

# *YES Project*

*Oct 19, 2018 Washington, DC Planning Meeting Report*

## ***Youth Equity Science***

A Science-Advocacy Partnership Project to Reduce  
LGBTQ Youth Victimization and Suicide

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## **Project Overview – Youth Equity Science**

*The Youth Equity Science (YES) Project is a collaboration between mental health professionals and human rights advocates to benefit the equality and wellbeing of LGBT youth.*

*Historically, civil rights progress has benefitted from science applied for justice. In *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the right to educational equality was established based in part on scientific evidence that prejudice in segregated schools caused psychological harm to youth. Under 14<sup>th</sup> amendment rights to equal protection and due process, this evidence proved the prevailing "separate but equal" Jim Crow system was unjustified.*

*Half a century later, in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), a federal right to marriage equality was won when scientific evidence brought before the Supreme Court demonstrated that same-sex families promote the mental health and wellbeing of youth as well as heterosexual ones, showing that same-sex marriage denial was similarly unjustified.*

*Currently, suicide is epidemic among LGBTQ youth. It is partly correlated with stigma, like bullying or family rejection. Research also shows 20% of LGBTQ youth suicide to be driven by stigma experienced by living in a region with inappropriate law and policy that permit anti-LGBT discrimination. LGBTQ youth advocates need access to such scientific facts to help them fight urgent problems like LGBTQ youth suicide and hate-based victimization through advocacy for appropriate civil rights.*

## **Project Vision**

*YES is founded on the premise that when told the truth about the harmful effects of stigma on LGBTQ youth, most people will choose not to hate. LGBTQ youth deserve no less security, dignity and love than any child. Fighting stigma can help save young lives.*

*Through YES, some of the world's best LGBT health science researchers will work with LGBT human rights advocates to get them useful facts they most need about discrimination's link to violence against and suicide among LGBT youth.*

*The two-year project will put scientifically sound evidence in useful form into the hands of rights advocates as tools to fight for LGBT youth rights and wellbeing, and create a platform and model for future work.*

## **Meeting Purpose**

*On October 19, 2018 representatives from leading LGBT advocacy organizations met to discuss working with youth mental health research, human rights and legal experts through the YES Project. Two brainstorming sessions addressed what facts advocates need and how research scientists can help them. The resulting information provides the basis for a collaborative work plan. These are outlined below.*

## Planning Participants

### Core Project Partners

The YES Project benefits immensely from affiliation with two Key Project Partners: the **LGBT Rights Division of Human Rights Watch** and **Yale's Global Health Justice Partnership (GHJP)**, a joint program of Yale Law/Public Health School that has offered to serve as the administrative home of the YES project.

- *Human Rights Watch LGBT Rights Division*

*"Human Rights Watch works for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender peoples' rights, and with activists representing a multiplicity of identities and issues. We document and expose abuses based on sexual orientation and gender identity worldwide, including torture, killing and executions, arrests under unjust laws, unequal treatment, censorship, medical abuses, discrimination in health and jobs and housing, domestic violence, abuses against children, and denial of family rights and recognition. We advocate for laws and policies that will protect everyone's dignity." (<https://www.hrw.org/topic/lgbt-rights>)*

- *Yale's Global Health Justice Partnership*

*"The Global Health Justice Partnership (GHJP) is a program hosted jointly by Yale Law School (YLS) and Yale School of Public Health (YSPH) that tackles contemporary problems at the interface of global health, human rights, and social justice. The GHJP is pioneering an innovative, interdisciplinary field of scholarship, teaching, and practice, bringing together diverse thought leaders to collaborate on research, policy projects, and academic exchanges." (<https://law.yale.edu/ghjp>)*

*With GHJP and Human Rights Watch as key partners, YES is in a unique position to benefit from knowledge about previously effective strategies, substantial advocacy and scientific relationships, valuable infrastructure such as a website for project communications, and product dissemination expertise ranging from press relations to academic publishing.*

## **YES Project Leadership**

*The meeting included YES Project leadership, who are experts in LGBT youth mental health, research, human rights and related law:*

**Stewart Adelson, YES Project Director** (he/him/his) is an Assistant Clinical Professor at Columbia University and Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor at Cornell University of Adult, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and a faculty member of the National LGBT Health Education Center of Fenway Institute. He was a 2014-15 scholar and valedictorian of the Clinical Research Scholars Training Program in the Global Health Division at Harvard Medical School. His professional interests include public psychiatry including care for LGBT youth and adults. He is the principal author of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry's guidelines on care for LGBT youth, and the lead author on several peer-reviewed papers and chapters on sexual and gender development. He has taught physicians in training at Columbia and Cornell and served as Medical Director in public psychiatry-oriented clinical programs for youth affected by HIV/AIDS, immigrant and homeless youth, and youth in foster care, as well as community-based mental health promotion programs. He is a Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, a recipient of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry's Presidential Scholar Award, and a member of the Group for Advancement of Psychiatry and of the Advisory Committee of the LGBT Program of Human Rights Watch.

