

Designing Collective Giving: Where Collaboration Meets Impact





acknowledgments

Dasra would like to thank the founding patrons of Pride Fund India for their vision and leadership in advancing collaborative philanthropy for LGBTQIA+ communities in India. We are also grateful to the grantee partners, sector experts, and members of the broader ecosystem who generously shared their time, experiences, and insights during the research and interviews that informed this report. Their perspectives helped shape both the narrative of Pride Fund India's journey and the practical lessons captured in this playbook. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Dasra colleagues whose inputs, research, and operational support helped bring this report to fruition.

introduction

In Queeristan: LGBTQ Inclusion in the Indian Workplace, author and head of Godrej DEI Lab Parmesh Shahani describes a pivotal shift in India's LGBTQIA+ movement: from invisibility to visibility, from marginalization to conditional inclusion. Over the past decade, legal change, corporate leadership, and shifts in public discourse and social norms have expanded the space for queer lives to be seen, spoken about, and, in some settings, supported. Yet as Parmesh Shahani also makes clear, visibility alone does not guarantee sustainability or institutional strength. Inclusion remains fragile.

Pride Fund India emerged at precisely this juncture. While conversations around LGBTQIA+ rights had entered the mainstream, the organizations doing the everyday work of community support—across mental health, livelihoods, housing, and safety—continued to

operate with limited and uncertain resources. The gap between growing public recognition and financial and operational capacity of the ecosystem had become difficult to ignore.

The pages that follow document the origins of Pride Fund India and the lessons that emerged from its design and early implementation. Together, they offer both a narrative of how the Fund came into being and a set of practical insights for others seeking to build collaborative philanthropic initiatives in similarly under-resourced fields.



the origins and design of pride fund india

How a Collaborative Fund Emerged to Support an Under-Resourced Movement

The story of Pride Fund India begins with a simple but urgent question: how could philanthropic capital better support the organizations and communities working at the forefront of LGBTQIA+ inclusion in India?

What follows traces how Pride Fund India was conceived and designed in response to that question. It examines the conditions that shaped its emergence, the motivations and roles of its founding patrons and partners, and the choices that informed its structure, governance, and approach to grantmaking.

More than an origin story, this narrative lays out the rationale for why a collective funding vehicle was needed, why it took the form it did, and what early experience reveals about supporting overlooked causes in complex and politically sensitive contexts. These lessons later inform the practical playbook presented in the second half of this report.

Before Pride Fund India: Giving Without Structure

Queer philanthropy in India did not begin with Pride Fund India. Long before the Fund's launch, individuals and institutions had supported queer communities and organizations. Many of those who would later become founding patrons had been engaged with LGBTQIA+ issues for years through personal philanthropy, corporate leadership, advocacy, and movement-building.

The Godrej Industries group of companies had emerged as a consistent champion of LGBTQIA+ inclusion within the Indian corporate landscape. Most notably through the work of the Godrej DEI Lab, the Group helped normalize conversations around sexual orientation and gender identity in corporate India and made sustained investments in inclusive workplace policies and thought leadership.

Entities such as the Keshav Suri Foundation (KSF), established in October 2018, reflect a move beyond symbolic allyship toward structured and sustained support for LGBTQIA+ communities. From the outset, KSF has focused on building deep, trust-based relationships with queer-led and queer-serving organizations, grounded in an understanding of both lived realities and structural barriers. Its work has centered on economic empowerment—sensitizing Corporate India, enabling access to skilling and employment, and creating pathways for queer individuals across sectors such as hospitality, entertainment, sports, healthcare, retail, and education. Alongside this, KSF has prioritized visibility through storytelling initiatives such as It Gets Better India, recognizing narrative change as integral to expanding opportunity and shifting public perception.

Reflecting on this period, Radhika Piramal, LGBTQIA+ advocate and trustee of GiveOut, UK, noted, “Before Pride Fund India, my engagement with LGBTQIA+ causes was largely through personal philanthropy, supporting organizations and initiatives that I believed in, often in response to immediate needs, but without a larger structure for coordination or scale.”

Much of the support, however, remained episodic and relationship-driven, often responding to urgent requests or organizations already known and trusted by donors. As a result, LGBTQIA+ organizations often operated in isolation, competing for limited resources, trust, and visibility. There was no shared platform through which organizations could be seen collectively, nor a mechanism to shift them from survival-mode fundraising to strategic, long-term growth.

This fragmentation affected donors as well. Without a common framework or trusted intermediaries, donors were unsure how to assess organizations, concerned about compliance risks, or hesitant to engage deeply in a politically sensitive space. For many organizations working at the intersections of gender, sexuality, caste, livelihoods, and disability, the absence of flexible, long-term funding remained a persistent and binding constraint.

The Conditions that Shaped the Pride Fund India's Emergence

Pride Fund India took shape at a moment when the narrative around rights-based and community-led work was evolving, both in India and globally. Official development assistance was declining, donor priorities had shifted following COVID-19, civic spaces were shrinking, and conservative narratives around gender and sexuality were gaining ground. In this environment, funding for LGBTQIA+ rights was not only scarce but actively retreating.

This retreat was particularly stark given the increased visibility of queer lives in India over the previous decade. The repeal of Section 377 in 2018 marked a watershed moment, creating new public conversations around sexual orientation and gender identity and encouraging many organizations to expand their work. Yet legal visibility did not translate into corresponding philanthropic support. Funding for LGBTQIA+ organizations, especially grassroots and community-led groups, remained limited and unpredictable, leaving many organizations trapped in short-term survival cycles rather than able to plan for sustained long-term growth.

Reflecting on this disconnect, Radhika Piramal observed, “After the Supreme Court’s 2023 decision declining to recognize same-sex marriage in India, it became clear to me that while visibility had increased, real support had not. There was energy, conversation, and even hope—but very little sustained funding reaching organizations on the ground.” The Supreme Court’s 2023 decision declining to recognize marriage equality underscored how fragile recent gains remained and how exposed the movement was without strong, well-resourced institutions to carry the work forward.

For Keshav Suri, Founder of the Keshav Suri Foundation and Executive Director of the Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, who was also a writ petitioner in the Section 377 case, these moments underscored an undeniable truth: legal victories, while significant, do not automatically translate into lived dignity. Even as landmark judgments reshaped the law on paper, the ecosystem required to support queer lives in practice remained fragile and under-resourced.

The reading down of Section 377 made visible a deeper gap—the absence of structured, long-term support systems across mental health,



wellbeing, and community care. While public recognition had advanced, the philanthropic and social infrastructure necessary to sustain that progress had not kept pace. These were not peripheral concerns, but foundational elements of community resilience. Their persistent underfunding reinforced the urgency of building more intentional, community-rooted forms of philanthropy.

