

TOOLKIT

# Why Values Matter

A Destination Guide  
to LGBTQ+ Travelers

*Image courtesy of Visit Greater Palm Springs*

WITH THE SUPPORT OF



**IGLTA**  
FOUNDATION



**DESTINATIONS**  
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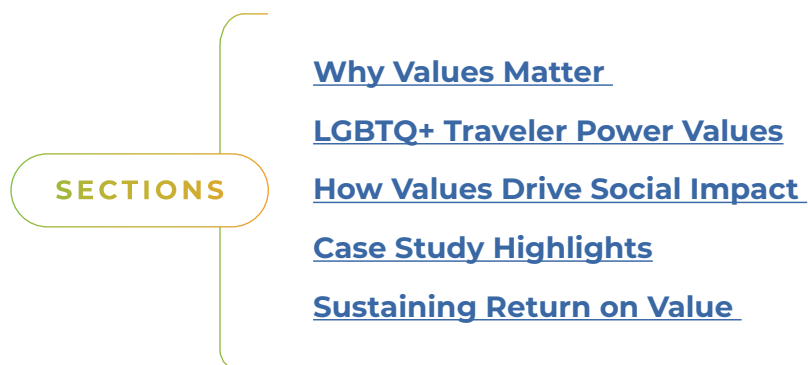
# Executive Summary

In an increasingly competitive global tourism landscape, destinations that understand and align with traveler values gain a measurable advantage. Values-driven engagement deepens emotional connection, influences decision-making, increases length of stay and repeat visitation and supports word-of-mouth advocacy: all critical drivers of sustainable destination growth.

For LGBTQ+ travelers, values-alignment is deeply personal and often tied to safety, visibility and lived experience. Choosing a destination is not only about the attractions or experiences offered, but how a place can affirm identity and reflect belonging in everyday life.

With support from the Destinations International Foundation, Destinations International (DI) and the International [LGBTQ+ Travel Association Foundation](#) (IGLTA Foundation) partnered to examine how values uniquely influence LGBTQ+ travelers and what that means for destinations seeking to design and deliver meaningful experiences. *Why Values Matter: A Destination Guide to LGBTQ+ Travelers* presents insights from [Valuegraphics](#), a global leader in values-based audience research.

Moving beyond demographics, this toolkit highlights three Power Values, **Harmony, Health & Well-Being** and **Balance**, that uniquely motivate LGBTQ+ travelers and translates them into actionable strategies for strengthening loyalty and long-term destination impact. It complements *Why Values Matter: A Destination Guide to LGBTQ+ Travelers*, developed in collaboration with IGLTA.



# Why Values Matter

*“To become genuinely customer centric, organizations must realize the need to understand their customers as humans and help them achieve what they aspire to. This starts with getting curious about customers’ values - the driving force for their goals.”*

**- Camille Nicita**  
Forbes Councils Member

Consumers increasingly choose brands that reflect what matters most to them. A 2021 Ipsos Global Study, summarized by the World Economic Forum, found that across 25 countries surveyed, 70% of consumers purchase from brands whose values reflect their own.<sup>1</sup> As one Forbes Councils Member described it, we are in “a new age of ‘emotional branding’” where decisions are shaped by personal connection to values.<sup>2</sup> This is especially relevant in travel and tourism, where destination choice is deeply tied to identity and personal experience.

For destinations, this shift has measurable implications. Valuegraphics data show that people within a demographic cohort resemble one another on average of 13%. This means building strategies based on demographics alone leads to 87% of incorrect ideas about who people are. Instead, building strategies based on values translates emotional connection into measurable outcomes. Valuegraphics calls this quantifiable metric ‘Return on Values’ (ROV).

**When Harmony, Health and Well-being and Balance are incorporated into travel experiences, LGBTQ+ traveler loyalty rises by 30%, trust rises by 30% and engagement rises by 20%. Willingness to pay, or financial elasticity, rises by 15%.**

**This means that values directly correlate to an increase in brand loyalty and visitor spend.**

Valuegraphics’ LGBTQ+ Travelers study found the audience is a belonging-driven group of “community seekers who prioritize safety, inclusion and visible acceptance.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, authenticity cannot be episodic. It must be embedded across the traveler journey. This study draws from more than 1,800 LGBTQ+ respondents across inbound markets including Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, India, Germany, Brazil, Japan and France. All respondents are actively considering travel to the United States in 2026.



**Valuegraphics analyzes human values at scale, drawing from one million surveys across 180 countries and 152 languages. Its methodology maps responses to 56 core values, identifying Power Values: those uniquely motivating to a specific audience.**

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/12/people-prefer-brands-with-aligned-corporate-purpose-and-values/>

<sup>2</sup> Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescommunicationscouncil/2024/04/05/navigating-the-evolving-landscape-of-personal-values-what-brands-and-companies-need-to-know/>

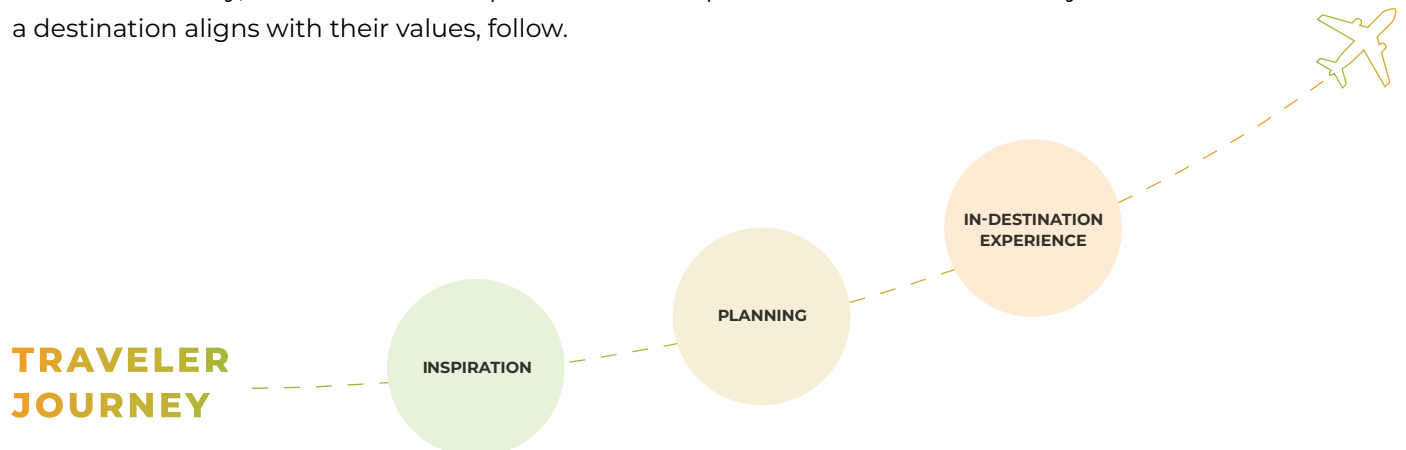
<sup>3</sup> <https://valuegraphics.com/>

# LGBTQ+ Traveler Power Values

Valuegraphics' study identified three Power Values uniquely motivating LGBTQ+ travelers: **Harmony**, **Health and Well-Being** and **Balance**. These values rise above the broader consumer baseline, signaling distinct emotional and behavioral priorities. Together, these values also suggest the significant role safety plays: To experience Harmony, Health and Well-Being or Balance in a destination, LGBTQ+ travelers must first feel safe, welcome and accepted.



For destination organizations, these Power Values provide a practical lens for experience design across the traveler journey. When embedded intentionally, from inspiration through in-destination engagement, they shape how LGBTQ+ travelers experience safety, belonging and sustained connection. When values are met, loyalty, trust, engagement and financial elasticity, their readiness to spend more on experiences or extend their stay when a destination aligns with their values, follow.



**HARMONY**

The Power Value “Harmony” means being at peace with oneself. For LGBTQ+ travelers, Harmony is the absence of friction between identity and environment.

*75% LGBTQ+ alignment compared to 44% global population alignment*

**APPLYING HARMONY**

<p><b>PHASE</b> <b>Inspiration</b></p>	<p><b>DESTINATION ACTION</b> Feature LGBTQ+ representation in mainstream imagery. Highlight sentiments of welcome and safety year-round not just during Pride or LGBTQ+ events.</p>
<p><b>LGBTQ+ TRAVELER LENS</b> <i>Will I be welcomed or merely tolerated?</i></p>	
<p><b>PHASE</b> <b>Planning</b></p>	<p><b>DESTINATION ACTION</b> Provide centralized, specific LGBTQ+ travel resources and call out non-discrimination policies. Highlight LGBTQ+ inclusive amenities, services and programs that help travelers feel a sense of belonging from the very first interaction.</p>
<p><b>LGBTQ+ TRAVELER LENS</b> <i>Will I need to do extra work to feel safe?</i></p>	
<p><b>PHASE</b> <b>In-Destination Experience</b></p>	<p><b>DESTINATION ACTION</b> Train front-line staff and partners. Support and recognize welcoming businesses who integrate belonging into operational practices. Build partnerships with local LGBTQ+ organizations to align visitor and resident needs. Actively collect feedback to continuously improve safety, comfort and a sense of belonging throughout the visitor journey.</p>
<p><b>LGBTQ+ TRAVELER LENS</b> <i>Can I move freely while at the destination?</i></p>	

*Image courtesy of Visit Greater Palm Springs*

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The Power Value “Health and Well-Being” means having the ability to care for body and mind. For LGBTQ+ travelers, this reflects the need for restoration, reassurance and environments that support emotional and physical well-being.

**67% LGBTQ+ alignment compared to 44% global population alignment**

## APPLYING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

### PHASE

### Inspiration

#### LGBTQ+ TRAVELER LENS

*Will this destination nourish or drain me?*

### DESTINATION ACTION

Highlight nature, culture and restorative spaces, featuring LGBTQ+ representation. Showcase welcoming community gatherings beyond nightlife. Position the destination as renewal, not just escape.

### PHASE

### Planning

#### LGBTQ+ TRAVELER LENS

*Will my experience be empowering or exhausting?*

### DESTINATION ACTION

Provide centralized, up-to-date LGBTQ+ travel resources, including safety guidance, wellness options and non-discrimination policies. Offer curated itineraries focused on restoration and cultural immersion. Include clear accessibility information and channels for traveler questions or support.

### PHASE

### In-Destination Experience

#### LGBTQ+ TRAVELER LENS

*Will this place actively support my ability to feel grounded and restored?*

### DESTINATION ACTION

Train frontline staff and partners in service, welcoming language, and crisis support. Ensure public spaces and facilities are safe, accessible and supportive. Promote experiences and itineraries that blend celebration and calm. Partner with local LGBTQ+ organizations to align visitor programming with community needs. Continuously gather traveler feedback to improve well-being outcomes.

*Image courtesy of Visit Greater Palm Springs*

## BALANCE

The Power Value “Balance” means sustainable living, both today and tomorrow. For many LGBTQ+ travelers, life has not always offered stability, requiring geographic relocation for acceptance, evolving relationship recognition and legal uncertainty. Balance is deeply tied to family in all forms and multi-generational belonging.

**57% LGBTQ+ alignment compared to 35% global population alignment**

## APPLYING BALANCE

### PHASE

### Inspiration

#### LGBTQ+ TRAVELER LENS

*Does this destination reflect the life I lead?*

### DESTINATION ACTION

Showcase a variety of family structures including parents, elders, multigenerational groups and chosen families. Highlight culture and connection. Represent travelers in everyday settings. Communicate that the destination values long-term belonging and social acceptance for all family forms.

### PHASE

### Planning

#### LGBTQ+ TRAVELER LENS

*Will my family structure and life stage be welcomed?*

### DESTINATION ACTION

Provide clear LGBTQ+ family travel resources including guidance for families with transgender or LGBTQ+ children or parents. Promote experiences that appeal across ages, interests and levels of accessibility. Offer clear, detailed information on accessible accommodations, experiences, ensuring families can plan confidently without uncertainty or extra stress.

### PHASE

### In-Destination Experience

#### LGBTQ+ TRAVELER LENS

*Will my relationships be treated as normal and enduring?*

### DESTINATION ACTION

Study and optimize every first point of contact, from airport staff to front-line personnel, to ensure welcoming interactions occur. Support welcoming operational policies at attractions and visitor-facing spaces. Train staff on welcoming practices and partner with local LGBTQ+ and family-focused organizations to embed belonging into the visitor experience. Collect feedback to continuously refine belonging and connection.

*Image courtesy of Visit Greater Palm Springs*



Image courtesy of Choose Chicago

# How Values Drive Social Impact

The LGBTQ+ Traveler Power Values of Harmony, Health & Well-Being and Balance do more than influence return on value. They provide a roadmap for advancing measurable social impact. Destinations International defines social impact as measurable and enduring outcomes achieved through welcoming and responsible tourism. Within this framework, four pillars guide outcomes: Economic Growth and Opportunity, Community Impact and Well-Being, Responsible Tourism and Stewardship and Access and Participation.

When Harmony, Health and Well-Being and Balance are activated, destination organizations can measure outcomes across the traveler journey through policy and partner alignment, economic contribution, representation and visibility, experience participation and community engagement.



Social impact is the result of measurable outcomes through welcoming and responsible tourism.





## The intentional development of local businesses and investment in emerging workforce



Economic Growth and Opportunity

### Examples of Measurement

#### Policy and Partner Alignment

##### *In-Destination Experience:*

- Number of hospitality partners completing LGBTQ+ training
- Businesses participating in relevant welcoming and belonging programs

#### Economic Contribution

##### *In-Destination Experience:*

- Visitor spend during LGBTQ+-friendly events
- Small/local business revenues or exposure
- Repeat visitation rates among LGBTQ+ travelers
- Growth in local LGBTQ+-owned or allied businesses
- Increased sponsorship or vendor participation
- LGBTQ+ representation in tourism or hospitality workforce



#### Example of economic contribution

Louisville Tourism's Visitor Profile study from 2023-2024 found the **average daily trip spend per LGBTQ+ traveler was \$144 per person, or \$427 per party.** Among all visitors, the average daily trip spend was \$178 per person or \$476 per party.



# Ensuring residents and visitors benefit from tourism experiences through shared services, spaces and infrastructure



Community Impact and Well-Being

## Examples of Measurement

### Policy and Partner Alignment

***In-Destination Experience:***

- Number of hospitality partners completing LGBTQ+ training
- Businesses participating in relevant welcoming and belonging programs
- Public-facing non-discrimination policies adopted
- Widely accessible public spaces and facilities
- Formalized partnerships with LGBTQ+ organization

### Representation and Visibility

***Inspiration, Planning:***

Promotion of LGBTQ+ experiences outside of Pride celebrations

***In-Destination Experience:***

Social sentiment analysis of belonging, safety or welcome

### Community Engagement

***Planning/In-Destination Experience:***

- Collaborative programming with local community groups
- Advisory council or board representation
- Community feedback sessions to shape visitor experiences
- Resident sentiment surveys that capture insight on belonging for LGBTQ+ communities

### Experience Participation

***In-Destination Experience:***

- Attendance at LGBTQ+-friendly events, not just Pride
- Multi-generational participation rates at festivals or attraction
- Positive reviews of services and spaces



### Example of Policy and Partner Alignment

Visit Frederick engages closely with local organization, The Frederick Center. In early 2026, the Center led an LGBTQ+ sensitivity training with the Visit Frederick team.



## Advancing strategies to protect and uphold the natural and cultural assets in a destination



Responsible Tourism  
and Stewardship

### Examples of Measurement

#### Policy and Partner Alignment

***In-Destination Experience:***

- Formalized partnerships with LGBTQ+ organizations that address responsible tourism and stewardship

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#### Experience Participation

***In-Destination Experience:***

- Attendance at LGBTQ+-friendly events, not just Pride

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#### Community Engagement

***Planning/In-Destination Experience:***

- Collaborative programming with local community groups
- Advisory council or board representation



#### Example of Community Engagement

Visit Frederick regularly connects with Maryland State Delegate, Kris Fair, Executive Director of The Frederick Center, to advance alignment.



# Ensuring all individuals, regardless of background or ability, can experience and benefit from tourism



Access and Participation

## Examples of Measurement

### Policy and Partner Alignment

#### *In-Destination Experience:*

- Sentiment following engagement with first-contact touchpoints in travel, such as airport staff, transportation and frontline personnel
- Public-facing non-discrimination policies adopted
- Widely accessible public spaces and facilities

### Representation and Visibility

#### *Inspiration:*

- Percentage of marketing assets featuring authentic LGBTQ+ representation
- Engagement rates on LGBTQ+-centered campaigns

#### *Planning:*

- Website traffic to LGBTQ+ travel resource pages

### Experience Participation

#### *In-Destination Experience:*

- Increase in bookings or reservations where non-discrimination policies are visible
- Multi-generational participation rates at festivals or attractions
- Uptake of family or LGBTQ+-specific travel packages
- Review mentions of feeling welcomed, seen or safe

### Community Engagement

#### *Planning/In-Destination Experience:*

- Advisory council or board representation
- Community feedback sessions to shape visitor experiences
- Collaborative programming with local community groups



### Example of Experience Participation

Louisville Tourism’s Visitor Profile study from 2023-2024 found that nearly two out of three LGBTQ+ travelers surveyed say the destination is welcoming. **On a score of 0 to 10, the average likelihood to return score was 8.8.**

# Case Study Highlights

## LGBTQ+ Entrepreneur Case Study:

### When Culture Becomes Your Safe Space

– Jaipur, India



*Image courtesy of IGLTA/IGLTA Foundation*

Nandita Gupta is a queer entrepreneur and experience curator from Jaipur, Rajasthan, who is redefining how culture can be used as a tool for inclusion and destination development. As the Founder Director of Mango Soufflé Productions and creator of Rajasthan's first Queer Women's Collective, her work focuses on designing cultural experiences that integrate LGBTQ+ communities into the fabric of local heritage, festivals, and creative economies. Her approach reflects a broader destination opportunity: transforming culture into an accessible, welcoming, and economically active space for diverse traveler segments.

In Jaipur, Nandita has developed a series of community-led cultural activations that align closely with LGBTQ+ traveler Power Values of Harmony, Health & Well-Being, and Balance. These include Pride programming rooted in local identity, such as the Jaipur Queer Gulabi Pride Parade with expanded pre-Pride cultural events, immersive experiences like a Queer Food Walk through heritage markets and inclusive festival activations such as Gulabi Dandiya, which brings together local traditions and queer-led celebration formats. More recently, she curated an initiative connecting LGBTQ+ communities with Jaipur's historical courtesan (tawaif) heritage, reinforcing the role of culture as both an economic and social bridge. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate how destinations can activate cultural assets to strengthen belonging, diversify visitor experiences, and increase engagement with underrepresented traveler communities.



*Image courtesy of Discover Puerto Rico*

**Destination Case Study:**  
**Discover Puerto Rico's Inclusive Approach to LGBTQ+ Tourism**

Discover Puerto Rico developed a research-driven and community-informed strategy to position the island as the LGBTQ+ Capital of the Caribbean. Launched in 2018, the approach was designed to move beyond historical market segments and build a more inclusive, destination-wide model that reflects authenticity, local engagement, and long-term traveler value. The strategy integrated LGBTQ+ inclusion into broader destination branding, focusing on awareness, trust, and preference-building through coordinated marketing, education, and stakeholder alignment.

A key element of the strategy was close collaboration with LGBTQ+ community partners and industry specialists to ensure credibility and meaningful engagement across the visitor journey. Through targeted campaigns, inclusive storytelling and tourism partner training, Discover Puerto Rico strengthened both perception and performance in the LGBTQ+ travel segment. This structured approach contributed to measurable growth in destination preference and visitation, ultimately supporting Puerto Rico in hosting the record-breaking 2023 IGLTA Global Convention and reinforcing its position as a leading inclusive destination in the Caribbean.

[READ MORE](#)

# Sustaining Return on Value

When values of Harmony, Health & Well-Being and Balance are embedded consistently into destination strategies, they generate both social and economic return: strengthening belonging, expanding participation and deepening long-term visitor loyalty.

Yet, sustaining that return requires shared accountability and measurable progress. Destination organizations cannot advance social impact alone. Meaningful outcomes depend on collaboration with partners: chambers of commerce, tourism partners, advocacy organizations and community leaders who reflect the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ residents and visitors.

Use DI's [five-step process](#) for Social Impact to guide this work, and refer to Community Impact stories, such as [Discover Newport: Building Community and Belonging Through the Newport Pride Center](#), for inspiration.

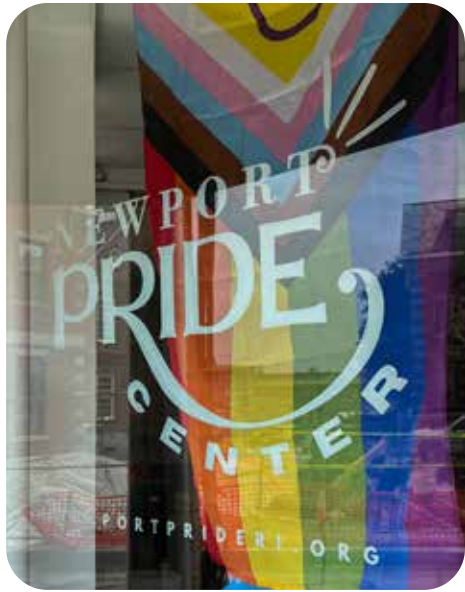
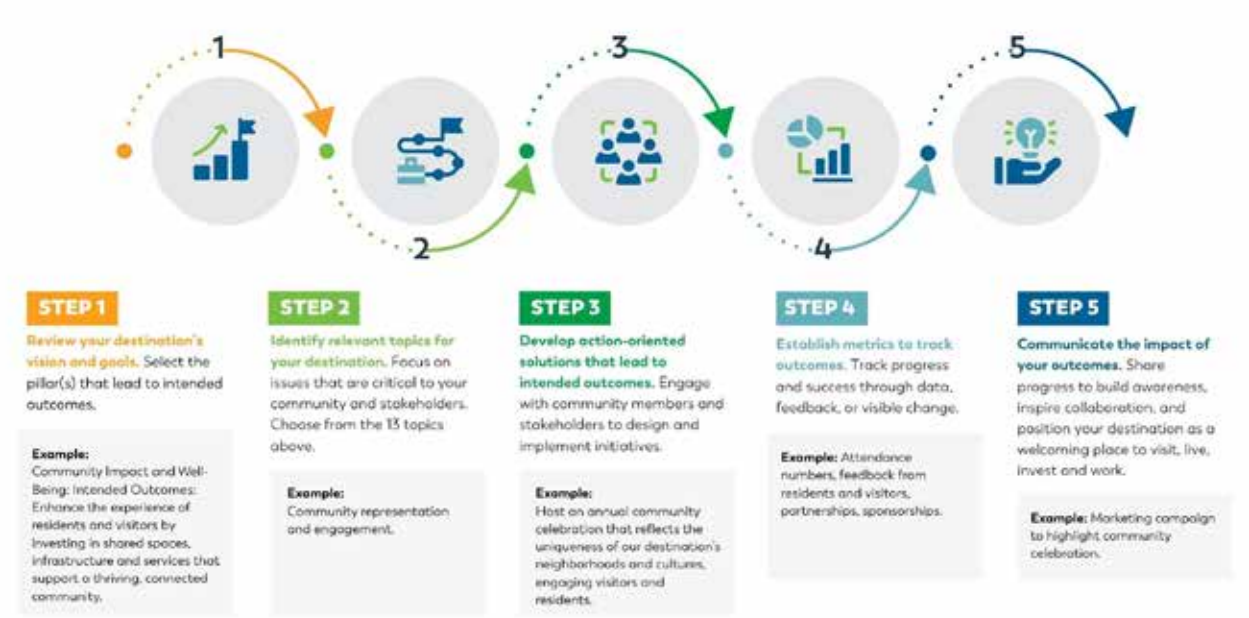


Image courtesy of Discover Newport





## Step 1: Align Vision and Goals

**Clarify alignment and intended returns through Social Impact Pillar(s):** *Identify which Social Impact Pillar(s) lead to outcomes of welcoming and responsible tourism by investing in LGBTQ+ values and experiences. Integrate LGBTQ+ values into your destination's vision and strategic goals.*

- *From Economic Growth and Opportunity to Access and Participation, determine what the returns of social impact through LGBTQ+ visitation might look like in your destination.*
- *Build leadership alignment around long-term commitment, not short-term activation. Articulate the economic and community impact and understand the landscape of LGBTQ+ advocacy and support groups locally.*

## Step 2: Identify Topics that Matter

**Engage community voices to define priority issues:** *Using DI's Social Impact Framework, work with community groups to select relevant topics that reflect local needs and expanded opportunities. In many destinations, [Community Representation and Engagement](#) may be a critical starting point, ensuring that LGBTQ+ individuals and families are welcomed and visibly integrated into destination strategy, storytelling and experience design.*

- *Convene LGBTQ+ advisory groups or listening sessions. Assess representation across boards, campaigns, partnerships and first-contact touchpoints such as airports and frontline visitor services.*
- *Identify gaps in visibility across neighborhoods, life stages, chosen families and multi-generational travelers. Evaluate whether destination narratives reflect the diversity of LGBTQ+ identities and relationships.*

### Step 3: Develop Action-Oriented Solutions

**Co-create initiatives that tie back to Social Impact Pillar outcomes.** *With priority topics identified, move from intention to implementation by designing initiatives with community partners that activate LGBTQ+ traveler power values.*

- *Establish an LGBTQ+ advisory council to inform policy, programming and storytelling, reinforcing Harmony through visible representation and shared decision-making. Co-create events, itineraries or visitor experiences that support emotional restoration and authentic connection, advancing Health & Well-Being. Normalize chosen families and multi-generational belonging in programming and promotion, strengthening Balance.*
- *Support LGBTQ+-owned and allied businesses through promotion and procurement, benefitting the local economy. Embed belonging-based, well-being and safety-focused training standards across the industry, especially at first-contact touchpoints such as airports, visitor centers or hotels, to reduce friction and build traveler confidence.*

### Step 4: Establish Metrics

**Measure Outcomes.** *To sustain impact, destinations must track whether initiatives meaningfully lead to pillar-based outcomes at each stage of the travel journey: from inspiration through in-destination engagement.*

- *Use the guidance in “How Values Drive Social Impact” to explore how across the traveler journey, representation and visibility, policy and partner alignment, experience participation and community engagement align with each pillar of the Social Impact Framework. Metrics should reflect expanded outcomes and be developed in collaboration with LGBTQ+ community partners to ensure they are meaningful, credible and locally relevant.*

### Step 5: Communicate Impact

**Share progress transparently and elevate community stories.** *Sustained return requires visible accountability and authentic storytelling that reflects real community partnership.*

- *Publish progress updates and measurable outcomes tied to Social Impact pillar goals. Highlight local businesses, community leaders and creators. Share traveler stories that reflect Harmony, Health and Well-being and Balance in action.*
- *By embedding LGBTQ+ traveler values of Harmony, Health & Well-Being and Balance into their strategies and pairing this with strong partnerships, measurement and transparent storytelling, intention evolves to impact. Collaboration with the IGLTA Foundation and local community-based organizations provide access to best practices, peer learning and a trusted global network of knowledge. Through working together, destinations can create safe, welcoming and meaningful experiences for LGBTQ+ travelers, including their chosen families and multi-generational groups.*