**Mark Hatzenbuehler, YES Project Scientific Co-Director** (he/him/his) is Associate Professor in the Division of Sociomedical Sciences at Columbia U. Mailman School of Public Health and Co-Director of the Center for the Study of Social Inequalities and Health. His research broadly focuses on examining the health consequences of structural forms of stigma and on identifying biopsychosocial mechanisms linking stigma and health. Dr. Hatzenbuehler has published over 100 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and his research has been published in several leading journals, including *American Psychologist*, *Psychological Bulletin*, *American Journal of Public Health*, and *JAMA Pediatrics*. In recognition of this work, Dr. Hatzenbuehler received the 2015 Louise Kidder Early Career Award from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the 2016 Early Career Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest from the American Psychological Association, and the 2016 Janet Taylor Spence Award for Transformational Early Career Contributions from the Association for Psychological Science. His work has been widely covered in the media, including interviews on NPR and MSNBC, and it has been cited in amicus curiae briefs for cases on status-based discrimination. Dr. Hatzenbuehler currently serves on four editorial boards and also recently served as a member of a consensus committee on peer victimization and bullying at the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Dr. Hatzenbuehler is currently funded on a K01 award from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to study social determinants of substance use and other health outcomes among sexual minority youth.

**Alice Miller\*, Co-Chair, YES Project Legal & Human Rights Subcommittee**

(she/her/hers) is Co-Director of the Global Health Justice Partnership at Yale, is an Associate Professor (Adjunct) of Law at Yale Law School, an Assistant Clinical Professor in the Yale School of Public Health, and a Lecturer in Global Affairs at the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs at the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies. An expert in gender, sexuality, health and international human rights, Miller previously taught at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law, where she was faculty director of the Women's Institute for Leadership Development, and at Columbia University, where she was co-director of the Center for the Study of Human Rights. She is Co-Chair of the LGBT Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch. She holds a B.A. from Harvard and a J.D. from University of Washington School of Law.

**Graeme Reid, Co-Chair, YES Project Legal & Human Rights Subcommittee**

(he/him/his) is director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Program at Human Rights Watch, is an expert on LGBT rights. He has conducted research, taught and published extensively on gender, sexuality, LGBT issues, and HIV/AIDS. Before joining Human Rights Watch in 2011, Graeme was the founding director of the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa, a researcher at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research and a lecturer in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies at Yale University. An anthropologist by training, Reid received a master's from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and a PhD from the University of Amsterdam.

**Theo Sandfort, YES Project Scientific Co-Director** (he/him/his) is a Professor of Clinical Sociomedical Sciences (in Psychiatry) at the Columbia U. Mailman School of Public Health. He trained and worked in the Netherlands as a social psychologist. He was Chairman of the Interfaculty Department of Lesbian and Gay Studies at Utrecht University, the Netherlands and Director of the Research Program "Diversity, Lifestyles and Health" at the Netherlands Institute of Social Sexological Research. He is a former President of the Dutch Society of Sexology and the International Academy of Sex Research. His research interests center around sexual health, homosexuality and sexual development. He has extensive experience in working with CBO's in the field of sexuality. In terms of research methods he is skilled in both quantitative and qualitative approaches. He was involved in large as well as small-scale studies, aimed at surveying sexual behavior and attitudes, identifying determinants of health behavior, needs assessments, evaluating mass media and small-scale health interventions, and identifying the epidemiology of mental disorders. In his applied research he enjoys helping to identify basic research needs of professional organizations and promoting the application of research findings.

