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Advancing diversity in space: challenges and successes from a non-profit organisation

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Abstract

This abstract presents the formation and impact of Space Pride, a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the space industry, as seen from its volunteer board members. It highlights the organisation's journey; emphasising governance, how it has overcome challenges, and its ongoing goal of creating a diverse and inclusive environment in the space sector. The paper will detail the organisation's strategic objectives and governance structures that support its DEI mission, specifically to support and uplift LGBTQ+ individuals and the wider community in the space industry. Initiatives such as mentorship programs, professional development workshops and educational outreach will be showcased, illustrating their role in diversifying the space workforce. In doing so, the paper will highlight the power of community and safe spaces to welcome marginalised people into the space industry. The discussion will also extend to how the organisation addresses historical legacies and systemic barriers in its advocacy for inclusivity and equity across the industry, and the challenges which come with being the first dedicated organisation of its kind. Novel approaches adopted by the organisation, such as advocacy through the visual arts, will also be highlighted. Furthermore, the paper will explore the significant impact of creating a welcoming and safe workplace on workforce retention. It argues that environments which promote diversity and inclusion not only attract, but also retain a strong and innovative talent pool, addressing hiring challenges faced by the space sector and beyond. By offering a comprehensive analysis of the organisation's strategies, outcomes, and lessons learned, this paper aims to contribute valuable insights and practical models for cultivating a diverse and inclusive community within the space industry and other sectors struggling with workforce diversification and retention.

1. Introduction

This paper is composed of eight sections: introduction; journey; achievements so far; the personal nature of LGBTQ+ advocacy; benefits of diversity for workplaces; lessons for other organisations; next steps; and a conclusion.

Please note, that this paper delves into the personal perspective of being LGBTQ+ and discusses topics such as discrimination, suicide and self-harm. If you would prefer to avoid these discussions, please do not read sections 2.1, which includes a warning at the start. Support resources are available in Section 6.1.

2. Journey

This section highlights Space Pride's journey in 3 parts - first, why LGBTQ+ advocacy is necessary, second how Space Pride came to be and, third, the mission, vision and values which govern us.

2.1. The need for LGBTQ+ advocacy

This section contains discussions on topics including suicide and self-harm. If you wish to skip, Section 2.2. begins on page 2.

Despite advances in LGBTQ+ acceptance globally, this is not universal, nor does legal acceptance translate to cultural acceptance. This is highlighted by numerous statistics.

For example, in a 2023 study by UCL, it was found that lesbian, gay and bisexual people in England are more than twice as likely than their heterosexual (straight) peers to have suicidal thoughts or have self-harming behaviours [1]. According to Just Like Us, a UK based charity, this number increases to 89% in Black LGBTQ+ people [2]. Similarly, UCLA's School of Law found that in the US, more than 40% of transgender adults have attempted suicide [3].

UCLA researchers in 2023 also found that 47% of LGBTQ+ employees have experienced discrimination or harassment at work during their lives. This increases to 55% for trans and nonbinary workers. 21% of LGBTQ+ are not out to

any co-workers, whilst 33% of LGBTQ+ employees have left a job because of how they were treated by their employer [4].

Globally, LGBTQ+ inclusion is even more of a concern. Currently 63 countries criminalise private, same-sex consensual sexual relationships [5]. In 12 countries, these can result in the death penalty [6]. Additionally, conversion therapy has only been banned in approximately 16 countries [7], although the World Psychiatric Association has stated that “there is no sound scientific evidence that innate sexual orientation can be changed” [8].

It is important to note that these challenges facing LGBTQ+ individuals are not due to these identities, but due to discrimination, social isolation, rejection, difficulties resulting from stigmatisation and other pressures from the person’s surroundings and environment which lead to these challenges [9]. While there is nothing wrong with being LGBTQ+, this position which Space Pride stands for is not reflected globally.

2.2. Founding

“When I first entered the international space sector in 2022 at IAC Paris, I felt lost. Being queer and neuro divergent, I felt out of place and without a safe space to express myself and a community to turn to. I founded Space Pride to be that community and safe space. The beauty of this is that through that same safe space we created together, I was able to discover I was gender non conforming, and Space Pride became like a home to me. And Space Pride will be a welcoming and joyful home for many others like me too, *we are all made of stardust* after all.”[10]

This is how our founder, Protea Vale (they/them), described their first experience at IAC which prompted them to found Space Pride. Initially a team of six people, in its early days Space Pride acted as a home for a community which, otherwise, did not have representation. In order to facilitate further growth, and ensure the community had adequate protections, Space Pride decided to register as a legal charity. This occurred in June 2024, when the organisation became an official Association under French law. France was chosen due to French charity law allowing for an international board of directors, something essential for advocating in the space sector and increasing the reach and diversity of the organisation.

