Inside Philanthropy

The State of American Philanthropy

Giving for LGBTQ+

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ABOUT INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

Inside Philanthropy is a digital media site that covers the world of charitable giving. We report daily on foundations, major donors, and trends in philanthropy. Through our GrantFinder resource, we also profile and track thousands of funders working across key issue areas and geographic regions. Inside Philanthropy is supported by reader subscriptions and advertising. We do not receive funding from any other source. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com

ABOUT THE STATE OF AMERICAN PHILANTHROPY

The State of American Philanthropy is a series of background papers on important topics and trends in U.S. philanthropy. The papers draw on past research and reporting by IP writers, as well as new interviews, grantmaking data, and other sources. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com/state-ofamerican-philanthropy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LGBTQ+ philanthropy addresses a range of issues, including legal equality, equal access to healthcare, and cultural change. LGBTQ+ movements and the individuals and institutions that fund them generally have deep roots within the LGBTQ+ community. And both LGBTQ+ philanthropy and LGBTQ+ movements have grown and evolved over the last half-century.

Funding for LGBTQ+ issues and communities hit record highs in 2017 and 2018, but seems to be stagnating or even decreasing in recent years, even as nonprofits face organized attacks on LGBTQ+ rights. This diverse and multifaceted sector receives only a tiny fraction of overall philanthropic spending. In 2022, for every \$100 given by U.S. foundations, only 25 cents were specifically dedicated to LGBTQ+ issues, Funders for LGBTQ Issues found.

A decade out from the Supreme Court victory on marriage equality in 2015, and in the midst of intersecting movements for racial, gender and social justice — as well as a conservative backlash and serious threats to LGBTQ+ rights, people, and health — today's LGBTQ+ philanthropy is expanding and shifting priorities. Dedicated funding is increasing to communities that have long been disproportionately impacted by injustice but under-resourced by philanthropy, including trans communities, LGBTQ+ communities of color and LGBTQ+ communities in the U.S. South.

A relatively small group of private foundations and a few leading corporate funders account for most of the philanthropic dollars in this area, but at the same time, both longstanding and emerging community foundations play important roles in advancing equitable ways of moving resources to interconnected grassroots movements for LGBTQ+, racial and gender justice. Individual giving at all levels is also a leading source of revenue for LGBTQ+ nonprofits.

In this State of American Philanthropy issue brief, Inside Philanthropy's researchers, writers and editors have assembled an overview and analysis of the LGBTQ+ field. The brief looks at the overall lay of the land, starting with who's giving—mostly private foundations, along with some notable corporate, community and individual funders—and where funding is going—mostly to national organizations and the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, with some important increases in dedicated funding to trans communities, Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ communities and the U.S. South. A deeper dive looks at the dollar amounts given in recent years by the top funders in the field and the organizations receiving the most funding.

A look at the key issues shows that there are inextricable links between efforts to achieve legal equality, culture-change work, and issues like healthcare access and ending stigma and violence. The report also looks at grantmaking strategies and trends, including growing conversations among funders about how to support multi-issue movements. A discussion of equity in the field highlights how the priorities of wealthy,



cis gay white men historically guided LGBTQ+ philanthropy, but today, more funders are taking an intersectional approach that recognizes the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community and the ways that struggles for LGBTQ+ equality, gender justice and racial justice are connected.

The report then takes a closer look at different types of funders, highlighting important players among private foundations, community and public foundations, corporate funders, individual major donors, and philanthropic associations and intermediaries.

Who's Giving

- Philanthropic giving to LGBTQ+ communities and issues in the United States is led by private foundations, along with some significant corporate funders.
- The field is dominated by a few very large funders who account for most of the philanthropic dollars moving to LGBTQ+ issues and communities, while at the same time, a few community foundations and other smaller funders play important roles in moving resources to grassroots organizations and LGBTQ+ communities of color.

Who's Getting

- The majority of funding in this area goes to national organizations and projects focused on LGBTQ+ rights for the community as a whole.
- Grassroots groups and arts and culture organizations receive notably smaller shares of funding.
- Funding specifically for trans communities is increasing, accounting for 19% of all LGBTQ+ funding by U.S.-based institutions in 2022.
- Most funding goes to national work. California and New York have been the most highly funded states in this sector in recent years.

The Big Issues and Funding Trends

- Key issues include health and well-being (including HIV/AIDS), civil rights, anti-violence work, and culture change to challenge oppressive gender norms, end homophobia and transphobia, and increase acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people.
- Movements and funders are mobilizing in response to an organized conservative opposition that is targeting LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion.
- There is a high level of collaboration among the leading funders in this field, and a growing conversation about funding cross-movement collaboration with other progressive and pro-democracy movements.

Equity in the Sector

• Most of the leading funders in this area are making active efforts to advance equity, gender justice, racial justice and broadly defined social justice in their work.





• LGBTQ+ philanthropy has historically been primarily led by and focused on the priority issues of wealthy, white cis gay men, but that is changing, and dedicated funding for historically under-resourced groups such as trans communities and LGBTQ+ communities of color is increasing.

A half-century after the Stonewall riots, which prompted the founding of a wave of LGBT organizations, LGBTQ+ philanthropy is an established, evolving field. From its roots in "for us and by us" community foundations to the establishment of large private foundations that have substantially resourced historic campaigns for civil rights and legal equality.

While philanthropic attention is still largely focused on the ongoing struggle to achieve full legal equality for all LGBTQ+ people, grants are increasingly dedicated to historically under-resourced and disproportionately impacted groups, including trans communities and LGBTQ+ communities of color. And in the face of highly organized conservative opposition, there is ample opportunity and increasing discussion among funders about supporting cross-movement collaborations to advance LGBTQ+ equity, gender justice and racial justice.



