



An IGLTA Global Partner Strategic Forum

IGLTA Global Partner Summit
The JW Marriott, Tampa, FL
29 May 2025

Executive Summary

The International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) hosted a Strategic Forum as part of its Global Partner Summit in Tampa, May 2025. The discussion convened IGLTA Global Partners from leading global travel brands supporting LGBTQ+ welcoming tourism. Under the theme, “Moving Forward Authentically: A Strategic Roadmap to Assess, Align, and Advance Inclusion,” the two-hour discussion addressed specific questions, including:

- How have external pressures or internal shifts impacted your organization’s public diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy?
- What barriers are you navigating in supporting inclusion this year?
- What shared values drive your brand’s commitment to LGBTQ+ travelers and employees?
- What commitments or partnerships can help your brand in this evolving climate?

The exchange invited participants to share current challenges — political, operational, and reputational — for their teams and companies, and for the tourism industry overall.

5 TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ In this changing political and business landscape, ongoing self-assessment is key in DEI work.
- ✓ Establish clear, actionable metrics for success in DEI initiatives.
- ✓ Leverage the relationship with IGLTA to support authentic messages of LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- ✓ Build strategies and resilience that sustain broad DEI commitments amidst constraints.
- ✓ U.S. and non-U.S. brands require different strategies for success, shaped by their unique cultural and legal frameworks.

Many of the points made by participants are familiar, such as the importance of authentic storytelling in DEI marketing and the power of collaboration in advancing shared goals. Considering the travel industry’s and the current U.S. landscape, however, much of the discussion focused on taking stock of core values, navigating changing guidelines, and communication strategies around DEI and LGBTQ+ commitments.

Companies with common values and pride in their inclusivity, and those for whom IGLTA is a trusted resource, are better equipped to endure in any business climate.

Introduction

The forum was led by moderator Zoe Moore (she/her), a strategic EDI consultant at Moore Consulting Agency, who facilitated a dynamic session beginning with roundtable questions and thought exercises for each participant to share. Those responses prompted exchanges and insights about the state of U.S. and international LGBTQ+ travel and tourism in 2025.

Throughout the session, participants were encouraged to consider diverse perspectives when assessing their companies and clients/customers. Inevitably, much of the discussion addressed hard realities facing brands this year, with concerns over crucial business factors, including privacy, budgeting, leadership changes, shifting values, and human morale.

But it is clear that a strong sense of community prevails among brands that remain proud of and committed to their DEI progress. Moreover, the discussion reminded participants that IGLTA's core values align with those of many Global Partners: Pride, Leadership, Empowerment, Belonging, Humanity.

Due to the fact that the majority of Global Partners attending this Summit are U.S.-based, much of the discussion addressed U.S.-centric topics and issues at hand. However, representatives from Canada, Mexico, Great Britain, and multi-national brands also participated, and shared perspectives both on their own strategies, as well as their brands' operations as they relate to the United States and American travelers.

The Strategic Forum was held under Chatham House Rule, so this report serves as a summary and analysis of the discussion, with unattributed quotations.

IGLTA is grateful to all of its Global Partners and to everyone who participated in the Strategic Forum. We also want to thank Visit Tampa Bay for hosting this international gathering, along with our host hotel the JW Marriott Tampa Water Street.



In this changing political and business landscape, ongoing self-assessment is key in DEI work.

In this unprecedented U.S. political year, companies are facing economic, logistical, and reputational pressures. The situation is prompting American companies to make difficult decisions about how — or whether — to proceed with established DEI policies that embrace employees and customers from diverse backgrounds. Those decisions may lead to consequences that have severe short- and long-term impacts.

Several participants from both the public and private sectors expressed concern over state and federal governments announcing new guidelines related to DEI, such as eliminating use of certain language related to gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Some participants noted potential penalties for non-compliance, such as fines or jeopardizing government contracts.

