



IATSE PRIDE

Pride Committee How-To Guide

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Guide Contents

History of the IATSE.....	3
Structure of the IATSE	3
IATSE Equality Statement.....	5
What is the IATSE Pride Committee?	6
Community Guidelines: P.R.I.D.E.....	7
Before You Start	8
Engaging Potential Committee Members	9
Starting a Pride Committee.....	10
Writing a Mission Statement	12
Pride Committee Activities	14
Things to Consider	17
Pride Committee Checklist.....	19

History of the IATSE

The National Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees was established in 1893 when ten cities with stagecraft workers that were affiliated with a labor union group called the Knights of Labor decided to join together and form a national union. The purpose of this affiliation was to achieve the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the workers in the entertainment industry by collectively organizing and bargaining with employers collectively to gain these improvements. In 1898, with the addition of two Canadian locals, the National Alliance became the International Alliance (IATSE), which has remained to this day. Over the years we have grown to become one of the largest unions in the entertainment industry with over 150,000 members in over 366 local unions.

As the decades progressed and technology changed, the crafts of the IATSE adapted as well. Theatrical events have grown to include more than just plays and musicals to other forms of amusement, and commercial and industrial tradeshow. Motion Pictures brought about not only the crafts that created the films themselves and the workers who showed them in movie theaters across North America, but the shows and movies we consume via the Internet and streaming as well. Television has adapted from small regional studios to globally televised events.

Through it all, the IATSE has been there to represent the workers in these various crafts: the people who make the magic happen.

Structure of the IATSE

The IATSE is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), and local unions are affiliated with the relevant state or provincial labor federations. The laws of the IATSE are found in the International Constitution and Bylaws, but each local also has its own Constitution and Bylaws.

All locals operate independently under a principle known as “Home Rule,” also known as “Local Autonomy.” This structure enables members to have a direct voice in their working lives. Members of each local determine their priorities and how they choose to operate through their own Executive Boards and general membership meetings.

The day-to-day administration of the IATSE affairs is in the hands of the International President, with an extended staff that spans the US and Canada to assist the local unions. The General Office is located in New York City with other offices in Los Angeles, Toronto, and Vancouver.

The IATSE is broken into 13 geographical districts. Most Districts meet at least once a year so members have another forum to raise and discuss issues that may affect members on a regional level. Each District has a secretary who coordinates and communicates information from the International, other regional IA locals, state/provincial federations, and worker groups.

The Supreme governing body of the IATSE is its Quadrennial Convention. Every four years, convention delegates – elected by their local unions – review the progress of the organization. It is at this time that the policies are changed or reasserted, that plans for the future are formulated, and the International Constitution and Bylaws are updated. It is also at this time the International Officers are elected by the membership.

Between Conventions, government of the IATSE is entrusted to its General Executive Board, which consists of the International President, the General Secretary-Treasurer, and thirteen International Vice Presidents. International Executive Board Meetings are held twice annually and are open to delegates from all IATSE local unions. The Union also provides a financial report to the Board and the members twice a year and has elected three Trustees to review the books every quarter.

The International also has a departmental structure within it. There are eight departments: Stagecraft, Motion Picture & TV Production, Tradeshow & Display, Television Broadcast, Education and Training, Political/Legislative, Communication, and Canadian Affairs.

The president also appoints International Representatives and Special Representatives to work and assist the Department Directors. There are 28 International Reps (full-time) and 5 Special Reps (part-time) located across the United States and Canada. The International President assigns representatives to various assignments.

In order to get the assistance of an IA Representative, the local must write to the International President requesting assistance, and he or she will then assign a Department Director or Representative to assist the local union. This can be assistance in organizing, contract negotiations, grievance arbitration, union administration, and other issues.

IATSE Equality Statement

Equal rights are the cornerstone of the labor movement. Unions were founded on the principle that all people are equal and all people are deserving of respect and fair treatment. Equality issues run through all areas of trade union activities – from health and safety to wage negotiations.