At the same time, conversations among queer leaders and allies—including Radhika Piramal, Keshav Suri, and Parmesh Shahani—were converging around a shared diagnosis. Individual giving, while meaningful, was no longer adequate to meet the scale or complexity of the challenge. The need was not simply for more money, but for a structure that could pool resources, reduce fragmentation, and support organizations in ways that reflected the communities’ realities.

As Parmesh Shahani, Head of Godrej DEI Lab and author of *Queeristan: LGBTQ Inclusion in the Indian Workplace*, reflected, the Pride Fund did not emerge because “India was ready,” but because the need had existed for a long time and could no longer be deferred. He described the Fund as “not as an Excel-sheet plan that we designed and then executed, but as a design-thinking way of listening to communities and building solutions alongside them.” Acting with the resources and relationships already at hand, rather than waiting for ideal conditions, became a deliberate choice.

Rather than moving with prevailing philanthropic currents, the founding patrons chose to move against them—recognizing that field-building in under-resourced movements often requires early, collective action precisely when risk aversion is highest.

Against this backdrop, the Pride Fund India was formally launched in February 2025, translating years of individual engagement and collective reflection into a shared philanthropic vehicle.

From Individual Giving to a Collaborative Fund

For the founding patrons, the response to widening funding gaps was not simply to give more, but to give differently. Each brought distinct pathways into the LGBTQIA+ ecosystem, yet their experiences converged on a shared understanding: individual philanthropy, however committed, could not on its own address fragmentation, risk, and uneven capacity across the sector.

Long before the Pride Fund's launch, the Godrej Industries group of companies had demonstrated a sustained commitment to equity and inclusion within corporate India. In addition to progressive LGBTQIA+ inclusion policies and benefits, including same-sex partner recognition and gender-affirmation support, the Group had consistently used its institutional voice and spaces to advance LGBTQIA+ inclusion: hosting the India launch of the UN Standards of Conduct for Business on LGBTI Inclusion in 2017, releasing a landmark white paper on transgender inclusion in workplaces in 2018, supporting LGBTQIA+ cultural platforms such as the KASHISH film festival, producing queer-affirmative advertising, and organizing Pride marches across its offices and factories.

Alongside this institutional commitment, Radhika PIRAMAL brought a complementary perspective shaped by decades of philanthropic engagement across girls' education, gender equity, and women's leadership, as well as exposure to global LGBTQIA+ philanthropy through her role as a trustee of GiveOut in the UK. The Keshav Suri Foundation added deep sectoral intelligence and on-the-ground familiarity with LGBTQIA+ organizations in India, having already built relationships across the ecosystem and developed a nuanced understanding of its gaps, capacities, and constraints. The Foundation has also prioritized mental health support through dedicated initiatives, including a helpline.

The Pride Fund did not begin as a large institutional intervention. Radhika PIRAMAL first imagined it as a personal philanthropic effort to raise funds for queer causes. However, it quickly became clear that to achieve credibility, scale, and sustainability, the initiative would need to move beyond individual action and be anchored within a trusted institutional framework.

This shift—from individual giving to a collaborative fund—was shaped by several considerations.

First, a pooled fund could aggregate capital in ways individual donors could not, enabling larger and more predictable commitments to organizations. Second, collaboration offered a mechanism to share risk in a funding area often perceived as politically sensitive or controversial. Third, a collective structure created shared accountability, signaling legitimacy to grantees while lowering barriers for future donors to engage.

These considerations shaped not only the decision to collaborate, but also the specific form that collaboration would take. As members of the Dasra team articulated during the design phase, consortia often bring together organizations or funders around a specific agenda or campaign, requiring alignment on priorities and tactics. By contrast, the Pride Fund was designed to support organizations across stages, geographies, and ideological approaches to strengthen the ecosystem that holds it together.

Trust within the queer ecosystem was a critical precondition for this model. As Parmesh Shahani emphasized, “the founders were not parachuting in as external benefactors. They were long-standing participants in the community, with relationships built over years of advocacy, corporate engagement, writing, and personal support to organizations.” This embeddedness helped establish early credibility and openness among grantees. At the same time, the founders recognized that personal networks alone were insufficient for long-term impact.

It was in this context that Dasra was brought in as an anchor partner. The decision was deliberate. For the founders, Dasra offered the ability to provide arm's-length governance, rigorous due diligence, and operational discipline, while allowing the Fund to remain grounded in community priorities. As Parmesh Shahani noted, “the presence of an intermediary ensured that no single patron could unduly influence funding decisions, protecting both grantees and the integrity of the Fund.”

Dasra's Role: From Activation to Intermediation

Within Dasra, the Pride Fund did not emerge from a blank slate. There was already clarity among the founding patrons that a collaborative fund was the most appropriate vehicle for advancing LGBTQIA+ philanthropy in India. What remained was to translate this shared intent into an operationally sound and institutionally credible structure—while remaining open to how the initiative might evolve as it took shape.

The early work was deliberately practice-led rather than theory-driven, prioritizing speed, feasibility, and learning over perfection. Rather than designing an idealized model upfront, the Dasra team focused on building a workable structure within the existing system that could evolve through learning and iteration. This approach prioritized action, allowing the initiative to move forward while remaining responsive to emerging insights.

Importantly, the Pride Fund was not conceived as a consortium or advocacy alliance. During the design phase, the Dasra team was deliberate in clarifying this distinction. Consortia typically bring together organizations or funders around a shared agenda or campaign, often requiring alignment on priorities, positions, and tactics. By contrast, the Pride Fund was designed as a field-building vehicle—one that could support organizations across stages, geographies, and ideological approaches, without forcing alignment, while strengthening the broader ecosystem that holds this work together.

Initial efforts centered on establishing a research track to better understand the landscape of LGBTQIA+ organizations in India, followed by the design of a sub-granting mechanism. Capacity building and fundraising were envisioned as subsequent components to be developed as the Fund matured and resources became available.

Much of this early work was carried out with minimal resources and a lean team. In its incubation phase, the Pride Fund was supported largely through internal commitment rather than dedicated budgets—reflecting both the experimental nature of the initiative and Dasra's willingness to invest institutional effort in an under-resourced field.

Landscape Report: Research as an Enabler of Action

A central design choice in the Pride Fund's early phase was to commission a landscape report on LGBTQIA+ organizations in India. Rather than producing research for its own sake, the objective was to generate actionable insights that could directly inform fund design and early grantmaking decisions.

Dasra's research focused on identifying where philanthropic intervention could unlock momentum in a highly fragmented and unevenly resourced ecosystem. The report surfaced several persistent challenges, including limited institutional funding, uneven organizational capacity, gatekeeping within the ecosystem, and significant gaps in areas such as mental health, livelihoods, and support for queer women and trans communities.¹

The scale of underfunding was stark. India receives less than 1% of global funding for LGBTQIA+ issues, despite accounting for nearly 18% of the world's population. Domestic philanthropic momentum remains weak, with only two of India's top 50 philanthropic givers explicitly identifying LGBTQIA+ issues as a funding priority. As a result, many organizations continue to operate with limited and unstable resources, often relying heavily on international donors.

