

# EVALUATION REPORT:

## Earning the Rainbow Workshop Series (Rainbow Affinity Group)

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November 2021



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## Project Contributors

This project, beyond the evaluation itself, represents a collaboration between many individuals. We would like to recognize their many important contributions to this work.

### Core Project Team

#### Workshop Design

- **Alex Brodovsky** (RAG member) - Facilitation & Design
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#### Evaluation

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### Additional Contributors

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- **Pam Gawn** (The Neighbourhood Group)

### A Special Thank you to...

- Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership (TEQ LIP) Health and Wellbeing Action Group

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- Toronto Neighbourhood Centres Rainbow Affinity Group (TNC RAG)

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## Introduction

The Toronto Neighbourhood Centres (TNC) is a collaborative membership-based network of community organizations across Toronto, working together to address critical social injustices at an individual, organizational, and systemic level. The Rainbow Affinity Group (RAG) is just one of TNC's committees made up of people in all staff roles from organizations in the network, including Frontline Staff, Managers, and Executive Directors. The group focuses on addressing the needs of people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ (two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual and other sexual/gender identities and expressions), including newcomers, by sharing best practices, discussing challenges, and building capacity of the network's membership.

### Building a Collaboration

The Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership (TEQ LIP) focuses on addressing the current needs of newcomers by facilitating collaboration among service providers. Through its Health and Wellbeing pillar, the TEQ LIP has been working to implement strategies to build the capacity of service providers in Scarborough and Toronto to better support 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers. Led by community feedback, this work is focused on the provision of safer spaces and individual impact. This overlap of objectives and the fact that many TEQ LIP organizations are also members of the TNC makes for a naturally successful partnership.

### Developing the Workshop Series

The TNC RAG membership developed the idea for targeted capacity building for staff members through discussions and observed trends and experiences shared by people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ and allies, both community members and staff. The three-part series, titled Earning the Rainbow, was co-designed and developed with the TEQ LIP. Each workshop was written for a specific staff role (First Point of Contact e.g. Receptionists, Frontline Workers, and Managers & Executive Directors) and centred around the exploration of specific workplace scenarios adapted for each intended audience.

The TEQ LIP completed a developmental evaluation and implemented pre and post workshop surveys to offer real-time feedback to the project team around content and format. This report highlights the evaluation results based on participant feedback, and proposes recommendations for next steps.

### Highlights from this Report

- Across a diverse range of work environments, First Point of Contact staff, Frontline staff, and Managers and Executive Directors are seeking more support from their organizations to better support the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, including newcomers.
- The workshops were found to be highly accessible in terms of clarity of content and participants' comfort level, and offered a supportive learning environment where the vast majority of

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participants reported learning new policies/protocols/strategies.

- The use of experiential scenarios as a basis for discussion and building skills in problem-solving were an effective technique to support the learning of participants across all experience levels, and facilitated the sharing of best practices.
- Participants described individual, organizational, and system level barriers and enablers to implement the learning from the workshops within their own places of work.
- Organizing the participant groups by staff role based on organizational responsibility and amount of contact with clients enabled focused problem solving and communication of needs between participant groups.
- The design of the overall workshop series, one that integrates experiential learning and content tailored to distinct audiences, but within a continuous learning approach, is a recommended strategy to support future capacity building around creating safe and welcoming spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ community, including newcomers.

## Evaluation scope

The workshops were evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in: (1) supporting participants to understand the experiences of people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+; and (2) building skills to serve them. The responses from each workshop's evaluation were used to support the design of the following workshop series, while also being collated to demonstrate the effectiveness of this workshop model.

## Methods

A total of 53 pre-surveys and 29 post-surveys were collected across all three participant groups.

The workshops were evaluated through a series of surveys using both quantitative and qualitative questions. All three groups of participants were surveyed before and after each workshop in a pre/post-test format. Pre-test survey results acted as a baseline to measure against post-survey results when reviewing effectiveness and to understand the change in knowledge, attitudes, etc., as a result of participating in the workshops.