One discussant stated, **“Many corporations will be undergoing thorough investigation. It’s an attack on humanity and humans around the world, something I never thought I’d experience in the [many] years I’ve been doing this work.”**

Participants also expressed concern over rolling back or erasing DEI policies. In recent years, companies in travel and other sectors invested in their inclusive DEI programs and today still place significant value on the benefits of those programs. **“It’s a little bit easier, when you have the backing [at the corporate level], to believe in something,”** said one participant.

Some public organizations are concerned about losing funding for entire departments or agencies due to new guidelines or changing governmental leadership. Some are being more cautious about expressing their positions, and are keeping their company visions “more internal, for now”; while others are preemptively revising certain terminology in hopes to “avoid red flags.”



Dynamic note-taking provided by Ink Factory

Meanwhile, some private companies are concerned about losses that may affect financials and contracts, marketing and communications, human resources and company morale. One participant noted that some private companies may be better able to remain committed to their established core values, because they are not beholden to governmental pressures.

Many participants agreed that effective DEI implementation begins with thorough self-assessment, both at personal and organizational levels. This helps in understanding one's position and capacity to advocate for and implement DEI initiatives. "Assessment begins with [how well] you know yourself...because there will be a lot of questions about your commitment, your level of knowledge. Use that to assess the organization."

Many also agreed that indecisiveness is best avoided — and action is vital.

"You won't improve your communication [if you] pretend that these problems don't exist. Well, they exist. These challenges, both what we grow from and what holds us back, exist."

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Establish clear, actionable metrics for success in DEI initiatives.

A recurring point throughout the forum was the importance of metrics to measure DEI success. Implementing SMART (strategic, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals is a helpful way to ensure that objectives are clearly defined and attainable within a certain timeframe. Values should align “beyond the words on the page,” and rather through actions.

The moderator suggested that a team “create systems, not goals,” for ensuring accountability and measuring progress. That includes setting a DEI initiative’s clear objective, owner, timeline, action, resource (such as IGLTA), and metric of success.

Self-assessment may prompt a SMART goal that, for many of the participants, increases LGBTQ+ traveler engagement. The moderator asked, “What is the action that needs to be taken when you leave this room? What is that first call you’re going to make, the email you’re going to send, or the meeting you’re going to schedule? What is that action that you’re going to talk about? Who is going to own it?”

Internal awareness is vital because it supports every goal, and fosters inclusivity and communication. For some companies, internal awareness also might encourage different stakeholders to factor in their concerns or advocacy, such as a legal department’s compliance reviews, or a marketing department’s messaging or campaigns.

One participant noted that some brands are secure and unbending in their DEI commitments. One shared an example from a recent C-suite meeting where this sentiment was expressed:

“We are value-based leaders. This is not going to make us surrender our values.’ Once I heard that, I thought it strengthened them externally. When you hear your peers and your board members say it, then you know that you are not out on a limb.”

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Leverage the relationship with IGLTA to support authentic messages of LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Long-term partnerships between travel brands and LGBTQ+ organizations demonstrate commitment and help build trust within the community, even in challenging times. Now is a prime opportunity for organizations to fully utilize partnerships and available resources, such as those offered by IGLTA, to strengthen their DEI initiatives and reach.

One participant said,

“Don’t just talk about it, be about it. IGLTA provides a wealth of resources to its Global Partners, so lean on them for support and to elevate your voices.”

Among its Global Partner benefits, IGLTA marketing spans a variety of channels, including social media, eNewsletters, webinars; and enhances its activations using informative content, authenticity, and visual storytelling. The IGLTA Global Convention connects industry leaders, suppliers, and other partners for long-term collaborations and insights, including post-event reporting and research publications. IGLTA also works with global media across more than 20 countries, reaching millions of readers, viewers, and listeners annually.

The association and its not-for-profit IGLTA Foundation also have established the Gender-Diverse Travel Advisory Group (GTAG); published the “Comprehensive Guide for LGBTQ+ Inclusive Communication in the Tourism Industry”; and support LGBTQ+ entrepreneurship in underserved markets through training programs, mentorship, and investor exposure.