The research also highlighted important differences between emerging community-led groups and more established institutions. While over half of LGBTQIA+ nonprofits are queer-led, only 27% have a national presence, with most operating at hyperlocal or regional levels. Smaller organizations, in particular, face barriers related to compliance, documentation, and eligibility for foreign funding—only 43% of nonprofits studied were eligible to receive international funding, constraining their ability to scale or diversify funding sources.

Across organizational types, the report underscored the limitations of rigid, project-based funding models. Many LGBTQIA+ nonprofits function simultaneously as service providers and field-builders, responding to layered and evolving needs across health, legal aid, housing, and livelihoods. Narrowly defined project grants often fail to account for this interconnected work, leaving organizations under-resourced for core functions such as staff retention, compliance, documentation, and crisis response.

¹ Against all odds: Advancing equity for India's LGBTQIA+ communities, February 2025, <https://dasra.org/individual-resources/159>, accessed January 2026.

Beyond shaping strategy, the landscape report served a practical function. It helped create a credible longlist of organizations for funding consideration, drawing on Dasra's existing NGO databases, secondary research, sector recommendations, and a curated list of LGBTQIA+ organizations shared by the Keshav Suri Foundation. In total, the mapping identified 81 registered nonprofit organizations working with LGBTQIA+ communities across India. The findings revealed a highly fragmented and unevenly distributed ecosystem: 53% of organizations operate at a hyperlocal level, 27% at a national scale, and 20% regionally. Nearly two-thirds are concentrated in just four states—Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, and West Bengal—highlighting both the density of queer organizing in metropolitan centers and the relative invisibility of work in smaller towns and rural geographies.

Grounded in this evidence, the Pride Fund was able to move from concept to grantmaking relatively quickly, with a design shaped by lived realities rather than assumptions.

Designing for Flexibility, Trust, and Diversity of Capacity

As the fund took shape, research and early engagement revealed wide variation in capacity across the LGBTQIA+ ecosystem. Organizations differed significantly in size, geography, legal status, leadership experience, and access to compliance infrastructure such as FCRA² registration. Many demonstrated deep strengths and community trust, yet faced challenges related to documentation, governance, and financial systems.

● Designing for uneven capacity

Founders and advisors consistently noted that many organizations were founder-centric, with limited succession planning and thin second-line leadership—raising questions about institutional continuity. Others struggled to articulate detailed execution plans or monitoring frameworks, not because of a lack of vision, but because they had never been resourced to build planning, financial management, or evaluation capabilities.

Rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model, the Pride Fund was deliberately designed to accommodate this diversity. Grant sizes were calibrated to ensure that funding did not exceed a defined percentage of an organization's

annual budget, reducing dependency risks. Selection criteria incorporated not only organizational effectiveness, but also vulnerability, marginalization, leadership, and contextual constraints.

As one jury member reflected, the process went beyond comparing applications purely on merit. While scoring frameworks provided structure, final decisions also accounted for organizational potential, vulnerability, and lived realities—particularly where community trust and long-standing work were not fully captured in formal documentation. In several cases, grant amounts were adjusted upward in recognition that meaningful support required more than symbolic funding.

● Flexibility as an intentional choice

Capacity was not treated as a prerequisite for funding, but as an outcome that funding itself should enable. Grants were paired with compliance support and institutional strengthening, recognizing that rigid project funding models often misaligned with the realities of organizations working across crisis response, advocacy, and service delivery.

Grantee experiences reinforced the value of this approach.

Maya Sharma of Vikalp Women's Group described the application process as straightforward and non-intimidating, with interactions that felt respectful rather than extractive.

Anjali Gopalan of Naz Foundation highlighted the absence of micromanagement—particularly notable for a large, long-standing organization accustomed to heavy donor oversight.

For Manveer Yadav of Tweet India Foundation, the Fund represented not only financial support, but recognition and dignity, an affirmation that queer-led work mattered.

Koyel Ghosh of Sappho for Equality underscored the importance of multi-year commitments and flexible use of funds, especially for smaller organizations with limited administrative capacity. The presence of an intermediary like Dasra, she noted, helped translate funder requirements and reduced barriers to access.

2 India's Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, regulates foreign donations. Registration is mandatory for non-profits that intend to receive foreign donations.

● Trust as a negotiated process

Trust surfaced repeatedly as the most critical—and fragile—ingredient in the Fund’s design. From the community’s perspective, trust deficits were shaped by experience: sudden funding withdrawals, short-term project grants, and shifting donor priorities. In a politically volatile space, the promise of continuity mattered as much as the quantum of funding itself.

From the funder’s perspective, trust raised different questions. The concern was not whether organizations were doing important work, but whether they had the governance systems, leadership depth, and institutional resilience needed to steward flexible capital responsibly. Unrestricted funding was widely recognized as necessary—but also as something that required sustained engagement, on-ground assessment, and capacity building.

The Fund’s gradual approach of beginning with partially restricted grants while investing in organizational strengthening reflected this negotiated trust-building process. Rather than assuming trust at the outset, the Pride Fund treated trust as something to be built over time, through consistency, transparency, and shared learning.

Grantmaking in practice and early experiences

With these design principles in place, the Pride Fund, anchored by its founding patrons Radhika Piramal, the Keshav Suri Foundation, and Godrej Industries group of companies, moved from concept to practice. Together, the three represented distinct funder types—an individual philanthropist, a family foundation, and a corporate donor—bringing complementary perspectives on risk, governance, accountability, and scale that helped shape the Fund’s early choices. Their different affiliations shaped how the Fund approached risk, credibility, and scale: Radhika Piramal’s experience as an individual philanthropist brought agility and an intent driven by values; the Keshav Suri Foundation contributed deep knowledge and a long-term engagement with LGBTQIA+ organizations; and the Godrej Industries group of companies brought a corporate lens on governance and systems-building.

The first round of grantmaking served as a critical testing ground, revealing how choices

around flexibility, trust, and institutional support played out once funding reached organizations on the ground, and offering early lessons on due diligence, compliance, funder–grantee relationships, and the realities of supporting organizations operating in constrained and politically sensitive environments.

Within months of its launch, the Pride Fund began to attract additional philanthropic interest, reinforcing early assumptions about the value of a collective model. New donors including international foundations and institutional donors came on board after the first round of grantmaking, responding to the Fund’s clarity of purpose, governance structure, and early execution.