While participation in the evaluation process was encouraged, it was not a requirement. As candidness was deemed more important for the evaluation process than the need for tracking the exact effect on

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individual attendees, submissions were anonymous and allowed participants to be more forthcoming with their responses. This gave organizers an understanding of the learnings made by the group as a whole, rather than those of individual members.

The quantitative survey results were analyzed descriptively to produce graphs and charts. Here, all responses were converted to a 10-point scale for easy comparability among charts and graphs. Qualitative results were analyzed thematically to identify some common and unique themes and ideas.

## Results

### Expectations

As part of the baseline assessment, participants were asked questions about their openness to, and motivation for, joining the workshops.

Participants signed up to each of the three workshops for a range of reasons:

- to increase their knowledge and capacity;
- to improve inclusivity, safety, and empowerment in the workplace;
- to increase community connection; and
- to build collaboration.

Those in attendance also sought to gain tools and skills for advocacy and allyship and to understand how to improve inclusivity and service access for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

*“[I] want to learn more and be able to make our agency safe for staff and participants who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+”. -Manager/ED group participant*

*“[I’m] curious to know the different perspectives of organizations and different teams in approaching gender and sexuality in programs and in the workplace particularly in the virtual setting. How do we care for those who are isolated and are not able to reach out because of fear, shame, especially in [the COVID-19] situation like we have now.” -Frontline staff*

*“To network and to know how different organizations are dealing with LGBTQ+ issues in different organizations.” -Frontline staff*

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## Baseline Capacity and Support

Participants were asked what support they already had access to within their organizations, those that helped to create an environment of allyship with 2SLGBTQIA+ identifying people. Their responses provided the workshop project team with context about the attendees' starting capacity.

Before the workshops, many participants had access to tools, strategies, training, and policies. General policies were mentioned, such as anti-discrimination and harassment, and equity and inclusion. General procedures were also highlighted, including guidelines on anti-oppression and complaints procedures. Specific 2SLGBTQIA+ and 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomer supporting practices were also cited, such as: welcoming and inclusive spaces and administrative procedures like gender neutral washrooms and inclusive intake forms. Some also reported having access to targeted training and structural support such as anti-oppression committees.

*“In all the new intake forms clients have the opportunity to identify themselves and give us specific information as an individual about their preferences. By having this information we make sure they are treated with respect and we can [fulfill] their requests.” -Frontline staff*

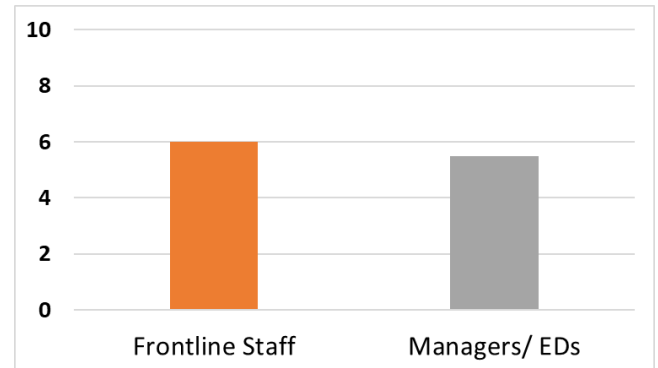
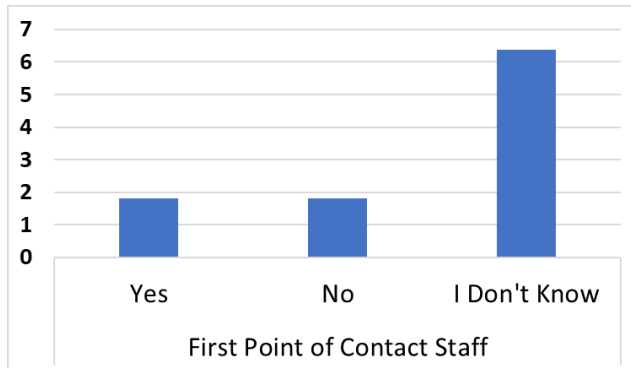
To add additional context, participants were also asked how many training sessions or workshops they had taken in the past five years as a working professional, specifically those whose objectives were to provide better support for people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ (Table 1). Based on the responses, it was clear that Managers, Executive Directors, and Frontline Staff participate in many more trainings (average between 4 and 5 trainings each) than First Point of Contact Staff (average less than 1 training each).

