



Strategic Direction
2015-2020

*Adopted by the Board of Directors
May 2015*

Mission

Basic Rights Oregon will ensure that all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer¹ Oregonians experience equality by building a broad and inclusive politically powerful movement, shifting public opinion, and achieving policy victories.

Who we are

Basic Rights Oregon is made up of inspiring, strategic organizers driven by LGBTQ communities' deep need for justice. We work proactively to address the needs of our community through policy advocacy, building political power, community empowerment, and education.

We are the first line of defense. We act from alertness of what our communities continue to face, and vigilance toward threats to our communities' safety, wellbeing, and legal security.

We empower—we strive to share what we know with community leaders, progressive partners, LGBTQ organizations across the country, and allies wherever they may be.

We educate. We know that meeting the needs of LGBTQ Oregonians means educating straight people, cisgender people, and members of our own communities about our myriad needs. And we know that kind of education takes time, effort, compassion and honesty.

We seek to be dependable allies. We know what it means to have allies—in family members, in colleagues, in movement partners—so we commit to taking public action for the myriad issues that impact our LGBTQ communities and our allies.

We strive to be accountable. To our communities, to our organizational partners, and to our anti-oppression values. We do what we say we'll do, and we respond thoughtfully to feedback. We know that accountability is the foundation of a meaningful, strong, nimble, and lasting movement for LGBTQ justice.

We act from memory – memory of where we've come from as LGBTQ communities, of what we've faced, of who's led the way. Memory that Oregon's pro-LGBTQ reputation is borne of a history of unprecedented anti-LGBTQ activity. And memory of the extraordinary change we can create when we work together as united communities.

¹ Queer can be a challenging term for many in our communities. Some experience it as a slur or derogatory term; for others, it is a deeply held personal and political identity. Basic Rights proudly supports queer Oregonians, who are reflected in our communities, movements and leadership; and we work to end the violence and discrimination that has made queer a painful word for so many of us.

What We Do

Basic Rights Oregon works fearlessly and tirelessly to build a strong, vibrant, powerful and progressive movement for LGBTQ equality. We understand that LGBTQ Oregonians exist in every community, and that we have to engage in strategic and values-based coalitions to address the many needs of our communities. As such, building alliances with progressive groups that advocate for working families, racial justice, immigrant rights, reproductive justice, and campaign reform will be essential to win policies that meet the varied needs of our diverse community.

We recognize that within our LGBTQ communities, many of us experience both privilege and oppression on a daily basis. We know that despite leading the nation in statewide legal protections, LGBTQ Oregonians are far from full legal equality. In the next five years, we will be a leader in political and policy work that centers the needs of four critically important communities:

- **LGBTQ people of color**, including LGBTQ immigrants & refugees of color, who bear the brunt of homophobia, transphobia, racism, and xenophobia.
- **Trans, genderqueer and gender nonconforming people**, who face astonishing rates of violence and discrimination, and whose basic rights are far from secure.
- **LGBTQ youth**, who face high rates of homelessness, bullying and suicide, and who are present and future leaders for LGBTQ equality and social justice.
- **LGBTQ people beyond the Portland Metro area**, who are often isolated, whose needs are distinct from those in Portland, and who face unique barriers to reach the promise of true lived equality.

Basic Rights Oregon prioritizes statewide policy advocacy. We understand the strategic value of local policy interventions, and we provide leadership and support to federal policy work based on opportunity and need.

To that end, Basic Rights Oregon prioritizes education both external and internal to our LGBTQ community. We recognize that policy victories can only function in a culture that's prepared to support us as LGBTQ people, and that we can only effectively support one another in our movement when we understand each other's needs and experiences, and when we're educated about the political and policy systems that impact us. As such, we prioritize both broad public education and targeted in-community education.

Basic Rights Oregon supports policies that include transgender people as core members and leaders in our communities. Policies that protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people at the expense of transgender people are not supported by Basic Rights Oregon.

Basic Rights Oregon recognizes the needs of LGBTQ seniors, and that many of those needs are best met through direct service work. When policy needs arise, we will prioritize ensuring that they are met, either through our own work or through that of senior advocates.

Basic Rights Oregon strives to fully implement our policy victories through impact litigation, administrative rulemaking, executive branch advocacy, community education and more. We strive to appropriately refer LGBTQ Oregonians for services they may need, but we do not provide direct services or social support services ourselves.