2.3 Mission, Vision, Values

The mission, vision and values (MVV) of an organisation represent their core goals, and Space Pride’s were approved by the board of directors in early 2024. This represented the culmination of work to define what areas Space Pride would aim to address in the space sector. Each aspect of the

MVV is outlined below, along with an explanation as to why they were selected.

2.3.1. Mission

Space Pride’s mission is “to make the space sector more open, accessible and inclusive to the LGBTQ+ community by advocating for rights, building safe spaces and fostering community.”

This mission statement was selected as a way to tangibly reflect our motto “we are all made of stardust”. It incorporates the motto’s sentiment of equality, whilst outlining the tangible steps that Space Pride takes to ensure this occurs.

2.3.2. Vision

Space Pride’s vision is divided into three sections - 1. a vision for the space sector, 2. vision for what Space Pride will create, and 3. a vision for what the space sector can accomplish. The first part of the vision reads as follows:

“We envision a space sector where LGBTQ+ careers are valued and nurtured.”

The goal of this aspect of the vision is to ensure that the way most people interact with the space sector is inclusive. Space is a fascinating sector, and getting to be involved with it professionally is a privilege, however being able to do so unapologetically as oneself is a basic expectation that, too often, is not met. The sector’s failure to nurture careers is explored in subsection 2.4.3.3., whilst the benefits for doing so is explored in Section 5.

The second part of Space Pride’s vision is internal - it represents what we want to create and the environment we want LGBTQ+ people and allies to feel welcomed to. It reads:

“We envision a community where LGBTQ+ individuals are welcomed and safe.”

Space Pride strives to be a space where people can come and immediately feel at ease - no expectations of having to be a token representative of your identity, but where everyone is fully themselves with no expectations attached. The final part of Space Pride’s vision is:

“We envision a world connected by space where people are accepted, regardless of their sexuality or gender.”

The space sector has the capacity to change the world through connecting us. This aspect of the vision highlights how this connectivity can improve

acceptance and lead to a future where everyone is accepted for who they are.

2.3.3. Values

Space Pride's values are split into four values which promote the overall mission and vision of the organisation. These are community, advocacy, research and education. Each value is explained in turn, highlighting how each supports and uplifts the LGBTQ+ community in the space sector.

The values were also chosen in this order as they form the acronym CARE, a core aspect of what Space Pride wants its members to feel as part of the community - that they are cared for.

2.3.3.1. Community

"Everyone deserves a place where they belong."

The first value is a central to building safe spaces and strong, supportive communities. Through an active discord and WhatsApp chat, Space Pride provides an online safe space for people with similar interests to connect, socialise and engage. Additionally, our anticipated event during the same week as this year's IAC (the Space Pride Fashion Gala (SPFG)) gives the community a chance to meet and network in person.

2.3.3.2. Advocacy

"We will stand up for those who can't."

Space Pride's second value is advocacy. This work takes multiple forms, and is explored in Section 3, and 6.2., but it is integral in Space Pride's mission to change the space sector.

2.3.3.3. Research

"LGBTQ+ stories should be shared."

Space Pride is working to gather data akin to what is presented in Section 2.1. for a future report. However, an integral part of our research is also collecting stories. Not only does this give those sharing their stories and experiences a sense of ownership over personal narratives that were once not in their control, but it also offers a personal side that too often hides behind the statistics. Every number is a story, and Space Pride's work will ensure these stories are shared. One such story from our community is as follows.

"Doing a graduate degree in the late 90s was a liberating moment. One of the most prevalent memories was how individual supervisors, and professors within the department were accepting of

my sexuality. This helped spur confidence in my research and ability to deliver contributions to science. After some modest academic success, it was suggested to me that I applied to the summer session program for International Space University. The heady excitement of being in a crucible of knowledge and among the best and brightest in the space sector soon took over. Within a short period of time the foreign university campus became our intercultural and interdisciplinary melting pot. Surely in such an environment I could not fail to flourish.

And flourish I did! Until the day someone asked me about my partner. Feeling somewhat safe I revealed, albeit hesitantly, that I was dating somebody of the same gender. The mixed reaction that followed tainted the rest of my experience. One of the other attendees from my country took me to one side and advised me against mentioning it to the wider group.