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) is committed to equality of opportunity and to eliminating all forms of discrimination. We are opposed to unlawful and unfair discrimination and oppression on the grounds of sex, gender identity and expression, relationship or marital status, race or ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age, language, background, political or religious beliefs, physical appearance, pregnancy or responsibility for dependents.

We believe that equality for all is a basic human right and we actively oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. IATSE leaders and members must be vigilant in working, both with each other and with our employers, to promote an equal and welcoming environment for all people, through our actions, attitudes, and language. The IATSE celebrates the diversity of society and is striving to promote and reflect that diversity within this organization.

What is the IATSE Pride Committee?

The IATSE Pride Committee is committed to advancing the labor movement through any number of ways, whether it's participation in the union's activities, activism within the community, or activism in the wider labor movement.

The International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees represents a wide variety of trades and crafts in the entertainment industry with a membership as wide and varied. Inspired by a growing push to engage diverse union members across North America, the IATSE Pride Committee was formed in 2019 to give a voice to our LGBTQIA+ union members and encourage their active participation in the IATSE.

Appointed by the IATSE International President and recruited through the membership, the IATSE Pride Committee is the core group of members behind the International Pride initiatives.

Mission Statement:

The IATSE Pride Committee works to enhance LGBTQ+ members' inclusion, visibility, and potential for success within the union, the workplace, and the community, across our various crafts and geographic locations. The IATSE is committed to the principle that all people are equal, and therefore deserve respect and fair treatment, regardless of sex, gender identity/expression, or sexual orientation.

Name:

The initialisms that have been used to describe our community are constantly evolving and different groups have different preferences. As such, we have chosen to adopt the "Pride Committee" name so as not to exclude anyone who self-identifies as part of our community.

Participation

The Committee is made up of IATSE members/officers/staff who identify as LGBTQ+. At every General Executive Board meeting we will hold an event for any self-identifying LGBTQ+ attendees to participate in. Throughout the year there will also be options for both LGBTQ+ members and their allies to participate through activism, parades/marches, education, etc. You don't have to be an expert, you just need an open mind, an open heart, and the willingness to learn.

Community Guidelines: P.R.I.D.E.

PRIVACY

Being part of this group requires mutual trust. Authentic, expressive discussions make groups great, but may also be sensitive and private. What's shared in the group should stay in the group.

RESPECT

We're all in this together to create a welcoming environment. Let's treat everyone with respect and kindness. Healthy debates are natural, but please keep the dialogue civil.

INVOLVEMENT

Recognize that not everyone is at the same knowledge level, but by being involved they are showing a willingness to learn. If someone is genuinely trying, we don't want to embarrass them if they use an incorrect term. By participating, they are showing a desire for education and involvement.

DIVERSITY

We are a diverse group that reflects the membership of the IATSE. The broad range of identities of our members - race, color, creed, gender, sex, national origin, citizen status, sexual orientation, age, disability, political persuasion, religious affiliation, marital status, veteran status, gender identity and/or expression, economic background - is one of our strengths as a union, and as a group. We ask all participants to acknowledge this and to be mindful and respectful of these differences.

EXPERIENCES

Be mindful of the subjectivity of your voice. Understanding experiences outside of your own requires active work - listen; ask questions; have empathy. Speak for yourself and let others speak about their own experiences.

Before You Start

Before you start your local Pride Committee, you should talk to your local union leadership and fellow workers to gauge interest. Has the idea been raised before? Are people interested, but concerned about time commitment? Having these conversations first will make the formation easier.

Working with your local leadership, use your Constitution and Bylaws as guidelines. While all Constitutions and Bylaws are different, in many, the President of the local appoints committees. You should check your local Constitution and Bylaws to see how your local runs.

When it comes to Pride Committees, The IATSE does not have formal requirements. There are no Pride Committee rules and bylaws, and each group is free to function in a way that makes sense for the local and its members. You may refer to the IATSE International Pride Committee, but ultimately, decisions are up to your group.