Where we come from

Basic Rights Oregon was born out of fighting back against a virulent anti-LGBTQ movement in Oregon. Since 1988, Oregonians have voted on five statewide and over 25 local anti-LGBTQ ballot measures—more than any other state. After three statewide ballot measures, community leaders came together to form Basic Rights Oregon (BRO), a 501(c)(4) organization, to sustain and strengthen Oregon’s LGBTQ rights movement between and beyond measure campaigns. Today, Basic Rights Oregon operates a Measure PAC to defend against challenges at the ballot, and an Equality PAC to elect pro-LGBTQ candidates.

In 1999, Basic Rights Education Fund (BREF), a 501(c)(3) organization, was formed to conduct education and advocacy for LGBTQ Oregonians. Today, Basic Rights Education Fund convenes volunteer leadership groups of LGBTQ and allied attorneys, transgender leaders, and LGBTQ leaders of color. The Education Fund’s work was also crucial in cracking the code to build support for the freedom to marry in Oregon and across the nation.

After weathering nearly two decades of attacks, Basic Rights Oregon opened a new chapter in its history in 2007, with the passage of two landmark bills—the Oregon Equality Act and the Oregon Family Fairness Act. Basic Rights has emerged as a national leader in winning legal protections for LGBTQ people. In the last five years, we have won increased protections and access in relationship recognition, schools, identity documents, jails & prisons, transgender health coverage, and more. We utilize every path that is available to us to create broad public policy change—from administrative rules to electoral victories. We fight hard to increase protections for LGBTQ Oregonians, and our work is far from over.

We know that our movement for LGBTQ equality is bigger than one vote, broader than one issue, and stronger than the fear and intolerance that we must overcome. This five-year strategic plan reflects Basic Rights Oregon’s commitment to work fearlessly to ensure that LGBTQ Oregonians experience both legal and lived equality, wherever they reside in the state, and however they identify.

Values

Basic Rights Oregon values: dignity, respect, equity, inclusivity, integrity, accountability, community, courage, transformation, empowerment. We work to build the political power of the LGBTQ community in a strategic and values based way. We value and support building a strong and vibrant progressive movement. We will continue to work as a dependable ally to other progressive groups in Oregon and to participate in strategic and values-based coalitions for a variety of causes. Our on-going values based commitment to gain ground for trans/gender non-conforming people, LGBTQ youth, LGBTQ people beyond the Portland Metro area, and LGBTQ people of color is also a strategic investment in basic rights for all of us.

Goals

Win legislation to continue to secure legal equality for all LGBTQ Oregonians.

Basic Rights Oregon is the primary policy advocacy organization for LGBTQ Oregonians. As such, we will continue to advocate for public policy that meets the needs of a breadth of our LGBTQ communities.

All of our policies will be constructed with a deep understanding of what they will mean to LGBTQ communities of color, transgender communities, LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ people outside of the Portland Metro area. Because our communities have diverse needs, we will also build and advocate for policies that meet the needs of those specific communities—for example, continuing to advocate for the needs of LGBTQ people in jails and prisons. We also recognize that resources and time are limited, so we will work to address issues that impact many of these communities at once, including issues surrounding housing, criminal justice, and more.

In order to ensure that policy victories meet the most pressing needs of our communities, Basic Rights will implement a biannual issue selection process, which will inform both our legislative agenda and our work with candidates and elected officials.

When we do any of this work particularly well or feel that we have resources to contribute to state and national conversations about how to advocate for LGBTQ equality, we will share our model for the work and our lessons learned.

We will employ the following strategies to meet this goal:

1. Develop, test, and implement an effective model for building grassroots political power and community empowerment as evidenced by:

- Active leadership from key LGBTQ and allied constituencies including youth, transgender, and people of color communities;
- Large scale constituent engagement in grassroots lobbying, shifting public will and enacting electoral strategies driven by empowered volunteer leaders;
- Our ability to mobilize in targeted geographies as necessary; and
- Our ability to mobilize our base to take action in support of key allies.

2. Develop, test, and implement an effective model for issue selection as measured by:

- Participation from leadership bodies, both internal and external to the organization, representing LGBTQ people of color, transgender people, LGBTQ youth, and LGBTQ people outside of Portland;
- Increased mobilization in policy-driven organizing, and an increased ability to mobilize across lines of age and geography; and
- Increased community participation in key decisions related to policy architecture.

Build lasting political power for LGBTQ Oregonians to ensure LGBTQ Oregonians' ability to advocate effectively for our communities.

Legislation and policy change is only effective when we have the political voice and power to ensure its success. In order to fulfill our mission, Basic Rights Oregon must build herculean political power amongst LGBTQ Oregonians to effect change for us and our allies.

As such, Basic Rights Oregon's Equality PAC will continue to grow in its fundraising, field and strategic capacity. Basic Rights will prioritize PAC board development to ensure strong links between staff, board and PAC board in carrying out our shared work. Basic Rights' Equality PAC will also adjust its endorsement process to reflect a new issue selection process.

We recognize that LGBTQ people of color and transgender people aren't just underrepresented in political office—in many cases they're not represented at all. And when LGBTQ people are represented in elected office, they're frequently elected in or near Portland. Therefore Basic Rights Oregon's affiliated Equality PAC will seek to support LGBTQ candidates, with particular focus on LGBTQ people of color, transgender people and LGBTQ people outside of Portland. We recognize that age restrictions prevent many youth from running for office. We will therefore strive to build skills in youth to advocate for their own needs. We will continuously scan the landscape of LGBTQ youth organizations and the needs of LGBTQ youth to find our appropriate role as a uniquely political organization.

Strategies we will use to meet this goal include:

1. Basic Rights Oregon will grow the profile and engagement of the BRO Equality PAC as strategically necessary by:

- Supporting winnable candidate campaigns in order to increase the number of fair-minded lawmakers in public office;
- Raising and coordinating donations and volunteer hours from LGBTQ Oregonians to build and demonstrate our political power; and
- Educating candidates, caucuses, consultants, and managers so that election campaigns can build public will for LGBTQ equality across the state.

2. Developing the political leadership of LGBTQ Oregonians in progressive political organizations and elected office.

- Recruiting, training, and electing out LGBTQ lawmakers to public office, with particular focus on LGBTQ people of color, transgender people, and LGBTQ people outside of Portland; and
- Ensuring that all of Basic Rights' work reflects a commitment to leadership development by building both the social justice analysis of our many volunteers, and providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively lead work to change public and institutional policy.

3. Grow our capacity to successfully execute grassroots public education and mainstream media activities by:

- Expanding our reach into small town and rural media outlets;
- Coordinating a grassroots public education campaign that includes speakers' bureaus, high publicity public events, face to face education, etc.; and

- Utilizing key messengers, including: LGBTQ people of color, transgender people, LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ people outside of Portland; straight allies and PFLAG; faith leaders; business people; elected officials and partner organizations.

4. Develop and maintain an up-to-date file of identified voters by:

- Annual contact, growth and investments that increase the depth and utility of the data in the Voter Activation Network.

Build our coalitions and partnerships to contribute to lasting, vibrant movements for LGBTQ justice and progressive politics.

At its core, Basic Rights is a political advocacy organization with a progressive soul, and from our state’s many years of anti-LGBTQ attacks, we know that partnerships are crucial to winning and implementing policy victories. Similar attacks have been leveled against immigrant & refugee communities, labor unions, the reproductive justice movement, and more. As a result of that anti-everybody organizing, Oregon is a leader in progressive political coalitions, and in partnerships between racial justice and LGBTQ organizations.

In the next five years, we will continue to grow our circle of partners and take those partnerships to the next level by:

1. Strengthen our partnerships with progressive partner organizations as measured by:

- Engagement of community and movement leaders in furthering BRO’s political agenda;
- Mobilization of BRO resources (funding and field power) in critical policy battles impacting key allies and vice versa; and
- Participation as key partners in strategic and values-based political coalitions.

2. Deepen our alliances within LGBTQ community organizations by:

- Creating channels amongst LGBTQ community organizations to address shared needs and challenges, and to identify emerging policy needs;
- Establishing an ever-evolving approach to policy implementation that can help meet the most pressing needs of our communities; and
- Supporting emerging LGBTQ organizations as appropriate to enrich LGBTQ Oregonians’ experiences and better contribute to their experience of lived equality.

3. Research, develop and test a model for effective LGBTQ youth engagement and leadership and policy by:

- Regularly scanning the landscape of organizations serving LGBTQ youth to identify gaps that Basic Rights can and should fill;
- Researching existing models of LGBTQ youth leadership and engagement;
- Identifying the best ways to engage LGBTQ youth—either as an organizational partner or through direct recruitment and leadership development—that both meets their immediate needs and furthers their engagement; and
- Continuing to champion policies that meet the needs of LGBTQ youth.

4. Deepen our alliances with people of color-led and racial justice organizations by:

- Engaging racial justice organizations as key partners in all of Basic Rights' efforts;
- Continuing to take regular public action for racial justice allies; and
- Identifying issues that impact LGBTQ people of color and developing and executing joint advocacy plans to win policy victories by & for LGBTQ people of color.

5. Strengthen partnerships with businesses that prioritize leading the way to LGBTQ equality by:

- Assisting in the implementation of nondiscrimination and other pro-LGBTQ policies with employers;
- Expanding support for LGBTQ equality by connecting with LGBTQ workers and assisting businesses in taking public stands for our communities; and
- Building relationships with businesses' offices of community engagement to expand our relationships in the long term.