Introduction

Funding for LGBTQ+ issues and communities in the United States has expanded for at least a decade before hitting a record high in 2021. LGBTQ+ philanthropy today is a diverse, multifaceted sector that spans every region of the country and addresses a range of intersecting issues. Still, LGBTQ+ communities receive only a tiny fraction of overall philanthropic resources: LGBTQ+ people make up at least 7.6% of the U.S. population, yet in 2022, U.S. LGBTQ+ nonprofits and projects received only about \$0.25 for every \$100 awarded by U.S. foundations, according to research by Funders for LGBTQ Issues.

LGBTQ+ philanthropy and the nonprofits it resources have their roots within the LGBTQ+ community. While movements for gay liberation and equal rights preceded the establishment of nonprofits and philanthropic institutions, LGBTQ+ organizations were founded in significant waves after the Stonewall riots of 1969, and in response to the HIV/AIDS crisis and organized conservative opposition to equal rights in the 1980s. The first lesbian and gay community foundations were created by and for community members in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the Horizons Foundation leading early funding for HIV/AIDS research and care. The 1990s saw the expansion of community foundations as gay men who were dying of AIDSrelated complications left resources to the community, and later in the decade, as community members who profited from the tech boom, like Tim Gill, created private foundations to resource the movement for LGBTQ+ equality. The earliest grants to LGBTQ+ issues focused on health, direct services and civil

rights—a funding area that would swell over the next several decades as movement funders made ever-larger investments in state and national campaigns for equal rights, eventually coalescing around coordinated national efforts to achieve marriage equality.

While many predicted that funding for LGBTQ+ issues would decrease after the victory on marriage equality in 2015—an issue funders had focused on for more than a decade—funding for nonprofits in this space continued to grow for years. The total number of philanthropic dollars supporting LGBTQ+ issues and communities has increased most years since 2012, more than doubling from 2009 to 2018, according to research by the affinity group Funders for LGBTQ Issues. Foundation giving to U.S. nonprofits in this sector reached a record high of \$251 million in 2021.

The range of issues attracting support is also growing, as the community and BIPOC-led grassroots movements expand focus beyond the priority issues of wealthy, cis gay white men (who long set funding priorities such as marriage, media representation, and the right to serve in the military) and advance a broad vision of gender justice and LGBTQ+ equality that sees all forms of oppression as interconnected and recognizes the diversity inherent in "LGBTQ+." This evolving and inevitably inadequate acronym includes people of all races, genders, abilities, ages and class statuses who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, and other identities, including asexual, pansexual and more. Some use the oncepejorative, proudly reclaimed word "queer" as an

umbrella term to refer to anyone who is not cisgender and straight. This report uses "LGBTQ+" to acknowledge, through the + sign, that identities beyond cis-hetero norms will always exceed any chosen acronym; other acronyms and terms are used as needed to align with the language used in a given cited source. This brief—and many experts we interviewed often refer to "trans" people as a linguistic shorthand for transgender, nonbinary, nonconforming, genderfluid, genderqueer and other terms used by people who identify across a gender spectrum but do not consider themselves cisgender.

While the majority of funding today goes to the LGBTQ+ community broadly, more targeted giving is on the rise to historically underresourced groups, including trans communities, LGBTQ+ communities of color and LGBTQ+ communities in the U.S. South.

The continued philanthropic focus on this area after the successful campaign for marriage equality reflects the reality that LGBTQ+ people still do not have full legal equality in the United States. While a 2020 Supreme Court ruling expanded protections against discrimination in employment, LGBTQ+ people are still not explicitly protected against discrimination under federal law in the areas of housing, public accommodations, public education, federal funding, credit and the jury system.

Only 22 U.S. states have state laws protecting people from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing and public accommodations. And groups that oppose LGBTQ+ equality have made a coordinated effort to mount "religious exemption" challenges to state-level nondiscrimination laws, permitting denials of service on the basis of religious beliefs to LGBTQ+ people in areas including healthcare, public accommodations, adoption and foster care. In just the last few years, federal and state legislators have introduced more than 1,300 anti-LGBTQ+ bills across the United States, Lambda Legal has reported. Nonprofits, movements and funders are galvanizing around campaigns to end discrimination and other efforts to achieve full civil rights.

At the same time, advocates, activists and funders are increasingly embracing a multi-issue approach, understanding that, for instance, policy change can happen because cultural change supports it, and that issues like racial justice, LGBTQ+ equity, gender justice and democracy are intertwined. The highly organized conservative opposition further emphasizes the need for movement building across social justice movements.

HIV/AIDS, a funding category of its own, significantly overlaps with LGBTQ+ issues. Funding data provided by organizations such as Candid, tracks general HIV/AIDS programs under health, but HIV/AIDS programs that specifically serve LGBTQ+ communities are considered LGBTQ+ funding.

LGBTQ+ philanthropy is dominated by a few big players like the Arcus and Gill foundations and the corporate donor Gilead Sciences. In 2022, the top 10 funders accounted for 52% of all funding for domestic LGBTQ nonprofits from U.S.-based giving institutions, according to Funders for



LGBTQ Issues. That said, the breadth and type of donors involved in this area is expanding.

One thing that makes this area of philanthropy unique is a high level of collaboration among those few top donors. Several of the leading funders are in regular communication and often coordinate efforts, especially around major policy campaigns.

The Lay of the Land

Who's Giving

Philanthropic giving to LGBTQ+ communities and issues in the United States is led by private foundations, along with some significant corporate funders. The field is dominated by very large funders at the top. That handful of funders accounts for the bulk of the philanthropic resources directed to LGBTQ+ nonprofits, but there are also many smaller funders actively leading in key areas.

According to data from Funders for LGBTQ Issues, in 2022, the top 10 institutional funders that gave the most in this area distributed a combined \$149.2 million, accounting for about half of all funding from U.S. foundations to U.S. LGBTQ+ communities and issues. \$91 million of that came from just three funders: Gilead Sciences, Ford Foundation, and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund. The field has been consistently top-heavy for years, with the top 20 institutional funders accounting for 73% of domestic giving in this area in 2022.

