This is a general career guide for LGBTQ students. The guide is designed to support you in applying for jobs and internships by showing you how to leverage available resources and make decisions that work for you and your career.

This guide is not able to answer every question you might have, but we hope that it answers some of them, and offer insight into steps you can take to get closer to finding the answers you’re searching for.
Support at School
Many LGBTQ student clubs and organizations including college and professional faculty, can help you get connected to and network with other LGBTQ students, staff and faculty. Also, consider getting involved with student groups or clubs which align with your career aspirations to gain insight into the profession and meet people who share the same career interests.

Expand your network/connection
Connecting with professionals, employers and alumni — particularly those who identify as LGBTQ — is a great way to envision yourself doing what you want to do. Reaching out to your personal and community contacts, and connecting with student groups, campus and career resources, can feel intimidating and can take time, but is necessary for the job search process.
Networking

The purpose of networking is to build relationships, connect with people in your field of interest, and an effective way to find job and internship opportunities. Networking can happen in a casual environment, a professional setting or at formally-structured networking events.

Opportunities to Network include

- Social media – We suggest creating a LinkedIn profile to seek out individuals you are connected to who are in positions or companies you are interested in exploring.
- Informational interviews
- Job Shadowing
- Professional events
- Professional organization meetings and conferences
- Classroom speakers, current employers, supervisors, internship fairs, and mentoring groups (on-campus or community-based)

Networking Tips:

- The more you network, the better your chances of hearing about job openings.
- Present yourself professionally in appearance, language, and interactions.
- Prepare a personal introduction or elevator pitch which includes your name, major, year in school, interest areas, and general career goals.
- Develop a list of general questions to ask about an individual’s job, career path, and place of employment.
- Maintain an organized list of contacts.
- Send a thank you note to those who provide information and referrals within 24 hours.
Informational Interview
Once you’ve identified a professional whom you want to connect with to learn more about their career or a particular job, you can request an informational interview. This is an opportunity to talk to professionals about their career journey and learn from their experiences. This can be a formal invitation or a casual conversation.

Informational interviews - Start to finish
Reach out: When requesting an informational interview, it’s helpful to explain why you’re reaching out and to highlight any common interests or experiences.

Book a meeting - Professionals often have busy schedules, so be mindful and accommodating of their time. People often meet in public spaces (such as coffee shops), in meeting rooms and offices, and also via video conferencing. You should meet where you feel most comfortable and safe.

Prepare some questions - Before the meeting, do some research and prepare questions, such as
- What do you enjoy the most about your current role?
- What is the most challenging aspect of the role?
- What is your advice for someone hoping to enter this field?
- Are there specific resources/groups/contacts that might be useful as I continue my job search?

Follow up - After your meeting, send a follow-up email
Thank the person for their time and insights. You can use this follow-up email to remind them of any commitments they made (e.g. referrals to other contacts, resources, etc.). If they gave you a piece of advice, let them know if and how it was helpful.
Developing your resume and other documents
Resumes and cover letters give you the opportunity to showcase skills you’ve gained across different experiences and share your accomplishments. Effective applications are tailored to respond to the requirements of a job description. When it comes to your personal identity and experiences, you can decide what information you want to share and how.

Preparing for interviews
Interviewing can be a stressful process, but is also a rewarding opportunity to share your accomplishments and experiences. Take some time before your interview to reflect on your experiences and choose examples that demonstrate skills most relevant to the job description. You may also want to think about what you’re comfortable sharing in an interview.

Interview tips
Don’t forget to practice! Practicing can help you feel confident with sharing how you choose to present yourself and your accomplishments in a tailored way. Schedule a mock interview with a career professional at school.

Research the company, hiring managers, and industry to gain a better understanding of who they are and what they care about.

Brainstorm potential interview questions by going through the job description and highlighting the main skills required and how you’ve performed those skills.

Send a follow up email after the interview and thank them for the opportunity. Try referring to something you spoke about in the interview that resonated.

Resume and cover letter review
Reach out to Career Center at school, faculty members or professionals in your desired field to review and provide feedback on your application materials (resume & cover letter).
Coming Out on a Resume or in a Cover Letter

Should you include information on your resume or in a cover letter that directly associates you with the LGBTQ community? For example, you may wonder whether to include LGBTQ-specific awards or scholarships, advocacy work, or involvement in LGBTQ student organizations. Whether or not to come out on a resume or cover letter depends on your own comfort level and interest in sharing your sexuality or gender identity with others. It is a very personal decision to come out at any stage of the job search process. As such, there is no right or wrong answer.

While it is important to some people to be out and visible, others prefer to be more private. Ask yourself: is it important to you to be out at work? Be sure to research your work environment. Is it likely the organization you’re applying to is LGBTQ-friendly? If you’re concerned they are not, you may choose to highlight the skills you developed but not the organizations you worked with. Is a particular activity, award, or experience relevant to the job you are applying for? If the experience does not demonstrate relevant skills you may choose to leave it off at this point.

HELLO IM-
BORN THIS WAY
Pronouns – to share or not to share?

**Disclosing when creating your application**

**Benefits**
Put yourself forward and weed out employers that don’t have the environment you’re looking for.

**Drawbacks**
You may worry that a decision about whether to interview you was based on identity rather than qualifications.

**Example:**
Add pronouns to your resume title next to your name.

**Things to consider**
Discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression is against the law. However, transphobia (and discrimination on other protected grounds) can happen if you provide this information at the application stage. If you’re unsure whether or not to include this information at the application stage, you can speak to a human resources representative or another employee at the company if you know one, to see how this information would be handled.

