
CHASING 100: WHY (EVEN SLOW) PROGRESS MATTERS AS MUCH AS THE PERFECT SCORE

When it comes to the MEI's rating of cities on LGBTQ+ equality, a perfect 100 can feel like the ultimate prize. And yes, obtaining a 100 point rating is impressive: it shows a city is leading, implementing protections fully, and setting a strong example. But for many cities the MEI is about growth, about establishing a place to start, about measuring progress and about engaging in the hard work of building a community where fairness and equality are embedded in everything a city does.

Cities operate under wildly different conditions. Some have robust budgets, large staffs, and the legal authority to enact every possible protection. Others face constraints like state preemption laws that block protections, limited administrative capacity with staff juggling multiple roles, and resource gaps that make broad policy implementation or big community initiatives a little tricky.

For these cities, moving the needle is a significant accomplishment even if the score falls short of 100. Progress is about meaningful change and creating policies that actually improve people's lives, rather than simply chasing a number.

At the same time, acknowledging real-world constraints doesn't mean we lower the bar. Cities that earn top marks deserve credit for leadership, innovation, and full implementation of protections. The goal is to recognize and reward excellence while also appreciating the work done under tougher circumstances.

Think of it like a marathon. Some cities are elite runners with state-of-the-art training and perfect weather. Others are tackling the course with hurdles, heavy backpacks, or running shoes that don't quite fit. Crossing the finish line is still the goal and each city's story matters. Meaningful

progress often looks different depending on the starting line and course obstacles.

The takeaway?

The scorecard should be used to celebrate achievement and progress while acknowledging context. It highlights leaders and guides improvement. Above all, however, it shows that every city can contribute to advancing LGBTQ+ equality, whether they're sprinting for 100 or steadily making gains one policy at a time.