*\* Participated by telephone*

## **Allied Partners - LGBTQ Youth Advocates**

*Representatives from a number of leading advocacy organizations working on behalf of LGBTQ youth participated in the planning meeting as YES Project stakeholders:*

- **Advocates for Youth** - Jennifer Augustine
- **Center for American Progress** - Laura Durso
- **Cornell University Child & Adolescent Psychiatry** - Justin Mohatt
- **Human Rights Campaign** - Ellen Kahn, Jennifer Pike Bailey
- **Human Rights Watch LGBT Division** - Kyle Knight
- **Movement Advancement Project** - Naomi Goldberg\*, Sean Lund\*
- **National Center for Transgender Equality** - Ma'ayan Anafi
- **Trevor Project** - Sam Brinton
- **True Colors Fund** - Gregory Lewis, Justin Rush, Katie Dubielak

*\* Participated by telephone*

## **Stakeholders' View of the Project**

*Leading LGBTQ youth advocates provided both qualitative and quantitative feedback about the YES Project in a post-meeting survey. They gave overwhelmingly positive responses about its usefulness and uniqueness, and endorsed the project concept.*

### **Qualitative Feedback**

*In their own words, leading advocates say what they like about YES:*

"...huge value to the LGBTQ movement"

"...an opportunity for deep thinking"

"...opportunity to pull together the best data that already exists so that advocates can use it effectively"

"...bridging of advocacy and science"

"...connecting advocates to researchers"

"...a great opportunity to create a space for advocates and researchers to communicate, and to ensure that advocacy is informed and enriched by the best data possible while ensuring that research is responsive to community needs and perspectives..."

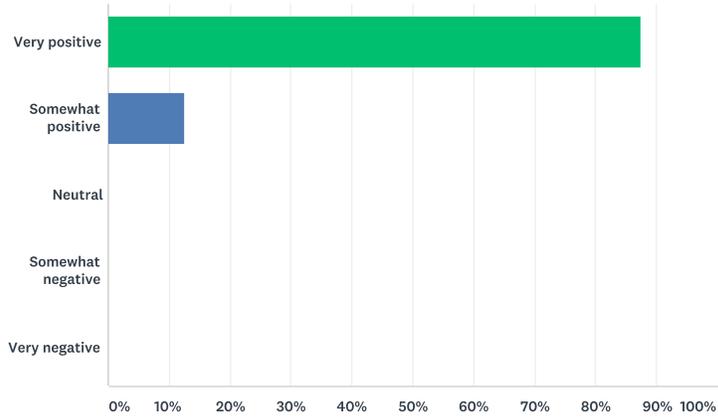
### **Quantitative Feedback**

*In a quantitative survey whose results are presented on the following pages, stakeholders from allied LGBTQ youth advocacy organizations confirmed they see YES as:*

- A positive idea
- An opportunity for access to high-quality researchers
- An innovate opportunity to collaborate with LGBTQ youth mental health experts
- Something they need
- Something they would value participating in
- Something they would be likely to participate in
- Would add value to their organizations

### Q1 What is your first reaction to the YES Project?

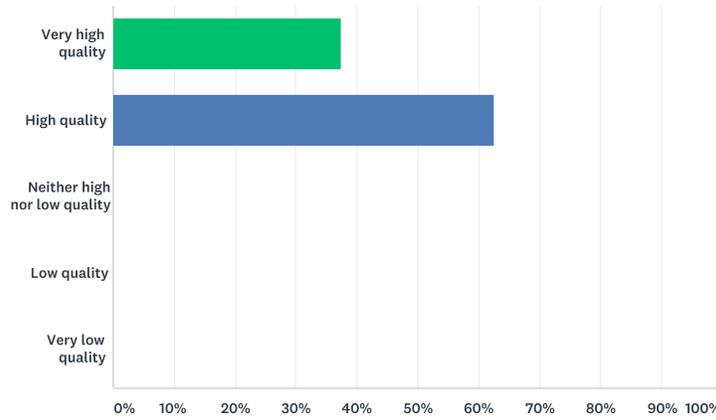
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very positive	87.50% 7
Somewhat positive	12.50% 1
Neutral	0.00% 0
Somewhat negative	0.00% 0
Very negative	0.00% 0
TOTAL	8

### Q2 How would you rate the quality of YES scientific leaders' contributions to LGBT youth mental health?

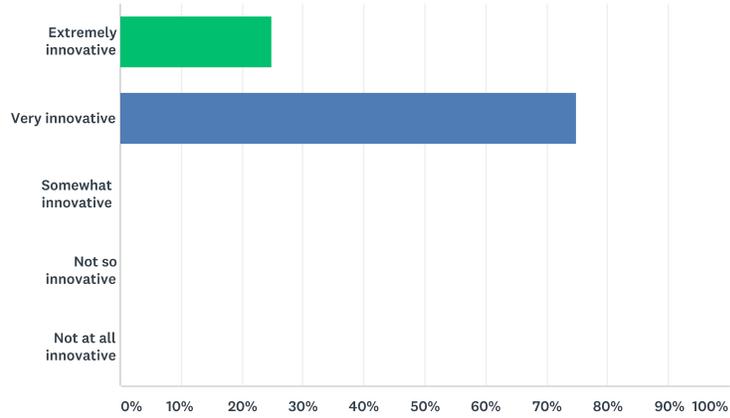
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very high quality	37.50%	3
High quality	62.50%	5
Neither high nor low quality	0.00%	0
Low quality	0.00%	0
Very low quality	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>8</b>

