

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-of-american-philanthropy.

AUTHORS: Jessica Hoffman with Fundraising Now contribution by Beth Rowan

EDITOR: Michael Hamill Remaley

COPY EDITOR: Chris Packham

GRAPHICS & DESIGN: Sue-Lynn Moses

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LGBTQ+ philanthropy addresses a range of issues, including legal equality, equal access to healthcare, and cultural change with hopes of bringing an end to stigma and violence. 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 is on the rise, hitting record highs in the years 2017 and 2018. Yet this diverse and multifaceted sector still receives only a tiny fraction of overall philanthropic spending. In 2018, for every \$100 given by U.S. foundations, only 28 cents were specifically dedicated to LGBTQ+ issues.

In the wake of the historic Supreme Court victory on marriage equality in 2015, and in the midst of intersecting movements for racial, gender and social justice, 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.

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 civil rights work and to 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 civil rights is the most-funded issue, but also 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 have 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.
- The field is expanding: The number of grantmakers almost tripled over a recent five-year period, from 1,064 in 2014 to 2,958 in 2018.

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.
- Grassroots groups and arts and culture organizations receive notably smaller shares of funding.
- Funding specifically for trans communities is increasing, accounting for 16% of all LGBTQ+ funding by U.S.-based institutions in 2018.
- Most funding goes to national work, but among U.S. regions, the South received the largest share of funding in 2017 and 2018.

The Big Issues and Funding Trends

- Civil rights is the top-funded issue, with a focus on legal equality and anti-discrimination protections at both the federal and state levels.
- Other key issues include HIV/AIDS, 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 also mobilizing in response to an organized conservative opposition as well as the combined economic and health crises of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 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 movements in the face of organized conservative opposition.

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.
- Dedicated funding to trans communities and LGBTQ+ communities of color is increasing.

- LGBTQ+ philanthropy has historically been led primarily by and focused on the priority issues of wealthy, white cis gay men, but that is changing.

Fundraising Now

- While the COVID-19 pandemic dominated the nation's attention during the past year, fundraisers say donors to LGBTQ+ causes have continued to receive strong support.
- The nation's focus on racial justice, the increasing understanding among donors of concepts of intersectionality, and the related imperative to move resources to those whose multiple identities affect outcomes have helped LGBTQ+ organizations make the case for donations, especially those which have focused on the most vulnerable in the community.

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, LGBTQ+ philanthropy is today moving record-high dollar amounts, even in the wake of the 2015 victory on marriage equality, a campaign that had dominated funders’ attention for years.

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 to movements for social justice, 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 been rising for at least a decade, hitting record highs in 2017 and 2018. This diverse, multifaceted sector includes multiple identity groups, spans every region of the country and addresses a range of intersecting issues, but still receives only a tiny fraction of overall philanthropic resources: LGBTQ+ people make up [at least 4.5% of the U.S. population](#), yet from 2014 to 2018, U.S. LGBTQ+ nonprofits and projects received only about 0.18% of grant dollars from U.S.-based foundations, according to data from Candid.

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 AIDS-related 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 has, in fact, continued to grow. 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 [Fundors for LGBTQ Issues](#). U.S.-based philanthropic institutions collectively gave record highs of more than \$200 million per year to this issue area in 2017 and 2018.

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 have 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 once-pejorative, 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 uses 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 under-resourced 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 (although this will change if the Equality Act, which is awaiting passage in the U.S. Senate, becomes law).

Only 21 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. 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 and gender justice 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 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 2018, the top 10 funders accounted for 46% of all funding for LGBTQ issues 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 the years 2014 through 2018, the top 10 institutional funders that gave the most in this area distributed a combined \$291.29 million. More than 47% of those dollars came from the Arcus Foundation, Gill Foundation, and Gilead Sciences., which gave \$49.54M, \$45.93M, and \$41.85M, respectively. Funders for LGBTQ Issues' 2014 to 2018 Tracking Reports puts total domestic funding for LGBTQ+ issues at \$697.30M, which means the top 10 funders accounted for around 42% of all institutional funding. Its 2018 report noted that LGBTQ grantmaking "continues to be quite top-heavy," with "the top 100 accounting for a full 89% of all LGBTQ grantmaking."

