



***Rainbow Connections: Advancing
LGBT Inclusivity at Center in the
Park***

A Proposal to the Friends Foundation for
the Aging
September 9, 2020

i. Executive Summary

Center in the Park (CIP), in collaboration with the LGBT Elder Initiative at William Way, is requesting \$21,250 to support *“Rainbow Connections: Advancing LGBT Inclusion at Center in the Park.”* LGBT older adults encounter a complex array of social, emotional and physical health needs exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Senior centers can be engaged to provide access to programs promoting physical, social, emotional wellness for LGBT older adults. Objectives in Year 1 include improving staff cultural competencies, cultivating a volunteer LGBT Advisory Committee, and developing an LGBT outreach and program plan. Objectives in Year 2 include increasing LGBT participation and sense of inclusivity, and cultivating allyship among peers at CIP. CIP will accomplish this through a combination of virtual and in-person workshops, targeting 75 LGBT older adults and 50 potential allies, and an LGBT community engagement event reaching at least 75 community members.

ii. Brief statement of the organization’s history and competence for this effort.

Coined as a “Gem in Germantown,” CIP is proud of its 52-year history as an anchor in the community. Our mission, “to promote positive aging and foster community connections for older adults whose voices are critical instruments in shaping its activities and direction,” remains more critical than ever. The COVID-19 crisis illuminates the value of social connection, particularly for older adult at increased isolation risk. When COVID required CIP to suspend on-site activities in late March, CIP adapted to continue to provide critical programs remotely. CIP operates with an annual budget of just over \$2 million, 23 dedicated staff, a 14-member Board of Directors, and 150+ volunteers.

iii. Project details (max 5 pages):

1. What problem are you addressing? Evidence of need, why this solution chosen, demographics, description of community and people to be served.

“Terrific, comprehensive, welcoming class. Wonderful, positive instructors. Lot of RESPECT.”-CIP LGBT Aging Mastery Program Participant

As CIP moves toward resuming on-site programs, we do so with the intersectional understanding that our participants, 93% of whom are African American, are simultaneously among those at greatest COVID-19 risk, are confronting the collective trauma of systemic racism— and, in the case of LGBT elders, also have endured lifetimes of institutionalized homophobia, including years when homosexuality was criminalized and labeled as a mental disorder. As a result of this social and legal mistreatment, LGBT older adults encounter a complex array of social, emotional and physical health needs. In a 2016 research review conducted by the Williams Institute, researchers found that LGBT older adults experienced high risks of mental health issues, disability, and higher rates of disease and physical limitation than their heterosexual counterparts. Compounding these disparities is the reality that many aging services providers do not collect data on LGBT older adults, making it difficult to assess whether or not LGBT elders are accessing aging services.

What is known is that LGBT older adults tend to avoid accessing healthcare and social services outside LGBT-specific community providers, due to perceptions related to stigmatization and/or past experiences with discrimination (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2013; Hughes et al., 2011). A 2013 needs assessment of LGBT older adults in Philadelphia notes LGBT older adults share many of the same needs as the aging population in general, including healthcare, economic resources, supportive services such as home delivered meals and homecare, affordable housing, and socialization opportunities (PHMC, 2013). However, over 20% of LGBT older adults indicated that either they had been or feared they would be treated poorly in a traditional aging service setting.

COVID- 19 has compounded the isolation LGBT older adults face. Public health efforts such as social distancing and quarantines are designed to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Yet, these protective measures often mean further social isolation for LGBT elders (SAGE-USA, 2020). According to the Movement Advancement

Project, social isolation has a direct impact on health and well-being of LGBT older adults. Senior centers such as CIP can be engaged to provide access to programs and services promoting physical, social, emotional wellness for LGBT older adults. While COVID-19 has changed how senior centers deliver programs, for example through online methods including Facebook and Zoom, the purpose remains unchanged. Senior center participants may experience restorative health benefits such as relief from physical and psychological fatigue, enhanced quality of life, and improved physical and mental well-being (Rosenbaum, 2014).

CIP has made a commitment to creating a senior center environment, whether in person or virtual, where people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are welcomed and affirmed. Over the past several years, we have engaged with LGBT-serving organizations and pursued opportunities to make our programming more inclusive. Recently, CIP delivered the National Council on Aging's 10-week Aging Mastery Program to a cohort of LGBT older adults in collaboration with the LGBT Elder Initiative. We conducted targeted outreach to the LGBT community in Greater Philadelphia and to LGBT CIP members. We also recruited program presenters who were part of the LGBT community and who could speak to some of the unique needs faced by LGBT older adults.

