

S.O.L.I.D. Initiative

Strengthening Opportunities for Leadership, Inclusion, and Diversity

The S.O.L.I.D. Initiative aims to dismantle white supremacy, transphobia and heterosexism at New Orleans area medical, medical research and public health organizations that provide services to LGBTQI+ People of Color, hire from within that community for entry-level community-facing positions, but are helmed by people who are overwhelmingly cis and white. Our strategy is twofold:

- 1) Confront racial, gender and economic injustice while building power and leadership by providing a year-long leadership and professional development fellowship to LGBTQI+ staff of color at partnering agencies. The SOLID Fellowship consists of a) twice monthly sessions with a dynamic executive coach culminating in a 3-5 year professional development or community leadership plan and b) monthly educational convenings on topics that range from racism in the HIV movement to self-care and healing to more administrative topics like reading and analyzing budgets.
- 2) Create positive sustainable change by identifying unjust and inequitable policies, hiring and promotion practices and employee benefits while assessing company climate, facilities, training and staff development as it specifically relates to LGBTQI+ staff of color at partnering agencies. This is done through a comprehensive organizational assessment, developed with a community advisory board of LGBTQI+/POC leaders, done at the start of the fellowship year, at twelve months, and at eighteen months. SOLID provides technical assistance to the employers in creating an institutional development plan based on the results of the first survey. We then track and monitor their progress through the second and third surveys.

Black Southern Queer and Trans people of color face mounting threats to their lives and livelihoods in 2020. The persisting pandemics of racism/anti-Blackness, transphobia, homophobia, and HIV have collided with the Covid-19 pandemic in our region laying in stark contrast the disparities faced by LGTBQ+/POC. The health and wellbeing of our communities must be in our own hands. The leadership of institutions that work toward our health and benefit from our expertise on the front lines must look and love and live like us. The SOLID community aims to make this need a reality.