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 \$20.19M in 2018. MAC AIDS Fund (which rebranded in 2019 as the MAC Viva Glam Fund) and ViiV Healthcare are other significant corporate funders in this area.

**Top 10 Domestic LGBTQ+ Funders
2014 - 2018**

Grantmaker	Dollar Value of Grants Awarded
Arcus Foundation	\$49.54M
Gill Foundation	\$45.92M
Gilead Sciences	\$41.85M
Ford Foundation	\$34.80M
Strengthen Orlando One Orlando Fund	\$29.51M
Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr., Fund	\$29.13M
H. van Ameringen Foundation	\$18.23M
Pride Foundation	\$17.23M
Elton John AIDS Foundation	\$14.33M
Tides Foundation	\$10.74M

Source: Funders for LGBTQ Issues

There are also important public and community foundations working in this field, including the Tides Foundation and Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, which often land in top 10 or top 20 funder lists. 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 foundations play a relatively small role in this sector in terms of total number of dollars given compared to other funder types (giving about

5% of LGBTQ grant dollars in 2018, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues), but there are a few important LGBTQ-focused 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.

Inside Philanthropy’s analysis of Funders for LGBTQ Issues’ Tracking Reports shows that with the exception of 2016 to 2017—which saw a funding decrease of 21.91%—total institutional funding in the LGBTQ+ field increased at an average yearly rate of around 11% from 2014 to 2018.

Individual major donors in this field are often members of the LGBTQ+ community, like music-industry magnate David Geffen, or close allies. New “apex donor” MacKenzie Scott has named LGBTQ+ equity as one of her priority giving areas.

In an August 2020 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.

According to Candid data, in the years 2014 through 2018, the LGBTQ+ rights category received \$42.91 million, while the next-most-funded category, public engagement and community organizing, received \$27.3 million. Efforts to end discrimination and violence received \$20.76 million. And funding directed at two specific populations represents the next two most-funded categories in these years: \$17.88 million went to support the trans community specifically, and \$16.43 million went to projects focused on LGBTQ+ youth.

Funders for LGBTQ Issues breaks down funding categories differently, but also shows civil rights work receiving the largest share of funding in

Year	Dollar Value of Grants	Regranting Funds	Total -All Grant Funding	Percentage Increase/Decrease
2014	\$112.60M	\$12.40M	\$125.00M	--
2015	\$129.10M	\$9.00M	\$138.10M	10.48%
2016	\$156.80M	\$30.80M	\$187.60M	35.84%
2017	\$137.00M	\$9.50M	\$146.50M	-21.91%
2018	\$161.80M	\$13.30M	\$175.10M	19.52%

Source: Funders for LGBTQ Issues

organizing, received \$27.3 million. Efforts to end discrimination and violence received \$20.76 million. And funding directed at two specific popular recent years. For 2017 and 2018, the funder network reported that rights work received more than a third of funding, followed by health and wellbeing (23% in 2018, 20% in 2017); strengthening communities, families, and visibility (20% both years); economic issues (6%, 5%); education and safe schools (6% both years); addressing violence, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia (2% in 2018, down from 5% in 2017); and other issues (6%).

Subject	Amount Funded
LGBTQ+ Rights	\$42.91M
Public Engagement and Community Organizing	\$27.30M
Discrimination and Violence Prevention	\$20.76M
Transgender Community	\$17.88M
LGBTQ+ Youth	\$16.43M

Source: Candid

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—75% of 2018 grant dollars from U.S.-based foundations to LGBTQ+ causes globally, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues. Funding specifically for trans communities hit a record high that year, accounting for 16% of all LGBTQ+ funding. Still, the community remains under-resourced: Funders for LGBTQ Issues reported that “for every \$100 awarded by U.S. foundations, only 4 cents supports transgender communities.” Funding specifically