As the Fund gained momentum, its scale expanded quickly. Within the first nine months, the Pride Fund grew from an initial cohort of eight organizations to seventeen, spanning multiple geographies and thematic priorities across the LGBTQIA+ ecosystem. A full list of current grantees is available on the Pride Fund India website.³ Over the same period, funds raised increased from approximately USD 0.21 million (INR 18 million) at launch to USD 0.38 million (INR 32.3 million), reflecting growing donor confidence in the model. Notably, 80% of funds raised in the first year were disbursed to grantee organizations.

Alongside grantmaking, the Fund also experimented with collective capacity-building as a complementary form of support. In August 2025, it convened a multi-day capacity-building workshop that brought together grantee organizations, sector practitioners, and facilitators. Rather than focusing on one-on-one mentoring, the workshop emphasized peer learning, shared problem-solving, and exposure to practical tools related to governance, finance, and organizational sustainability. Early feedback suggested that the value of the convening lay as much in relationship-building and collective reflection as in technical inputs, pointing to convenings as a low-cost, high-trust mechanism in constrained funding environments.

3 Pride Fund India. “Grantees.” <https://thepridefundindia.org/grantees>

Synthesis:

How the Pride Fund India Chose to Act



Starting small, learning iteratively

At its launch, the Pride Fund was established with a modest corpus, supported by a small group of committed patrons. Rather than waiting to assemble a broad donor base, the founding patrons and partners chose to proceed with those willing to put money on the table. This reflected a shared belief across interviews: that action, even at a limited scale, was preferable to delay in the face of urgent and unmet need. Early assumptions were expected to be revisited as the Fund evolved, while a commitment to community-first decision-making, transparency, and learning remained constant.



Collaboration as strategy, not symbolism

Across conversations, collaboration emerged not only as a values-based choice, but as a practical one. A collective fund signaled legitimacy, distributed risk in a politically sensitive funding area, and made it easier for others to engage. Several stakeholders emphasized that an India-led fund, backed by Indian philanthropists and institutions, was particularly important in a context where foreign funding was increasingly constrained. More than any specific structure, what appeared most replicable was the Fund's adaptive capacity: its ability to evolve from a disbursement mechanism into a connector, learner, and ecosystem-builder over time.



Aligning diverse funding modalities

Further, by combining individual philanthropy, a family foundation, and corporate giving within a single domestically led platform, the Pride Fund demonstrated how diverse funding modalities can be aligned to support complex and sensitive issues—where ecosystem-building, legitimacy, and long-term commitment matter as much as capital.



Rooted in relationships, reinforced by systems

A defining feature of the Pride Fund's early story is that it did not emerge as a static blueprint. It grew through long-standing relationships, listening, and iterative adjustments, while deliberately embedding institutional processes to ensure fairness, accountability, and sustainability. For grantees, this combination translated into funding that felt usable, respectful, and aligned with on-the-ground realities. For patrons, it offered a way to move beyond individual giving toward a collective effort capable of supporting not only organizations, but also the less visible work of learning, narrative building, and field formation.

Taken together, the Pride Fund's early journey is less a story of a finished model and more a record of intentional choices. The Fund did not arise from abstract intent, but from moments when philanthropy had failed to show up decisively for queer communities in India—and from a decision to act differently.

The experience of designing and launching Pride Fund India surfaced several recurring design choices and trade-offs. The following section translates these lessons into a practical playbook for practitioners seeking to build collaborative funds in similarly complex contexts.

a practical playbook for building collaborative funds

How to Design, Launch, and Manage Collaborative Philanthropic Funds for Overlooked Causes

This section distills the design principles of Pride Fund India (PFI) into a practical playbook for building collaborative philanthropic funds in overlooked and underfunded areas, particularly those supporting vulnerable and historically marginalized communities in India and beyond. While grounded in PFI's experience, the insights here speak more broadly to the realities of working in emerging fields where conventional philanthropy often struggles to engage effectively. Prior familiarity with Pride Fund India is not required.

This resource is intended for a wide range of actors: philanthropists exploring new vehicles for collective action; intermediaries looking to build funding infrastructure; and institutions seeking to build support for issues across geographies and contexts where traditional funding approaches fall short and grantmaking models optimized for scale and predictability may be misaligned with ecosystem realities.

Rather than prescribing a single model, this playbook offers six adaptable design tenets to guide decision-making. Its purpose is to move beyond the mechanics of pooling capital toward the deeper question of how to build collaborative structures that are responsive, inclusive, and capable of strengthening entire ecosystems. Each tenet can be read independently, but together they reflect an integrated approach—from diagnosing the field to designing governance and grantmaking systems, and embedding learning over time. Select examples from Pride Fund India illustrate how these principles operated in practice; they are not intended as templates for replication.

This playbook is not exhaustive, nor does it resolve every tension inherent in collaborative philanthropy. It is designed as a working guide—something to revisit during fund design, implementation, and reflection.

In complex and uncertain contexts, effective collaboration depends less on perfect design than on clarity of intent, humility, and a commitment to learn. The tenets that follow are offered in that spirit.



design tenets for collaborative funding

Key Risks and Questions for Fund Builders

Together, these tenets capture the core design principles underpinning effective collaborative philanthropic funds, particularly in emerging fields—offering a practical lens for thinking about how a collaboration is conceived, governed, and sustained. The below table links each design tenet to the primary risk it addresses and the key question fund builders should ask.

Tenet 1	Core Focus	Primary risk addressed	Design question
	Field diagnosis	Solving the wrong problem	Do we truly understand the ecosystem we are trying to support before designing a funding vehicle?
Start with the field, not the fund Begin by developing a grounded understanding of the ecosystem you seek to support, its actors, gaps, and constraints. Field diagnosis helps ensure that funding structures respond to real needs.			
Tenet 2	Core Focus	Primary risk addressed	Design question
	Community-informed funding design	Designing funding around capital rather than community needs	Have funding structures been shaped by community realities rather than donor preferences?
Let community realities shape funding design A collaborative fund should strengthen organizations and movements. Grant design and implementation should reflect community realities and how organizations operate on the ground.			
Tenet 3	Core Focus	Primary risk addressed	Design question
	Governance & decision-making	Decision-making dominated by a few voices	Who holds decision-making power, and how is it balanced, shared, or constrained over time? How are community voices meaningfully included?
Build governance and decision-making that balances power Collaborative funds must be explicit about who holds decision-making power and how it is shared, constrained, or rotated over time. Governance should meaningfully include community members.			



Tenet 4	Core Focus	Primary risk addressed	Design question
Choose collaborative structures that balance trust and accountability Different models such as consortia, pooled funds, platforms, and advisory models, serve distinct purposes and involve different trade-offs. Decisions should balance trust and accountability.	Collaborative structure & form	Weak accountability or unmanaged risk	What systems are needed to balance trust, credibility, and operational discipline?