One participant said about IGLTA, “Just making sure that [my co-workers] know that we are part of this organization, that we have this partnership, that we have all these opportunities at our disposal...there’s absolutely nothing like it.” Several Global Partners have been engaged with IGLTA for more than nine years, with several more surpassing the 15-year mark.

“I am looking forward to going back to my team and making sure they understand this partnership we have with IGLTA, and all the resources that are available,” said one participant.



Photo credit: © Visit Tampa Bay

Zoe Moore, Strategic EDI Consultant, moderating the 2025 IGLTA Global Partner Strategic Forum

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Build strategies and resilience that sustain broad DEI commitments amidst constraints.

For authentic DEI implementation and building stakeholder trust, organizations must ensure their stated values align with their actions, behaviors, and beliefs. A brand that superficially supports the LGBTQ+ community only during Pride season, often referred to as “pink washing,” can often backfire by seeming inauthentic. In comparison, a brand that devotes long-term resources internally and publicly to the LGBTQ+ community is often rewarded with customer loyalty.

Building strategies around DEI commitments can make a brand more resilient, and there are several pathways to success. One participant said that intersectionality can be an effective way to approach DEI initiatives. Travel companies are recognizing the importance of addressing multiple aspects of diversity and inclusion, including non-visible disabilities and accessibility.

Similarly, generational differences remain an important part of messaging. Organizations that bridge gaps in ever-evolving DEI-related terminology help ensure consistent understanding. It’s vital to stay informed and adaptable to ensure that communication remains respectful and inclusive.



Dynamic note-taking provided by Ink Factory



Photo credit: © Visit Tampa Bay

Tampa Mayor Jane Castor provided welcome remarks at the 2025 IGLTA Global Partner Summit.

One participant said, **“As language evolves, we also have to understand how it’s evolving. Not just to add to another [term] to memorize; it’s another way to grow and learn and respect folks.”** To this end, IGLTA’s inclusive-communications guide and the work of its Gender-Diverse Travel Advisory Group helps support both the community and travel industry.

Leveraging partnerships with popular media productions offer innovative ways to promote destinations and reach LGBTQ+ audiences without explicit DEI messaging. An example shared in the forum noted that gay subtext in shows such as “Bridgerton” and “The Last of Us,” which are not marketed as explicitly LGBTQ+, are opportunities to build partnerships with destinations, artists, or brands “that are kind of a Trojan horse of LGBTQ+ representation.”

Large-scale LGBTQ+ events and conferences also can yield significant economic impacts on host cities and local businesses. Gatherings of member associations, national or global communities, and other affinity groups may bring many millions of dollars in revenue to a destination. A participant noted, “This is not specific to LGBTQ+, but it demonstrates the capacity of specialized communities to generate tourism revenue,” and it highlights the business case for LGBTQ+ tourism initiatives.

U.S. and non-U.S. brands require different strategies for success, shaped by their unique cultural and legal frameworks.

Much of the Strategic Forum addressed the current U.S. political and business outlook. Additionally, several participants shared valuable insights about the state of DEI in their own countries.

While the U.S. government is reversing its national DEI commitments and establishing new, restrictive guidelines, some non-U.S. participants noted that their communities and brands proudly continue to build on their long-term DEI progress.

One noted that local city Pride events continue to grow exponentially, with the destination actively marketing its inclusive, welcoming culture. Over the past decade or more, local laws in that traditionally “conservative” destination have expanded to recognize marriage equality, trans identity, and other civil rights.

Some destinations, particularly in Latin America, are actively working to become more LGBTQ+ friendly and are seeing positive results in tourism growth and community acceptance.

“The U.S. would set an example for everyone else. And now the situation has shifted,” said one participant, noting that many brands and destinations are now looking elsewhere for best, inclusive business practices.