Subject	Amount Funded
Civil Rights	\$142.73M
HIV/AIDS	\$86.76M
Community Building and Empowerment	\$54.91M
Anti-Violence	\$38.52M
Gender Identity Rights	\$30.84M

Source: Funders for LGBTQ Issues

directed toward gay/queer men represented 8% of LGBTQ+ philanthropy by U.S.-based institutions in 2018, lesbians/queer women 3%, and groups or projects specifically focused on bisexual people, intersex people or asexual people received 1% of funding or less. Funding to LGBTQ+ communities of color overall increased in 2018, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues, though a close look shows that funding increased to Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ communities, while support to AAPI LGBTQ+ communities decreased.

In terms of geography, national efforts receive the largest share of funding, accounting for 40% of all U.S. LGBTQ+ funding in 2018. Local efforts were funded at a similar level, about 39% of all domestic funding in 2018. During the same year, support for state-level work increased significantly, and 2018 was the first year since they began this type of geographic analysis that Funders for LGBTQ Issues reported at least some funding going to all 50 states.

According to Funders for LGBTQ Issues, New York and California were the most funded states in 2018. Among U.S. regions, the U.S. South received the largest share of funding in 2017 and 2018.

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.

In addition to organizations whose mission explicitly relates to LGBTQ+ communities or issues, organizations with broader areas of focus—e.g., the ACLU—also receive funding for projects that focus on LGBTQ+ issues. According to Funders for LGBTQ Issues, in 2018, organizations whose missions explicitly focus on LGBTQ+ issues received 62% of funding in this area, while “non-LGBTQ” organizations received 37%, for LGBTQ-specific programs, campaigns, or outreach efforts.

Giving & Getting Deeper Dive

In the years 2014 through 2018, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues, the top 10 domestic institutional funders in the field were the Arcus Foundation (\$49.42 million), the Gill Foundation (\$45.93 million), Gilead Sciences (\$41.85 million), the Ford Foundation (\$34.80 million),

Strengthen Orlando-OneOrlando Fund (\$29.51 million), Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr., Fund (\$29.13 million), the H. van Ameringen Foundation (\$18.23 million), Pride Foundation (\$17.23 million), Elton John AIDS Fund (\$14.33 million) and the Tides Foundation (\$10.74 million).

It's worth noting that the Strengthen Orlando-OneOrlando Fund, appeared on Funders for LGBTQ Issues' top funders list in 2016 only. The fund was established in response to the [Pulse nightclub shooting](#) on June 12, 2016, which killed 49 people and injured more than 50 others. Money raised was directly distributed to victims' families and survivors of the attack. The OneOrlando Fund has officially closed. The Contigo Fund and Better Together Fund continue to support Pulse survivors, victims' families and local LGBTQ+ communities.

Additional leading funders in this area include the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Open Society Foundations and the Foundation for a Just Society, all of which consistently appear on the top funders lists in terms of dollar amounts in Funders for LGBTQ Issues' reports for 2014 to 2018.

The grantee that received the most funding in this area in the years 2014 through 2018 was the National LGBTQ Task Force, followed by Services and Advocacy for LGBT Elders (SAGE), 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), Los Angeles LGBT Center and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

Top 10 Domestic LGBTQ+ Grant Recipients 2014 - 2018

Recipient	Dollar Value of Grants Received
National LGBTQ Task Force	\$17.22M
Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)	\$10.39M
Transgender Law Center	\$9.74M
Genders and Sexualities Alliance Network	\$9.26M
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund	\$8.32M
National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)	\$8.23M
Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation	\$6.89M
Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)	\$7.17M
Los Angeles LGBT Center	\$6.47M
San Francisco AIDS Foundation	\$4.59M

Source: Funders for LGBTQ Issues

Funders for LGBTQ Issues tracks the top funders of LGBTQ communities of color, which for 2018 were Gilead Sciences, Foundation for a Just Society, Borealis Philanthropy, the Arcus Foundation, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, New York Women’s Foundation, Groundswell Fund, AIDS United, the Ford Foundation and anonymous donors. “Collectively, they awarded \$22.2 million and accounted for two-thirds of all funding for LGBTQ communities of color,” the affinity group reported.