The second incident occurred during the same summer session. One of the technical projects at that had included a discussion about lesbian or gay astronauts, especially in the context of extended duration spaceflight. The idea was immediately and brutally withdrawn by staff involved in that project.

To its credits since, ISU has asserted its position on inclusivity [11] and what might constitute harassment. However the individual behaviours and attitude of the time affected my career for decades to come. Moreover some of those attitudes and behaviours still exist not just in a set of individuals but in fundamental policies and systemic behaviours within organisations making it hard to impossible for individuals such as myself to thrive, in the space sector."

- A Space Pride community member

2.3.3.4. Education

"We have to be ready to teach when those that don't understand are ready to learn."

Change and acceptance are not concepts which can be forced overnight, and Space Pride's final value seeks to highlight this. Everyone's exposure to the LGBTQ+ community differs, and it does not help to try to educate someone from where you wish they were, versus where they actually are. Whether educating someone who has never engaged with the community on the acronym LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and more) or educating an ally on the best way to implement an inclusive parental leave policy, each step is a step towards inclusion and is essential.

3. Achievements so far

Space Pride has used its platform to advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion within the space industry and carve out a safe community. Through the use of visual arts and other mediums, the organisation has been proactive in showcasing the significance, existence, and impact of the LGBTQ+ community.

3.1. *Interstellar Foundation*

In 2023, the Interstellar Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to the dissemination of human-made artefacts to represent humanity and for the potential contact with extraterrestrial life [12], invited individuals and organisations from across the world to participate in a unique opportunity to feature digitised artefacts on the surface of the moon [13]. Under the title “Aspire One: Moon Archive”, the initiative sought to collect pieces which reflected on the impact of humans and its linkage with outer space, sharing both its aspirations and achievements in the decades it's been involved with outer space [14]. Its aim is to inspire future generations through the showcasing of our civilisations' diversity and creativity. Using a solid state memory chip embedded in a special capsule, the selected pieces would travel with the capsule to the moon using a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket aboard the Firefly Blue Ghost Lander [14]. The ultimate destination would be on the Mare Crisium on the near side of the moon.

Space Pride was invited to submit a single artwork, making it the only piece to be included through submission for the mission [15]. Rania Djojosingito (she/her) (current operations director and former social media director) and Khushi Shah (she/they) (current vice president and former creative arts director) responded to this call and led Space Pride's participation in it. With the close collaboration and input of the wider Space Pride community they commissioned a digital art work named “Humanity's journey into the cosmos, we are all made of stardust”. Out of a selection of 4 draft ideas and through a democratic majority vote by the board, Djojosingito and Shah developed the idea which featured a black hole with rainbow coloured stardust swirling intricately into it. These subjects symbolised the singularity of human existence and the beauty of humanity's diverse and complex collection of humans. The final piece was symbolic to the concept of singularity and togetherness, where every single human being is tied to the stars irrespective of their background.

Not only did this piece acknowledge the similarities between individuals, it also brought attention to the harmony and beauty of a diverse and illustrious existence. The colours were carefully chosen to subtly tie to the Progress Pride Flag which was developed by Daniel Quasar

(xe/xyr) in 2017-2018 [16]. This made reference to the original 1978 rainbow flag by Gilbert Baker (he/him) [17], but also incorporated the colours which represent trans and non-binary individuals (light blue, pink and white), as well as People of Colour communities (brown and black) [18].

The impact of the art piece is aimed to signal a changing view of outer space and its exploration. The landscape of the space industry cannot and should not be confined to a binary conception of gender and sexuality, but rather begin to embrace the beauty and importance of a diverse collection of people who contribute new thoughts, ideas, and innovations. To date, the Aspire One mission is tentatively planned to launch by the end of 2024 [19].

3.2. *Big Bloom Hackathon*

The participation of Space Pride extends beyond the visual arts. In June 2023, members Scott Scoular (he/him) (current president and former legal officer) and Matylda Berus (she/her) (former vice-president) joined the 1st edition of the Big Bloom Pride Hackathon, an international event which raises awareness on the inclusion of LGBTQ+ in the workplace. Working alongside the Space Generation Advisory Council's Diversity and Gender Equality Project Group (‘Our Giant Leap’) [20], the joint team participated in the brainstorming of LGBTQ+-friendly activities that promote workplace equality for the LGBTQ+ community.