	First Point of Contact Staff	Frontline Staff	Managers and EDs
Average # of trainings	0.72	4.42	5.14
Range of trainings	0-3	0-20	1-10

Table 1: The average number and range of 2SLGBTQIA+ capacity building/ training sessions/ workshops taken in the last 5 years, across participant groups.

For the most part, the Frontline Staff group were the most likely to report having sufficient organizational training/resources to provide safer spaces for colleagues who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+

(Graphs 1 & 2). However, overall, the responses of all three participant groups reflected a need for more support from their organizations. This is consistent with their participation in such a workshop.



Graphs 1& 2: Total response counts to the question 'To what degree do you feel your organization provides the proper training and resources to provide safer spaces for clients (First Point of Contact Staff, Graph 1) and colleagues (Frontline Staff, Managers and Executive Directors, Graph 2) who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ including 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers?'

Participants were asked to share some of the current challenges they experience working in their roles. This 'context setting' would later help to identify the effectiveness of the workshops within diverse work environments. Participants reported a multitude of barriers in supporting community members who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ which fell primarily into three categories: *systemic*, *organizational*, and *individual* (Table 2).

Systemic	Organisational	Individual
Job precarity	Limited professional experience with the community	Being aware of their own privilege
Clients facing homophobia	Having to supervise staff with diverse experience and approaches	A need to learn how to respond to microaggressions.
	Negative organisational responses to challenges	
	Observing overworked management	

Table 2: Barriers around supporting the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, as identified by participants.

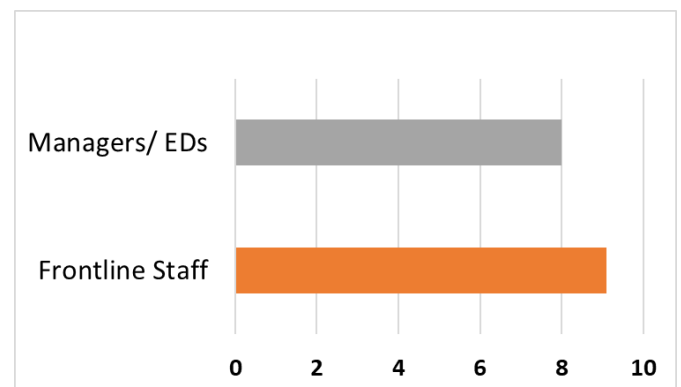
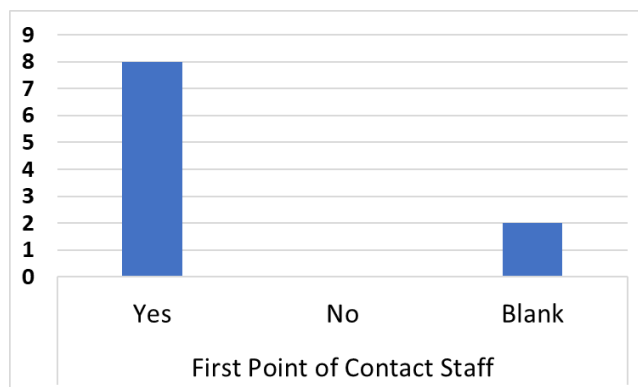


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*"I often don't think that senior management understands the impact of homophobia because it is done in so many microaggressions and not something that is grounds for corrective action in a large way."* -Manager/ED group participant

