

How to write effective proposals

Elements of a Good Proposal

The following is an excerpt from an advocacy proposal written by a gay rights organization in the United States. To protect the privacy of the organization, its name within the proposal has been changed to 'Rights for All'.

In addition to the excerpt provided here, the organization also included other important components in their proposal, such as information on their past accomplishments in this area, why this is an opportune moment for this work and how they will measure their success in advancing policy change.

Project: Advancing tangible policy change on the national level that directs funding and attention to the LGBT community.

Rights for All will continue to advocate for critical legislative and non-legislative policy changes at the national level that will significantly improve the lives of LGBT people and ensure that issues faced by LGBT people are included in significant policies being taken up by federal policy makers, including: economic reform, health care and immigration. More specifically, Rights for All will advance tangible and positive pro-LGBT policy change at the federal level by:

Educating policy makers and preparing them to enact non-legislative policy changes. Over the last year, Rights for All has worked with the new administration as the lead organization on the administration transition project eventually known as the New Beginnings Initiative, which included extensive education of the transition teams for the new Obama Administration on a variety of recommendations for non-legislative policy changes to improve the lives of LGBT people. Rights for All led a coalition of 20 organizations in developing a set of proposed policy changes within federal governmental agencies and the executive branch of government which could be accomplished by rule or regulation, not requiring legislative action. This has been a mammoth undertaking by Rights for All and the participating organizations. The resulting blueprint for policy change, *A New Beginning: policy recommendations to improve the lives of LGBT people and eliminate discrimination from federal policies*, includes briefings from 20 organizations recommending changes to over 80 policies within over 30 federal governmental agencies and the executive branch of government.

Rights for All is now leading the efforts of the New Beginning Initiative coalition and moving forward on advocating for the implementation of the proposed changes. With funding from the Open Society Institute, Rights for All has hired a full time staff member to oversee the coordination and tracking of this significant program including convening the partner organizations and organizing all interactions with the administration to move policy recommendations forward. In addition, Rights for All will track, monitor and publicize on its website the extent to which the administration has made recommended

changes – and engage community members in activities to affect these changes. The power and potential of this project is exemplified in the project’s first “win”, which was getting the Census Bureau to count and report same-sex marriages in the 2010 census, ***Working to support the passage and/or repeal of legislative policy affecting LGBT people***. Over the next two years, Rights for All will focus its energies on a fully-inclusive employment non-discrimination act; domestic partnership benefits for federal employees; the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act and Don’t Ask Don’t Tell; comprehensive immigration and healthcare reform; and economic policies. During the course of the grant period, Rights for All will provide national leadership by working in coalition with congressional offices to educate members on the merits of legislation and how it will affect their constituency and provide public educational tools for local advocates and state organizations and raise public awareness on the state and local levels on issues affecting LGBT people.

An important component to the passage of an inclusive ENDA is effective utilization of the grassroots momentum and collaborative efforts that became known as United ENDA – a now 400 member coalition of organizations initiated and led by Rights for All. In partnership with the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) – we will continue to lead United ENDA and coordinate its efforts. In addition, Rights for All will use data from the Policy Institute survey conducted this year on transgender discrimination to educate policy makers and their constituencies. We will also continue to work with NCTE and the Office of Personnel Management to enact regulatory changes aimed at eliminating transgender discrimination in federal employment. Rights for All will continue to educate key leaders on the importance of the Domestic Partners Benefits and Obligations Act, which has been introduced in both chambers of Congress to provide partner benefits to federal employees. With the recent introduction of the Respect for Marriage Act, Rights for All will continue working with its partners to support a repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act. We will also partner with Servicemembers Legal Defense Network on the military policy “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell,” and Immigration Equality and non-LGBT progressive immigration organizations to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform and educate law makers on the inclusion of LGBT families in the new immigration legislation.

In addition, Rights for All has a long-standing partnership with SAGE to advance pro-LGBT initiatives affecting the lives of LGBT seniors. Activities for the grant year include leveraging the *New Beginnings Initiative* (above) and educating key policy makers and lawmakers in federal and state legislatures on fair and equitable policy changes affecting LGBT seniors. An additional area of focus this year includes advocacy and education around entitlement reform as LGBT seniors are at risk of losing a critical safety net if there are cuts or benefit reductions resulting from changes to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

The revised *Outing Age: Public Policy Issues Affecting Gay, Lesbian, Transgender Elders* was released in November 2009 and will be leveraged – over the next two years – to educate the LGBT community and organizations about federal dollars available for LGBT housing, care and services through recommendations set forth in the report. *Outing Age* also incorporates new research and policy work concerning the aging community and integrates the findings of the federal policy mapping work Rights for All completed in collaboration with SAGE. Together, we were instrumental in getting HHS to establish a national resource center on LGBT aging.

Outputs: *During the grant period, Rights for All will:* (1) meet with the contributors to the New Beginning Initiative to develop a strategy for direct interactions with government agencies and to enact the recommended policy changes; (2) meet with appropriate staff in each of the government agencies over the next two years, develop an online report card to track and make public progress on implementing the recommendations; (3) leverage *New Beginnings* and *Outing Age* to affect policy change and federal resources available to organizations focused on seniors and aging; (4) continue its participation in Our Families Count, the Queer the Census grassroots campaign, and deliver petitions from the Census “sticker campaign to federal officials;” (5) provide leadership of the United ENDA coalition, managing the local, state and national activities to educate the public and lead advocacy efforts in Congress; host community forums with elected officials and monthly steering committee meetings of the United ENDA coalition; release reports leveraging data on transgender discrimination to support ENDA and other issues affecting the transgender community; (6) continue educating policymakers to ensure passage of at least two of the following pro-LGBT policies: ENDA, Domestic Partner Benefits and Obligations Act, LGBT-inclusive immigration legislation, and/or the repeal of DADT and DOMA.

Outcomes: By the end of the grant period, Rights for All will: (1) increase the number of LGBT people who live freer from federally sanctioned discrimination by delivering – in partnership with New Beginning organizations – as many as fifteen administrative or regulatory wins at the federal level covering a range of regulations. Of the fifteen New Beginnings coalition wins expected, Rights for All will deliver a minimum of five concrete federal policy wins; (2) increase LGBT participation in the 2010 Census so that we continue to have strong data on same-sex couples to refute right wing lies about the community, and report on the depth and breadth of challenges facing LGBT same-sex couples and their families, reverse anti-LGBT policies and laws, and enact pro-LGBT policies and legislation; (3) increase the number of LGBT people who have employment discrimination protections from 39% for transgender persons and 52% for LGB persons to 100%; and (4) through attaining at least one other legislative win, more LGBT people will be able to serve their country, receive federal employees partner benefits, or otherwise not live in fear of government-supported discrimination.