3.3. *Making space in space*

The organisation also prides itself heavily on building community and outreach, giving individuals from across the world the possibility to network with like-minded individuals and share their perspectives in a safe environment.

In October 2023, Space Pride hosted an online networking event for LGBTQ+ individuals in the space sector, allies and individuals who wanted to learn more. This event was led by Scoular and accompanied by presentations held by Protea Vale (they/them) (founder of Space Pride) and Paige Butler (she/her) (then president of the NASA JPL Spectrum organisation). Through storytelling and dialogue, participants were able to gain insight into the experience of- and actions by- LGBTQ+ individuals within specific organisations.

Open discussions allowed for a safe space for participants to cast their own stories and ask questions. The large takeaway from this event saw individuals share positive exchanges and gain a sense of belonging and shared history or bond. A number of participants opened up about their own experiences within the space industry and community, relaying their hardships and

takeaways. Post-event, participants shared enthusiastic responses and positive outlooks on the event and relayed the hope for more events like these in the future. The long-term outcomes reached through this event included exchanges between individuals from across the globe from various disciplines, ranging from law and policy to engineering and chemistry.

3.4. *LUNA Accelerator*

The Level-Up Non-profit Accelerator program (LUNA) LUNA is a learning community of people passionate about the impact of their organisation's impact. This 28-week experience of asynchronous and live learning has placed Space Pride on a path of growth and sustainability. One of the reasons that Luna has been so incredibly successful for us is the amount of support and encouragement that we have received from cohort members on our program, as well as being part of a much larger nonprofit network that encourages positive social impact in the world. We learned how honesty, transparency, good governance, sincere adherence to our mission vision and values (MVV) are foundational to making us an organisation that can truly be present for the LGBTQIA+ community. This project has allowed us to define our values and positively impact our constituents.

3.5. *Modern Art Oxford*

In March 2024, Space Pride was approached by Modern Art Oxford, a leading contemporary art space located in Oxford, the United Kingdom [47], for a commissioned piece reflecting on the queer community in outer space titled "Cosmic Capsule: A Journey to Queer Liberation" [48]. The key points raised by the commission touched on the work of Space Pride, importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion and the opportunities raised through this. The prompt also opened up space to comment on the work of the established and renowned contemporary artist, Frieda Toranzo Jaeger, whose work inspired the collaboration with Space Pride. The final commission consisted of an essay authored by Djojusugito and co-authored by Labia and Shah. The body of work included both case studies and artistic metaphors and analogies which highlighted themes of art activism, space advocacy, allyship and impact of the queer community in space. The essay is now a permanent blog feature of the Modern Art Oxford digital page.

4. **The personal nature of LGBTQ+ advocacy**

LGBTQ+ advocates who are part of the community are putting themselves in a position to have some of the most personal aspects of their identity attacked, discredited and denied. By being an outspoken member of the LGBTQ+ community, one is automatically sharing an aspect of their

existence which, wrongly, some feel the need to comment on or critique.

Like with other areas of identity advocacy, LGBTQ+ advocacy often has a personal element. Whilst ally-ship is an essential part to LGBTQ+ advocacy, personal involvement is often associated. The personal nature of LGBTQ+ advocacy is unsurprising - in a poll by the charity 'Just Like Us', it was found that, of the 3,695 adults aged 18 to 25, 74% of those who described themselves as "not supportive" of transgender people did not personally know someone transgender. [49]

When preparing for this paper, Space Pride reached out to our community and asked if anyone would be willing to share their experience from the space sector. This account we received has been included as we believe it highlights the reality that LGBTQ+ people face, i.e. having to constantly advocate for their identity and asserting who they truly are when their outward display of sexuality does not match a heteronormative society's perception of what being LGBTQ+ means.

"In the early 2000s, with a PhD. under my belt, I forged ahead and started applying to some of the larger organisations in the UK involved in space. Many of them, by the fact that they were involved in space, were also large defence contractors as well. Most jobs included a security clearance form that had to be filled out which did not include questions regarding partners or sexuality. To my knowledge such practices have been made either illegal or were considered poor form almost a decade earlier. I was, however, told informally that my job prospects would be limited and was actively warned off seeking employment with one company because of my sexuality. As a result, I never embarked on a career in the space industry; a chance that I regret to this day. If I had felt more support rather than fear at the time, then I would not have been scared of applying to the industry."

- *A Space Pride community member*

Another story highlights how being an advocate for your identity is sometimes inherent in having to exist in heteronormative spaces.