Tenet 5	Core Focus	Primary risk addressed	Design question
Design grantmaking for uneven organizational capacity Assume diversity in organizational maturity, readiness, and infrastructure. Collaborative funds should avoid funding only the readiest organizations and accommodate variation.	Grantmaking for uneven organizational capacity	Funding only the most ready organizations	Are we designing for organizational diversity and readiness rather than urgency alone? Are we supporting leading organizations, or a field/movement?

Tenet 6	Core Focus	Primary risk addressed	Design question
Build for learning, adaptation, and iteration In data-poor or emerging fields, rigid models often fail. Collaborative funds should embed learning, reflection, and course correction from the outset to evolve their approach as contexts change.	Learning, data & iteration	Rigid models that fail under uncertainty	How will learning, adaptation, and course correction be built into the fund from the outset especially when data is imperfect?

tenet 1

**Start with the field,
not the fund**

Collaborative funds are effective when they are designed as a response to structural constraints within an ecosystem rather than as vehicles for deploying capital. Often, fund design begins with questions of fundraising targets, donor participation, or grant size. However, in newly emerging or politically sensitive fields, this approach risks reinforcing the very fragmentation, exclusion, or misalignment that collaborative funding seeks to address.

The starting point must be a clear diagnosis of what is broken, missing or under-resourced in the ecosystem, and why existing funding approaches have failed to respond adequately. In many overlooked fields, the challenge is not a lack of research but a lack of action-oriented diagnosis—analysis that clarifies where philanthropic capital can unlock progress and how funders can engage meaningfully.

Look beyond funding gaps

In overlooked areas, lack of funding may only be an indicator of deeper challenges. These may include:

- **Fragmented organizational landscape**
- **Uneven capacity across organizations**
- **Limited data on communities and outcomes**
- **Compliance and regulatory barriers that deter mainstream funders**
- **Political or reputational risks**
- **Limited trust between funders and community-led organizations**

A collaborative fund is valuable when it addresses systemic constraints, not just the urgent, immediate need for resources. This may require supporting organizational readiness, strengthening intermediaries, creating shared standards, or investing in learning alongside grantmaking.

Pride Fund India in Practice:

PFI's early landscape report highlighted several non-financial constraints, including compliance challenges, lack of data, and ecosystem fragmentation, which shaped PFI's design and grantmaking approach.

Design for the community you seek to support

Effective collaborative funds are shaped by listening to the organizations and communities they intend to serve. This includes understanding:

- **How organizations currently fund their work and raise resources**
- **What kinds of support do they find usable**
- **Where compliance, governance, and leadership bottlenecks exist**
- **How political or social contexts affect their ability to operate openly**

Without such contextual understanding, even well-resourced funds risk imposing structures that do not fit ground realities.

Pride Fund India in Practice:

In the case of PFI, early engagement with community organizations highlighted wide variation in capacity, prompting a deliberate move away from a one-size-fits-all model or eligibility criteria.

Accept that clarity emerges through iteration

In underfunded ecosystems, it may not be possible to define a perfect model at the outset. Problem definition often sharpens through engagement, experimentation, and early failures. Successful collaborative funds, therefore, allow room for such learning and avoid the pressure to over-design at the start.

Pride Fund India in Practice:

PFI did not begin with a fixed blueprint. Its assumptions, priorities and mechanisms evolved as patrons, partners, and grantees learned from early grant cycles and ecosystem feedback.

Before deciding how to collaborate or how much funding to raise, it is important to answer the following questions:

- **What specific ecosystem failures are we trying to address?**
- **Why have existing funding mechanisms not worked here?**
- **What non-financial barriers limit organizational growth and success?**
- **Whose perspectives have shaped this problem definition, and whose perspectives are missing?**

tenet 2

Let community realities shape funding design

Once a field has been diagnosed, the next design task is to translate that understanding into funding structures that work for the community, not just for funders. In some instances, collaborative funds correctly identify the right problem but then default to familiar funding architectures shaped by donor convenience, risk frameworks, or institutional habits. This disconnect can undermine impact before grantmaking even begins.

Design funding around how organizations operate

Community-based organizations working in overlooked or politically sensitive fields often operate under conditions very different from those assumed by mainstream philanthropy. Funding design must therefore account for:

- Irregular or crisis-driven work cycles rather than linear project plans
- Small teams balancing service delivery, advocacy, and survival simultaneously
- Limited administrative bandwidth for complex reporting or compliance-heavy grants
- Exposure to political, legal, or reputational risk that constrains visibility and fundraising

Pride Fund India in Practice:

Early engagement with LGBTQIA+ organizations revealed that rigid project grants and short timelines were misaligned with how many groups functioned, prompting PFI to prioritize flexibility and avoid overly prescriptive funding requirements.

Taken together, these realities suggest that funding design is not a neutral technical exercise. Decisions about grant size, timelines, reporting, and eligibility directly shape who can participate—and who is left out. For collaborative funds working in under-resourced ecosystems, the question is not simply how much capital to deploy, but whether the design of that capital aligns with the conditions under which organizations actually operate.

Align capital with organizational readiness

At times, collaborative funds prioritize fundraising speed and grantmaking goals over organizational

readiness. When the pressure to raise and deploy capital is prioritized, funds may inadvertently overwhelm organizations with expectations that they are not capable of meeting. To avoid this, collaborative funds may:

- Start with smaller cohorts or grant sizes
- Sequence and combine funding with capacity support and compliance assistance
- Resist pressure to grow the fund faster than what the ecosystem can absorb

Pride Fund India in Practice:

In its early grant cycles, PFI deliberately limited cohort size and calibrated grant amounts relative to organizational budgets, prioritizing feasibility and learning over rapid scale.

Build flexibility into funding structures

Flexibility should be designed into the core ethos of the fund, particularly when working in ecosystems that are characterized by uncertainty, crisis response, and marginalization.

- Flexible use of funds to respond to evolving needs
- Multi-year commitments, where possible, to enable planning and stability
- Reporting that prioritizes learning and reflection over compliance theatre

Pride Fund India in Practice:

PFI avoided narrowly defined project grants, allowing organizations discretion in how funds were used across programmatic and organizational needs, while keeping reporting focused on learning rather than compliance performance.

Fund eligibility and criteria

Eligibility criteria in many cases reflect donor risk tolerance instead of ecosystem realities. Requirements such as registration status, years of operations, audited accounts or availability of strategic plans can unintentionally exclude early-stage, volunteer-led, or community-led organizations. Funds should scrutinize each criterion and who it includes and excludes. Design elements such as working with intermediaries, offering smaller grants, and phased support can help to mitigate some of these risks.

Pride Fund India in Practice:

PFI's grantee assessment framework brought together multiple parameters, including organizational vulnerability, leadership, community embeddedness, and program relevance, instead of merely focusing on conventional indicators of readiness. Grant sizes were calibrated relative to organizational budgets, and funding was paired with compliance and institutional support.

