



Working Group Meeting to Establish a Gay & Lesbian Business Network
Held at Southern Sun Cape Sun Hotel, Cape Town, South Africa
13 April 2016

REPORT

1. Background

Since its formation, the Other Foundation has been working to establish strategic partnerships and fund joint projects with allies of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities in our region, especially in the business sector. The motivation for this approach is to promote economic empowerment and participation and improve social inclusion and physical safety for LGBTI people, and to change attitudes and practices towards LGBTI people in the workplace.

Exclusion from even the scarce employment opportunities that are available and workplace discrimination are continually identified by LGBTI people in southern Africa as factors that affect them deeply. At the same time, some LGBTI-owned small businesses are thriving and others are eager to do better by tapping into LGBTI markets. And some big companies are committed and eager to ensure greater diversity in their workforce and to ensure LGBTI inclusion in their supply chains.

At the level of international economic and development policy, “inclusive economic growth” and development approaches that “leave no-one behind” are at the top of the policy agenda.

Young LGBTI professionals who are newly big earners hold huge influence over their families in urban and rural environments. On the one hand, they and their straight peers are developing new worldviews and value systems as they enter the world of work in companies in the cities; and on the other hand they hold the power to leverage the “aspirational” attractiveness of their lives (and the financial muscle that they wield in their families and local communities) to shape new social value systems that erode homophobic and discriminatory attitudes towards homosexual, bisexual, and gender non-conforming people. But this opportunity is likely to last only one generation before the unique power that this segment of an emerging generation wanes.

It is the perfect moment, therefore, to launch a sustained and deliberate effort to harness the power of business for LGBTI economic empowerment and social acceptance in southern Africa.

2. Response to the need

The Foundation has been exploring the possibility of establishing a national gay and lesbian business network or chamber of commerce in South Africa as one way to structure a coordinated response to this challenge. The Foundation has been in consultation with the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) of the United States of America about this. The two entities launched a partnership by developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed on 15 April 2016, to cooperate in this work.

As a first step, the Foundation invited business owners, individual service providers who relate to small or medium enterprises and big businesses, and technical specialists to participate in a

meeting of a small working group in Cape Town, prior to the signing of the MOU. Twenty individuals attended the working group meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to explore if there is any traction for focused support to LGBTI-owned businesses through a business network or chamber of commerce, identifying areas of work in which there is some likelihood of success, defining potential linkages with LGBTI workplace groups in big businesses, and map a way forward for the Foundation's investment in the economic empowerment of LGBTI people insofar as that relates to private enterprise.

The discussions at the meeting also included an engagement with the NGLCC who outlined their offerings of workplace inclusion, marketing, and supplier diversity (procurement) to create a safe space for LGBTI people to do business.

The outcomes of the working group discussions will shape the future programming of the Other Foundation in this field of work for a 5 year period, relating both to supporting the economic empowerment of LGBTI people through business development and LGBTI workplace issues in big businesses.

In addition, participants were invited to stay on in Cape Town as the Foundation's guests to attend the 33rd global convention of the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA), held at the Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town on Thursday, 14 – 15 April 2016. Participants were offered free registration at the IGLTA global convention by the NGLCC.

The participants in the meeting unanimously endorsed the proposal to establish a national LGBTI business network in South Africa.

3. Risks

The following risks were identified:

- The identity of the business network should be fully inclusive and representative of the demographics of LGBTI communities in all their diversity, including race, class, gender, geographic, age and other factors.
- Failure to find a valuable space in the crowded architecture of business associations' in the South African "transformation" space.
- Ongoing effort is required to keep the broader community involved.
- Most business networks / chambers of commerce are not sustainable because of the failure of membership fee structures vs. benefits. Careful attention must therefore be given to this aspect of structuring a new business network.