"Being a bisexual in several industries and the community of life...is challenging. The obstacle is living under what feels like an unchosen disguise of inaccuracy. After already coming out decades ago, I feel continuously put back into the closet. Either assumed lesbian for having relationships with women or assumed heterosexual for having relationships with men, there has never been a community where I have felt completely and accurately, me. Caught in between worlds and remaining under assumptions, Space Pride opened a door for me to be part of a community where I am

seen. A community where misrepresentation won't happen because I am already represented. What a privileged place to be, unapologetically me.”
- *A Space Pride community member*

Additionally, erasure of identities within the community can force people to justify their existence regularly because their outward portrayal of their sexuality is assumed to be heteronormative. Exemplified by phenomena like bi-erasure, forcing people to justify that they are, in fact, LGBTQ+ despite what people assume exerts an unnecessary toll on individuals. As such, inclusionary practices go some way into alleviating this added work. However, benefits of LGBTQ+ inclusion goes beyond personal benefits too. The following section explores the benefits of diversity for employers.

5. Benefits of diversity for workplace retention

The idea that inclusive practices benefit institutions is far from a novel one [21], and it is well-supported in labour economics, particularly through the human capital approach [22]. This theory suggests that institutions which marginalize or exclude minority groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, whether intentionally or not, forfeit valuable talent and skills. This loss extends beyond individual human capital, impacting overall economic output, as diversity is a key driver of innovation [23]. Empirical evidence demonstrates that a lack of diversity stifles innovation by narrowing the range of perspectives and ideas, particularly in sectors requiring cutting-edge technology and creative solutions. Institutions that fail to foster inclusion not only diminish their talent pool but also constrain their ability to innovate and compete effectively in today's global economy [24].

A crucial issue for LGBTQ+ employees is the experience of "onlyness", which occurs when an individual is the sole representative of their minority group in a workplace[25]. This situation, particularly prevalent in companies that fail to prioritize diverse hiring practices, disproportionately affects LGBTQ+ employees, with LGBTQ+ women bearing the brunt. Data indicate that LGBTQ+ women are twice as likely as heterosexual women to experience "onlyness," while heterosexual men are seven times less likely to feel this way than LGBTQ+ women. The intersection of multiple marginalized identities compounds these challenges, as LGBTQ+ women of colour report feeling "onlyness" eight times more frequently than their white LGBTQ+ counterparts [26].

The psychological and professional consequences of this isolation are severe. "Onlyness" often leads to heightened stress, increased scrutiny, and a

greater incidence of workplace aggression, manifesting through microaggressions and harassment. LGBTQ+ women face particularly high rates of such aggression—whether in the form of offensive remarks or sexual harassment—at higher rates than both their heterosexual and LGBTQ+ male colleagues. However, research shows that these harmful experiences are less frequent in workplaces that promote a balanced and inclusive environment [27]. A diverse workforce reduces the pressure on minority employees to act as educators to the company [28] on issues of identity [29, further reading in bibliography], thus alleviating the substantial burden that often falls on those from underrepresented groups [30].

The systemic challenges LGBTQ+ individuals face in the workplace are often captured by the concept of the "rainbow ceiling", analogous to the "glass ceiling" that women encounter. The "rainbow ceiling" refers to the invisible barriers preventing LGBTQ+ individuals from achieving upward mobility and full recognition in professional settings[31]. Closely related is the "rainbow cliff" phenomenon, which describes how LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to be placed in leadership roles during times of crisis or when the risk of failure is particularly high. This occurs due to the perception that promoting minorities during turbulent periods signals social responsibility, despite the precarious nature of the position[32]. While the "glass cliff" effect has been well-documented for women, insufficient data exist to determine whether LGBTQ+ individuals experience this phenomenon to the same extent, given the underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ leaders in high-level positions [33].

In light of these realities, it is clear that companies which prioritize diversity and inclusion not only enhance employee satisfaction and retention but also foster a more innovative and productive workplace. Satisfied employees, who feel valued and protected, are more likely to remain with their employers, thus reducing costly turnover and the need for continuous hiring and training. Beyond retention, diverse teams offer a broader range of perspectives and problem-solving approaches, enabling companies to address complex challenges more effectively. By mitigating groupthink -a dynamic in which the pursuit of consensus suppresses dissenting views- diverse workforces contribute to better decision-making and a more adaptive, forward-thinking institutional culture [34].

6. Lessons for other organisations

Hopefully, the information presented thus far has inspired you to take action for the LGBTQ+ community. This section outlines ways in which

organisations can help, but if further information is desired please don't hesitate to contact the Space Pride team.