For an illustrative example of how these design choices translate into practice, see Annexure 1: Sample Request for Proposals, which highlights how eligibility, scope, and expectations can be framed to minimize exclusion.

For an illustrative example of how selection criteria can be structured to balance organizational effectiveness, vulnerability, and context, see Annexure 2: Sample Grantee Selection Framework.

Before finalizing funding structures, funders and intermediaries should ask:

- Have community realities genuinely shaped the funding design?
- What assumptions are we making about organizational capacity?
- Are the eligibility criteria or reporting requirements excluding organizations unintentionally?
- Are fundraising goals aligned with ecosystem capacity?

A collaborative fund succeeds when its design enables organizations to do their best work under real-world constraints.

tenet 3

Build governance and decision-making that balances power

As collaborative funds grow, how decisions are made becomes as important as what decisions are made. In under-resourced or politically sensitive fields, weak governance can quickly undermine legitimacy by concentrating power among a few donors or by creating opaque processes that erode trust among communities and grantees.

Effective collaborative funds treat governance not as a compliance requirement, but as a core design element for managing power, risk, and accountability over time.

Clarity on core decision-making

From the outset, collaborative funds must be explicit about where authority sits and how it is exercised. Key questions include:

- Who sets funding priorities?
- Who selects grantees?
- Who arbitrates trade-offs between risk, inclusion, and scale?
- Who has the authority to change course?

These decisions should be explicit, documented, and communicated early, both to funders and to the organizations being supported.



Pride Fund India in Practice:

PFI established clear roles between the founding patrons and Dasra, reducing the risk of any single donor exerting disproportionate influence.

Recognize and leverage different funder archetypes

Collaborative funds often bring together different types of funders—individual philanthropists, family foundations, corporate donors, and institutional or international foundations. Each archetype brings distinct strengths, constraints, and expectations that shape governance dynamics.

For example:

- Individual philanthropists may bring agility, speed, and values-driven intent.
- Family foundations often contribute long-term commitment and sector familiarity.
- Corporate donors may emphasize compliance, brand risk, governance systems, and scalability.
- Institutional or international foundations may bring structured reporting frameworks and global perspectives.

These differences are not obstacles to collaboration; they are design inputs. Effective governance systems recognize these varied motivations and risk appetites, creating clarity around roles, decision rights, and accountability. Without such clarity, collaborative funds risk internal friction or power imbalances that undermine trust over time.

Pride Fund India in Practice:

The presence of an individual philanthropist, a family foundation, and a domestic corporate donor created a diversity of perspectives on risk, governance, and scale. Clear role definition and the involvement of an intermediary helped translate these differences into complementary strengths rather than sources of tension.

Include community voices meaningfully

In overlooked fields, legitimacy depends on whether communities see themselves reflected in how decisions are made. This requires moving beyond consultation to meaningful participation in governance through structures such as juries, advisory groups, or steering committees. Meaningful inclusion involves:

- Clear decision rights (not just advisory roles)
- Adequate representation across identities, geographies, and organizational types
- Transparency about how community input is used or not used

Pride Fund India in Practice:

PFI constituted a jury with strong community representation, recognizing lived experience as a form of expertise alongside technical and philanthropic knowledge.

Use intermediary organizations to manage complexity and risk

In many contexts, intermediaries play a critical role in balancing agility with institutional credibility. A strong intermediary can:

- Hold fiduciary, compliance, and due-diligence responsibility
- Ensure transparency and accountability in grantmaking and disbursement
- Provide capacity-building support to grantee organizations
- Translate donor requirements into workable processes for the field
- Buffer community organizations from undue donor pressure
- Enable timely and effective reporting to stakeholders
- Capture and disseminate learnings and insights from the fund
- Create platforms for grantees to showcase their work domestically and internationally

Pride Fund India in Practice:

Dasra's role as an intermediary enabled arm's-length governance and due diligence while allowing funding decisions to remain grounded in ecosystem needs.

Design governance for evolution

As funds grow, diversify, or shift focus, decision-making arrangements may need to evolve. Built-in review points—after early grant cycles or major scale shifts—allow collaboratives to recalibrate power and accountability before problems become entrenched.

Pride Fund India in Practice:

An engaged steering committee met formally every month, while maintaining informal, ongoing engagement between meetings. This combination supported timely decision-making and allowed the Fund to operate at a high pace without compromising deliberation or trust.

Key design questions for fund builders:

- Is there clarity on decision-making at different stages of the fund's lifecycle?
- How are community voices included?
- What safeguards exist against concentration of power or conflicts of interest?
- How will governance adapt as the fund grows?

Effective collaborative funds endure because power and authority are deliberately structured, shared across diverse actors, and continuously examined over time.

tenet 4

Choose collaborative structures that balance trust and accountability

An early and consequential decision in setting up a collaborative fund is choosing the form of collaboration itself. In practice, collaborative efforts can take very different shapes, each with its own distinct implications for governance, accountability, flexibility, and durability.

Drawing on Dasra's experience with collective action initiatives, collaborative efforts in India's philanthropic context tend to take a few broad forms. These are not rigid categories, nor are they mutually exclusive. In practice, many collaboratives evolve over time or combine elements from more than one structure. What follows are commonly observed patterns, each with distinct characteristics and trade-offs.

• Pooled Funds

Some collaboratives aggregate capital and deploy grants through shared governance structures. These arrangements are often useful in underfunded or fragmented ecosystems, particularly where funders wish to reduce individual risk through collective action. However, pooled structures typically require strong governance mechanisms and intermediary support to manage compliance,

power dynamics, and accountability.

• Consortia

Other collaborations bring together funders or organizations around a shared agenda, campaign, or policy objective. These arrangements can be effective for coordinated advocacy or time-bound initiatives where alignment is high. At the same time, they often require consensus on priorities and approaches, which may limit participation from actors with differing strategies.

• Platforms or Networks

Some collective efforts focus less on pooled capital and more on convening, learning, visibility, and coordination. These structures can play an important role in early-stage ecosystems or in narrative and movement-building work. Their limitation, however, is that they may not directly address material funding gaps unless complemented by grantmaking mechanisms.

• Advisory or Regranting Models

In certain contexts, collaborations emphasize technical support, due diligence, or directing funds from donors to organizations through an intermediary. These arrangements can be particularly helpful for donors entering new or complex fields. This may, however, concentrate influence within the intermediary unless deliberate mechanisms for community governance are built in.

Ultimately, the choice of collaborative form depends on the nature of the problem, the maturity of the ecosystem, and the kinds of risks funders are willing to navigate collectively. In many cases, structures are not static; they evolve as trust builds, capital increases, or ecosystem needs shift.

Pride Fund India in Practice:

PFI was deliberately structured as a pooled fund, allowing it to support organizations across ideologies, geographies, and stages without alignment on tactics or positions.