The testimonial of a recent participant in CIP's LGBT Aging Mastery program illustrates the imperative for senior centers to be inclusive. Mr. W told the class how difficult it has been for him to embrace what he called his "LGBT-ness" and how he spent much of his life "in the closet." He expressed his gratitude that there was now "LGBT-friendly" programming in his neighborhood: *"Center in the Park has provided this opportunity in an urban setting. LGBT Elder Initiative is downtown, in the 'Gayborhood' where it is welcoming and accepted. This is something that we are breaking through, that Center in the Park is breaking through, to make a difference in the community. There are so many people in this community that are 'LGBT-friendly' that need the support system...and I need that support system...I feel stronger, and I see more people like myself, and I thank Center in the Park."*

As part of that project, program graduates were invited to participate in a focus group to inform the development of an LGBT Advisory Committee, as well as next steps in CIP's approach to creating an inclusive environment. We asked focus group participants to share perceptions of CIP, ways in which CIP could be more inclusive, perspectives on attending programs that are LGBT specific versus those that also include heterosexual and cis-gender peers and allies, how to more effectively reach LGBT elders, and perspectives on starting an LGBT Advisory Committee at CIP. Participants noted the importance of having a balance of LGBT specific program and programs that include both LGBT elders and heterosexual peers.

2. What action(s) will you do?

Rainbow Connections: Advancing LGBT Inclusion at CIP is informed by the LGBT focus group held at CIP as well as best practices for creating welcoming environments for LGBT older adults noted by LGBT aging advocates, as well as both CIP and the LGBTEI's recent experience delivering programs for older adults online. The project includes two overarching components that take into account the realities of operating in a COVID-19 impacted environment. The first component (Year 1) involves capacity building through staff training, the development of a sustainable volunteer LGBT Advisory Committee infrastructure, and an LGBT Outreach & Program Plan. The second component (Year 2) involves program implementation with participant driven outcomes. The attached logic model illustrates how each of these components complement one another. CIP will take the following actions over a two-year period (January 2021- December 2022).

Organizational Capacity Building (Year 1: January 2021 to December 2021)

Staff Training (Winter/Spring 2021; dates TBD): First, CIP will engage SAGECare, which provides a nationally recognized certification in LGBT aging cultural competency, to provide training for all CIP staff, with CIP's participant Advisory Council, and Board of Directors also invited to participate. CIP previously offered an all staff SAGE training over 5 years ago and have had several staffing changes since then. CIP has already received a training quote from SAGE and the training can be provided virtually if needed. CIP anticipates holding the training in early 2021. Increased understanding of how to inclusively serve LGBT older adults will support staff as CIP will also

implement data collection procedures across all program areas (by June 2021) to ask about sexual orientation and gender identity to better know who we are serving in various programs.

Volunteer LGBT Advisory Committee Development (January 2021-March 2021): Second, in collaboration with the LGBT Elder Initiative, CIP will cultivate a volunteer directed LGBT Advisory Committee comprised of 4-5 LGBTQ older adult volunteers in CIP's community who will play a lead role in developing LGBT inclusive outreach strategies, workshops, and activities at CIP. CIP has identified 3 recent focus group participants who are interested in serving on the committee, and will recruit additional volunteers. LGBT Advisory Committee members will initially participate remotely via Zoom and receive a stipend. CIP has found stipends to be an effective volunteer retention strategy for long-term volunteer roles. The purpose of the committee is to inform LGBT inclusive outreach and program delivery. Beginning in January, CIP's Health Promotion Coordinator will work collaboratively with the LGBT Elder Initiative to develop and facilitate CIP's LGBT Advisory Committee as it defines its structure and processes. Initial meetings will be held via Zoom to outline committee role and responsibilities; define committee structure, meeting times and methods.

LGBT Outreach & Program Plan Development (April 2021-December 2021): Third, through regular monthly meetings in consultation with CIP and LGBTEI staff, the LGBT Advisory Committee will take action steps to develop plan including LGBT outreach strategies, LGBT workshops, and activities that cultivate allyship among heterosexual and cis-gender CIP participants. The LGBT Advisory Committee will work with staff to develop an LGBT Outreach & Program Plan for the 2022 year to include outreach and program delivery methods (i.e. online zoom activities, in-person) and a calendar for increasing CIP's visibility in the LGBT community (i.e. participating in Pride or other community events) for the coming year.