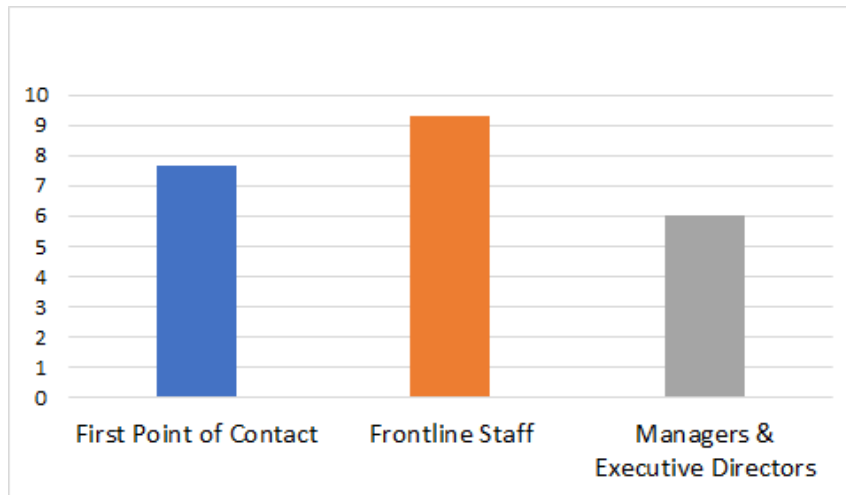
## Accessibility of Workshops

To understand the accessibility of the workshop, participants were asked how easily they were able to engage with the content and the format of the sessions.



Graphs 3 & 4: Total response counts for 'Was the material presented in a clear manner?' (First Point of Contact Staff, Graph 3) and average responses on a scale of 1-10 to 'How clearly was the material presented?' (Frontline Staff, Managers and Executive Directors, Graph 4)

Responses around both the clarity of material presented (Graphs 3 & 4) as well as comfort level to share ideas and thoughts during the workshop (Graph 5) were generally high suggesting the workshop delivery was very accessible.

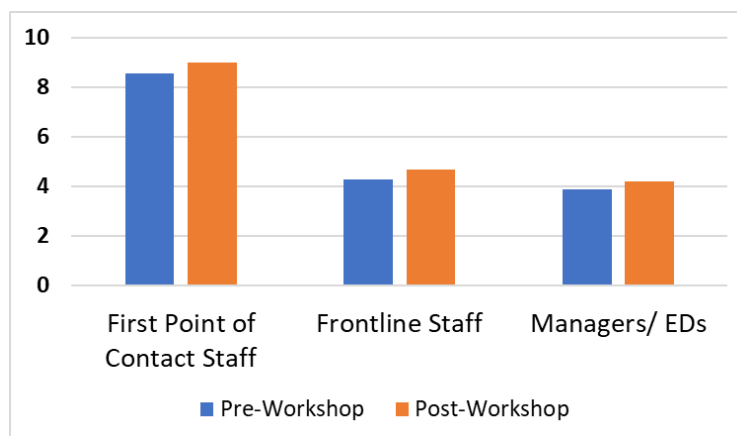


Graph 5: Average responses to the question 'On a scale of 0-10, how comfortable did you feel sharing your thoughts and ideas during the workshop?' across participant groups.

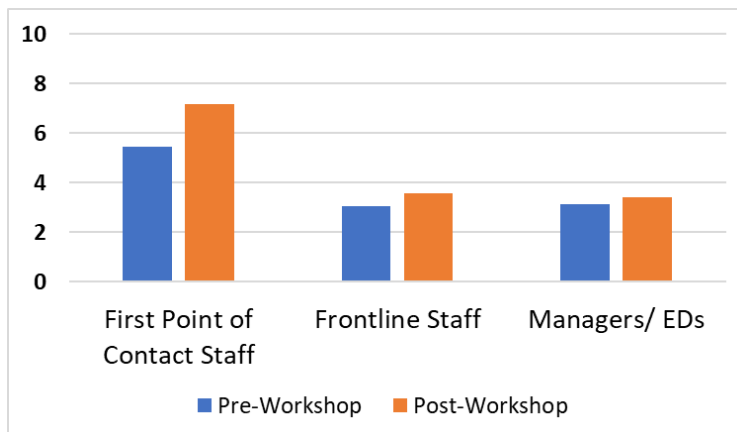
## Effectiveness of Workshops

### Changing Knowledge & Attitudes

The goal of the workshop series was to support the learning of service providers and their awareness of the needs of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, as well as the tools and strategies that meet their needs. In order to assess the effectiveness of the workshops, participants were asked to rate their change in comfort level serving and/or working with members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (Graph 6), and knowledge of this community's unique needs (Graph 7).