Diversity plays a central role in the space sector. A diverse workforce encourages the exchange of new perspectives and ideas, utilising viewpoints that can be beneficial in providing innovative solutions. These can make a difference within the industry, by making it stand out and increase the competitive edge of the institution, business, or individual. According to a 2023 Report by McKinsey & Company businesses which demonstrated a strong sense of diversity are more likely to outperform and increase their profitability compared to those that didn't. Where ethnic representation was emphasised there was a 39% likelihood, whereas businesses which promoted the representation of women was over 30% [35].

Nurturing this type of environment is also closely tied to articles I and II of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which emphasise the free and equal dignity and rights of all humans and the principle of non-discrimination respectively. Hence, fostering an inclusive environment empowers individuals, increases job satisfaction and promotes safety within the workplace [36]. Through promoting, strengthening and maintaining a diverse workforce, efficiency is promoted. For example, companies may avoid the legal costs associated with discrimination lawsuits, and improved health and well-being can lead to lower costs of health insurance [38]. Such environments can also lead to a decrease in interpersonal conflicts between colleagues, allowing individuals to engage with their work without fear of discrimination.

Although diversity is generally regarded as a crucial factor in facilitating efficiency within companies in general, the space sector can benefit greatly from employing improved DEI systems and practices. Avoiding or neglecting the use of DEI practices can lead to the loss of talent, foster hostile working conditions, and lead to missed opportunities and ideas that could be consequential for space activities [39].

Although applying DEI can be beneficial, it is integral to not frame or view diversity as a 'tick box' objective. The use of DEI needs to stem from genuine and meaningful interaction with individuals and communities to avoid insincere actions that feed social, political or other pressures as seen with "rainbow washing", a practice wherein companies or institutions may use superficial marketing tactics to be perceived as supporters of the LGBTQ+ community. The Global Compact Network UK argues the need to provide DEI strategies through an intersectional lens by looking beyond legal compliance and seeking genuine connections and lasting outcomes [40].

A few suggestions on how to promote a more inclusive and diverse working environment include developing policies and encouraging a positive organisational culture. These can be done through the adoption of non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies. For example, abolishing gender stereotypical dress code mandates and revising employment factors such as pensions, parental leave and more [40]. Reforming training and hiring practices that are LGBTQ+ friendly can solidify and provide strong foundations for organisations to grow from.

6.1. Support your members

Supporting the LGBTQ+ community within your organisation is a great way to start being more inclusive of this community. This can take multiple forms, one popular form is by participating in Pride Month, during June. Whilst corporate rainbow-washing (a practice where brands create the illusion of supporting the LGBTQ+ community without tangibly contributing to change [41]) is obviously undesirable, Pride Month still offers an important opportunity to raise awareness and educate your members [42].

However, as is commonly articulated, the values espoused during Pride Month should not be limited to just one month. In fact, the values cannot be limited to one month if real change is going to occur - they must be addressed consistently and constantly year-round [43]. One way organisations can do this is by supporting local LGBTQ+ organisations where they operate.

To help facilitate this, Space Pride has compiled a non-exhaustive list of organisations supporting the LGBTQ+ community by community. This is a summary, and we encourage you to look for local LGBTQ+ organisations advocating for change and providing physical safe spaces and communities to inform your members about and support. Not only will doing this allow for more tailored support, but it will also raise awareness of the state of LGBTQ+ support in your community and the challenges which your members may be facing.

Additionally, if you are LGBTQ+ and want support, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Space Pride team. Alternatively, if you are looking for support in your region Columbia University has compiled a global NGO database of organisations supporting LGBTQ+ individuals in local areas (titled the Global Observatory of LGBTQ+ Education and Advocacy [44]). (**organisation title**)

6.1.1. Africa

6.1.1.1. North Africa

Arab Foundation for Freedoms & Equality is an organisation that was started in 2009 in Beirut, Lebanon. Its mission is to "encourage and support

sexual health, sexuality, gender and bodily rights movements in the Middle East and North Africa through capacity building, knowledge production, protection and advocacy.”

6.1.1.2. Southern Africa

The Other Foundation works to support local LGBTQ+ organisations by providing grants to these groups across Southern Africa to advance human rights and the resources available to the LGBTQ+ community.

6.1.2. Asia

6.1.2.1. Central Asia

Equal Asia Foundation works to support LGBTQ+ inclusion and support local organisations to advance LGBTQ+ rights across Asia, and by supporting them they can support local groups.