While most of the leading funders toward these issues are private foundations, there are some

standout corporate donors, mostly in the health sector. The biopharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences, which focuses on the treatment of HIV and hepatitis, is a consistent top funder in this field. Gilead increased its domestic funding for LGBTQ+ issues from \$6.01M in 2014 to \$38.7M in 2022. MAC AIDS Fund (which rebranded in 2019 as the MAC Viva Glam Fund) and JPMorgan Chase are other significant corporate funders in this area.

LGBTQ+ Funders to KnowGilead SciencesArcus FoundationGill FoundationGill FoundationFord FoundationWellspring Philanthropic FundCalifornia EndowmentTides FoundationThird Wave FundBorealis PhilanthropyAstraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice

Horizons Foundation

There are also important public and community foundations working in this field, including the Tides Foundation and Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. The Stonewall Community Foundation, which started as a "for us and by us" collection of donor funds in 1990, is a leading funder on issues of LGBTQ housing and homelessness in the United States and operates the largest scholarship program in the nation for LGBTQ refugees and asylum seekers, among many other projects. Women's funds also play a role, especially by serving as intermediaries or partners for small or nascent LGBTQ+ organizations.

Community and public foundations play a smaller role in this sector in terms of total number of dollars given compared to other funder types, but they make a lot of grants in this area. There are also several important LGBTQfocused community foundations that make a meaningful impact in specific geographic areas such as Horizons Foundation in the California Bay Area and Pride Foundation in the Pacific Northwest.



"The communities, movements, and activists we support are multidimensional, and the challenges and fights are multidimensional. In response, our funding needs to look at it all. Protecting and promoting rights are one piece within a broader agenda, which includes addressing violence as it affects many different people, using arts and culture to change norms and expand dialogue ... a wide range of approaches."

–Maitri Morarji, vice president of programs, Foundation for a Just Society Individual major donors in this field are often members of the LGBTQ+ community, like musicindustry magnate David Geffen, or close allies. Ally and apex donor MacKenzie Scott has named LGBTQ+ equity as one of her priority giving areas.

In a survey of Inside Philanthropy readers and others who work in the nonprofit sector, about half of the respondents who work in the LGBTQ+ space said the importance of large individual donors and donor-advised funds is increasing, while about two-thirds said the importance of government grants is decreasing or staying about the same.

Who's Getting

The majority of funding in this area goes to organizations and projects focused on LGBTQ+ rights for the community as a whole. Advocacy organizations receive the largest share of funding, followed by direct service providers. Grassroots groups, arts and culture organizations and others receive significantly smaller shares of funding.

After years of civil rights being the top-funded issue in this area, in 2022 health and wellbeing was the top-funded issue, receiving 28% of grant dollars. Civil rights was the second-most-funded issue area, receiving 23% of funding, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues' research. "This increase in funding for health and wellbeing coincided with the rise in the introduction and passage of anti-trans legislation targeting gender affirming health care and criminalizing supportive parents of trans youth and their medical providers across the U.S. in 2022," Funders for LGBTQ Issues wrote. Efforts toward "strengthening communities, families, and visibility" received 22% of funding tracked by Funders for LGBTQ Issues in 2022. Economic issues; education; and other issue areas received much smaller shares of funding.

The focus on rights reflects funders' and nonprofits' deep and long-term investment in the struggle for legal equality for LGBTQ+ people in the United States. What the data does not capture is how LGBTQ+ issues overlap. For instance, policy advances toward civil rights happen when there is public support for LGBTQ+ equality, which is gained in part through cultural shifts. Policy-focused funders like the Gill Foundation also support public awareness campaigns, as just one example.

In addition to issues and strategies, "who's getting" can also be seen through the lens of identity or geography. In terms of identity, the vast majority of funding goes to the community broadly--79% of 2022 grant dollars from U.S.based foundations to LGBTQ+ causes, according to Funders for LGBTQ+ Issues. Funding for trans communities is increasing. Still, the community remains under-resourced: Funders for LGBTQ Issues reported that for every \$100 awarded by U.S. foundations, only about 4.6 cents supports transgender communities. Funding specifically bisexual people, two-spirit people, and intersex people received less than 1% of overall LGBTQ+ funding from U.S. funders tracked by Funders for LGBTQ+ people. The group was unable to identify a single grant dedicated to asexual people in 2022. Funding to LGBTQ+ communities of color overall has been increasing compared to historic levels, though LGBTQ+ communities of color remain under-resourced by philanthropy.

In terms of geography, national efforts receive the largest share of funding, accounting for 29% of all U.S. LGBTQ+ funding in 2022. About 16% of U.S. foundation funding went to local efforts, and state-level work received about 12%, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues. That said, about 36% of grant dollars tracked by Funders for LGBTQ Issues were not specifically marked by geographic level, so it's hard to get a completely precise picture of where funding is flowing geographically.

According to Funders for LGBTQ Issues, New York and California were the most funded states in 2022. California was the only state that year to receive more than \$10 million in state and local funding for LGBTQ+ issues. The West Coast was the most-funded region in this sector overall, and the Southeast the second-most-funded. While funding for LGBTQ+ nonprofits in the U.S. South has increased in recent years, it is still far from commensurate with the need. According to the Movement Advancement Project, the South (including the population-heavy states of Texas, Florida and Virginia) is home to more LGBTQ+ people than any other U.S. region, and also has one of the most hostile state-policy landscapes for the community.

Giving & Getting Deeper Dive

In 2022, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues, the top 10 U.S.-based institutional funders of domestic LGBTQ+ nonprofits and programs were Gilead Sciences (\$38.7 million), the Ford Foundation (\$30.3 million), Wellspring Philanthropic Fund (\$21.9 million), the California Endowment (\$11 million), the Tides Foundation (\$9.7 million), Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (\$9.2 million), Gill Foundation \$9 million), Chicago Community Trust (\$6.9 million), Arcus Foundation (\$6.19 million), and Third Wave Fund (\$6 million).

Additional leading funders in this area include the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Open Society Foundations and the Foundation for a Just Society, among many others.