LGBT Program Implementation (January 2022- December 2022)

In year 2, the LGBT Advisory Committee will work in collaboration with CIP and LGBTEI staff to implement the LGBT Outreach & Program plan. Any activities on-site at CIP will be implemented in accordance with CIP's COVID-19 safety policies and procedures which include a screening process for staff, volunteers, and participants, a sanitation policy, a mask requirement, and social distancing guidelines. Programs developed by the LGBT Advisory Committee in consultation with staff will include:

- *Delivery of 2 educational/social activities specifically targeting the LGBT community to be held in Spring 2022 and Fall 2022.* During the LGBT focus group, participants described workshops that have a social component as being important. CIP staff will work with the LGBT Advisory Committee to define the specific content and method (i.e. online or in-person) of the workshops/social activities to be delivered.
- *Delivery of 2 educational/social activities to cultivate allyship between among CIP participants (Spring 2022 and Fall 2022).* Focus group participants emphasized the importance of also offering workshops and activities in which LGBT participants engage with heterosexual and cisgender peers. CIP staff will work with the LGBT Advisory Committee to define the specific content and methods (i.e. online or in person) of the workshops/social activities to be delivered.
- *CIP will host an LGBTQ community engagement open house event either at CIP or online, depending on conditions, inviting both LGBTQ service providers and local aging services organizations (Fall 2022).* CIP's Health Promotion Coordinator will coordinate the event in consultation with CIP's program staff and the LGBTEI. The purpose of this event is to engage LGBTQ community providers in dialogue with aging services providers, while also providing valuable resources to community members, and increasing CIP visibility in the LGBT community.

3. What other organizations will you partner with on this project?

CIP will partner with the LGBT Elder Initiative at William Way (LGBTEI; www.lgbtelderinitiative.org) to build on our history of successful collaboration. Upon receipt of funding, CIP and LGBTEI will formally execute a MOU. In order to effectively implement this expanded LGBT inclusivity effort, the competencies of CIP and the LGBTEI are both critical. The LGBTEI is a leader in advocacy and experienced in linking the Philadelphia LGBT older adult community with resources within the aging services network, including coordinating and recruiting participants and facilitators for LGBT inclusive workshops. Over the past 5+ years, CIP and the LGBTEI have developed a collaborative relationship that has included co-hosting programs and mutual participation on one another's boards and program committees. Our collaboration initially grew out of CIP's desire to be more LGBT inclusive, and the LGBTEI hoping to engage racially and economically diverse LGBT elders in areas of Philadelphia beyond Center City. Most recently, in 2019 through a Community Innovations Grant from the Independence Blue Cross Foundation, CIP and the LGBTEI adapted the National Council on Aging's evidence-informed 10-week Aging Mastery Program specifically for a cohort of LGBT older adults for the first time. CIP and the LGBTEI also collaborate on Balancing Dollars & Sense, and annual full day housing and financial literacy event held at CIP that is open to all older adults and is intentionally LGBT inclusive. Past collaborative programs included an LGBT Health Aging Conversation held at CIP that attracted over 40 participants. Additionally, both CIP and the LGBTEI have demonstrated adaptability and re-envisioned programming during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges COVID presents, both organizations now provide online programs and anticipate the successes and lessons learned over the past 6 months will inform this project. Finally, CIP will partner with SAGECare (<https://sageusa.care/>) to provide staff training. SAGECare is under the umbrella of SAGE (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders), the largest and oldest LGBT aging advocacy organization in the country with the capacity to provide online training.

4. What outputs (measurable, specific) do you expect?

CIP's long-term goal is to increase LGBT participation in CIP programs through both enhanced staff cultural competency and LGBT participant directed outreach and programming. The attached logic model outlines CIP's major activities, goals, objectives and timeline. CIP anticipates the following outputs:

- CIP will obtain SAGE certification with at least 80% of CIP staff, and additional Board members and CIP Advisory Council members completing SAGE training.
- At least 4-5 LGBT older adults will participate in the LGBT Advisory Committee.
- At least 75 older adults will participate in LGBT specific workshops;
- At least 50 older adults will participate in workshops designed to foster LGBT allyship among CIP peers.
- At least 75 community members will attend the LGBT community engagement event.

5. What outcomes do you expect—what change will occur, what impact will it have?

CIP will measure effectiveness through an evaluation plan that considers both organizational impact and participant impact. Immediate organizational outcomes include the following:

- Increased knowledge of working with LGBT older adults across all levels of CIP leadership (i.e. staff, CIP Advisory Council, and Board).
- Enhanced LGBT data collection establishing baseline knowledge of LGBT participation across all programs by the end of the grant period.
- CIP will have a sustainable self-directed volunteer LGBT Advisory Committee infrastructure.

Longer term organizational outcomes include the ability to track LGBT participation trends annually and make adjustments to outreach strategies as needed. Participant outcomes will include the following short-term outcomes:

- At least 85% of LGBT workshop participants will report feeling more socially connected and included as a result of participating. We also anticipate that 75% of LGBT participants who participate in workshops through this grant, will also participate in additional CIP classes or programs.
- At least 75% of participants who attend workshops/activities designed to foster LGBT allyship will report they learned at least one thing they will do to be an ally to LGBT peers at CIP.
- At least 75% of community engagement event participants will report increased knowledge of resources available through LGBT and aging services organizations.