4. Opportunities

The group listed the following opportunities for the business network:

- The desire amongst successful LGBTI business people to leave a legacy that is somehow linked to private enterprise.
- The potential to establish strategic “hooks” with existing laws and other regulatory frameworks (e.g. Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment codes, the Companies Act, corporate governance codes, etc).
- The possibility of including companies who are part of the business network in the national treasury supplier database.
- The identity of the business network being a source of strength.
- Focusing on “new industries” (e.g. communications and renewable energy).
- The currency of the link between the business imperative and the social transformation imperative in our context.
- LGBTI business is part of building a transformed community.

5. Areas of focus

The group agreed on the following focus areas:

- Advocacy for an enabling the business environment and support for LGBTI business owners, opening space to normalize the environment.
- Mentoring and coaching, ensuring that the approach is linked to long term advancement (e.g. an incubation platform).
- Establishing and linking with a network of workplace LGBTI groups who become internal champions of LGBTI inclusion in supply chains and employment.
- Promotion of supplier diversity.
- Accreditation of LGBTI suppliers.
- Establishing a database of LGBTI suppliers.
- Enterprise development that includes technical support, mentoring/coaching, training and market development.
- Business to business networking, including value chain development.

6. Benefits

Participants identified the following as potential benefits of membership of the business network:

- Mentorship and business development support.
- Accreditation as an LGBTI supplier.
- A reduced fee for business-to-business or technical support opportunities.
- Access to Facebook and other networking groups.
- Free registration at an annual network gathering
- Access to registration on the the NGLCC US LGBTI supplier database.
- Loyalty rewards and reduced rates for member products and services.
- Receiving communication (e.g. newsletter) about business opportunities.

7. Responsibilities of members

Member responsibilities were identified to be as follows:

- Paying membership fees.
- Underwriting the values that the business network stands for.
- Declaring association with the business network.
- Participating in network activities.
- Recruiting new members.

9. Next steps

All participants agreed to be on the Working Group for the establishment of the business network. The following actions were agreed, with volunteer leaders for each task:

- Recruit a project officer (the Other Foundation).
- Procure the services of an agency to assist with the technical aspects of the project (the Other Foundation).
- The name of the business network to be changed to just a “name” and “tag line”, for decision by the Working Group (the Other Foundation).
- Produce a scoping report / feasibility study / business case for the business network (Siphiwe Tshabalala, Liezl van der Westhuizen and Luiz De Barros).
- Develop a co-financing proposition (Marion Green-Thompson and Kelly-loulie).
- Draft a mission and values statement for the business network (Liezl van der Westhuizen and Luiz De Barros).
- Draft articles of association for the business network (Siphiwe Tshabalala).
- Develop a draft brand for the business network (Luiz De Barros and Fanney Tsimong).
- Plan a regional road show linked to the upcoming meetings of the working group (the Other Foundation).
- Launch the brand at an event (Reuben Nyoni).

It was agreed that meetings of the working group will be held quarterly with the next meeting to be held in Johannesburg on Wednesday, 20 July 2016. At that meeting, all draft products listed above should be presented for discussion and decision.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Andile Nxumalo	Stu Bed and Breakfast
Darren Kelly-Loulie	Aspigon
David Ryan	Rino Africa Safaris
Dean Ebden	Vukile Communications
Fanney Tsimong	Doti Productions
Liezl van der Westhuizen	Creatividad Consulting
Luiz De Barros	Mambaonilne
Marion Green-Thompson	Globeleq South Africa Management Services
Nhlanhla Ndaba	Doti Productions
Reuben Nyoni	Mpatho Nyoni Events
Simphiwe Tshabalala	Black Inc. Events
Xhanti Payi	Nascence Advisory and Research
Zini Godden	Development Practitioner
Orain Edwards	US National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (guest)
Michael Castellano	US National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (guest)
Andrew Howard	The Other Foundation
Neville Gabriel	The Other Foundation
Shekeshe Mokgosi	The Other Foundation
Carolina Shields	The Other Foundation (support personnel)
Tendai Thondhlana	The Other Foundation (support personnel)
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