phase of the project will take place in June 2025. Phase 3 is both a culmination of the engagement process and a continuation of the project's commitment to reflection and accountability. As part of this phase, a Community Meal shareback is being hosted with 2SLGBTQIA+ service providers to validate the findings shared in the *What We Heard* report. This step ensures that community voices are accurately reflected in the engagement outcomes. Equally important, the meal offers a space for connection, appreciation, and honouring the stories that were shared. It also supports continued relationship-building among 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations and provides meaningful context for the City as it moves forward with the development of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan.