

Fostering 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion in Sport and Recreation in Waterloo Region

Evaluation of Spectrum's Rainbow Diversity Training 101

Rainbow Diversity Training 101

Spectrum offered its Rainbow Diversity Training 101 workshop to City of Kitchener recreation staff and community centre neighbourhood leaders as part of its partnership with the city to implement the 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion in Sports project. Broadly, the workshop covered who 2SLGBTQ+ people are (information about the daily challenges 2SLGBTQ+ individuals face), terminology and key concepts (e.g., gender identity, heterosexism), intersectionality and microaggressions (what they are and the role that these play within the 2SLGBTQ+ community), and what one can do to advance 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion (strategies for dismantling one's own misconceptions and how to become a better ally). In addition to facilitators presenting definitions, statistics and research findings about 2SLGBTQ+ people and their experiences, and other information, the workshop included a video (coming out stories of 2SLGBTQ+ community members in Waterloo Region), case studies addressing key concepts, and an empathy-building exercise. Specific attention was given transgender identities and types of transitions. The workshop concluded with the opportunity for participants to reflect on their biggest takeaways and what they can do to be better allies, and resource sharing.

This evaluation was completed as part of the Fostering 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion in Sport and Recreation in Waterloo Region project, which ran between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, funded by Sport Canada.

Michael R. Woodford, Tin D. Vo, Alex Wells, Eric Van Giessen, and Alex Silver (December 2024). Fostering 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion in Sport and Recreation in Waterloo Region: Evaluation of Spectrum's Rainbow Diversity Training 101. Spectrum: Kitchener, ON.

Program Goals

Increase participants' understanding of 2SLGBTQ+ terms, experiences, challenges, and strengths.

Help prepare participants to create inclusive spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ people.

Help prepare participants to be allies to the 2SLGBTQ+ community, including how to effectively respond when discrimination occurs.



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Evaluation

The evaluation utilized surveys¹ and assessed the training's impacts on participants' competencies, namely knowledge, perceived confidence in skills and knowledge application, inclusive language use, and attitudes. The evaluation also identified ways to strengthen the training.

Select findings are presented in this brief report. Readers interested in learning more are invited to review the full report available [here](#). For some findings, composite scores² are reported.

Impact on Trainees' Competencies

Knowledge: The evaluation assessed knowledge of 2SLGBTQ+ terminology, privilege, and inclusive pronouns practices using true-false, matching, and multi-choice questions. On a 0—14 scale (0 = no correct answers selected, 14 = all correct answers selected) inclusive of all 14 knowledge questions, the average correct responses score for the pre-training survey was 5.91. It was statistically significantly higher at 10.16 for the post-training survey, indicating that participants' overall knowledge was greater after the training.

¹ The evaluation team administered a survey prior to the training and another one immediately following the training. These surveys assessed trainees' competencies, with the second survey also seeking feedback on the training. Several months later a follow-up survey was conducted to identify key learnings and real-life applications of the training content to trainees' work, as well as the training's strengths and areas for improvement. Seventy-six people participated in the pre-training survey, 70 in the post-training survey, and 14 in the follow-up survey.

² A composite score is a single score that combines responses from multiple questions. For true/false and other similar questions, the sum of "correct" responses is reported. For questions asking for one's degree of agreement or how frequently one engages in an action, average scores across responses are provided.

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Confidence in Skills and Knowledge Application:

The pre- and post-training surveys included questions about trainees' level of confidence in applying 2SLGBTQ+ skills and knowledge in one's work as recreation staff or community leader. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree), with a higher average score indicating greater confidence in one's skills and knowledge application.

In the pre-training survey, questions about comfort working with a trans person in one's workplace and understanding why inclusive language is important had the two highest average scores (5.40 and 5.00, respectively), whereas the lowest scores were for items addressing awareness of 2SLGBTQ+ community resources and groups (3.60) and 2SLGBTQ+ friendly social services (3.39). In the post-training survey, the questions about understanding why to use inclusive language and being comfortable working with a trans person in the workplace continued to have the highest average scores (5.38 and 5.54, respectively). Though their average scores increased, the items about 2SLGBTQ+ friendly social services and 2SLGBTQ+ community resources/groups continued to have the lowest scores (4.42 and 4.46, respectively).

The difference between the average composite scores was significantly higher in the post-training survey (5.05) compared to the pre-training survey (4.51), suggesting the training improved trainees' confidence in skills and knowledge application.

Program Goals

Based on participants' average composite scores, the training positively impacted their 2SLGBTQ+ competencies

Knowledge

Pre-training score 5.91
Post-training score 10.16

Confidence in skills and knowledge application

Pre-training score 4.51
Post-training score 5.05

Gender inclusive language use

Pre-training score 2.49
Post-training score 4.20

2SLGBTQ+ attitudes

Pre-training score 4.72
Post-training score 4.97

Note: Average scores for composite scales range 1-6 except for knowledge which ranges 0-14. For each composite scale, higher scores indicate greater competency.

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Gender Inclusive Language Use: Participants reported how often they used gender-neutral language (e.g., they rather than she/he), asked new recreation program participants' their pronouns, and shared their pronouns when meeting a new person (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = almost always, 6 = always). A higher average score indicates greater engagement with gender inclusive language practices.

Across all survey items, average scores were higher after the training (ranges: pre-training 2.01 – 3.40, post-training 3.73 – 4.90). Likewise, the average composite score was significantly higher following the training (pre-training 2.49, post-training 4.20), suggesting a meaningful impact on language use.

2SLGBTQ+ Attitudes: Trainees' 2SLGBTQ+ attitudes were assessed using 10 questions, with participants responding to each statement using a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree). A higher average score reflects more affirming 2SLGBTQ+ attitudes.

Based on the pre-training survey, views generally tended to be in the “somewhat agree” – “agree” range as suggested by the average scores on the items. They were in the same range in the post-training survey, though the average score for each item was higher. The average composite scale was relatively high on the 1-6 scale for both surveys (pre-training survey 4.72, post-training survey 4.97), with the difference between them being statistically significant which suggests the training helps participants to have more affirming 2SLGBTQ+ attitudes.

“I think it is useful to know that it is okay to make a mistake [when trying not to misgender someone], to correct it and move on and not make a big fuss. Simply apologize, correct myself and keep going--I think prior to taking the training I have seen it in myself, and my colleagues, the desire to "get it right" can sometimes hold us back from making conversation or asking about pronouns. Now, I am not anxious about it and routinely ask about pronouns.”

- RDT Participant

³ In the pre-training survey, the questions addressed how often they tended to engage in these behaviours. Whereas, in the post-training survey they asked how often they are likely to do so.

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Key Learnings, Personal Growth, and Application to Work

In the follow-up survey, open-ended questions were used to explore trainees' primary learnings, personal growth, and situations in which they and colleagues applied what they learned from the training, with these findings illustrating training impact. Participants were also asked about workplace factors that supported or hindered implementing what they learned in the workplace.

Key Learnings: Many participants, including one belonging to the 2SLGBTQ+ community, acknowledged an increase in their understanding of how to foster inclusive environments, particularly using gender-neutral language and proper pronoun usage. Some emphasized learning the importance of subtle language changes in promoting a sense of belonging and safety. In one case, the alarming statistics on the mental health challenges faced by the 2SLGBTQ+ community resonated deeply, and learning about the 2SLGBTQ+ community's experiences with discrimination prompted calls for proactive support structures within the workplace. Some comments highlighted the value of what they learned to their work.

Personal Growth and Insights: Participants expressed that the training had a profound impact on their awareness and attitudes towards the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Increased awareness and understanding led to more compassionate interactions both within and outside of the workplace. For some, the training also sparked discussions about inclusivity in their personal lives, indicating its broad-reaching impact on their perspectives and behaviours.

“Realizing how much it meant to people by "just" putting up the flags - I wasn't aware of the positive impact that people within the community (or just in general) would feel. It's made me more aware of something that I think won't really mean much, it truly does and what else I can do either at work or in my personal life.”

RDT Participant

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Application of Training Content in Work: While a few participants noted they had not had the chance to apply their learnings directly, others shared implementing changes in their daily interactions and physical work environments, including introducing inclusive signage and sharing pronouns. Participants also reported a more thoughtful approach to program offerings, moving away from gender-specific activities to more inclusive programming. One individual shared intervening when a community member engaged in homophobic behaviour, and another described how they supported a young person and created an affirming space.

Other respondents commented that they observed impacts among colleagues, such as increased mindfulness about language use, sharing one's pronouns, and asking for people's pronouns. However, it was noted that these changes are not always consistent and sometimes require reminders, coaching, or mentoring, suggesting that ongoing reinforcement and perhaps a more formalized support system could be beneficial to maintain these practices.

Support and Barriers to Applying Training: The presence of supportive colleagues and leadership was frequently highlighted as crucial in facilitating the use of inclusive practices. Conversely, the absence of ongoing training, resources, and refreshers was noted as a barrier, preventing staff from feeling fully confident in their abilities to consistently apply what they learned. Others noted that a larger attendance at the training by colleagues would have led to a greater impact.

Feedback about the Training

Below are selected recommendations. If interested in learning about all the recommendations, please see the [full report](#).

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Both the post-training survey and the follow-up survey asked about the training's strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement. In the post-training survey, written responses reflected a mix of positive and constructive feedback. Many praised the training for being informative, valuable, and relevant, with several individuals noting that the clear presentations helped them better understand the 2SLGBTQ+ community and how to be effective allies. Some noted appreciation for the safe space created by the facilitators for open conversations, which enhanced their learning experience. Several comments emphasized the importance of the training in making them feel more confident in supporting 2SLGBTQ+ community members, highlighting an overall positive potential impact on their professional roles.

"The instructors did a great job creating a safe place for conversations. Well done presentation—I feel it was rushed, lots to learn and understand, the knowledge is very important to our customer service role."

"It would be nice to have more specific examples in Rec. How can I make people feel welcome? Who can help with this? Info was great but would love an action plan."

Concerning ways to improve the training, in both the post-training and follow-up surveys, some participants noted the need for longer or more frequent sessions to allow for deeper exploration of the topics, as well as more discussion time to address complex issues. In the post-training survey, to make the training more applicable to the audience, a few participants recommended incorporating more specific examples relevant to their work environments, including how to make recreation spaces more 2SLGBTQ+ friendly, how to implement all-gender washrooms, and how to respond when 2SLGBTQ+ discrimination occurs in a recreation centre. This latter point was emphasized in the follow-up survey, also.

Recommendations

Follow-Up and Continuous Learning: While the initial training session was well-received, there is a need for ongoing support and follow-up. Participants expressed a desire for refresher sessions and continued learning opportunities to help reinforce and build upon the initial training. This could include regular workshops, updates on best practices, and access to additional resources (i.e., short video trainings).

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Handling Resistance: Participants indicated a gap in the training regarding how to handle resistance or negative reactions from the public or colleagues concerning inclusive practices. Training could be improved by incorporating more comprehensive conflict resolution techniques and strategies for dealing with backlash in a constructive and safe manner.

Advanced Content for Experienced Participants: Some participants felt that the training could better cater to varying levels of prior knowledge about 2SLGBTQ+ issues. Offering differentiated training sessions or advanced modules could help ensure that all participants find the content relevant and challenging, thereby enhancing learning outcomes for those with more background knowledge.

Cultural and Religious Sensitivity: A few participants noted that the training could be improved by directly addressing the complexities of cultural and religious perspectives on 2SLGBTQ+ issues. Including content that respectfully engages these perspectives and provides clear guidance on City of Kitchener policies could help create more inclusive environments and prevent religious-based homophobia from affecting City of Kitchener programming.