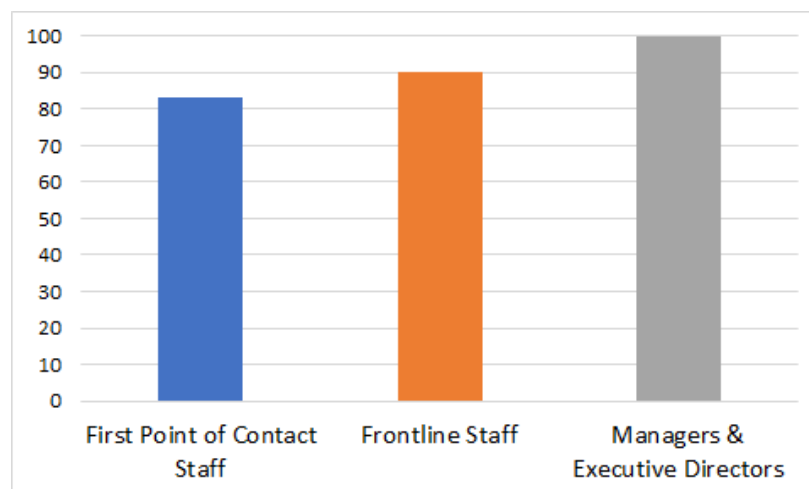
Graph 6: Change in comfort level in serving/interacting with 2SLGBTQIA+ identifying people, across participant groups, average scores out of 10.



Graph 7: Change in knowledge of unique needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ identifying people across participant groups, average scores out of 10.

Participants across all groups reported a marginal increase (less than one point) in both knowledge (Graph 6) and comfort level (Graph 7), after having joined the workshop. One exception was the 'First Point of Contact' group, whose knowledge increased by closer to two points. The overall increase in scores would indicate success in the workshops' goals; however, it is difficult to interpret the modest difference especially since there are some clear indications of participants having learned content/protocols/strategies (described below) which may suggest the need for continuous learning.

A large percentage of participants confirmed they learned new policies, protocols, and strategies to better support people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, with 100% of Managers and Executive Directors confirming so (Graph 8). These numbers indicate that the workshops consistently created an environment for learning practical solutions to typical challenges experienced by attendees' in their specific places of work.



Graph 8: Percentage of respondents who indicated they had learned new policies/protocols/strategies in the workshop, across participant groups.

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Earlier, it was described how participants who registered for the workshops were looking to gain tools and skills for advocacy and allyship and to understand how to improve inclusivity and service access for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Mapping their expectations against what they learned is another evaluative measure for workshop effectiveness.

The respondents described how working through the experiential scenarios (representing workplace experiences of people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+), they were able to get near first-hand experience in supporting people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. The resulting discussions played a significant role in participant learning.

*“[I] really appreciated the scenarios and then hearing first hand how things were followed up and how the individual felt during the scenario and currently.” -Frontline staff*

The topics brought up in the scenarios were familiar for some while new for others, which makes sense given the range of participants’ experience in supporting this community. Participants were able to explore how the scenarios might be experienced by different people and how they might contribute to the situation differently to better support 2SLGBTQIA+ staff and clients in the future.

*“I have not come across much of the identity used in the scenarios at my agency. I would like to work with my agency in making sure that more are done to welcome the needs of this population.” -Frontline staff*

One respondent shared feelings of discomfort while exploring the scenarios, and highlighted that this had caused them to think about how their position might affect the outcome in these types of situations:

*“[The scenarios] did seem to be "manager bashing", but I understand they are intended to make us uncomfortable and it worked. I also see things from both sides and it makes me evaluate my role in interactions.” -Manager/ED group participant*

Although some participants were keen to gain more information, the workshops did support many in achieving their goals to develop their skills in advocacy and allyship including the importance of:

- Individual actions;

*“Ask how you can serve them and listen empathetically” -First point of contact staff*

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- Capacity building of management;

*“It was interesting to hear from some of the EDs in our sector. It is unfortunate that they felt a bit attacked, and my takeaway is that we really need to build up their competency in having these discussions.” -Manager/ ED group participant*

- Continuous learning with specific and targeted capacity building;

*“There needs to be opportunities for regular training for staff both for their own learning but also for member engagement and doing education with members.” -Frontline staff*

- Building safe and inclusive environments;

*“Don't just look at surface things like signage and posters and flags go beyond that to have real conversations and be committed” -Frontline staff*

- Consenting inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ colleagues;

*“ask for consent from staff before depleting their time and energy” -Frontline staff*

- Focusing on a needs-based service delivery model.