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”) collectively awarded the largest share of

support for LGBTQ communities in 2018, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues. A notable example is Foundation for a Just Society, explicitly a feminist funder and categorized as a “non-LGBTQ” funder in Funders for LGBTQ Issues’ reporting, while also being one of the leading funders of LGBTQ+ communities of color. 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—gender justice being a clear area of overlap between some feminist and LGBTQ+ funders.

The Big Issues and Beyond

Civil rights is the top-funded issue in this area, and HIV/AIDS is also a longtime priority issue. 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 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 the largest 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 ending discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, federal funding, credit and jury service. Many organizations are organizing and advocating around the Equality Act, which would provide non-discrimination protections in these areas at the federal level. LGBTQ+ people won an important victory in 2020, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects LGBTQ+ people from employment discrimination on the basis of sexual identity or orientation.

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. Progressive funders are moving resources to counter the strategies of the conservative opposition, especially at the state level. This includes fighting 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 state-level “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.



“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, director of programs, Foundation for a Just Society

Over the last several years, funders have increasingly made dedicated grants to trans communities. This is an important shift, as 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. GPP found that between 2013 and 2017, “LGBTI movements worldwide received \$1.2 billion, while the anti-gender movement received \$3.7 billion—more than triple the LGBTI funding.”

Some funders we spoke with noted that as the strength of conservative opposition to LGBTQ+

equality in the United States became especially visible during the Trump 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 anti-violence work.

Maitri Morarji, director 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

fight 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 42% of grant dollars in 2018, per Funders for LGBTQ Issues. Direct services received 19%; followed by 12% to capacity building and training; 7% each to culture and media, philanthropy and fundraising, and research; and 6% to other strategies.

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. “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, U.S. social justice program director at the Arcus Foundation. “The more foundations really can be as flexible as

Inside Philanthropy August 2020 Survey

“It is frustrating that oftentimes money is wasted in the wrong areas of philanthropy—money which would’ve been better spent going directly towards fulfilling the needs of the community/population we are trying to assist.”

—Foundation professional, State College, Pennsylvania

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.”

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

Another priority strategy is research. Funders for LGBTQ Issues explains this is important because numbers relating to LGBTQ+ communities have not historically been visible within philanthropy or within society at large.

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.” She notes that 2020 saw more discussions among funders about supporting multiracial, multi-issue movement work.

“[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 August 2020 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.

Last year also saw increased rapid-response funding, as queer and trans people, who experience high rates of poverty, among other inequities, faced combined economic and health crises amid the pandemic. Some leading funders stepped up their rapid-response giving, which could portend a continued increase in support for direct services in the coming years.



“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. 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.”

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

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. A 2015 report commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign found that the organization—the largest LGBTQ advocacy group in the United States—had an organizational structure marked by sexism and a homogenous “gay, white, male” leadership culture.

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, interim president of 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 under-funded parts of the community. Funding for Black LGBTQ+ communities and for trans communities reached record highs in 2018, according to Funders for LGBTQ issues.

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 and executive director 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 gender-nonconforming people of color—80% to 501(c)(3) organizations and 20% to 501(c)(4)s.

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 less than 3 cents of every \$100 awarded by U.S. foundations in 2016, reports Grantmakers United for Trans Communities. Funding in this area is concentrated among a few grantmakers, with the top 10 funders of U.S. trans communities accounting for 70% of the funding in 2015–16, according to GUTC. These leading funders largely mirror lists of Top 10 LGBTQ+ funders overall—among them, the Arcus

Foundation, the Elton John AIDS Foundation and the Gill Foundation—but also include the Tawani Foundation, founded by Jennifer Pritzker, the only publicly out trans billionaire.

Initiatives like Grantmakers United for Trans Communities, Groundswell’s Black Trans Fund and Borealis Philanthropy’s Fund for Trans Generations are aiming to increase the philanthropic resources moving to trans communities.