Grantees that have consistently received substantial philanthropic support in recent years include the Trevor Project, National LGBTQ Task Force, Transgender Law Center, Genders and Sexualities Alliance Network, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), Human Rights Campaign Foundation, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), L.A. LGBT Center and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

While several of the leading funders in this field -such as the Arcus and Gill foundations—have missions explicitly related to LGBTQ issues or communities, funders who do not (or "non-LGBTQ funders") also make substantial grants for LGBTQ+ issues.

This reflects what many funders in the space know: that every issue is an LGBTQ+ issue because there are LGBTQ+ people in every community and affected by every issue, and that issues overlap and intersect.

The Big Issues and Beyond

Civil rights and health are top-funded issues in this area. Other big issues are anti-violence work; work to end homophobia, transphobia and biphobia; and cultural change to challenge oppressive gender norms and increase acceptance

LGBTQ+ Grantees to Know National LGBTQ Task Force National Women's Law Center Trevor Project United We Dream TSA Network TGI Justice Project SAGE Transgender Law Center LA LGBT Center GLAAD

GSA Network

and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people. Funders also support multi-issue movement building, recognizing the connections among LGBTQ+ issues and between LGBTQ+ issues and other social justice issues, such as racial justice, gender justice, criminal justice and economic justice.

Within the U.S. context, the "rights" category primarily refers to efforts to achieve equality under the law for LGBTQ+ people, at both the state and federal levels. In interviews, several funders noted that this issue receives such a large share of funding because, while visibility and acceptance are increasing throughout U.S. society, LGBTQ+ people still do not have full equal rights under the law. For many years, the focus of this struggle was the campaign for marriage equality. Since that fight was won in 2015, rights work has continued, now with a focus on defending trans rights, rights to healthcare, and ending discrimination.

LGBTQ+ and feminist movements have both advanced what is now an increasingly widespread discussion around challenging oppressive gender norms, toxic masculinity, binary notions of gender, sexism and heteronormativity. As these movements grow and culture begins to shift, a conservative backlash has emerged. It is not only a cultural backlash, but is tied to a larger authoritarian, anti-democracy movement. As outlined in the Journal of Democracy (among many other sources), illiberal populist movements around the world are scapegoating LGBTIQ people and attacking LGBTIQ rights as an organizing strategy. Understanding that any threat to democracy is a threat to LGBTQ+ rights, some leading LGBTQ+ funders are getting involved in democracy funding as well. For example, in 2024 the Gill Foundation made a multi-million-dollar pledge for pro-democracy work on top of its core LGBTQ+ grantmaking, IP reported.

LGBTQ+ Funding Priorities

Civil Rights

Health and Well-Being

Transgender Community and Rights

Community Building and Visibility

LGBTQ+Youth

A number of LGBTQ+ funders are moving resources to counter the strategies of the conservative movement, especially at the state level. This includes fighting attacks on trans health care as well as state-level "religious exemption" laws, which would allow discrimination in areas like public accommodations for religious reasons. Resources are also being mobilized to fight conservative attacks on transgender students, including statelevel "bathroom bills," which prohibit transgender students from using bathrooms that align with their gender identity, and discriminatory state legislation that bars or makes it difficult for transgender students to participate in sports in alignment with their gender identity.

An issue some think may receive rising grant dollars in coming years is work to end conversion therapy, a harmful practice that targets queer and trans youth and attempts to change LGBTQ+ people's gender identity and/or sexual orientation

Over the last several years, funders have increasingly made dedicated grants to trans communities. This is an important shift, as trans rights are under attack and trans people face especially high rates of violence, employment discrimination, poverty and lack of access to adequate healthcare. Funding dedicated to transgender communities is expected to increase further in the coming years, although the majority of LGBTQ+ funding still goes to the LGBTQ+ community as a whole.

In 2020, Global Philanthropy Project issued a call for progressive philanthropy to resource

movements "in defense against the attacks and destabilization wrought by the 'anti-gender' movement," a global anti-rights movement based on transphobic, homophobic and essentialist ideas about sexual orientation and gender identity. The anti-rights movement is, unfortunately, vastly better resourced than LGBTI human rights organizations. GPP found that in 2021-22, just three large organizations working against LGBTI rights collectively received more philanthropic support than 8,000 grantees working in the global LGBTI movement.

Funder Spotlight GROUNDSWELL BLUEPRINT

"We are proof that when philanthropic decision-making power sits in the hands of women of color and transgender and gender non-conforming people of color who come out of grassroots organizing, the giving looks different," Groundswell founder Vanessa Daniel told Inside Philanthropy. Groundswell provides a way for individual donors to give money to social movements led by those most impacted by injustice. Its "Blueprint for 2020-2025" aims to move \$100 million to grassroots organizing led by women of color, transgender and gendernonconforming people of color-80% to 501(c)(3) organizations and 20% to 501(c)(4)s.

Some funders we spoke with noted that as the equality in the United States became especially visible in recent years, some grantmakers began shifting resources to support the safety and security of LGBTQ+ communities and organizations. strength of conservative opposition to LGBTQ+ equality in the United States became especially visible in recent years, some grantmakers began shifting resources to support the safety and security of LGBTQ+ communities and organizations.

A less-funded issue when looking at the field as a whole is faith, but it is worth noting that two of the biggest funders in this field, the Arcus and Haas, Jr., foundations, prioritize funding relating to LGBTQ+ people of faith and increasing acceptance in faith communities.

While civil rights and legal equality will continue to be a priority funding area, several funders we spoke with noted that data on funding categories fails to capture the overlaps between issues. Even if categorical data shows that cultural work and anti-violence work, including work to end transphobia, biphobia and homophobia, receive smaller shares of overall funding than LGBTQ+ rights work, all of these issues intersect, and data may not capture the significant overlaps between, e.g., policy advocacy and work to shift narratives, or human rights work and antiviolence work.

Maitri Morarji, vice president of programs at Foundation for a Just Society, puts it this way: "The communities, movements, and activists we support are multidimensional, and the challenges and fights are multidimensional. In response, our funding needs to look at it all.