However, as a new or developing committee, it is important to ensure you are engaging existing leadership through the creation of your Pride program. Having a good idea as to what the pride program is all about and especially what it means to you can be very helpful. If you don't have your goals and objectives laid out yet, you can talk about why you think it's important for the labor movement and your local to engage workers.

Engaging Potential Committee Members

We encourage members to start out informally as a way to gauge interest. Reach out to interested members of your local and organize a meet up. In our industry, it can be hard to meet in person, so those meetings could be done virtually using a platform like Zoom. Many committees also start a Facebook group or Discord server – if you decide to do this, make sure that everyone is on board and that you’re not excluding folks who may not have access to these platforms.

When reaching out, be careful not to “out” anyone. Please do not approach people you “think might be gay” and ask them to join the Pride Committee, even if they are “out” to you. Just because someone feels comfortable enough to be out to you personally, does not mean they necessarily want to be out at work or in their local. Instead, put out a local-wide announcement and let people come to you.

You will also have to decide whether your committee will include only self-identified LGBTQ+ folks, or if allies will be permitted as well. There are pros and cons to both so you will have to weigh them according to your local/committee.

Engaging members is a fundamental element of building and sustaining a strong committee – and you should make sure that leadership is aware of any new members added to your group. When starting your committee, you should consider establishing a strong leadership team. This team can be one or two people for small or new groups.

Regardless of who or how many people are associated with this development team, it is important they are dedicated and want to see your committee grow and flourish.

After you’ve established a core group, you should continue thinking about how to expand. Even if you’ve established an informal group, recruiting members means you’ll have more ideas and possibilities to push you in the right direction.

Starting a Pride Committee

Establish talking points. It is beneficial to have a clear, concise, and relevant pitch for your committee. Make sure the rest of your group knows and can communicate this message. This will help you build recognition for the program and help with recruitment.

Recruit for events. Meetings are important, but social events are great for sharing what the group is about and what you want to do. Start by hosting happy hours, potlucks, or game nights and get people out to local actions. Sometimes in-person actions are not possible for various reasons, in which case virtual events can be a good way to keep in touch.

Develop a contact list. You can build this through sign-ups and email blasts. You want to build a list that informs your members about activities and meetings (but be conscious not to spam this list).

Use social media. Start a Pride Group page on Facebook, or a Discord channel, and encourage members to join. Post relevant information and events.

Develop a Game Plan. Determine strategic targets for engaging and developing your committee. Have one-on-one conversations with others who have shown interest and invite them to a meeting/event and follow up with them. Have members of your leadership team meet and talk with every new member who joins the group.

Do not limit yourself to just a single recruitment strategy. Always continue to evolve and find new and creative ways to engage workers.

Make sure you are available to people as a contact and provide multiple ways for people to get in touch with you.

Have the local host a variety of events. Not only should your meetings and events be worth coming to, they should be topically diverse to in turn diversify the interests of your members. Don't be afraid to embrace something different or new, or issues that fall outside of "union work."

Develop an "ask". Draft a standardized pitch for getting people to check out your committee.

Have a consistent message and branding strategy. Think about what separates you from other groups or programs within your union. Use this to your advantage to draw union members into the importance of supporting the Committee

Communicate success. People want to be a part of something that is actually getting things done.

Note: No matter how you decide to use these strategies, approaches and methods, just remember a person's initial interest must be matched by your ability to motivate them and establish a sense of personal camaraderie. But remember, this is a long-term project. Almost all committees take some time to develop. Set realistic expectations and expect some frustration, but, be patient and flexible.

Most importantly, have fun!

Writing a Mission Statement

A mission statement is an important component of your committee. A mission statement describes what your group is about, what you do, and where you see yourselves going. This statement is a foundation of the plan that lays out how you will achieve your organization's objectives. We have attached a few examples of mission statements from other pride committees across North America. Please feel free to adopt one as your own or work to write a new one that reflects your Pride Committee and members.