Even with funding increasing year over year, LGBTQ+ communities of color are still receiving small shares of overall LGBTQ+ funding, and in this area again, a few large donors moving most of the money dominate the space.

Funders for LGBTQ Issues reports that even as funding for Black LGBTQ communities grows, it has never exceeded 5% of all LGBTQ funding in the United States and “the top 10 funders of Black LGBTQ communities accounted for 65% of all support [in 2017–2018]. The two largest funders are

both pharmaceutical companies [Gilead Sciences and ViiV Healthcare] with grantmaking almost exclusively focused on HIV/AIDS.”

Funding specifically directed toward LGBTQ Latinx communities is also increasing, and is top-heavy here, too, with the top 10 funders—among them Gilead Sciences, the Arcus Foundation and Borealis Philanthropy—accounting for 68% of all funding in 2017–18.

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.



“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.”

—Paulina Helm-Hernández, Southeast program officer, Foundation for a Just Society

A Closer Look at Funder Types

Private Foundations

The Arcus Foundation is one of the leading private foundations in this space in terms of dollars given, having contributed \$49.42 million to U.S. LGBTQ+ issues in the years 2014 through 2018, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues. The Arcus 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 in the years 2014 through 2018 was the Gill Foundation, which gave \$45.92 million to LGBTQ+ issues over the course of those years. Founded by software entrepreneur Tim Gill, the foundation aims to “secure equality for all LGBTQ Americans.”

Other private foundations in the top 10 in terms of overall giving to LGBTQ+ issues in the years 2014 through 2018 were the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund (\$29.13 million), Ford Foundation (\$29.13 million), the H. van Ameringen Foundation (\$18.23 million), Pride Foundation (\$17.23 million).

Additional significant funders in the field include the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, MAC AIDS Fund, and the Tides Foundation.

Notably, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues, Foundation for a Just Society tripled its funding to LGBTQ+ communities of color in the U.S. South at the end of this span of years, in 2018. Another

significant private foundation grantmaker in this field is Open Society Foundations, which was fourth U.S.-based foundation funder of LGBTQ issues in terms of dollar amounts in 2018, giving \$9.1 million that year, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues; more than a third of Open Society's giving in this area went to projects outside the United States.

Funder Spotlight



Arcus has been a leader in LGBTQ+ philanthropy for decades, giving more to LGBTQ+ communities and causes than any other foundation from 2014 to 2018.

Its Social Justice Program works toward LGBTQ+ social justice in 12 countries, with the goals of increasing safety, identity-affirming protections, inclusion, and acceptance. Recent grantees include Borealis Philanthropy's Transforming Movements Fund and Fund for Trans Generations, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Trans Queer Pueblo.

While the Arcus Foundation makes grants across multiple issues affecting LGBTQ+ communities, it stands out as one of few foundations prioritizing building cultural acceptance of LGBTQ+ people through faith communities.

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 14% of giving in this area by U.S.-based institutional grantmakers in 2017, and 17% in 2018. 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 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 10-year, \$100 million partnership with community-based 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.

Another important corporate funder is the U.K.-based pharmaceutical company ViiV Healthcare, which also focuses on HIV/AIDS. Targeted grants programs direct support to specific groups, such as cis and trans women of color, people living with HIV in the U.S. South, Black men who have sex with men, young people living with HIV, and gay, bisexual, and trans-Latinx men. ViiV Healthcare

Corporate Donor Spotlight



Gilead Sciences has been a leader in testing, treatment and prevention of HIV for nearly three decades. The biopharmaceutical company has also been a leading funder of HIV/AIDS programs worldwide. In 2018, the company was the No. 1 U.S.-based funder of LGBTQ+ issues and communities in terms of dollars given. Two new initiatives, COMPASS and the TRANScend Community Impact Fund, target support for LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. South and for trans communities.

gave \$2.9 million to LGBTQ issues in 2017, and \$1 million in 2018, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues.