Protecting and promoting rights are one piece within a broader agenda, which includes addressing violence as it affects many different people, using arts and culture to change norms and expand dialogue...a wide range of approaches."

Funder Trends and Strategies

The most-funded strategy in this area is advocacy, receiving 35% of grant dollars in 2022, per Funders for LGBTQ Issues. Direct services received 19%; followed by 13% to capacity building and 13% to culture and media. Research received 3% of grant dollars in 2022.

Funders in this area tend to be on the progressive end of things, and several of the leading institutional funders value participatory grantmaking. Multiple funders we spoke with described actively listening to what grantee partners, activists and communities say they need, and determining funding priorities based on what the people most impacted say they need. Even the big corporate funder in the field, Gilead Sciences, does a listening tour "to ensure programs are designed with the community hand in hand to have the best possible impact," said Korab Zuka, Gilead's vice president of Corporate Giving.

One of the things nonprofits say they need the most—across all program areas—is general operating support, and funders in this sector seem to be hearing it. "I am heartened by the fact that at this point, [everyone in this sector knows that] long-term, flexible general-operating support is a best practice for a reason," said Desiree Flores, former U.S. social justice program director at the Arcus Foundation. "The more foundations really can be as flexible as possible to meet the moment, and meet people and movements where they are at ... the better it will be for the people and movements they are trying to serve." In 2022, for the first time, general operating support was the most common form of support from U.S.-based funders to domestic LGBTQ+ projects, accounting for 51% of grants made that year, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues. 47% of grants were program grants.

Collaboration among funders is another key strategy in this space, with leading funders communicating regularly and often coordinating, especially around policy issues.

Funders in this area are increasingly supporting multi-issue movement building, especially in the face of attacks from the right. Foundation for a Just Society's U.S. Southeast program officer, Paulina Helm-Hernández, said, "You cannot move progressive wins without acknowledging the depth and brunt [of the impact] white nationalism has on every issue and every front. Organizations have made the misstep of thinking that they could move campaigns on gender without acknowledging racial justice, but the right has polarized folks around anti-Black racism, white supremacy and religious [conservatism]. The racial justice movement and feminist movement-including the LGBTQ movement, for example-have been natural allies, and yet there is much work to be done to build long-term unity."

"[The i]nterest of current funders is ... shifting to be more expansive, [and to] address current central issues," said a fundraiser who works in the LGBTQ+ field in Inside Philanthropy's survey.



Those working in the field hope this is a sustained rather than a passing trend. "[We] need transformative investments in movement building and advocacy for 20+ years...not the occasional jump when racial or other tensions or issues make the headlines," said a foundation professional who works in the LGBTQ+ space, responding to Inside Philanthropy's survey.

Perspectives on Equity

By definition, funders in this space advocate for LGBTQ+ equity, yet the history of the LGBTQ+ rights movement is not without misogyny, whitewashing and patterns of centering cis, white gay male voices and leadership. This is in spite of the fact that lesbians, queer and trans people of color have always been at the forefront of struggles for gender justice and LGBTQ+ equity, and have been among the most impacted by intersecting systems of oppression.

Within the broad and diverse LGBTQ+ community, the inequities of the larger society are present, a situation some nonprofits and funders are increasingly addressing.

Kristina Wertz, a former leader at Funders for LGBTQ Issues, said, "The culture of LGBTQ philanthropy today is deeply intersectional and prioritizes racial, gender, economic and social justice... In fact, I can't remember having a conversation with someone doing LGBTQ philanthropy that is not in some way doing racial justice work."

Most funding goes to the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, but recent years have seen increased funding directed toward historically underfunded parts of the community.



"This is such a movement moment, and more often than not it is LGBTQ leaders [who have] pushed these movements farther over time. Queer and transgender and gender-nonconforming people of color, especially young *LGBTQ* leaders, are often the first ones to say things, to open the door to what is possible, because they are disproportionately experiencing the harm first. It was LGBTQ leaders within the immigrant rights movement who first pushed for comprehensive immigration reform and dismantling *ICE*. *T*wo of the three creators of Black Lives Matter are queer women. Queer leadership is changing the face of social justice movements and creating the civil rights movements of our time."

–Desiree Flores , former program director , Social Justice (U.S.), Arcus Foundation

As a result of workplace harassment, discrimination and other issues, trans people face disproportionately high rates of poverty. Trans people also face high rates of violence, health disparities and negative interactions with the healthcare system. While funding specifically for trans communities has been increasing since 2012, funding remains very low relative to overall funding—accounting for only 4 cents of every \$100 awarded by U.S. foundations,



concentrated among a few grantmakers. These leading funders largely mirror lists of top LGBTQ+ funders overall—among them, the Arcus, Elton John AIDS and Gill foundations but also include the Tawani Foundation, founded by Jennifer Pritzker, the only publicly out trans billionaire.

Initiatives like Grantmakers United for Trans Communities, the Trans Futures Funding Campaign, Groundswell's Black Trans Fund and Borealis Philanthropy's Fund for Trans Generations are increasing the philanthropic resources moving to trans communities.

Even with funding increasing relative to history, LGBTQ+ communities of color are still receiving small shares of overall LGBTQ+ funding.

Inside **Philanthropy**

"More funding efforts must be made to support people of color, Trans people, and LGBTQ+ people everywhere, but most specifically in the US South."

–Development and strategic planning consultant, Oakland, CA

In an example of the kind of collaboration that is prevalent in LGBTQ+ philanthropy, in 2014, the Arcus Foundation, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, the Ford Foundation and an anonymous donor partnered to create the first LGBTQ Racial Justice Fund.

Another equity issue that impacts funding for LGBTQ+ communities and issues is

representation of LGBTQ+ people within the philanthropic workforce as a whole. A 2018 report by Funders for LGBTQ Issues found that the majority of LGBTQ people in philanthropy are "in the closet" at work.