Pride at Work

We seek full equality without restrictions or barriers for LGBTQIA+ individuals in our workplaces, unions, and communities, creating a Labor Movement that cherishes diversity, promotes inclusion, encourages openness, and ensures safety & dignity. We do this through education, alliances, and building solidarity across our large and diverse communities.

Organizing in the spirit of "An Injury to One is An Injury to All", we oppose all forms of bias and discrimination on the job, in our unions, and in the public square based on sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, race, veteran status, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, age, disability, HIV status, marital status, religion, or political views.

We recognize that true justice and equality can only be achieved through an organized and empowered working class. We seek to promote the ability of all working people to self-organize and act collectively to advance the power, needs, and interests of the working class in addition to the principles of justice, true democracy, and equality.

Pride at Work Canada

Through dialogue, education and leadership, Pride at Work Canada empowers employers to foster workplace cultures that recognize LGBT employees as an important part of a diverse and effective workforce

Teamsters LGBTQ+ Caucus

The primary purpose of the Teamsters LGBT Caucus is to unify, educate and empower Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the workforce at large, to ensure equality in the workplace and to enhance workers' power at the bargaining table, in organizing campaigns and in the political arena.

Pride Toronto

Pride Toronto supports our communities in the pursuit of our unequivocal rights to be known, be heard, be understood, be accepted, be respected, and to celebrate the beauty of who we are.

CUPE National Pink Triangle Committee

CUPE is a proud advocate for LGBTQ2+ rights. Our commitment is to fight against discrimination and hate in our workplaces and in our communities.

Through the work of our Pink Triangle Committee and with our coalition partners, we've helped make strides for LGBTQ2+ people in Canada and internationally.

We work every day to ensure our LGBTQ2+ members can work in a discrimination and harassment-free environment.

UFCW OUTreach

UFCW OUTreach is a constituency group dedicated to building mutual support between our union's International, regions, and locals and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ+) community and their allies in order to come together to organize for social and economic justice for all, regardless of age, race, gender, creed, color, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Together, we will ensure full equality for LGBTQ+ workers on their jobs and in their unions. Together, we will build a labor environment that cherishes diversity, encourages openness, and ensures safety and dignity, as we move forward in the spirit of "an injury to one is an injury to all," opposing all forms of discrimination—not just against members of the LGBTQ+ community. Together, we will educate all UFCW leaders, staff, and members about the LGBTQ+ community, and build support and solidarity for the UFCW in that community and all communities that share our union's common goals and interests. Together we will fight to achieve equality for all members of the LGBTQ+ community in employment, marriage, immigration, and wherever else inequities exist. Together, we will work closely with Pride at Work and other organizations to achieve mutual goals and make our shared vision for equality for LGBTQ+ workers a reality. Equality, education, understanding, and solidarity are our mission.

Pride Committee Activities

Now that you have a Pride Committee started, and the support of your local leadership, what comes next? There is a wide range of activities your group can become engaged in.

First off, communicate success: we strongly recommend that your committee pick a specific action or event to start off with. This ensures that you will begin with an accomplishment, demonstrating to your local leadership that a pride committee is a positive, worthwhile endeavor.

Once you've successfully executed your initial action or event, brainstorm additional activities. Be sure to consider capacity – it is very likely that running one project at a time is the best way to ensure success.

It is critical the activities of your group are inclusive and of interest to your members. Some additional activities you may want to get involved in might already be taking place within your local labor movement, so try to communicate and collaborate when possible. One of the great things about your group is that you bring new and creative ideas and perspectives.

Ideas for Activities:

Community Outreach and Involvement

Team up with a community or charity group to help out at an event or in a campaign. This will do well to build solidarity among your committee, give back to the community, and increase recognition and a positive perception of the labor movement and its members. Many IATSE groups have organized food and clothing drives, and collected toys for children around the holidays.