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 is one of only two corporate members of Funders for LGBTQ Issues (the other being Gilead Sciences). The philanthropic arm of the legendary denim jeans company, the Levi Strauss Foundation 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 Pride-themed 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 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 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 relatively small role in LGBTQ+ philanthropy, accounting for just 5% of foundation funding in 2018, and 6% in 2017, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues. They play an important role, however, in supporting small 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 foundations accounted for 21% of dollars given to LGBTQ issues and communities by U.S.-based institutional funders in 2018, according to Funders for LGBTQ Issues. A standout among them is the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, which, in 2018, was tenth in terms of total dollar amount (\$4.1 million) and third in the number of grants awarded (307), per Funders for LGBTQ Issues' tracking report. Astraea 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, the public foundation prioritizes groups led by lesbians and queer women, trans and gender-nonconforming 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 \$20 million since its founding, and today funds more than 110 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, another important public foundation in this field, 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 300 donors and 30 foundations give Groundswell dollars to redistribute. One of the top 10 funders of LGBTQ communities of color in the U.S. in 2018, 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 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+ themselves or are close allies, such as parents. While there are exceptions, major donors in this 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

Funder Spotlight



The Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice has been a leader in supporting frontline LGBTQ+ organizations for decades. Astraea is known for its commitment to funding under-resourced, LGBTQ+-led groups and for providing long-term, core support. Its U.S. Fund supports organizations led by LGBTQ+ people of color working to advance racial and economic justice, with a current grantmaking focus on anti-criminalization and migrant justice. In 2018, 99% of funding through Astraea’s U.S. Fund went to groups led by

LGBTQI Black people and people of color. Astraea is also a significant funder of intersex organizations, a notably underfunded group, through the Intersex Human Rights Fund. Astraea is known as an approachable funder that favors smaller organizations, and is quite accessible to initial grantseekers.

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 AIDS-related work since the 1980s, does his giving primarily through the Elton John AIDS Foundation, a leading funder in the LGBTQ+ space. The foundation was one of the top 10 U.S.-based LGBTQ+ public funders in 2018, per Funders for LGBTQ Issues.

Major Donor: Jennifer Pritzker



Jennifer Pritzker and her family have a long philanthropic history. In 1995 she established the Tawani Foundation 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. The Tawani Foundation 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.

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.

New “apex donor” MacKenzie Scott named LGBTQ+ equity as one of her priority funding areas. In July 2020, Scott said in a Medium post that she has moved \$46 million to this priority area to date, 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, the 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 75 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. Tides was the No. 1 U.S.-based non-LGBTQ+ public funder of LGBTQ+ communities and issues in 2018, per Funders for LGBTQ Issues, awarding more than \$7.1 million in grants to this area. From 1997 to 2019, Tides made grants totaling more

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.”

Tim Gill established the Gill Foundation in 1994, which has donated over \$379 million to LGBTQ+ programs and causes. Miller, who previously served as the vice president at UBS Wealth Management in Denver, is now the the Gill Foundation's board of directors co-chair and manages the foundation's national giving strategy toward advancing LGBTQ+ equality.

than \$42M to support LGBTQ causes in the U.S. and globally. Tides is also the organizational home of the Trans Justice Funding Project, among other LGBTQ-specific projects. Tides acts as a fiscal sponsor and/or provides other infrastructural support to several LGBTQ+ organizations.

The Trans Justice Funding Project is one of several new intermediary funds that have emerged in recent years. Others include Borealis Philanthropy's Fund for Trans Generations, which invests in trans-led organizing, and the Flush Transphobia Fund at the Third Wave Foundation, a rapid-response fund for groups challenging anti-trans legislation, regardless of 501(c)(3) status or fiscal sponsorship. 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.

Affinity Group Spotlight



Funders for LGBTQ Issues is an affinity group that brings together more than 75 foundations, corporations and other funding institutions. The individual members of this network distribute around \$100

million annually to LGBTQ+ causes. The affinity group works to increase both the scale and impact of philanthropic resources in this sector through research, training and support for funders new to LGBTQ+ issues. Resources offered include guides to best practices and funding opportunities, funder convenings and special initiatives like Grantmakers United for Trans Communities.