A Closer Look at Funder Types

Private Foundations

The Arcus Foundation is one of the leading private foundations in this space. The foundation's Social Justice Program specifically focuses on LGBTQ+ people and issues. With initiatives in 12 focus countries in the Americas and Africa, funding works to increase safety, protections, inclusion and acceptance of LGBTQ+ people. Within the United States, Arcus's Social Justice Program focuses on the U.S. South and Southwest.

Another leading private foundation in this space is the Gill Foundation. Founded by software entrepreneur Tim Gill, the foundation aims to "secure equality for all LGBTQ Americans."

Other private foundations that give substantial amounts for LGBTQ+ communities and issues include the Ford Foundation, Foundation for a Just Society, Open Society Foundations, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, MacArthur Foundation and Hewlett Foundation.

Foundation for a Just Society has been a top funder of LGBTQ+ communities of color in the U.S. South. Open Society Foundations makes grants for LGBTQ+ issues both in the United States and globally.

Corporate Giving

While most of the top funders in this area are private foundations, a few corporate funders mostly in the healthcare sector—also count among leading funders of LGBTQ+ issues. And they have stepped up their funding in recent years.

The role of corporate funding in the overall LGBTQ+ philanthropic landscape is increasing. Corporate funding represented 15% of giving in this area by U.S.-based institutional grantmakers in 2022. Corporate grant support to this area more than tripled from 2012 to 2019.

In 2017, the biopharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences doubled its support, and ViiV Healthcare, another longtime supporter of LGBTQ causes, increased its funding by 128%, according to earlier reporting by Inside Philanthropy. The next year, Funders for LGBTQ Issues reports, Gilead Sciences gave more than \$20M to LGBTQ+ issues in the United States and became the No. 1 U.S.-based institutional funder of LGBTQ issues—the first time the top 10 list was topped by a corporate donor. Gilead was the number-one U.S.-based funder of LGBTQ+ issues again in 2022, accounting for 14% of grant dollars to domestic organizations.

Gilead Sciences researches and develops drugs used in the treatment of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and other conditions. The company's philanthropic approach aims to address health disparities and the inequities that shape the HIV/AIDS crisis. Gilead's COMPASS initiative, launched in 2017, is a 10year, \$100 million partnership with communitybased organizations working to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the U.S. South. Gilead's TRANScend Community Impact Fund supports trans-led organizations working to improve the safety, health and wellness of the trans community.

Corporate Program Spotlight

Gilead Sciences has been a leader in the testing, treatment and prevention of HIV for nearly 30 years. Its TRANScend Community Impact Fund continues that work, with a focus on the transgender community. Established in 2019, the fund has awarded over \$9.2 million in grants to trans-led and serving organizations across the country. The fund, which suppots organizations through grantmaking, capacity building and direct services, has helped more than 10,000 transgender individuals in the U.S.

The cosmetics company MAC is another important corporate funder in this area. Since 1994, the MAC AIDS Fund has raised money from product sales to support projects around the world that target the treatment, prevention and basic needs of underserved people living with HIV/AIDS. In 2019, they changed the name to MAC Viva Glam Fund and expanded the focus "to include funding for programs aimed at creating healthy futures and equal rights for women and the LGBTQ community," adding new grantees such as Planned Parenthood and GLAAD.

The Levi Strauss Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the legendary denim jeans company, was the first U.S. corporate donor to make a grant to fight HIV/AIDS, with a donation to San Francisco General Hospital in 1982. While the foundation does not have a dedicated LGBTQ+ program, it has been a longtime funder of LGBTQ+ issues, with a focus on HIV/AIDS and human rights, and awards grants to organizations including the Transgender Law Center and the Equality Foundation of Georgia.

Corporations are also highly visible as sponsors of Pride events, and during Pride month, corporate ads featuring rainbows and Pridethemed hashtags abound. Some of the most prominent Pride sponsors are alcohol companies, a fact that raises concerns in a community with heightened risks for substance use issues. That

Funder Spotlight

Astraea LESBIAN FOUNDATION FOR JUSTICE

Astraea has been a leader in supporting frontline LGBTQ+ organizations for decades. Astraea is known for its commitment to funding underresourced, LGBTQ+-led groups and for providing long-term, core support. Its U.S. Fund supports organizations led by LGBTQ+ people of color advancing racial and economic justice. Funding priorities include bodily autonomy, LBQ women leaders, housing and land acquisition, migrant justice, and climate relief for QTPOC communities. Astraea is also a significant funder of intersex organizations, a notably underfunded group.

some corporate support of the LGBTQ+ community comes not from social responsibility or philanthropic budgets, but rather from marketing budgets, reflects the fact that the LGBTQ+ market represents more than \$1 trillion in purchasing power annually.

Wells Fargo, Google, JP Morgan Chase and the Citi Foundation have also increased their giving in this area in recent years.

Community Foundations

In terms of overall dollar amounts, community foundations play a smaller role in LGBTQ+ philanthropy. But community and public foundations are leaders in terms of number of grants made, and they play an important role in supporting local and grassroots organizations some of which grow into major forces advancing LGBTQ+ equality and supporting the community.

The longest-standing LGBTQ+ community foundation is the Horizons Foundation, founded in 1980. Horizons was an early funder of the Lesbian Rights Project, which became the now hugely influential National Center for Lesbian Rights. Horizons was also the first U.S. foundation to make a grant to an AIDS service provider, in 1982. Today, the Horizons Foundation's flagship program focuses on California's Bay Area.

Another decades-old, geographically focused community foundation is the Pride Foundation, which moves funds to LGBTQ+ communities in the Pacific Northwest. Public and community foundations together accounted for 26% of dollars given to LGBTQ issues and communities by U.S.-based institutional funders in 2022, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues. Standouts among them include the Tides Foundation, which made \$9.7 million in LGBTQ+ grants in 2022; Third Wave Fund and Borealis Philanthropy, both of which gave about \$6 million in this area in 2022; and Groundswell Fund, which made \$4.1 million in LGBTQ+ grants in 2022.

