

Pride festivals

It's not their first meeting, nor the last. With just under two months before the event, the joke is that they are "5,715 of the way there."

The meeting, like much of SLC Pride's planning, is thoughtful and intentional. They have a list of 160 line items that they have either completed or will complete to get the permits needed to hold the celebration. They talk about framing the event as a safer space, with some places for alcohol — instead of the other way around.

The committee, O'Brien said, is "pretty radical, incredibly involved with grassroots organizations." Several members, she said, have been involved with Utah Pride Festival in past years, either as employees or volunteers, or through their own organizations.

"We're a ragtag group of queers that really is open to a different level of education, uncomfortableness, conversation, and moves with marginalized communities and [that] supports all of the groups that are often left feeling like they're unsupported," she said.

O'Brien led the meeting, and encouraged those attending to bring their own tables, chairs and pens, if they can. There were white poster-paper signs hanging on one wall, for people to sign up for organizing events that require volunteers. O'Brien said she would be hosting a spray-painting session in her backyard to make signs.

Donations and sponsorships also are at a grassroots level. Committee members have encouraged each other to bring their friends to fundraising events at LGBTQ-owned bars and businesses. Even \$10 a person can help, O'Brien told them.

SLC Pride is keeping track of where that money goes. A handout, also posted on the group's Instagram account, outlines exactly what a donation will pay for, such as a book from a queer author, two hours of face-painting or sponsoring a drag story hour. Event sponsors also are posted online.

"The goal," Lopez said, "is not to make money, but to build community."

What SLC Pride is offering

O'Brien said the members of the SLC Pride committee have been having conversations for years about the direction of Utah Pride — both inside and outside the Utah Pride Center — and only now have their ideas been turned into action with the new event.

"With the opportunity to really start a new local Pride it allows everything that we wanted to ever happen, happen — because we're the ones to make it happen [and] we can do it freely," she said.



The UTA booth at the Utah Pride Festival in Salt Lake City on June 3, 2023. **TRENT NELSON** Tribune Staff Photo

Vendors and booths at SLC Pride and the Utah Pride Festival

A breakdown of pricing for vendors/booths at SLC Pride and the Utah Pride Festival. Each booth for both organizations are 10x10.

	SLC Pride June 25-26 • Community	Utah Pride Center Festival June 1-2 • Washington Square Park
Number of vendors	Around 100	200+
Cost per booth	Vendors: \$100 Businesses: \$200	A 10-foot by 10-foot booth will go from \$400 for local vendors to \$1,000 for large businesses. Owned, there are 150 pricing options, based on services, type of presentation and where they are located.
Set up of booths	Some booths have more than one organization at it.	Each booth is its own organization or with local.
Number of locals	All locals, except for one.	Around 100-150 locals are "sub-organized" groups and "local businesses."
Number of groups	Human Rights Campaign, a national organization, and 10 Utah chapters.	Extended to 10-15 booths with national or international organizations.

Source: SLC Pride and Utah Pride Center

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTOPHER CHERRINGTON The Salt Lake Tribune

The LGBTQ businesses and organizations that SLC Pride is working with are almost entirely local — and include the Nu-a Nua Collective, Seniors Out and Proud, Club Verse SLC, Sugar House Coffee and The Legendarium bookstore. (The notable exception is the Utah chapter of the Human Rights Campaign, the national LGBTQ+ advocacy organization.)

"The people that we're collaborating with, there are things that they're specifically hoping for or asking for," O'Brien said, "and we're just trying our absolute best to hear community members and then make that come into fruition."

One thing SLC Pride doesn't have to worry about, O'Brien said, is the overhead of having to sustain a nonprofit organization, the way Utah Pride does with the Utah

Pride Center.

"We're not stuck to having to support a center with hundreds of thousands of dollars of sponsorship," she said. "We're literally just there to celebrate community, to educate, and to highlight all of the groups that have a budget of zero to a thousand bucks."

O'Brien said SLC Pride is designed to be financially accessible, too. Admission for adults over the age of 18 is \$5, while youth 17 and under get in free. Vendors are being asked to pay between \$150 and \$250 for a booth.

"We want to allow full accessibility because we understand our community," O'Brien said. "Those that have not been at Utah Pride — finances were a big part."

As part of that accessibility, Lopez said, SLC Pride's VIP area will be open not only

to those who pay for it, but also to community organizers — so they can facilitate dialogue among groups.

"We're going to bring the people that are doing the groundwork... and then connect them with people [who] can fund their initiatives," Lopez said. "If we can build a community that can transcend those barriers, then the community heals itself."

SLC Pride will be featuring "just for YOUTH," a free space for young people. O'Brien said the youth space will feature a pop-up boutique by Project Rainbow — called Fashion Fluid — to provide clothing options, as well as makeup artists and QR codes that connect people to educational resources.

The committee, O'Brien said, has sought input from LGBTQ student groups at West High School and Salt Lake Community College about what they want in a youth space. "We're going to go out and make that happen," O'Brien said.

Meyer, SLC Pride's youth coordinator, said the youth space will also feature crafts, and that Utah Valley Behavioral Health has donated money and will bring therapists to be available at the event.

Meyer is also in charge of the festival's neurodivergent space, which will provide chargers, headphones, fidget toys and other items, and be "just a place where they can decompress."

When the group started surveying youth about what they wanted, Meyer said, their requests were simple — like fancy water. "I don't think anyone's ever asked that before," she said.

Utah Pride focuses on 'unity'

One area that people attending the Utah Pride Festival will notice a change, Call said, is in the entertainment, which he called "our biggest scale-back this year."

"Entertainment last year featured a lot of headlines [from] out of state," Call said. One example was the drag performer Trixie Mattel.

Call announced in early May that Utah Pride will concentrate on local performers — and Call said he's not going "to pretend" that the move isn't "a financial decision." He added that the center is ready to "celebrate the talent that makes up Utah Pride and showcase it."

Utah Pride will feature between 25 and 30 acts, and is bringing back — by popular demand, Call said — the karaoke stage.

Utah Pride, Call announced in early May, will also feature a "Rainbow Alley." Call described it as "a space where all of our local Pride festival organizations in Utah are invited to come together and share their stories and promote their events" — at no cost.

Photo: SLC PRIDE FESTIVAL, NEXT PAGE

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