

## OKEq FAQs - February 2024

### 1. How is OkEq going to be more transparent?

*The OkEq Board is committed to transparency. All of our monthly Board meetings are open to the public and take place on the third Thursday of every month from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Equality Center. All agendas, meeting minutes, and monthly financial reports, as well as our financial audit and bylaws can be found on our [website](#).*

### 2. What does it cost to operate OKEq? How many staff does the organization have?

*During fiscal year 2023 (October 2022 through September 2023), OKEq's operating expenses were approximately \$1.2 million. Oklahomans for Equality currently employs eight full-time staff. Six staff positions are salaried and two staff positions are hourly. A number of services (custodial, security, IT, and accounting) are provided through contracted services.*

### 3. Why isn't OkEq leveraging the foundations in Tulsa?

*OkEq has received immense support from the local foundations in Tulsa to maintain operations as we've rebuilt following the embezzlement. However, it was necessary to turn to the broader community for support to help bridge the funding gap between what we've been given by the foundations until we can reach our annual fundraising event, the Equality Gala, which is May 4, 2024. OkEq will expand efforts to better engage many historical donors who have been very generous in previous times.*

### 4. Why are you putting the strain of fundraising on an already marginalized community?

*We understand times are tough financially for many in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. We would never ask someone to give financially if that meant they wouldn't be able to provide for their own needs. Oklahomans for Equality has poured into the lives of thousands though, and if people are in a fortunate enough position to give back, that means we as an organization can use that and pass it forward to the next person in need. This campaign has also received broad community support from those outside of the community who are allies.*

*Furthermore, there are other ways people can support the mission of OkEq aside from financial giving. If you have time or talents and would like to get more involved, please consider volunteering at the Center, in our library, or on our Board.*

### 5. Is OkEq closing if it doesn't raise \$100K by Valentine's Day?

*Due to the generous support of the community, we have raised enough revenue to stay open for approximately the next two months at the current expense level. The Board and*

*staff now have additional time to secure new funding streams, take a hard look at the existing expenses, and make additional decisions about ways to reduce spending.*

*While we understand the language used in the campaign sounded alarmist, we were at imminent risk of not being able to make payroll the week of Valentine's Day. The Board selected the goal of \$100K knowing that that would sustain the Center until our major fundraising event, The Equality Gala could get under way. The Board will expand efforts to better engage many historical donors who have been very generous in previous times.*

**6. Why didn't you alert the community about the embezzlement sooner?**

*We have tried to be as transparent as possible throughout this process. In November of 2022, the President of the Board of Directors first shared information about the situation to the public. We hosted the first community town hall in October of 2023. We will continue to hold quarterly town halls to encourage community dialogue. Please make sure you are subscribed to [OkEq's e-newsletter](#) and are following us on social media to be notified of programs, services, and upcoming events.*

**7. Why didn't the past OkEq Board and Executive Director realize at the time something was wrong when the embezzlement was actively happening?**

*Past OkEq Board members just like the current Board are volunteers. This does not excuse past Boards from fault, but many do not come from a financial background. Even if the Board members had had financial acumen, we know that financial documents given to the Board were falsified to cover up wrongdoings.*

*The former Executive Director who was at the helm during the period of embezzlement stepped down in June of 2022 and is no longer with the organization. We have three remaining Directors on our Board who overlapped with the previous Treasurer. One of the three is who first identified the malfeasance and informed the Board. The other two are trusted Board members who had no knowledge of the embezzlement occurring and have been supportive of all of the measures we've taken to insert financial controls.*

*The Board Governance Committee has established OkEq's first formal onboarding process to better educate and prepare new Board of Director members and Advisors. We also hosted a Board retreat with a session specifically focused on nonprofit finances. Additionally, we've instituted an audit committee and a finance committee to ensure accountability for the organization's finances. The Board is committed to continued growth as well as learning and implementing best nonprofit Board practices.*

**8. What about all of the harm that OkEq has caused in the past?**

*The current Board and leaders of OkEq recognize that even though we are responsible for a lot of good, that doesn't negate the fact that we are responsible for a lot of very real harm. If we are going to be Oklahomans for Equality who run the Dennis R. Neill Equality Center, we need to live up to the ideals of equality for all. This means looking at the*

*intersectional identities of all 2SLGBTQIA+ people and realizing there is no singular queer experience.*

*We understand that some are frustrated that we have asked for funds without fully rectifying practices that cause harm. OkEq has tried to do this simultaneously, but rebuilding relationships and repairing relationships takes time. We were running out of time to be able to continue these conversations because of our financial position. We are working on a new membership model that puts more power and agency back in the hands of our members.*

*Our staff does phenomenal work. The reality is that we are operating with only around 50% of the staff we should have for a Center our size. The changes to membership that we are currently working through will also allow an avenue for people to engage with OkEq leadership and ensure their voices are heard.*