Fundraising Now

While the COVID-19 pandemic dominated the nation's attention during the past year, fundraisers say donors to LGBTQ+ causes have continued to receive strong support—and for good reason, as this community has been disproportionately affected. Recent studies show that LGBTQ+ Americans are at greater risk for health complications and are more likely to live in poverty, lack access to healthcare and paid medical leave, or work in highly impacted service industries.

One major LGBTQ+ nonprofit, Human Rights Campaign, was hit by COVID closures just as it was finalizing its 2021 fiscal year budget. “We had to rapidly re-evaluate everything,” said Christopher Speron, senior vice president of development and membership. The organization had planned 28 large-scale fundraising events across the country, as well as 300 Pride events and a street canvassing operation. All of it was canceled or suspended. Instead, the organization mounted one big online fall event, followed by a virtual presidential inauguration event; the group has planned an April 2021 event.

“Key revenue and acquisition channels were now unavailable to us, but the good news is that we will actually achieve close to what we budgeted, despite it being an extraordinary year of loss for our community, with people losing jobs, facing healthcare crises, and just the general hardships of the pandemic,” Speron said.

“We knew event-based donors still wanted to support us and we early on recognized that virtual fundraising would have to contain the same traditional fundraising strategies, so we

continued sponsorships and everything you would do for an in-person event. All events became free; monthly donors were asked if they wanted to pause their gifts and then re-asked three or four months later, with a terrific retention rate, even as our members navigated a lot of hardship. Our donors doubled down and remained engaged in our work,” he said.

One particularly successful initiative was a COVID-19 mask campaign: For every mask bought, HRC donated two to needy organizations. Ten thousand contributions resulted in 20,000 extra masks going to people in need, he said.

Inside Philanthropy August 2020 Survey

“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

HRC is taking a conservative approach in its fundraising strategy going forward. “We are hopeful we will have some in-person gatherings in fall 2021 or early 2022, but are not relying heavily on event revenue. We want to capture the momentum when it starts. There are donors out there who now say, ‘I wish I’d done more to help my community,’ and will double down when we can reconnect with the world.”

At the end of 2020, one exciting new funding source surfaced for some prominent LGBTQ+ organizations: MacKenzie Scott, whose fortune derives from Amazon. Her year-end, **\$4 billion** giving to 384 nonprofits (mostly non-LGBTQ+) included organizations like Lambda Legal, SAGE, GLSEN, PFLAG, the National Center for Lesbian

Rights, and Transgender Law Center. Scott made it clear that she wanted to support communities that have historically been marginalized and underserved or severely affected by COVID-19, especially groups with strong leadership and an established organizational structure. Her grants were to be used at the discretion of the recipients, an important factor this year for organizations facing increased operating and service needs.

“This gift is a vote of confidence and serves as a point of validation for many of the donors we talk with,” said Josh Pushkin, Lambda Legal chief development officer, adding that this transformational investment is a sign that big philanthropy is taking notice of Lambda Legal’s work and impact. Pushkin said the organization has excelled in the court of public law, but sometimes struggled in the court of public opinion.

Lambda Legal has some 18,000 loyal donors who, when the pandemic hit, “stood up to renew, and in many cases, increase their gifts,” Pushkin said. Once the national campaign went entirely remote, supporters who formerly gave at in-person events were now engaged in their homes, unlocking the potential across the country to make Lambda Legal a household name. This pivot was not without its challenges. “As far as the global pandemic, I was impressed with how quickly the team at Lambda Legal could adapt and excel,” Pushkin said. “We are all adapting to this strange new reality,” he added, listing direct mail, email, individual video calls, virtual galas, cocktail parties and grassroots events as tactics his team used to create a “Surround Sound effect” to amplify donor messaging and keep donors engaged.

