Naveen Jha leads the Deshpande Foundation’s programs in India. As CEO, Naveen furthers the Foundation’s larger vision around entrepreneurship, innovation and scale as drivers of change. Under his leadership, the Foundation has established a robust grantmaking program that supports nonprofits engaged in leveraging productivity, unleashing entrepreneurship and breeding innovative ideas for the larger well-being of people.

As an education entrepreneur, Naveen has pioneered a series of youth development programs that push the attitudes, efficiency, and problem-solving skills of young people. Through use of applied learning, intensive mentorship and inspiration, these programs – the Deshpande Fellowship Program, LEaders Accelerating Development (LEAD), and Entrepreneurship Academy – have created a movement that transforms youth into leaders and social entrepreneurs. Also critical to his work is engagement with engineering and management institutes in the area, where he is creating a new model for how institutes in second- and third-tier cities impact the larger educational system.

Naveen oversees the strategic growth and expansion of the Foundation’s work in the Sandbox, alongside the trustees and board of directors. Using the Foundation’s location-focused model, Naveen has worked to bring together the entrepreneurial network of northwestern Karnataka. This network now acts to strengthen local enterprises and to build initiatives essential to long-term economic development. Naveen’s work with entrepreneurs, both for- and non-profit, in the Sandbox has localized investment, built local leadership, and ignited collaboration between the two sectors. With a focus on innovation and scale, this entrepreneurship-based approach has been critical to helping to grow the Sandbox as a model of development.

Prior to the Deshpande Foundation, Naveen worked with PRADAN for six years, a leading non-governmental organization based in northern India. At PRADAN, Naveen led a team of professionals to promote livelihoods in the dry, semi-arid regions of Rajasthan. He has worked extensively on livelihoods, water resource management, food security, trade and microfinance programs in India. A recipient of the prestigious International Ford Foundation Fellowship (2005 - 07), Naveen completed his Master’s in International Development from Brandeis University. Naveen is also President and a co-founding board member of TiE Hubli; founder of Action Exchange, a US-based nonprofit organization; and serves as board member to several other organizations.

- **Deshpande Center for Social Entrepreneurship (DCSE)** - actively promotes social entrepreneurship by hosting, supporting and guiding dynamic individuals dedicated to generating innovative, scalable ideas, particularly in the Sandbox. Aspiring social entrepreneurs of all disciplines in the private and nonprofit sectors are empowered to develop prototypes and build the critical mass necessary to instigate positive social change in the Sandbox Area. [http://www.deshpandefoundation.org/dcse.html](http://www.deshpandefoundation.org/dcse.html)