*“We want to create safe spaces for our staff and participants and this will be best with clear and transparent communication.” -Manager/ED group participant*

## **Content & Techniques**

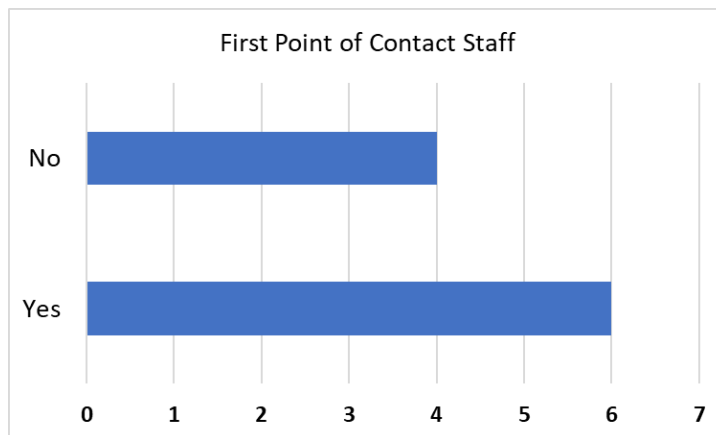
The three workshops, uniquely designed for three work roles, aimed to build transferable problem-solving skills using a scenario-based format that had a range of impacts. This scenario-based format, along with the broader workshop design was also evaluated in its ability to facilitate participants' learning.

One method for measuring the impact of this design was to assess the novelty of the presented scenarios (i.e. whether participants had experienced the scenarios in their workplace before). The answers would indicate how well the workshops balanced relevance/ reliability of workshop content with exposure to new experiences and ideas. Overall, participants reported a moderate level of familiarity with the scenarios, where they tended to be more familiar for Frontline staff and

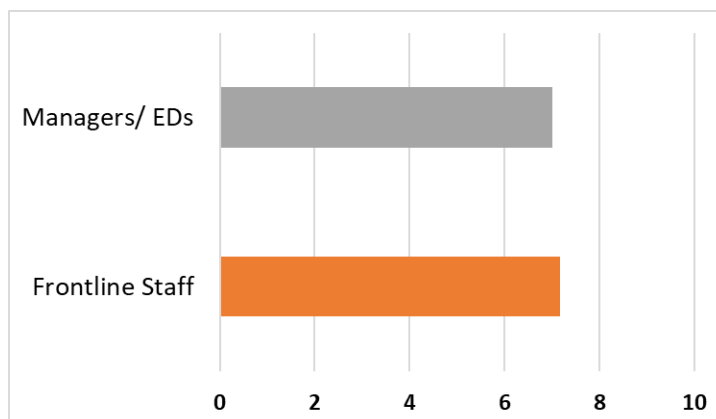
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Managers/EDs than for First Point of Contact staff (Graphs 9 & 10). Some participants offered some additional context as to why the scenarios were not recognizable for them:

*“Since I have started work during the pandemic, I cannot fully relate to the scenarios.” -Frontline staff*



Graph 9: Total response counts to the question “Were the scenarios used in the workshop reflective of experiences/challenges you have faced working in your role?”



Graph 10: Average responses on a scale of 1-10 for “To what degree were the scenarios used in the workshop reflective of scenarios you have experienced and/or observed in your organization?”

However, many others explained how the scenarios were recognizable:

*“The scenarios were reflective, hitting different points that I could relate to both our staff and our members.” -Frontline staff*

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*“I have literally been a part of the Pride example. I think so many of us have overheard people being misgendered, and it is important to think about how to respond and that it's not always cut and dry.” -Frontline staff*

*“The underlying issues were common malpractices present in my organization. Ones that are not directly noticeable, but are definitely harmful” -Frontline staff*

This feedback indicates that the workshop scenarios were well developed and positioned to offer all participants an opportunity to discuss and improve their understanding of the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, regardless of their previous experience.