Organize a Social Event

Organize a social event that reflects your interests, like a movie night or sporting event. Organize an informal gathering like “Labor Cheers” at a local restaurant once a month for members and non-members. Our industry relies a lot on social events that include drinking, however, make sure to be conscious that there are members of our community who may be sober, or dealing with addiction, and a bar may not be an ideal place for your event. Again, this is something that should be considered when making plans.

Training and Education

As a committee, figure out what areas of the labor movement or other issues you would like to know more about and work with local leadership to determine whether there already is training in place or how to get it. The labor movement and its allies have a wealth of resources, so ask what is available or request training you think is important. The Committee should also take the opportunity to develop and do peer training or presentations to leadership and other groups.

The IATSE Training Trust Fund offers many training and education opportunities for your local to take advantage of. Visit www.iatsetrainingtrust.org to learn more.

Political Action

Getting involved in political action is very important in every aspect of our lives. Volunteer on political campaigns, and educate fellow members on campaign issues or encourage them to come out and vote. Learn more about the labor movement and political action by having a presentation at your next meeting.

If you're a local in the United States, you can organize an IATSE Political Action Committee (PAC) drive at your local. The IATSE-PAC has been launched as a way for the IATSE to stand up to the recent attacks on our members from anti-worker politicians. The IATSE believes that we must stand up to these attacks and ramp up our voice in politics through waging this campaign. The mission of the PAC is to fight politicians and policies that do not benefit our members. Learn more about starting a PAC drive at your local here: www.iatse.net/start-a-pac-drive.

Organizing

Organizing starts at the local level, and could be one focus for a Pride Committee. Peer- to-peer conversations when organizing often are more effective, giving diverse workers an advantage when trying to organize other diverse workers.

Your local can request copies of the U.S. IATSE Organizing Resource Book from the International office: 212-730-1770, or copies of the Canadian provincial IATSE Organizing Booklets by emailing cdnoffice@iatse.net.

Develop/Update Communication Outlets

Create or update the local union's Facebook page, blog or website. Write an article for your local union newsletter or create a YouTube video that shows off what you do or an event you're

hosting. Start an Instagram account where all your members can share photos. **Remember to get permission from your local union officers before starting anything on behalf of the local.**

Marketing

Develop materials to promote the benefits of joining the union and highlight the positive aspects of the labor movement. This could include demonstrating the money and lifestyle benefits, a list of the “Top Five Reasons to Join a Union,” showing the types of work opportunities available or the coolest jobs worked on by your local union.

Develop materials to promote the work of your pride group. Include highlights of events that already have taken place as well as upcoming events. Always include contact information so people know how to get more information.

Things to Consider

When creating a Committee there are some things that you should be aware of. Some of these may apply to all committees, while others are specific to our Community.

Be realistic with your asks/events/goals.

While we would love to be able to immediately solve all the problems that we face, that is not realistic. Do not set yourselves up for failure. Make sure that your goals are things that you are actually capable of doing. Rather than say that you will gain equal protections for LGBTQ+ people in your jurisdiction, state specific things you can do. Whether it's helping draft language for your agreements or setting up a letter writing campaign to your local politician advocating for change, the ask should be something tangible that you can do to help things progress.

Respect Members' Time Commitments

Remember that your Committee members may be doing this on top of a full-time job, while raising a family, and taking downtime to rest and recharge. We all have a lot of great ideas that we want to tackle, but we also have to make sure to balance that within our time constraints. If you try to do too much, too quickly, you may cause your members to burn out and no longer wish to engage with the Committee. It's all about having balance.

Establish an environment of trust/privacy

This committee, more than any other, has the potential to harm workers if not done properly. There are still many states where an employee can be fired simply for being LGBTQ+. All actions done by the Committee should be aware of this and not do anything that may put an individual in harm's way.

Before posting anything (names of attendees, pictures, videos, etc.) please ensure that you have the individual's permission. Failing to do so could result in accidentally "outing" someone and we need to be extremely careful that that does not happen. You may also wish to make an announcement at the beginning of any meeting or event informing the group of their right to refuse to have their information or picture recorded or displayed. Allow them to do this privately in case they wish to have this choice kept confidential. If someone wishes to remain private, we don't want them to feel pressured to announce this publicly.