The public foundation Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice is the only philanthropic organization working exclusively to advance LGBTQI human rights around the world, and is rooted in LGBTQI communities and movements. In its grantmaking, Astraea prioritizes groups led by lesbians and queer women, trans and gendernonconforming people, intersex people and people of color.

Another public foundation, the Stonewall Community Foundation, was established in 1990 amid the AIDS crisis and the growing number of nonprofit organizations focused on LGBT issues and communities. Its founders wanted to create a "for us and by us" foundation through which LGBTQ+ donors could resource LGBTQ+ organizations. Longtime grantee partners like SAGE and the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center have become essential parts of the LGBTQ+ nonprofit landscape. The public foundation has given more than \$25 million since its founding, and today funds more than 200 organizations per year through grants and microgrants, with focus areas including the trans community, LGBTQ housing and homelessness and LGBTQ youth. The foundation's values

include "making philanthropy accessible to everyone and giving people space to live beyond the binary of being only a benefactor or a beneficiary."

The Groundswell Fund is the only national foundation led by women of color and trans people of color who come out of community, labor and electoral organizing. They report that more than 1,000 individual donors and 40 private foundations give Groundswell dollars to redistribute. One of the leading funders of LGBTQ communities of color in the U.S. Groundswell's campaigns include the Black Trans Fund and the Birth Justice Fund, which focuses on pregnancy disparities for women of color and trans people.

Women's funds also play an important role in supporting grassroots LGBTQ+ movements, including sometimes serving as intermediaries for nascent or isolated LGBTQ+ organizations.

Major Donors

LGBTQ+ people and communities have a long themselves or are close allies, such as parents. While there are exceptions, major donors in this history of mutual aid and supporting the community through generations of marginalization and oppression, as well as in the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis. When it comes to major donors, many of the leading philanthropists in this space identify as LGBTQ+ space tend to be part of the community. Only a fraction of a percentage of the world's billionaires openly identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (0.4% in 2014, Forbes reported). Among that small group are some of the top funders of LGBTQ+ causes, including David Geffen, Jennifer Pritzker and Jon Stryker, the founder and president of the Arcus Foundation.

Music-industry magnate David Geffen has been a supporter of LGBTQ+ causes, including marriage equality and fighting AIDS, while also spreading his giving to other areas such as the arts, education and the UCLA School of Medicine. He has been one of the largest supporters of the American Foundation for Equal Rights, which was dedicated to achieving marriage equality, and a major contributor to the campaign against California's Prop 8, Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, and other LGBTQ+ focused projects and organizations.

The world's only widely reported transgender billionaire, Jennifer Pritzker, of the Pritzker family, whose fortune derives from the Hyatt hotel chain and investments, gives through the Tawani Foundation. Tawani's Gender & Human Sexuality program focuses on science- and human-rights-based efforts to increase understanding and acceptance of the diversity of gender and sexuality. Tawani has made six-figure grants to the Michael D. Palm Center for an initiative related to transgender military service (Pritzker is a retired lieutenant colonel of the Illinois National Guard), the University of Minnesota for a transgender oral history project, and Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago for a program related to gender and sexual development, among others. In addition to LGBTQ+ issues, the Tawani Foundation supports organizations involved in military awareness and heritage, arts and culture, health and wellness, the environment, and human rights.

Apple CEO Tim Cook, the first openly gay CEO of a Fortune 1000 company, has pledged to give all of his Apple stock to charity. While he generally keeps a low profile in terms of grantmaking, among his known donations is a substantial gift to the Human Rights Campaign.

Elton John, who has been involved in AIDSrelated work since the 1980s, does his giving primarily through the Elton John AIDS Foundation, a leading LGBTQ+ funder.



Major Donor: Jennifer Pritzker

Jennifer Pritzker and her family have a long philanthropic history. She established the Tawani Foundation in 1995 as a way to take a more active role in her giving. Keen on helping people better understand the transgender community, Pritzker gave \$2 million to the University of British Columbia to establish the first ever chair of transgender studies. Tawani also awarded the University of California's Palm Center a \$1.35 million grant to study the experiences of transgender people in the military. Pritzker is a retired lieutenant colonel of the Illinois Army National Guard.



Computer programmer Tim Gill, who made a fortune on software in the 1990s, has given hundreds of millions of dollars to the fight for LGBTQ+ equality, much of it through the Gill Foundation. The foundation organizes a conference and network of individual and family funders in LGBTQ+ philanthropy, called OutGiving.

TV writer and producer Greg Berlanti ("Dawson's Creek," "Supergirl") gives with his husband, Robbie Rogers, through the Berlanti Family Foundation, which is dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ people. Berlanti has supported groups including GLAAD, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Trevor Project, and GLSEN, to which the couple made a \$1 million gift.

Major Donors: Scott Miller and Tim Gill



According to the Gill Foundation, Scott Miller and Tim Gill are "the largest contributors to LGBT equality in history, having donated hundreds of millions of dollars to the cause." The foundation has donated over \$500 million to LGBTQ+ programs and causes. Miller has co-chaired the Gill Foundation's board and managed the its national giving strategy toward advancing LGBTQ+ equality. At a more local level, rapper G-Eazy launched the Endless Summer Fund to support California Bay Area organizations that work with homeless and LGBTQ youth.

Megadonor MacKenzie Scott named LGBTQ+ equity as one of her priority funding areas. Between 2020 and 2022, she gave more than \$163 million to 28 LGBTQ-focused organizations tracked by the Movement Advancement Project, making her a notable exception to the generalization that most billionaires giving to LGBTQ+ causes identify as such themselves.

Associations & Intermediaries

LGBTQ+ philanthropy is highly collaborative. Many of the leading foundations are in regular communication with one another and often coordinate on strategic initiatives. There was significant coordination among policy-focused foundations, for example, during the fight for marriage equality. Foundations also come together as partners, such as when the Arcus Foundation, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Ford Foundation, and an anonymous donor partnered to create the first LGBTQ Racial Justice Fund in 2014.