Another participant noted the external pressure of hosting fewer American visitors to that destination in the months and years ahead — but that it’s now an opportunity to pursue other travelers.

Some non-U.S. destinations are leaning more into diversity than ever, one describing its inclusive community as more like a “kaleidoscope” than a “melting pot,” because it prizes different identities instead of fostering assimilation.

However, sometimes internal pressures may cause hesitation around messaging, due to evaluating at length “what do we say and how do we say it?” But that destination, above all, proudly markets its best points by reflecting its diverse community for the world to see.

Another added that “even though there is threat and uncertainty in the U.S.,” as an association with members in 80+ countries, “I guess IGLTA’s international presence will become stronger in the coming months or years. So that’s part of the opportunity or the strength that it has.”



Dynamic note-taking provided by Ink Factory

Conclusion

Points shared during the forum reminded participants that despite shifts in politics, travelers remain avid, and the tourism industry continues to expand the world over. That is unchanging. Brands must cope with the current state of the industry as it evolves, but remaining true to core values is a steadying force. Likewise, maintaining allies and collaborations is an effective way to strengthen collective progress.

IGLTA's mission is to enable authentic travel that enriches lives and connects the LGBTQ+ community and the tourism industry. Global Partners are essential to that mission, and in sharing challenges and potential strategies, resilience and long-term success are greater.



About IGLTA Global Partnership

The IGLTA Global Partnership program provides our partners with the context, vocabulary and research to **develop a platform for supporting the LGBTQ+ travel community**.

We build **strong brand alliances**, enabling both the partner and IGLTA to elevate each other's voices.

Through our shared values, mutual **commitment to DEI**, and by **promoting LGBTQ+ travel globally**, our combined strength allows us to bring the conversation forward and **walk together as leaders** in the global LGBTQ+ travel space.

By **demonstrating best practices** and **championing our accomplishments**, IGLTA and its valued portfolio of Global Partners represents the **true leadership** of global travel brands supporting the LGBTQ+ travel community.

IGLTA Global Partners

Platinum



Booking.com

DELTA



Gold

BELMOND



HYATT

Silver



For more information: gpteam@iglta.org



2025 IGLTA Global Partner Summit Host Destination:



TAMPA BAY
FLORIDA

Host Hotel:



JW MARRIOTT
TAMPA WATER STREET



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2025 IGLTA Global Partner Strategic Forum Participants

Moderator

Zoe Moore (she/her); Strategic EDI Consultant; Moore Consulting Agency

Participants

Bob Witeck (he/him); President; Witeck Communications (Representing Marriott International)

Cheryl Richards (she/her); SVP, Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer; Visit Dallas

Dan Rios (he/him); Director, LGBTQ+ Tourism Marketing; Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau

Jeremy Maunder (he/him); Director, Content & Communications; Destination Toronto

Luis Villaseñor (he/him); Director, Promotion and Advertising; Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board

Meg Ten Eyck (she/her); Vice Chair, IGLTA / Founder & CEO, EveryQueer

Mylia Battista (she/her); Marketing Manager; Visit Tampa Bay

Parker Smith (he/him); Client Director, LGBTQ+ and Entertainment, North America; Belmond

Reginald Charlot (he/him); SVP, Tourism Market Development; New York City Tourism + Conventions

Rocio Lancaster (she/her); General Director, Tourism Promotion ; Jalisco Ministry of Tourism

Rondel Holder (he/him); SVP, Content + Diversity Initiatives; New York City Tourism + Conventions

Stacie Nerf (she/her); Manage, MICE & Global Sales; Delta Air Lines

Sylvia Brookoff (she/her); Senior Manager, Brand and ESG; American Express Travel

Theresa Belpulsi (she/her); Senior VP, Tourism, Sports and Visitor Services; Destination DC

Tyronne Stoudemire (he/him); SVP, Global Human Resources; Hyatt Hotels Corporation

About the Author

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