### Q3 How innovative is YES as an opportunity for rights advocates to collaborate with health/mental health researchers?

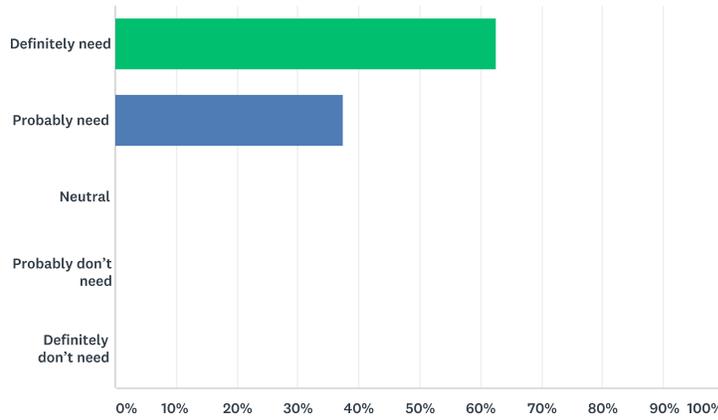
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely innovative	25.00%	2
Very innovative	75.00%	6
Somewhat innovative	0.00%	0
Not so innovative	0.00%	0
Not at all innovative	0.00%	0
TOTAL		8

### Q4 When you think about the YES Project, do you think of it as something you need or don't need?

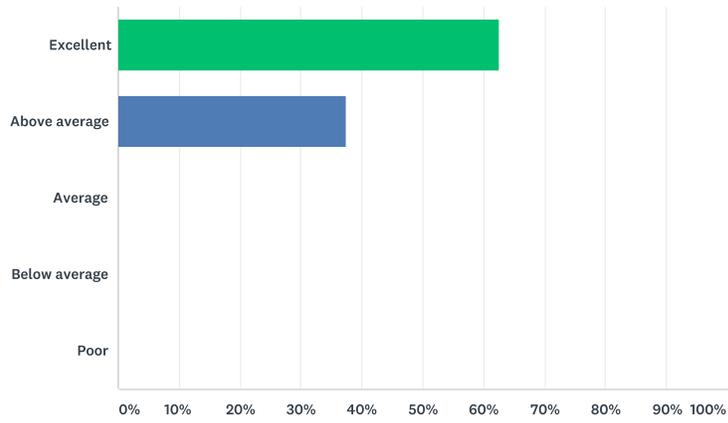
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Definitely need	62.50% 5
Probably need	37.50% 3
Neutral	0.00% 0
Probably don't need	0.00% 0
Definitely don't need	0.00% 0
TOTAL	8

### Q5 How would you rate the value of participating in YES in some way?

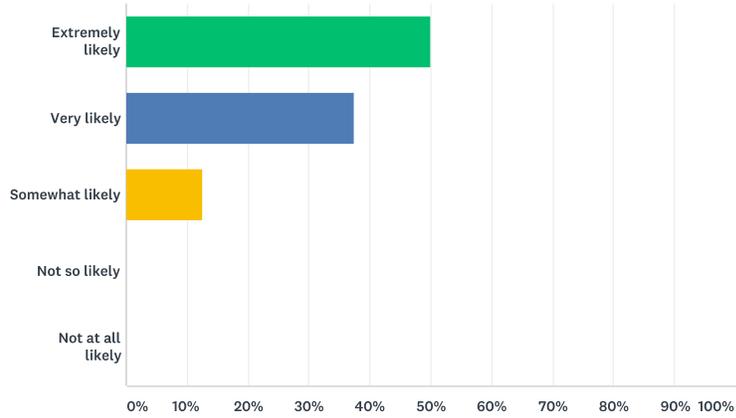
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Excellent	62.50% 5
Above average	37.50% 3
Average	0.00% 0
Below average	0.00% 0
Poor	0.00% 0
TOTAL	8