Key design questions:

- What problems are we trying to solve? Does it require pooled capital?
- What risks need collective management?
- Which structure best balances flexibility, accountability, and legitimacy in this field?

tenet 5

Design grantmaking for uneven organizational capacity

In overlooked and under-resourced fields, organizational capacity is rarely uniform. Collaborative funds that assume a single standard of “readiness” risk channeling resources only to the most visible or administratively sophisticated organizations. They may end up overlooking organizations closest to the communities or those that are most in need of support.

Recognize capacity as uneven

Organizations may differ widely across:

- Size and legal status
- Geography (urban vs. rural; national vs. hyperlocal)
- Leadership experience and succession planning
- Access to compliance infrastructure
- Ability to plan, document and formally report

Grantmaking that relies heavily on polished proposals, rigid reporting, or narrow eligibility criteria risks confusing administrative capacity with organizational value.

Treat capacity as an outcome, not a prerequisite

Collaborative funds can:

- Calibrate grant sizes relative to organizational budgets
- Pair funding with compliance or institutional support
- Allow flexibility in how funds are used for programmatic and non-programmatic purposes

Pride Fund India in Practice:

Pride Fund India calibrated grant sizes in relation to organizational budgets and paired funding with compliance and institutional support, recognizing that many queer-led organizations had not previously been resourced to build formal systems despite strong community credibility.

Avoid one-size-fits-all grant structures

Uniform grant terms can unintentionally exclude or destabilize organizations. Consider instead:

In uneven ecosystems, intermediaries play a critical role by helping organizations navigate funder requirements while enabling funders to better understand organizational realities.

- Help organizations understand funder requirements
- Help funders interpret organizational realities
- Reduce friction that disproportionately affects smaller or informal groups

Intermediaries can widen the pool of organizations that can participate meaningfully.

Key design questions:

- Who might the criteria unintentionally exclude and why?
- How will funding help organizations become stronger over time?
- What support structures are needed alongside grants?
- Are we supporting leading organizations, or a field/movement?

Grantmaking that is designed for uneven capacity shifts the focus from selecting only the most ready organizations to strengthening the ecosystem, including those most likely to be overlooked by conventional funding models.

tenet 6

Build Learning, Data, and Iteration into the Fund

In data-poor or emerging fields, waiting for perfect information often delays action. At the same time, rigid measurement frameworks that are designed for mature sectors may fail under conditions of uncertainty. Collaborative funds operating in overlooked or politically sensitive contexts must therefore treat learning not as a reporting obligation, but as a core function of the fund itself.

Rather than aiming for certainty upfront, effective collaborative funds are designed to learn in motion.

Accept imperfect data as a starting condition

In many under-resourced ecosystems, reliable, aggregated data simply does not exist. This may be due to informal organizational structures, safety concerns, fragmented service delivery, or the historical invisibility of the communities involved. Fund design must acknowledge this reality.

This requires:

- **Accepting that early funding decisions will be made with incomplete or uneven information**
- **Resisting the urge to delay grantmaking until “robust” datasets are available**
- **Treating early grant cycles as opportunities to surface insights, patterns, and questions—not just outcomes**

Pride Fund India in Practice

Pride Fund India operated in a context with limited aggregated data on queer communities, making it impractical to rely on predefined benchmarks or sector-wide indicators in its early phase. In the absence of comprehensive sector-wide data, the Fund was able to draw on the lived experience, relationships, and practical knowledge of its three anchor patrons—each deeply embedded in the community—which provided conviction and informed judgment where formal evidence was limited.

Broaden what counts as evidence

In data-constrained fields, learning must draw on multiple forms of intelligence. Alongside quantitative indicators, collaborative funds should value:

- **Lived experience and practitioner insight**
- **Qualitative feedback from grantees and communities**
- **Observations from intermediaries and juries**
- **Process learning from what worked, stalled, or required adaptation**

This broader definition of evidence allows funds to remain grounded while building toward stronger data systems over time.

Design MEL systems for evolution, not perfection

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems should be fit-for-purpose and adaptive, rather than

imported wholesale from other sectors. For collaborative funds, this means:

- **Starting with light-touch, learning-oriented reporting**
- **Prioritizing reflection, sense-making, and feedback loops over compliance-heavy metrics**
- **Allowing MEL frameworks to evolve as the ecosystem matures and data availability improves**

Pride Fund India in Practice:

For PFI, building a conventional MEL framework was challenging due to the lack of data beyond the individual grantee level. Rather than abandoning learning altogether, the Fund was deliberate about starting small, using available data and qualitative insights, while staying focused on strengthening the ecosystem in the longer term by building additional partnerships with actors. Intentionality, rather than completeness, guided this approach.

Key design questions

- **How will learning and course correction be built into the fund, especially when evidence is incomplete?**
- **What are the structures and feedback loops in place to capture failures and contingencies?**
- **What are common measures of success? How are we promoting cross-learning and the exchange of good practices?**

Collaborative funds that endure are not those that eliminate uncertainty, but those that design for it.





reflections for the future of collaborative philanthropy

The experience of Pride Fund India suggests that the challenges in collaborative philanthropy are rarely technical alone. They are questions of sequencing, trust, readiness, and learning.

Collaborative funds offer a distinct value as a philanthropic approach. By pooling capital, sharing risk, and drawing on diverse perspectives, they enable more effective engagement with complex and under-resourced issues than individual efforts alone. They also create pathways for more flexible, sustained, and ecosystem-oriented support—helping move organizations beyond short-term survival toward long-term resilience.

The tenets outlined in this section are meant to surface these choices early, so that funders and intermediaries can make them consciously rather than by default. Used together, these tenets can help practitioners avoid common pitfalls: designing for capital before community, scaling before learning, or prioritizing speed over legitimacy. They also point toward a different posture for collaborative funding—one that treats governance, capacity, and learning not as add-ons, but as integral to impact.

The annexures (Annexure 1: Sample Request for Proposal (RFP) and Annexure 2: Sample Grantee Selection and Assessment Framework) that follow provide practical templates and examples that can be modified to be contextually relevant.

in conclusion

This report set out to document not just the origins of Pride Fund India, but the thinking, choices, and trade-offs behind it. This first section traced how a group of patrons, intermediaries, and community leaders responded to a widening gap between visibility and support for LGBTQIA+ organizations in India, and how a collaborative fund emerged as a practical response to that moment. The second section translated those experiences into a playbook—not as a prescriptive model, but as a set of design tenets that others can adapt to their own contexts.

At a time when civic space is shrinking and external funding is increasingly uncertain, Pride Fund India signals a broader shift in how philanthropy can respond to communities that have long remained under-resourced. It affirms that those closest to the margins are not passive recipients of aid, but active stewards of knowledge, networks, and solutions. By pooling capital, sharing power, and centering community voice in decision-making, Pride Fund India contributes to a growing global conversation about how funding ecosystems can be reimagined to recognize community itself as a form of resource. What began as a response to a national gap speaks to a wider imperative: to build funding structures that make the invisible visible and invest in the resilience of those too often left at the periphery.