6.1.2.2. South Asian Subcontinent

The Queer Muslim Project is Asia’s leading digital and cultural platform for queer and Muslim voices. They offer programs like Language is a Queer Thing, an international poetry exchange, and

Gaysi Family is an online platform which provides a safe space for queer desis across South Asia, allowing stories to be shared and connections to be made.

6.1.3. Australasia/Oceania

6.1.3.1. Australia

Pride Foundation Australia is a philanthropic foundation that funds training, research and community initiatives for the LGBTQ+ community. They also work with Aboriginal communities to improve social outcomes.

6.1.3.2. New Zealand

InsideOUT Kōaro. This organisation provides resources, consultancy, workshops, consulting, advocacy and support for LGBTQIA+ communities, supporting communities, schools and workplaces.

6.1.3.3. Pacific Islands

Pacific Sexual & Gender Diversity Network. The PSGDN is an organisation based in Fiji with affiliates across 14 countries. They advocate for resources and sustainable communities across the Pacific islands.

6.1.4. Europe

ILGA-Europe is an NGO which unites over 700 organisations across 54 countries in Europe and Central Asia. By supporting them, you can support LGBTQ+ organisations nearest you.

6.1.5. North America

6.1.5.1. United States

The Human Rights Campaign is the largest LGBTQ+ organisation in the United States and has been working to protect LGBTQ+ rights for over 40 years.

6.1.5.2. Canada

Egale Canada is a non-profit advocating for policy changes to create “a Canada, and ultimately a world, without homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and all other forms of oppression so that every person can achieve their full potential, free from hatred and bias.”

6.1.5.3. Mexico

It Gets Better Mexico. Committed to sharing LGBTQ+ stories, creating safe spaces and offering support to young LGBTQ+ individuals at risk, It Gets Better Mexico works with organisations to provide resources and advocate for change.

6.1.6. South and Central America

6.1.6.1. South America

Like ILGA-Europe, **ILGA-Lac** collaborates with a regional network of groups that support LGBTQ+ individuals across Latin America and the Caribbean.

6.1.6.2. Central America

The Lambda Association is an NGO focused on gathering data on the LGBTQ+ community in Central America, and have released public reports of their findings.

6.1.7. Globally

Additionally, if you would like to support an organisation working to change laws criminalising people’s existence, the **Human Dignity Trust** uses the law to defend the rights of LGBTQ+ people globally.

6.2. Space Pride’s Manifesto

Another way organisations can show their public support for the LGBTQ+ in space is by signing Space Pride’s manifesto. Created to advance diversity, this document provides ten actionable steps for organisations in the space sector, each of which shall be discussed in turn.

In addition to providing a baseline guide for organisations, it allows LGBTQ+-friendly organisations to show their support for the community whilst committing to inclusion. This is just the start of Space Pride’s advocacy work, and further projects we are working on are detailed in Section 7.

6.2.1. Challenge

“We acknowledge that LGBTQ+ inclusion and safety is an ongoing challenge for the space sector.”

The first step to solving a problem is acknowledging that there is a problem to begin with, and this is what the first commitment of our Manifesto does. LGBTQ+ inclusion in the space sector has been a topic with little discussion, and as the sector grows it is essential that

6.2.2. Value

“We recognise that LGBTQ+ individuals are valuable and indispensable members of the space sector.”

LGBTQ+ individuals are essential parts of the space sector. Acknowledging their essential part of the space sector in a form which goes beyond mere tokenism (the “practice of doing something (such as hiring a person who belongs to a minority group) only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are being treated fairly” [45]).

The second Commitment encourages organisations to go beyond surface-level representation and acknowledge that LGBTQ+ individuals are more than a label or statistic to put in marketing.

6.2.3. International

“We recognise that LGBTQ+ identities are yet to be acknowledged and accepted in some space-faring nations.”

As highlighted in subsection 2.1., LGBTQ+ inclusion is far from global. This Commitment puts this fact front and centre, as making the space sector inclusive involves making sure all LGBTQ+ individuals are protected.

6.2.4. Borderless

“We uphold that LGBTQ+ inclusion should mean advancing inclusion globally.”

Commitment Four, once again, goes to the international nature of the space sector. In doing so, it encourages organisations to ensure that their members are protected everywhere they operate, and not just where it is convenient.

6.2.5. Safe spaces

“We give LGBTQ+ people a safe space to be themselves without fear of prejudice.”