Support and carry through policy victories through concerted policy implementation, public education and LGBTQ community education.

We fundamentally believe that in order to change hearts and minds, we need to do education work, with our LGBTQ base and the larger community. We need to do education of the public, so that they know the issues faced by LGBTQ Oregonians. We need to do education of institutions such as schools and prisons, so that they are better able to treat LGBTQ people with respect. We need to provide educational resources so that our LGBTQ base knows their rights under new and changing laws, as well as how to best be allies across the spectrum of progressive issues. Education is also a fundamental component of policy implementation. For legal equality to become lived equality for all LGBTQ Oregonians, Basic Rights Oregon has an important role in making sure that legislation that we have advocated for is actually working for LGBTQ Oregonians. Education is a fundamental part of who we are at Basic Rights Oregon.

Over the next five years we will continue to build and improve on this work by:

1. Empowering LGBTQ communities through education by:

- Providing support for the leadership of LGBTQ People of Color and support for issues of racial justice across our base;
- Training our base and allies in key skills, particularly when it comes to how to make policy change which directly affects people's lives;
- Providing "know your rights" trainings and resources which help educate and empower our base, particularly LGBTQ people of color, LGBTQ youth and trans, genderqueer and gender nonconforming people, and LGBTQ people outside of Portland; and
- Provide regular trainings to our base on issues affecting LGBTQ people of color, LGBTQ youth, and trans, genderqueer and gender nonconforming people.

2. Creating change in public and private institutions by:

- Providing model policies, trainings, and/or best practices with employers, agencies, schools and institutions on working with the LGBTQ community; and
- Providing “know your rights” trainings which help people navigate institutions and agencies, so that they can advocate for themselves.

3. Effectively implementing our policy victories by:

- Targeted outreach to people affected by policies to learn how the policies are working in reality;
- Convening representatives from agencies, institutions, advocacy organizations and those directly affected by policies together as needed to ensure that there is consistency and continuity of services needed by the breadth of the LGBTQ community; and
- Building an infrastructure to better support legal responses to discrimination or other non-compliance with policy change.

Build organizational strength through capacity building, organizational development initiatives and financial stability.

We cannot make the change we want to achieve in our state without a strong, inclusive organization that is financially and structurally stable. In order to achieve lived equality for all Oregonians, we need our organization to be present and accountable to all parts of our state. We will also continue to be accountable to our anti-oppression values.

In the next five years, Basic Rights will continue to strengthen our organization through:

1. Committing to internal anti-oppression work amongst our staff, board, donors and volunteer leadership by:

- Practicing an on-going commitment to anti-racist organizational development, with transparency and accountability to community leaders;
- Committing to internal education of staff and board and shifting organizational practices around disability rights and accessibility;
- Committing to internal education around the needs and experiences of LGBTQ youth; and
- Ensuring that new staff have a firm grounding in our trans-justice and racial justice values as well as our approach to building power by and for LGBTQ communities.

2. Establishing new practices to ensure financial stability for the long haul by:

- Continuing to invest in relationships with our longtime national LGBT foundation partners;
- Increasing grassroots fundraising, with a focus on actively engaging our donor base;
- Continuing to diversify our funding base by increasing our foundation funding from local foundations and non-LGBT funders; and
- Exploring the fundraising possibilities of all Basic Rights Oregon related entities – Basic Rights Education Fund, Basic Rights Oregon, Basic Rights Equality PAC and Basic Rights Measure PAC. All of these entities are necessary and useful in achieving our mission. If needed, new entities could be added to continue to move and evolve our work.

3. Establishing a strong presence in all 36 counties by:

- Supporting and building strong relationships with local LGBTQ community leaders across the state, and remaining highly responsive to their needs;
- Remaining visible at local LGBTQ events and Pride celebrations across the state, with staff and/or volunteer representation;
- Building and maintaining a regular schedule of staff travel outside of Portland;
- Holding statewide leadership convenings outside of Portland;
- Using technology and other creative strategies to include more voices outside of Portland in our work on a regular basis.

4. Recruiting, retaining and developing vibrant leadership on staff, on the board, and amongst volunteers by:

- Increasing the leadership and representation from communities that are currently least represented at Basic Rights Oregon, including trans women, LGBTQ youth and people living outside of Portland;
- Retaining a strong working relationship with the staff union, AFSCME Local 1790;
- Recruiting and retaining Boards of Directors for BRO, BREF and EPAC that build the organizational infrastructure and the political power of the organization, are representative of the community and play an active role in fundraising for the community; and
- Creating and offering opportunities for staff development and growth.