Pride Fund India remains a work in progress. Its value lies not in presenting a finished blueprint, but in offering a living example of how philanthropy can act with intention, humility, and collective responsibility in complex and under-resourced fields.



annexure 1:

sample request for proposals

Illustrative outline for collaborative funds supporting overlooked causes

This annexure presents a sample outline of a Request for Proposal (RFP) that collaborative philanthropic funds may use when inviting applications from organizations working in under-resourced or sensitive fields. The structure is drawn from the application information collected during Pride Fund India's early grantmaking rounds and reflects an effort to balance clarity, accessibility, and contextual sensitivity.

The intent of this outline is not to prescribe a rigid format, but to illustrate the types of information that can help funders assess organizations holistically while remaining mindful of uneven capacity across applicants.

1

Organizational Overview

Applicants may be invited to provide basic information to establish identity and context, including:

- Legal name of the organization
- Year of establishment
- Registration status and legal structure
- Primary location(s) of operation
- Contact details and authorized representative

This section helps establish legitimacy without over focusing on formalization.

2

Organizational Mission and Focus

Applicants may be asked to briefly describe:

- The organization's mission and core objectives
- Communities served, including identities and geographies
- Key thematic areas of work (e.g. health, livelihoods, legal aid, community support)

This section focuses on purpose and relevance rather than scale.

3

Programmatic Work and Activities

To understand what the organization does in practice, applicants may outline:

- Key programs or initiatives currently underway
- Nature of services or interventions provided
- Duration and continuity of work with communities
- Any notable adaptations to political, social, or legal constraints

This allows assessors to gauge alignment with ecosystem needs.

4

Community Embeddedness and Reach

Applicants may be invited to describe:

- How the organization engages with and is accountable to the community it serves
- Approximate number of people reached annually
- Partnerships with other community groups, networks, or movements

This section values trust, proximity, and relational work

5

Organizational Capacity and Team

Rather than assuming uniform capacity, the RFP may ask applicants to share:

- Size and composition of the core team (paid and unpaid)
- Leadership structure and decision-making processes
- Key strengths as well as current organizational challenges

This enables honest self-assessment without penalization.

6

Financial Overview

Applicants may provide high-level financial information such as:

- Approximate annual budget range
- Primary funding sources (domestic, international, individual, institutional)
- Ability to receive domestic and/or foreign funding (where relevant)

The emphasis is on context and sustainability, not financial sophistication.

7

Use of Funds and Grant Ask

To support flexible funding, applicants may be asked to outline:

- The amount of funding requested
 - Broad areas where funds would be used (program, staff, operations, compliance, capacity building)
 - How funding would strengthen organizational effectiveness
-

8

Risks, Constraints, and Support Needs

Applicants may be encouraged to reflect on:

- Political, legal, or operational risks they face
- Compliance or administrative challenges
- Types of non-financial support that would be most useful

This section helps funders understand other challenges and risks they face.

9

Learning, Reflection, and Outcomes

Rather than formal MEL frameworks, applicants may describe:

- How they reflect on their work and adapt over time
- What kinds of learning or documentation they currently produce
- How they would like to engage in shared learning with other grantees

This aligns reporting with learning rather than compliance and fosters trust-based philanthropy.

10

Additional Context (Optional)

Applicants may use an open-ended section to share:

- Anything not covered elsewhere that they feel is important
- Contextual factors that shape their work
- Clarifications or nuances they wish assessors to understand

This provides space for voice beyond structured fields.

annexure 2: Sample Grantee Selection Framework

Illustrative example drawn from Pride Fund India's early grantmaking processes

This annexure presents a sample selection framework to illustrate how collaborative funds can structure transparent grantmaking decisions.

Purpose of the Selection Process

The objective of the grantee selection process is to assess organizations holistically—balancing effectiveness, vulnerability, leadership, and contextual constraints—rather than relying solely on administrative readiness or proposal quality. The framework is designed to support fair comparison across diverse organizations while remaining attentive to uneven capacity and differing starting points.

Guidance for Assessors and Jury Members

Assessors are encouraged to review each organization using a combination of application materials, secondary research, and where

possible, contextual knowledge of the ecosystem. The process is not intended to identify a single “best” organization, but to surface those where philanthropic support can be catalytic, appropriate, and aligned with the fund’s objectives.

Key principles guiding assessment include:

- Recognizing lived experience and community embeddedness as forms of expertise
- Distinguishing between organizational value and administrative polish
- Being explicit about trade-offs between risk, vulnerability, and readiness

Assessors should document their reasoning alongside scores to support collective discussion and transparency during deliberations.

Core Selection Parameters

The scoring framework used by Pride Fund India grouped assessment across four broad dimensions:

1

Organizational Credibility and Effectiveness

This dimension assesses whether the organization demonstrates trustworthiness and impact in its context. Indicators include:

- Evidence of outcomes or community-level impact
- Transparency and accountability in operations
- Track record of working directly with LGBTQIA+ communities
- Programmatic relevance and clarity of approach

2

Programmatic Strength

This dimension focuses on the quality and relevance of the organization's work, including:

- Depth of engagement with affected communities
- Responsiveness to local needs and constraints
- Potential for catalytic or multiplier effects
- Ability to operate effectively in constrained or high-risk environments

3

Vulnerability and Marginalization

Indicators include:

- Degree of marginalization beyond gender and sexuality (e.g., caste, class, geography)
- Remoteness or operating in under-served geographies
- Exposure to political, social, or legal risk
- Limited access to mainstream funding channels

This dimension helps counteract bias toward more visible or better-resourced organizations.

4

Leadership and Team Effectiveness

This dimension assesses leadership depth and organizational continuity, including:

- Tenure and credibility of organizational leadership
- Independence and accountability of leadership
- Presence (or absence) of second-line leadership
- Reputation and trust within the ecosystem

Rather than penalizing founder-led structures, this dimension supports informed discussion about sustainability and support needs.

Using Scores to Inform, Not Replace, Judgement

The following approach is offered as a point for consideration, based on the experience of Pride Fund India. While numerical scores were used to support comparison, final decisions were made through collective jury discussion.

This approach allowed the jury to:

- Contextualize scores based on lived realities
- Balance organizational strength with ecosystem needs
- Make transparent, reasoned decisions in the absence of perfect data

About Pride Fund India

Pride Fund India is a collaborative philanthropic initiative supporting LGBTQIA+ communities across India. By pooling capital and strengthening organizations, the Fund seeks to build long-term ecosystem capacity in an under-resourced field.

To learn more or explore collaboration, visit:

www.thepridefundindia.org