The majority of an LGBTQ+ persons life is spent surrounded by cisgender, heterosexual people. Of course, there is nothing wrong with this,

and allies are an incredibly important part of the push for LGBTQ+ inclusion. However, being LGBTQ+ means not always knowing who will accept or support your identity. Commitment Five pushes organisations to let LGBTQ+ people be LGBTQ+ people, in all the forms that may take and without fear of judgement.

“I never realised how much I hid my identity in day-to-day life until I was surrounded by only LGBTQ+ people for three days. I immediately felt safe to be myself in a way I genuinely never had felt in similar environments. Being LGBTQ+, at least for me, meant feeling different from an incredibly young age, and being fully accepted for who I am by strangers without any fear of rejection was genuinely transformative.”

Scott Scoular, speaking on his time at Stonewall's Young Leaders Program Retreat in 2024 and why safe spaces are so important

6.2.6. Uplift

“We put LGBTQ+ voices at the heart of discussions on inclusion accessibility, accessibility, and safety.”

LGBTQ+ individuals live these experiences daily. Centering their voices not only gives us a seat at the table which decides, but it also goes some way to ensuring that the results of these discussions address what members of organisations are actually experiencing.

6.2.7. Privacy

“We protect the privacy of LGBTQ+ individuals within our organisation to prevent any unintended or unauthorised public disclosure (being “outed”).”

In countries where being LGBTQ+ is criminalised, even an LGBTQ+-friendly organisation which means well can endanger members if they unintentionally out them to any other member, or to the general public. More so than this, the personal strain this puts on the outed person can result in serious harm [46]

To reiterate - outing someone is exposing a part of their personal life for everyone to see without their permission. Doing so is unacceptable.

6.2.8. Educate

“We strive to actively educate all members within our community on LGBTQ+ issues.”

Education is a key step to understanding and acceptance. Ignorance of LGBTQ+ issues makes the community less tangible and their issues less present. Commitment Eight works against this ignorance to prevent instances where, for example, the majority of young people who were surveyed by Just Like Us that were non-supportive of trans people did not know a transgender person themselves [49].

6.2.9. Intersectional

“We recognise that issues of LGBTQ+ discrimination are closely tied to other areas of discrimination.”

When identities intersect, the challenges facing different communities intersect on one person. Having multiple aspects of identity can of course be freeing, but in section 2.1., the adverse effects of this were also highlighted. Space Pride is an LGBTQ+ organisation, however, in uplifting its members, it uplifts every community they are part of.

6.2.10. Space for all

“We strive to make the space sector more open, accessible and inclusive to all LGBTQ+ people by advocating for rights, building safe spaces and fostering community.”

Inspired by Space Pride’s official mission statement, Commitment 10 sums up what the Manifesto calls for - it calls for acceptance, it calls for allyship and it calls for change.

7. Next steps

The work Space Pride has done so far is important, however we are nowhere near finished. This section outlines our future plans to continue LGBTQ+ inclusion.

One of our primary plans is inspired by Space Pride’s Manifesto presented in section 6.2. This project is provisionally titled the Space Pride Handbook and aims to compile, and draft, policies for companies to put in place to be more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community. This would also provide a framework for organisations to learn about the issues discussed in this paper, fulfilling our goal to educate, whilst offering tangible steps they can take. We also hope to complement this handbook with workshops for individuals, inspiring them on how they can better create safe spaces within their local environments.

In addition to this, we are planning on continuing our research and gathering of stories for the LGBTQ+ in space. Not only will this provide a

clearer picture of the work which needs to be done, but it will also give individuals the chance to voice their experiences in a safe and uplifting environment.

Finally, regular community events, both online and in person, are planned to help grow the welcoming and nurturing community in the space sector which Space Pride has become. Sometimes, knowing that there is someone out there who shares your experiences and interests can be enough to help you get through the day, and facilitating this kind of community is something essential to Space Pride.

8. Conclusion

This paper began by setting out the need for LGBTQ+ advocacy, and the process which created Space Pride. It then sought to inspire the space sector with both its achievements, and the stories of our community. It then highlighted the benefits of diversity for other organisations and set out steps which they could take to achieve an inclusive space sector that ultimately benefits us all.

In doing so, it has sought not to speak or speak down to anyone, but to educate and highlight struggles which people may not be aware of. We hope that this has been informative and that our stories have inspired you to take action. We all share a passion, and we all can work together to make the space sector as inclusive as possible. We are all made of stardust after all

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