### Q6 If YES were launched today, how likely would you be to participate in some way?

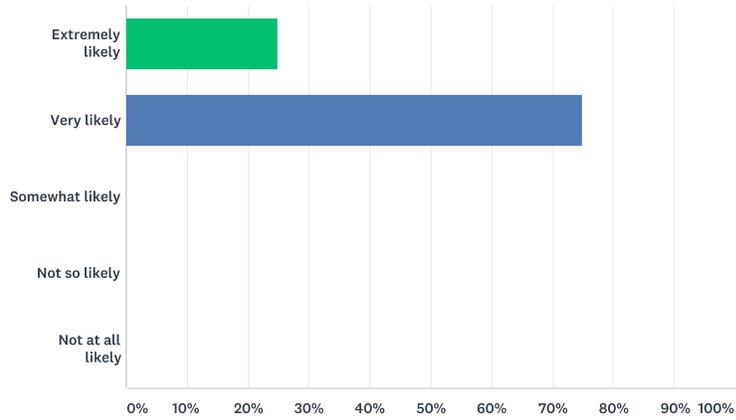
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely likely	50.00%	4
Very likely	37.50%	3
Somewhat likely	12.50%	1
Not so likely	0.00%	0
Not at all likely	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>8</b>

### Q7 How likely is it that YES might add capacity usefully to your existing strategies?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely likely	25.00%	2
Very likely	75.00%	6
Somewhat likely	0.00%	0
Not so likely	0.00%	0
Not at all likely	0.00%	0
TOTAL		8

## **Project Products**

*Two brainstorming sessions solicited participants' opinions and ideas about the following issues:*

### **Advocacy Needs, Scientific Help**

- What are current key policy areas related to youth LGBT rights?
- Which of these might relate to LGBT youth health/mental health & well-being?
- Is there a factual question that is relevant to policy and advocacy?
- Can mental health scientists help answer this factual question?

### **Project Vision, Ideal Products**

- What scientifically-related deliverables might you like to support your advocacy?
- What might you be willing to contribute (eg., – participate in qualitative research process?)

## **Advocates' Needs, Scientific Help**

*In the brainstorming session, it was readily apparent that LGBTQ youth rights advocates and health/mental health research scientists feel poised to contribute to each other's work in mutually beneficial ways.*

*Advocacy organizations need evidence from others' scientific research and their own organizational data for their work. They said they need more scientific information and help, both to know what research proves and in analyzing their own data.*

*In turn, scientists said they want to help rights advocates to translate the fruits of research to societal benefit through effective implementation. They also want to frame scientific questions and guide their research with understanding of advocates' perspective and experience.*

*A number of ideas emerged from the brainstorming sessions for further development of a project work plan, outlined below.*

### **Summarize Policy-Relevant Research Evidence**

*Advocacy organizations said that research evidence about LGBTQ youth physical health, mental health and wellbeing, and the factors that adversely affect or support them, is essential for their work; they routinely need such information. They said the YES project could provide a unique opportunity for pre-eminent LGBTQ youth health/mental health research scientists to help them access, interpret, and use policy-relevant research evidence. Advocates said it would be especially useful for YES scientists to produce research summaries or white papers for them on policy-relevant scientific evidence, adding capacity to efficiently obtain key evidence "so advocates don't have to write the same memo over and over."*

*Research scientists said they could prepare such summaries or white papers for advocates as YES Project products. In their work, they routinely review findings from research evidence, frame paradigms of analysis and hypotheses about promoting health and wellbeing, and highlight gaps in knowledge. Sharing this information would be relevant for advocates' task of promoting appropriate policies and laws impacting LGBTQ youth, and is feasible.*

*Scientists said they are familiar with the operational and staffing needs to produce such information, and might be able to integrate it into existing training and research programs to achieve efficient and cost-effective work strategies.*

### **Help Organizations Analyze Operational Data**

*Many advocacy groups collect information about LGBTQ youth they serve documenting their needs and responses to intervention. They use this information to implement their mission, monitor their effectiveness, and advocate for youth. Advocates said they could benefit greatly from technical assistance from YES research experts about collecting, analyzing, and interpreting this data.*

*YES Project scientific leadership said that helping advocates in this way could be quite feasible.*

### **Provide Opportunities for Scientists to Help Advocates**

*Meeting participants said that, in addition to technical assistance, YES could provide advocates with access to a unique network of scientists who could provide help in a variety of areas such as with programmatic best practices, expert legislative/judicial/administrative testimony, contribution to amicus curiae briefs, etc.*