The above outcomes will collectively contribute to our long-term goal of increasing LGBT participation at CIP. We hope to increase our LGBT participation by 10% within one-year post grant following the implementation of this project and establishment of a participation baseline. We also believe that the goals of increasing LGBT participation and cultivating allyship among CIP participants are interrelated and that in the long-term LGBT participants will report feeling support by peers at CIP.

6. How will you measure outputs and outcomes?

Organizational outputs will be measured by the completion of training, implementation of data collection procedures and implementation of the LGBT Advisory Committee in accordance with the project timeline. Workshop attendance and participation will be tracked using the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's (PCA) touchscreen sign-in system and sign-in sheets. PCA is CIP's primary funder (65% of annual revenue) and CIP is required to use the touchscreen system to record attendance for all activities. Community engagement event attendance will be tracked using a sign-in sheet for both organizations and community members who attend. Workshop and LGBT community engagement event participant outcomes will be measured through a program evaluation survey. CIP currently uses a standard program evaluation survey across all programs that measures the extent to which participation helped participants to feel more socially connected, increase knowledge, and know how to make healthy behavioral changes. CIP, in collaboration with the LGBTEI and newly formed LGBT Advisory Committee, will adapt CIP's existing form to measure participant outcomes for LGBT specific workshops and LGBT ally workshops. CIP will specifically incorporate "the straight for equality ally spectrum" developed by PFLAG (<http://www.straightforequality.org/allyspectrum>) into the program evaluation survey for LGBT ally workshops.

7. How will you sustain the project after the grant period?

The capacity building components of the project require an investment on the front end, but are designed to be sustainable. Once CIP has achieved SAGECare certification, we will implement a tracking system to note staff who have completed the training. SAGE offers 1-hour webinars to provide ongoing professional development. CIP will develop a system for ensuring key staff complete continuing education requirements on a staggered schedule and build costs into training lines of our existing contracts. One of the key goals of the project is the implementation of a sustainable self-directed volunteer LGBT Advisory Committee to lead LGBT inclusive programming at CIP. While CIP is investing a significant amount of staff time to implement and develop the committee, our intent is to have the committee be self-sustaining by the end of the grant period. The LGBT Advisory Committee, in consultation with staff, will lead coordination of future LGBT focused programs and activities. The programming aspects of funding LGBT specific workshops can be built into future grants and can also be leveraged by our senior center services contract with the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging.

8. How will your results be shared and replicated?

CIP shares program results, best practices, and lessons learned at local, regional, and national conferences including the American Society on Aging's (ASA) annual Aging in American Conference and the National Council on Aging's annual Age+Action conference. In fact, CIP and the LGBTEI had collaborative presentations accepted for both conferences this year to present results from the LGBT Aging Mastery Program. Additionally, in January 2020, CIP's Director of Grant Research and Development was part of a national ASA webinar presentation panel, "Beyond the Rainbow Flag: Engaging Heterosexual Peers" to talk about how to develop allyship for LGBT older adults in aging services settings. CIP also shares program results through our associations with the National Institute of Senior Centers and the PA Association of Senior Centers. Finally, the logic model we have developed is one which could potentially be replicated or adapted by other senior centers interested in effecting organizational and/or programmatic change to be more inclusive of LGBT older adults.

9. How does this project fit with Friends Foundation values?

After reviewing the mission, vision, and goals of the Friends Foundation for the Aging, we believe our project is very much aligned with the Foundation's values, particularly related to serving diverse populations, creating change, collaboration, and integrated approaches that involve staff and participants.

10. Project budget and timeline, including other sources of support, budget narrative.

Please see attached budget with justification. While CIP does not have committed funding for this project, the project is leveraged by CIP's contract with the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging which supports costs of additional staff, who while not directly responsible for project implementation, are involved with logistical aspects of the project. The project also leverages the success of a recent Community Innovation Grant from the Independence Blue Cross Foundation to pilot the National Council on Aging's Aging Mastery Program with a cohort of LGBT older adults, and through which CIP began development of an LGBT Advisory Committee. CIP also recently was awarded a PA Department of Aging grant to engage a consultant to enhance our volunteer capacity through the organizational adoption of a Self-Directed Volunteer Team (SDVT) model approach to engaging volunteers. Rainbow Connections will also be leveraged by this project as we envision the LGBT Advisory Committee functioning as a self-directed volunteer team.

iv. Attach IRS confirmation of its tax-exempt status under IRC Section 501(c)(3) and status as a public charity, and provide a copy of its most recent Form 990/990EZ (electronic preferred).

Please see attached.