

Boulder Daily Camera, CO, USA

Boulder County expands gender classifications for job applicants in bid for greater inclusivity

Nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid and agender are among options

By Charlie Brennan
Staff Writer

Posted: 01/16/2018 06:02:27 PM MST

Gender identity

Definitions for the gender categories listed in Boulder County's job application:

Female: One who is assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman

Male: One who is assigned male at birth and identifies as a man

Transgender Female: One who is assigned male at birth and identifies as a woman

Transgender Male: One who is assigned female at birth and identifies as a man

Nonbinary: One whose sex assigned at birth does not "match" their gender, who may not identify as exclusively a man or a woman; a sub-identity of transgender

Genderqueer: One who does not identify as exclusively a man or a woman, and may identify as a mix of both or something else; a sub-identity of transgender

Genderfluid: One who identifies as a man, woman, both or neither to varying degrees depending on context; a sub-identity of transgender

Agender: One who does not identify with gender

Source: Out Boulder County

Boulder County has greatly expanded the range of possible selections from which job applicants are asked to self-identify by gender, though an advocacy rights group believes the menu of options could possibly use a little work.

Those applying online for government jobs with Boulder County are advised in the seventh section of the nine-part form that Boulder County does not discriminate by "sexual

orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, religion, disability, veteran or socioeconomic status."

And applicants are asked to "consider" the subsequent questions to assist the county's tracking of recruiting efforts' effectiveness.

It also states that "personally identifiable information will not be viewed by the hiring manager or shared outside human resources."

That is followed by questions asking applicants to identify by ethnicity, then by race, and then by gender. The gender options, after male or female, are: transgender female, transgender male, nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid or agender.

Michal Duffy, education and program coordinator, works at Out Boulder County in Boulder on Tuesday. (Cliff Grassmick / Staff Photographer)

The gender question does not carry an asterisk, which would indicate that answering it is optional.

Previously, the only choices offered by the county were male, female or "other." The new range of options has been in place since September.

The city of Boulder currently offers job applicants two choices: male or female. Those are the same two choices offered at this time to applicants for jobs in Longmont's city government.

Mardi Moore, executive director of the [Out Boulder County](#) LGBTQ advocacy group, serves on a committee that helped the county to formulate its new list. Nevertheless, she offered a small critique.

"Nonbinary and genderqueer basically have the same definition," Moore said. "I think it's a good effort. If we're going to serve everybody, and want everybody to feel welcome in applying, this is a great effort. Is it perfect? No. And very little is in life."

Moore explained the benefits she sees in broadening the range of genders by which people can self-identify in applying to work with the county.

"The reality is Boulder, the municipalities and the counties are all working very hard to create an inclusive place to live and work, and an inclusive place to work is important," Moore said.

"If I was a trans person and my only choices were male and female, I might say, 'Do I really want to work here?' By opening those questions up, I can say, 'Wow, I might really be respected in this job.' It's the first step, having an inclusive application. And then it goes into the next step — what does the screening process look like, and how do we make sure and train our existing workers to be part of this inclusive workforce?"

Brandon Figliolino, recruiting technician for Boulder County, said the change was made in the

interest of expanding the county's applicant pool.

"We felt that by limiting the gender options to male or female, that could discourage some people from applying," said Figliolino, who said that as a gay man he identifies with the LGBT community.

"This definitely seems more welcoming. Before, it was 'male,' 'female,' and 'other.' We felt 'other' was not the appropriate word... That is something we wanted to eliminate. We don't want to ostracize people. And we still have that option 'I prefer not to answer.'"

He also said that there is no way a person's answer to the gender question could affect their chances in hiring.

"Nope. Any question (from) 10 or below is hidden," he said. "It's in their applicant profile so we can pull it as an aggregate. But on the individual application, the hiring manager and human resources can't see that."

County spokeswoman Barbara Halpin emphasized that point, and said the two primary reasons for the change were to make all applicants feel more welcome, and also to develop a clearer picture, from data gathered in aggregate, of generally who is applying for county jobs.

She conceded that some might find the expanded range of questions surprising. A similar self-identification question is now posed to county employees enrolling for county-insured health care, she said.

In walking people through the benefits enrollment process, she said, "I was sitting next to some people, who were saying, 'Why are you asking these questions?'" Halpin said.

"I would acknowledge that we probably need some more education around why there is a broader set of questions being asked. That's probably the next step the county will want to take."

But Figliolino has not heard any complaints.

"We haven't received any negative feedback," he said. "Since we just launched it in September, it has been only a couple months. We have seen people denoting different options, which is exciting for us. We haven't received any sort of pushback."

While Boulder currently only offers job applicants two ways to answer the gender question, a city spokeswoman noted in an email that Boulder hired its first chief diversity officer in July, and "will be working toward ensuring inclusivity with these types of forms and understanding best practices in other organizations."

http://www.dailycamera.com/boulder-county-news/ci_31597680/boulder-county-gender-identification