Funders for LGBTQ Issues is the network of more than 100 foundations, corporations and other funding institutions working to increase the scale and impact of philanthropic resources moving toward LGBTQ communities and issues. As is evidenced by the frequent citations in this report, their research and reporting on LGBTQ grantmaking provides important data on the field through annual tracking reports and other special reports. Funders for LGBTQ Issues also offers training and support to funders, and regularly convenes grantmakers committed to LGBTQ issues, including at the annual Funding Forward conference.

Funders for LGBTQ Issues is also the home of Grantmakers United for Trans Communities and Out in the South, which works to increase philanthropic resources for LGBTQ organizations in the U.S. South.

Tides Foundation is an important intermediary. It connects funders and organizations working on a variety of issues, including equity and human rights, and has been a top grantmaker for LGBTQ+ issues in recent years.

Tides also acts as a fiscal sponsor and/or provides other infrastructural support to several LGBTQ+ organizations.

The Trans Justice Funding Project, a communityled trust that funds trans-led grassroots organizations, is one of several intermediary funds that have emerged in the past decade. Others include Borealis Philanthropy's Fund for Trans Generations, which invests in trans-led organizing, and the Mobilize Power Fund at the Third Wave Fund, a rapid-response fund for gender justice organizations met with unanticipated, time-sensitive opportunities or threats. These types of funds are "proximate to communities and a great way for larger organizations to support organizations closer to the work," said Kristina Wertz of Funders for LGBTQ Issues.

Gift Spotlight

SFF Steans Family Foundation

In 2024, the Steans Family Foundation made a \$1.25 million gift to Lambda Legal's Nonbinary and Transgender Rights Project. The gift "couldn't come at a more important moment," said Sasha Buchert, who heads up the project at Lambda Legal. Since 2022, federal and state legislators have introduced more than 1,300 anti-LGBTQ+ bills.

The Steans Family Foundation is a placebased funder that mostly focuses its grantmaking on two Chicago communities, North Lawndale and North Chicago. Heather Steans, the foundation's chair, had firsthand experience with Lambda Legal's advocacy work while serving as a state senator in Illinois. Steans is also the parent of a trans daughter. She <u>told IP</u> in 2024 she believes there is a lot more philanthropy can do in this space.



An Analysis of Opportunities & Challenges

"Given that every issue is an LGBTQ issue and that queer and trans folks are present in every community, [the fact that] funding for LGBTQ issues is so low is an opportunity for the philanthropic sector," Andrew Wallace, a former vice president of research and communications at Funders for LGBTQ Issues, told IP.

The top-heavy nature of current LGBTQ+ philanthropy—where a handful of stalwart funders account for the majority of grant dollars —can represent both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, the longtime, leading funders in this space have a huge opportunity to make a positive impact. On the other, nonprofits and movements are vulnerable to negative impacts if any of the leading funders in this space change course.

The longtime focus on LGBTQ+ rights among current funders needs to be leveraged and even expanded in the face of the current wave of attacks on rights. There is also ample opportunity for more funding for anti-violence work and work to end homophobia, transphobia and biphobia, as well as arts and culture to shift narratives and the society at large toward increased acceptance and inclusion. There is also an opportunity here to support cross-movement collaboration with racial justice, economic justice, feminist and other social justice organizations. A promising example is the Culture Change Fund, a \$10 million+ fund housed at the Women's Foundation of California and launched by the California Gender Justice Funders Network and partners to create broad

public support for a new way of thinking that centers gender, racial and economic justice through culture change.

Funders for LGBTQ Issues and ABFE (formerly the Association of Black Foundation Executives) see opportunities to increase funding to Black LGBTQ+ communities by supporting queer Black leaders working across a range of movements, learning from Black-led movements, addressing anti-Black racism in all areas of their work, and centering Black trans experiences, among other suggestions.

Funders for LGBTQ Issues and Hispanics in Philanthropy have identified several opportunities to increase giving to Latinx LGBTQ+ communities, including funding leadership development for young LGBTQ+ Latinx leaders, supporting LGBTQ+ and Latinx organizations that have an intersectional lens, and supporting grassroots organizations led by LGBTQ+ Latinx people.

In light of highly organized conservative opposition to social justice, there is an opportunity, indeed a pressing need, for funders to support movement building across social justice issues.

"This is such a movement moment ... and more often than not, it is LGBTQ leaders [who have] pushed these movements farther over time. Queer and transgender and gendernonconforming people of color, especially young LGBTQ leaders, are often the first ones to say



things, to open the door to what is possible, because they are disproportionately experiencing the harm first. It was LGBTQ leaders within the immigrant rights movement who first pushed for comprehensive immigration reform and dismantling ICE. Two of the three creators of Black Lives Matter are queer women. Queer leadership is changing the face of social justice movements and creating the civil rights movements of our time," said Desiree Flores, a former director of the U.S. Social Justice Program the Arcus Foundation.

At the same time as they support multi-issue movements, funders may also be called upon to step up rapid-response giving, support for direct services, legal advocacy, and grants aimed at supporting the safety and security of LGBTQ+ organizations in the face of compounding health and economic crises amid ever more visible, and potentially violent, attacks on LGBTQ+ people and rights.

Advocate Spotlight



Established in 1973, Lambda Legal is the first legal organization of its kind. Committed to fighting for the civil rights of LGBTQ+ people, as well as those living with HIV, Lambda takes a multi-pronged approach toward equity through impact litigation, public policy advocacy, education and communication.

Since 2022, more than 1,200 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced in state legislatures. In 2024, Lambda Legal launched a \$180 million initiative to expand its fight against anti-equality legislation and discrimination. The initiative nearly doubles the organization's litigation capacity and also expands its community education efforts to suppor the rights and freedoms of LGBTQ+ people.

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Feedback?

The State of American Philanthropy is an ongoing project, each SAP brief will be updated periodically to integrate new information, additional data and evolving perspectives. This brief was originally posted to Inside Philanthropy in November 2020. It was updated in 2024. If you have comments or information you'd like to share with us, please email us at managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.com.