LGBTQ+ vs Allies

You should decide whether your Committee is open only to LGBTQ+ identifying people, or to allies as well. This is completely up to your Local/Committee.

Smaller locals may choose to include allies in order to get a larger group of participants involved. Allies

can help by using their privilege to assist LGBTQ+ members and help bridge any gaps your Local may encounter. However, Allies should be aware that they are there as allies and ensure that they are allowing LGBTQ+ voices to be heard.

Larger locals may choose to have the Committee made up only of members who self-identify as LGBTQ+. This can be helpful in creating a “safe space” for those members to open-up and speak honestly with their peers. It allows their voices to be heard without anyone, although well-meaning, to dominate the conversation. Even if your Committee is made up only self-identified members of the Community, it doesn’t mean that Allies can’t get involved. Perhaps you hold meetings just for the Committee, and then other meetings/events where Allies are invited to participate?

Whichever way your Committee chooses to operate, please be considerate of each other. LGBTQ+ members should engage Allies whenever possible. There’s strength in number. And Allies, whenever engaged, should always be aware that they are there as guests. Their experiences and input are important, but they should remember to listen and only offer it when called upon. LGBTQ+ voices have been silenced for decades and so please be aware that uninvited offers of help may justifiably be taken negatively. It’s nothing personal, and we do value your help, but you must also let us be heard.

Types of Pride Committees

You don’t have to have a Pride Committee in order to have a Committee that deals with LGBTQ+ issues. Maybe your local feels it is too small to effectively have multiple committees? One idea is to make a Diversity Committee that can combine various committee work. For instance, your Women’s Committee and Pride Committee could work together under one Committee, perhaps with co-chairs. Just like how we have some mixed locals that have a Film Business Agent and a Stage Business Agent, you could have one co-chair that is the Women’s Chair and one that is the Pride Chair.

Smaller locals may also decide to work with other locals in their area to create a Committee that includes representatives of multiple locals.

There is no one-size-fits all Committee. Do what works for your Local!

Innocent Mistakes

As we all know, our language is constantly evolving. Not everyone will be at the same level of LGBTQ+ education. The International Pride Committee stresses that, as long as you are coming from a place of love and positivity, using an incorrect term is not a deal-breaker. It’s a learning experience. Although it can be difficult, we do not want to turn members away, or make them feel embarrassed to participate, because they don’t know the proper terminology. Even within our own Community, there sometimes isn’t a consensus. (Is it LGBTQ? LGBTQIA? 2SLGBTQIA? Etc.) As long as everyone is respectful, open-minded, and willing to learn, we should embrace their participation. Innocent mistakes should be framed as educational opportunities, rather than chastised.

Pride Committee Checklist

1. Consult local leadership and Constitution and Bylaws

Most Constitutions and Bylaws include language about forming a committee. Talk with your local leadership and consult the bylaws if you wish to start a formal committee. The IATSE Pride Committee does not have formal requirements for worker groups. Do what works best for your local.

2. Engage the membership

Is the local leadership on board? Are members in your local interested in forming a group? Do you have capacity to organize and run the group?

3. Write a mission statement

A mission statement describes what your young worker group is about, what you do, and where you see yourselves going. This statement is a foundation of the plan that lays out how you will achieve your group's objectives.

4. Convene a meeting and discuss actions the group would want to take

Whether your group has dozens of ideas or not, you should pick one activity to complete as your first project to demonstrate success to your local leadership and fellow members.

5. Strategize and execute the action.

6. Prepare a report to read at the next local membership meeting

You should prepare reports after each activity your committee engages in, and read them at local membership meetings. This is a great way to keep everyone up-to-date and feeling positive about the Pride Committee.

Optional: Reach out to the IATSE International Pride Committee to report on your success – we are always excited to hear about what our sisters, brothers and kin are up to!