In 2021, the organization will focus on its One Lambda Legal campaign with a year-long series of virtual fundraising events, culminating in an October online campaign week, unique to the organization. Lambda Legal also boasts a strong menu of corporate and law firm donors, which benefit from online training and education provided by Lambda Legal. The nonprofit is looking to enhance and grow legacy giving and major gifts as it approaches its 50th anniversary in 2023.

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.

When the Trump-Pence administration rolled back Title IX rules of the Education Amendments of 1972, Lambda CEO Kevin Jennings called the move “a shameful attack that intentionally targets transgender youth athletes just for being who they are.” Jennings went on to say “Sadly, the Trump-Pence administration has chosen a different path and is weaponizing playgrounds in its latest attempt to turn back the clock on full civil rights for all LGBTQ people. Just as they stand up to bullies on the playing field, we will stand up to these bullies in the halls of power.”

Corporate support continues to play a significant role for LGBTQ+ organizations. As noted in the Corporate Funders section of this brief, MAC VIVA GLAM Fund is a long-term leader. MAC Cosmetics became active in this area during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. “Our campaign has always resonated with consumers because of its grassroots beginnings, and because it is so authentic to MAC and our community. Certain aspects of our mission might appeal differently to some consumers, but ultimately, it’s about helping people of all ages, races and genders who are in need,” said Nancy Mahon, senior vice president of global corporate citizenship and sustainability at parent Estée Lauder Companies.

“2020 was an incredibly challenging year for MAC VIVA GLAM’s NGO partners on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. In early April 2020, we quickly deployed \$10 million in donations to over 250 organizations to support COVID-19 emergency relief efforts,” Mahon said. “The support provided our partners with funds to address the growing need for vital services from at-risk communities, including food delivery, medication support and testing and treatment of COVID-19, especially among the immunocompromised.”

“Fundraising data for 2020 is delayed, but the trends we’re seeing show an expanded universe for LGBTQ funding,” says Wertz of Funders for

LGBTQ Issues. She credited this success to increased opportunities and new resources, the removal of past barriers at foundations, which now allow video reports and no longer require interim reports, plus an increase in grassroots fundraising in LGBTQ+ communities, with mutual aid inspiring support by and for fellow members, especially people of color and people in the South.

Wertz said the pandemic and the uprising for racial justice pointed out the need, and now, there is “an amazing opportunity” for more inclusive access and a reduction in practical barriers.

While its funding structure is very different from most LGBTQ+ nonprofits, Funders for LGBTQ Issues itself had to change revenue development strategies in the past year. The necessities of the pandemic transformed its annual conference into a series of virtual seminars, with decrease in sponsorship revenue. But Wertz expects to launch a similar event in 2021. “Many other funders stepped up and recognized the uncertainty,” she noted.

Wertz said she sees this increased support as “symbolic of a deep philanthropic spirit in our community and culture.” She noted that the issues of gender and justice are intersectional, and donors are responding to the breadth of that need. “I don’t think we will ever find ourselves back in 2019, and the tipping points will stay with us.”



“We leaned in on the caring. We sent care packages to donors to show the love, care and concern for our supporters and people responded. We asked how they were, about access to medical care. We led with the human to be with our supporters. With the focus on racial equality last summer, people really wanted to help.”

—Christopher Speron, senior vice president of development and membership, Human Rights Campaign Foundation

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,” says Andrew Wallace, acting vice president of research and communications at Funders for LGBTQ Issues.

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 means there is ample opportunity for new entrants to the field to increase philanthropic resources going to other issue areas, notably 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 of LGBTQ+ people. There is also an opportunity here to support cross-movement collaboration with ongoing cultural-change work around gender by feminist 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 in 2019 with an aim 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.

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“Even now we see several bold initiatives especially from foundations, but we do not see a matching effort at coordinating funding, quickly assessing and filling gaps, and transformative collaboration on advocacy funding.”

—Foundation professional, United States

In light of highly organized conservative opposition to social justice, there is an opportunity 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 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. 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 of 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, 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, extreme conservatism.

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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 has not yet been updated. If you have comments or information you'd like to share with us, please email us at managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.org.