Another way in which the workshop series facilitated reflection was by integrating feedback from one workshop into the next. In some cases, the feedback was shared anonymously and directly, such as between the Frontline Staff group and the Managers /Executive Directors group. Additionally, some summarized feedback was shared during a learning exchange event open to participants of all three workshops, as well as others who had not attended the series who may have had an interest in the process.

Through the separation of First Point of Contact Staff, Frontline Staff and Managers/Executive Directors in the three workshops, each group was able to identify, discuss, and communicate specific challenges and support they needed from other staff groups to achieve the shared goal of building a safer space. These discussions clearly represented a complex puzzle, however some trends did emerge (Table 3).

Needs	Context
The importance of open, clear, safe communication between management and staff, colleagues, and community members	Mistakes and microaggressions have a wide impact
Get consent from staff for emotional labour	Management have a commitment to responding to the needs of staff
Wider community engagement	Participants are open to continued learning
Incorporate the service user perspective	

Table 3: Summary of expressed needs and corresponding context for building a safe organizational space for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, as reported across all participant groups.

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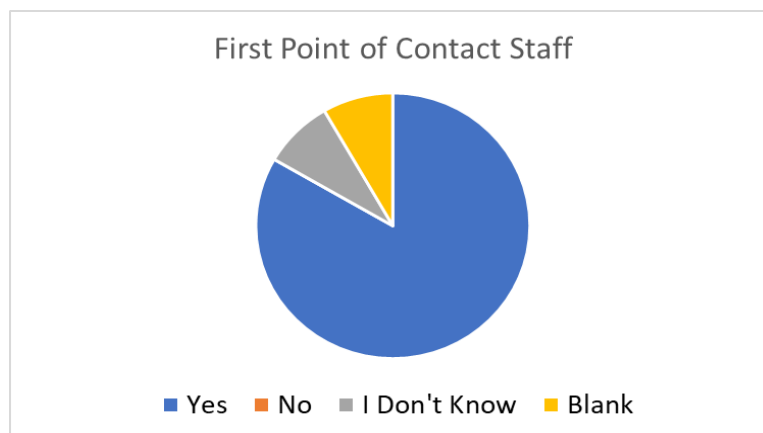
*"We're always learning and unlearning, and to constantly keep up as best I can."* -First point of contact staff

These ideas and suggestions were a dynamic addition to the workshop feedback and helped to explore some of the reasons why these scenarios occur in the workplace. Many of the points raised were used as a basis for continued dialogue at a subsequent learning exchange event.

## Application

To gain an understanding of the potential impact as well as the limitations of the workshops, we explored how participants might take away and apply their learnings. In particular, they were asked about their ability and likelihood of personally implementing any of the policies, protocols or strategies discussed in the workshops.

Overall, participants reported a high likelihood of personally advocating for or introducing any of the policies, protocols or strategies learned throughout the workshop, in their own places of work (Graph 11, Table 4). Managers and Executive Directors scored this likelihood consistently high, whereas Frontline Staff reported a much wider range of responses (Table 3).



Graph 11: Ability to personally implement new protocols and strategies learned in the workplace, as reported by First Point of Contact participants.



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	Frontline Staff	Managers and EDs
Average response	8.59	9.48
Range of responses	5.4 - 10	8.8 - 9.9

Table 4: Likelihood to personally advocate/ introduce any of the policies, protocols, or strategies learned.

The protocols and strategies that participants specifically mentioned they would personally be able to implement included:

- Individual changes, such as using pronouns (displaying their own and asking others for theirs) to avoid assumptions;
- Organizational level changes, such as implementing gender neutral washrooms.

*“Learning about shared washroom facilities was interesting and I agree that a practice is a best approach rather than a policy implementation” -Manager/ED group participant*

Continuing on the theme of understanding the impact of the workshops, participants highlighted barriers and enablers to implementing their learning.

#### Barriers:

- Staff flexibility;
- Gaps in foundational knowledge;
- Comfort level in addressing homophobia;
- A low prioritization as a long term project for the organization.