*Advocates also said they would also benefit from collaboration with health researchers to understand research processes, possibilities, limitations/constraints, and requirements.*

### **Create a Platform for Ongoing Researcher/Advocate Collaboration**

*Meeting participants said that as a unique network of LGBTQ youth rights advocates and research scientists, YES could serve as an ongoing platform for the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and information through ongoing meetings for researcher/advocate networking, collaboration and planning.*

*Participants also suggested that YES could help centralize the collection of organizations' data in need of scientific analysis.*

## **Provide opportunities for advocates to help scientists**

*LGBTQ youth health/mental health research scientists felt that through participation in YES, stakeholder advocacy allies could enrich scientists' understanding to guide their inquiry. Through YES, advocates can help scientists to:*

- Understand policy and advocacy needs
- Select important research topics
- Frame appropriate research paradigms and scientific questions
- Access important data and research opportunities
- Understand how to best conduct the research
- Frame relevant hypotheses for analysis
- Use appropriate paradigms and methods to interpret findings
- Produce useful advocacy tools
- Disseminate tools effectively to those who need them
- Participate in advocacy for appropriate policy and law, both domestically and internationally

## **Produce Tools**

*Meeting participants said that YES could help advocates by producing useful tools. Examples include tools for communicating policy-relevant science through press and media strategies, PSA's, etc.*

*Project products/deliverables can be adapted to a variety of advocacy strategies and theories of change, including (but not limited to):*

- Lobbying
- key jurisprudence
- grassroots education/advocacy
- model programs
- technical assistance
- best practices, advocacy within professional organizations, certification, etc.

*This might be done in a variety of policy-useful paradigms, including not only mental health risk/adverse outcomes associated with stigma reflected in inappropriate laws, policies and norms, but also factors associated with resilience and wellness.*

*Open-ended responses provide insight into how advocates would like to see YES developed.*

## Q9 In your own words, what are the things that you like most about the YES Project?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 2

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	This is a great opportunity to create a space for advocates and researchers to communicate, and to ensure that advocacy is informed and enriched by the best data possible while ensuring that research is responsive to community needs and perspectives.	11/9/2018 1:39 PM
2	If YES can create some deeper infrastructure to connect advocates and researchers, it will be of huge value to the LGBTQ movement. It is an opportunity for deep thinking about how that can work and needs to take into account the many tensions between the operations of the two worlds. I am hopeful this is a process that will help release some of those tensions. I also appreciate that you have clearly defined your area of research and policy, which will help manage those conversations.	10/23/2018 8:31 AM
3	I am excited about the opportunity to pull together the best data that already exists so that advocates can use it effectively, as well as the opportunity to explore what further research is needed.	10/23/2018 7:46 AM
4	The bridging of advocacy and science rather than keeping them in silos.	10/22/2018 11:33 PM
5	Collaborative nature	10/22/2018 9:04 PM
6	Connecting advocates to researchers and vice versa. I think that doing some sort of needs assessment to identify gaps/holes is a good first step to avoid recreating the wheel.	10/22/2018 10:03 AM

### Q10 In your own words, what are the issues that you would most like YES to address?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 2

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Strategies for data collection and outreach with respect to transgender youth and exploring areas where there is insufficient research being done related to transgender youth	11/9/2018 1:39 PM
2	If policy issues - nondiscrimination, religious exemptions, standards for treatment of program recipients, immigration detention standards and treatment of unaccompanied minors, sexual harassment, data collection, housing, health care access and coverage. These are all active discussions.	10/23/2018 8:31 AM
3	Conversion therapy School climate/ effects of non-discrimination and/or anti-bullying policies Outcomes for youth who have multiple marginalized identities (LGBTQ youth of color, LGBTQ youth with disabilities, etc.)	10/23/2018 7:46 AM
4	LGBTQ youth suicide prevention policies in schools effectiveness, conversion therapy trauma impact, LGBTQ youth resilience research	10/22/2018 11:33 PM
5	Lit reviews, complementary materials so advocates don't have to write the same memo over and over. Advocacy with/in medical and health professional societies to update their policy positions.	10/22/2018 9:04 PM
6	Examining the interconnections of issues in the lives of LGBTQ youth (coming out, family support, school performance/experience, homelessness, juvenile justice involvement).	10/22/2018 10:03 AM

### ***Next Steps***

*Based on the information from project stakeholders and considering their needs and priorities, YES Project leadership will continue to meet to refine the project work plan, staffing needs, and budget.*