**Disclosing during the interview**

**Benefits**
Disclosing in person can help you control tone, which may allow you to casually raise what’s important in a moment that feels most appropriate. You’re able to then present yourself how you want, and the responses of the interview committee members may give you an authentic reading of the organization. To help interviewers accurately refer to you in their decision-making process, you could choose to share your pronouns at the end of the interview once they’ve learned about your skills and experiences.

**Drawbacks**
Sharing your pronouns early in the interview could change the focus away from your experiences and on to your gender. Even if this doesn’t actually happen, you might worry that it has, which can distract you from focusing on the interview. Sharing your pronouns towards the end might mean you’re being misgendered throughout the interview. Also, if this is the last piece of information you leave the hiring committee with, it could become a focus of their discussion of you as a potential candidate.

**Example:**
During interview, introduce yourself by name and pronouns.

**Things to consider**
Interviews go two ways. As they’re assessing you, you’re assessing them too. Even if you get an offer, do you want this job.
Disclosing when offered an interview

Benefits
Disclosure at this point can lead to a more comfortable interview for both interviewee and interviewer. It also allows you to make any accommodation requests that might help your interview progress smoothly.

Drawbacks
Depending on reception to disclosure, it may distract interviewers from focusing on your qualifications at the interview.

Example:
Disclose your pronouns in email when you accept the job offer.

Things to consider
Once offered, it is unlikely that an interview offer will be withdrawn (if it is, this may be grounds for a human rights complaint).

Ways of finding LGBTQ-friendly companies/employers

Look for a Diversity and Inclusion Governance Structure
A company must have a diversity and inclusion governance structure that helps guide its strategies and programs, fosters leadership and management commitment, and drives employee engagement to create and foster an inclusive culture.

Ask The Right Questions During an Interview
- Can you speak to your company culture?
- Does your company have employee resource groups? And if so, how many?
- What are your specific inclusion practices and policies?

Ask About Employee Resources Groups
These groups can serve as a way to reduce feelings of isolation, reduce turnover, increase employee engagement. They can also serve as safe havens to air grievances and discuss any issues arising with coworkers or supervisors.

Consider the Benefits on Offer
A company that’s LGBT-friendly and diverse will often pride itself on offering benefits that appeal to a wide variety of employees. Those might include comprehensive health care coverage—including coverage for same-sex spouses or partners—as well as different types of leave, such as paid family leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, and paid sick leave.
Stay true to who you are. If you’ve never felt comfortable in a dress, opt for a pantsuit. Confidence is key from the get-go, and it is hard to be confident when you feel uncomfortable in your clothing. Wear clothing that highlights your personality and allows you to be yourself.

Consider a daily uniform. To avoid decision fatigue and make your mornings smoother, create a look you can wear every day. For example, you can invest in several neutral-colored button-downs and a few pairs of slacks to rotate through.

Observe the level of professionalism. Unless there is an industry standard, opt for business casual or perhaps more professional attire for your first day on the job. Take note of how other employees are dressed and base your degree of professional attire accordingly. To get a jump start on the standard dress code, you can also consult human resources ahead of your first day of work.

The key is finding clothing that achieves the three Ps: Proper fit, Polished, and Professional.
What does diversity and inclusion look like in practice here?

I was excited to read the statement on diversity and inclusion/non-discrimination policy on your website. Can you tell me a little bit more about how your organization or department supports diversity and inclusion? What does this policy look like day-to-day? What opportunities or initiatives are there to contribute to an inclusive workplace?

Keep in mind that an interview serves two purposes. Not only are interviewers assessing whether they want to hire you, you are also assessing whether you want to work for them. An interview is a great opportunity to determine the company’s diversity and inclusion policies, practices and culture in the workplace. Consider asking:

- What does diversity and inclusion look like in practice here? I was excited to read the statement on diversity and inclusion/non-discrimination policy on your website.
- Can you tell me a little bit more about how your organization or department supports diversity and inclusion?
- What does this policy look like day-to-day? What opportunities or initiatives are there to contribute to an inclusive workplace?

Remember, if you were invited for an interview, they’re already impressed with your qualifications!

You’re interviewing them, too

Employers are not allowed to make hiring decisions based on gender identity or gender expression (except in very limited circumstances where one of those things relates to the core duties of the job). So employers shouldn’t ask questions about your gender – either directly or indirectly – during or outside of the interview context (such as casual conversation before or after the interview).

If they ask these questions, you’re not obligated to answer. This might feel challenging in an interview setting, so if an employer asks you an inappropriate question, you have a few options.

- Answer if you feel comfortable.
- Deflect or address the concern you think the question is about. If, for example, someone asks you about a previous name that you used, you could respond with something like, “That is my legal name and this is the name I use.”
- Ask the interviewer to explain how it’s relevant to the role to make them realize it’s not an appropriate question. For example, you could say, “I’m not sure I understand how this would be relevant for this position. Can you explain?”
- Refuse to answer the question.
**Additional Resources**

**Career Services - Students**
https://career.umn.edu/students

**Career Services - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) Students**
https://career.umn.edu/gay-leather-bisexual-queer-and-allied-lgbtqia-students

**Coming Out at Work**
https://www.hrc.org/resources/coming-out-at-work

**LGBTQ and Gender Non-binary Resources**
https://uwosh.edu/career/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2016/05/LGBTQandGenderNon-binaryResources.pdf

**References**