*“I believe we have good intentions to be inclusive as an agency, however, I think myself and our team do not intentionally incorporate inclusion in all that we do, for staff and members who access our services.” -Frontline staff*

#### Enablers:

- The use of existing relationships;
- Being aware of varying spheres of influence (e.g. personal colleagues, management);
- Adopting and practicing the vision that everyone's safety is a priority, and hand in hand with this;

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- Highlighting that organizations are accountable to everyone's safety.

*"As an organization, it is important to ensure every individual feels safe and welcomed at the setting. It becomes a concern when one feels unsafe, so it is about taking accountability."* - Frontline staff

## Concluding Remarks

While there were some variations across the participant groups, the evaluation demonstrated significant positive learning outcomes for all while also identifying a range of barriers participants face while implementing what they learned. Fortunately, the evaluations also highlighted that workshop attendees have a strong motivation to continue their learning. This process can be informed by the recommendations below, which are based on the report's findings and have been shaped by feedback from participants.

- **The workshop format of open discussion and experiential learning was effective in helping participants take away practical skills and strategies.**

The goal of the TNC Rainbow Affinity Group was to develop service users' understanding of the needs and experiences of people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. Through a unique and dynamic workshop series, participants were able to learn by sharing helpful resources and best practices with each other as well as the project team. While being accessible and relevant, the capacity building environment challenged people to question their power and responsibility in the workplace to support community members and colleagues while encouraging open discussion about the challenges they encounter day-to-day. As a result, a significant number of participants learned a new tool, policy, or strategy they could implement in their workplace.

### Recommendations:

- Continue to offer environments where open discussion, self-reflection, and sharing of best practices is encouraged to support personal growth, where being uncomfortable is supported, and the recognition and healing of mistakes is encouraged.

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- Collate best practices and make them widely available, along with the workshop material, for service providers who newly engage and re-engage with this process, meeting people where they are and helping to expand the reach of the capacity building.
  - **The workshop series used a collaborative and dynamic approach to support participants with any amount of training or type of workplace experience to help improve critical skills required for building safer environments.**

Participants represented a range of different experiences and workplace environments, including varying levels of access to training and workshops, including some specific 2SLGBTQIA+ supporting practices. The workshop style was not only able to accommodate for this but fostered an environment where participants could support each other to explore their own understanding of the needs of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, as well as how they might be able to adapt what they are learning to implement a safer environment for them. This was accomplished through the sharing of experiences, best practices, and tools developing participants' skills in advocacy and allyship, and challenging comfort levels and assumptions.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Continue to consider the audience's needs and prior experiences to ensure relevance and suitability of the workshop content. Here, the simple pre-post survey evaluation is effective in gauging current capacity and planning future capacity building, while also gaining information on the impact of the workshops.
- Seek and make available specific tools and resources that support the individual and the organization to engage in this work, e.g. foundational terminology; tips and tricks for developing a long-term, sustainable implementation plan; ways to highlight the importance of everyone's safety; and the responsibility of organizations to meet this need.
- **While the workshop series has demonstrated success, building skills and capacity to support 2SLGBTQIA+ community members requires continuous learning and support.**

While participants share positive outcomes as a result of the workshops including a high rate of attendees having learned tools and strategies along with reported increases in knowledge and comfort

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levels, participants also shared insights on some of the barriers and enablers they expect to face in implementing what they learned.

The workshops helped to address some of these needs for individual participants. However, reported barriers such as the need for wider community engagement, and the impact of mistakes and microaggressions, help to illustrate the difference between the siloed environment of a capacity building workshop and the broader workplace environment participants are working within.

**Recommendation:** Develop opportunities to support the implementation of learning back into the workplace environment and support service providers to continually reflect and adapt to build safer environments for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

### **Continued Collaboration**

This project is a clear example of co-design and implementation built through strong collaboration. The project team is grateful to have had the opportunity to learn together and grow with the workshop participants, particularly the conversations that have helped identify how we can continue to learn and invite others to join us.

The hope is that this report supports us all as individuals and organizations, to consider how we can build our capacity and hold more welcoming spaces for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and the TNC RAG & TEQ LIP will continue to be a structure of support for this.