



iFORWARD: Equipping Organizations in the South through Technology to End the HIV Epidemic

Request for Proposals 2023-2024 Grant Cycle

Proposal Due Date: May 5, 2023 at 5p.m. EDT

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Executive Summary

The Southern HIV Impact Fund is a collaborative of funders seeking a greater collective impact against the disparities driving the HIV epidemic in marginalized communities in the South. iFORWARD, a special project of the Southern HIV Impact Fund, seeks to strengthen the technology infrastructure and digital capacity of HIV service organizations in the Southern United States. With funding from Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson, AIDS United is pleased to announce the second year of funding for iFORWARD. Grants of up to \$10,000 will be available for project-specific or general operating support.

Background

The South accounts for roughly one-third of the total U.S. population, but over half of new HIV diagnoses each year.¹ For the last decade, the South has had the highest rate of new HIV diagnoses in the country.² A substantial proportion of these new diagnoses are among youth and young adults, as 21.7% of people newly diagnosed with HIV in the South were between the ages of 13-24 and 36.3% were between the ages of 25-34 in 2020.³ Racial disparities are also clearly seen in HIV incidence and prevalence in the South. Black/African American individuals are eight times more likely to receive an HIV

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019, September). *HIV in the Southern United States*. Issue Brief. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/policies/cdc-hiv-in-the-south-issue-brief.pdf>

² Reif, S., Cooper, H., Warren, M., Wilson, E. (2021). *HIV in the US Deep South: Trends from 2008-2019*. Center for Health Policy and Inequalities Research, Duke University. <https://southernaidscoalition.org/hiv-trends-report/>

diagnosis than white individuals, and 30% of new diagnoses occur among Black men who have sex with men.² In addition, the rate of Black women living with HIV is 14.2 times that of white women.³

Mortality due to HIV can be more than three times higher in some Southern states compared to other regions.¹ Heightened structural barriers including poverty, inadequate sexual health education, HIV stigma, racism, homophobia, transphobia, lack of access to health care and specialized HIV care, HIV criminalization and high incarceration rates drive these disparities.² In fact, the Deep South has the highest number of uninsured people compared to other regions in the United States. All but one state in the Deep South have not yet opted to expand Medicaid.²

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated existing disparities and created serious new health risks for people living with HIV. These risks have resulted in increased trauma, fear and isolation, which in turn impact the accessibility of HIV care. From January to June 2021, the Center for Health Policy and Inequalities Research at Duke University, in partnership with the Southern AIDS Coalition and the Gilead COMPASS Initiative, conducted a survey of organizations located in the Deep South that serve people living with or vulnerable to HIV.⁴ The results found that, while 87% of organizations saw an increase in demand during this time, only 40% could continue offering their services at the same capacity as pre-pandemic.⁴ Furthermore, a need for technical support and training to switch to virtual services was reported by approximately half of the organizations surveyed.⁴

When speaking of structural, racial and social barriers, iFORWARD recognizes that technology and infrastructure are a barrier in the Southern United States, specifically in rural areas. Many organizations do not have the capacity to meet the needs of PLWH through their existing technology and digital infrastructure. A recent blog post from Funders Concerned About AIDS highlights barriers that prevent the telehealth solutions adopted during the pandemic from being successful, including low patient access and a lack of trust in telehealth services.⁵ However, providers who have created patient-centered telehealth solutions see significant reductions in disengagement from care, and technological innovations are promising solutions for community education, peer support and more.⁵ These solutions could be particularly impactful in the South, where HIV is disproportionately concentrated in rural and suburban areas.¹ To this end, iFORWARD aims to aid people leading and receiving services from HIV service organizations by providing funding for technology-centered initiatives.

Purpose

iFORWARD recognizes the barriers that Southern organizations face in accessing appropriate technology to carry out their services and achieve their mission. This initiative aims to reduce these disparities by directing funds to and building the capacity of grassroots organizations in the South to:

1. Improve community access to health information.
2. Enhance organizational communication systems.
3. Help to maintain a sense of client social and emotional support.

³ AIDSvu. *Regional Data: South*. <https://aidsvu.org/local-data/united-states/south/>

⁴ Reif, S., Cooper, H., Warren, M., Wilson, E. (2021). *The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Organizations in the Deep South*. Center for Health Policy and Inequalities Research, Duke University. <https://southernaidscoalition.org/cbo-and-covid-report/>

⁵ Hamilton, S. (2021, April 28). Lessons Learned from COVID: Continuud Uses Technology To Eliminate Barriers to HIV Care and Treatment During the Pandemic. *Funders Concerned About AIDS Blog*. <https://www.fcaids.org/2021/04/28/lessons-learned-from-covid-continuud-uses-technology-to-eliminate-barriers-to-hiv-care-and-treatment-during-the-pandemic/>

4. Establish and maintain a virtual community.
5. Extend organizations' geographical reach.
6. Reduce HIV-related stigma.

For the 2023-2024 cycle, \$70,000 in funding is available through iFORWARD. AIDS United anticipates making approximately seven grants of up to \$10,000 each to community-based organizations, racial and social justice organizations, AIDS service organizations, Federally Qualified Health Centers and/or networks of PLWH across the South. Grants will be 12-months in length (June 12, 2023 – June 14, 2024) and two types of grants will be offered:

1. Project-specific grants to support a distinct project with clear goals, objectives, activities and measurable outcomes. Project-specific grants aligned with iFORWARD will support projects such as:
 - a. Digital campaigns that promote linkage to HIV prevention services, HIV care and/or treatment as prevention.
 - b. Digital campaigns that address barriers to care.
 - c. Digital campaigns and/or hybrid events on addressing social and structural determinants of health.
 - d. Creation of digital health literacy materials.
 - e. Digital and hybrid advocacy events.
 - f. Digital and hybrid workshops/events with high-impact populations.
2. General operating grants that provide financial resources to an organization in support of its mission and overall activities, including operating expenses and overhead, rather than providing support for specific projects or programs. General operating requests aligned with iFORWARD will support activities such as:
 - a. Staffing support for social media, mass media or content creation.
 - b. Building infrastructure for Wi-Fi.
 - c. Expansion of telehealth services, including live video conferencing, mobile health (mHealth) apps, "store and forward" electronic transmission, remote patient observations and teletherapy, telemedicine, and telepharmacy.
 - d. Subscriptions to Zoom or other teleconferencing platforms.
 - e. Purchase of infrastructure building tools such as hotspots.

Eligibility

To be eligible for funding through iFORWARD, the applicant must meet the following criteria:

- **Nonprofit Status** – Applicants must be nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations, per the guidelines set forth by the Internal Revenue Service with proper 501(c)(3) status, or hold 501(c)(7) status. Organizations or coalitions that do not hold 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(7) status must have a fiscal sponsor. Note that 501(c)(4) designation is not the same. While it is possible for an organization to have both IRS (c)(3) and (c)(4) status, AIDS United will verify that each applicant organization has a (c)(3) designation.
- **Geographic Location** – Applicants must have a staff member located in and provide services within the Southern United States. For this opportunity, the South is defined as: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.
- **Financial Stability** – Organizations should be fiscally stable and viable before submission of the funding application. These funds are not intended to serve as a replacement for discontinued funding.

- **Operating Budget** – There are not organizational annual operating budget limitations on this funding; organizations are eligible to apply regardless of their annual operating budget amount. However, funding for small, grassroots organizations will be prioritized.
- **Equity** – iFORWARD recognizes that HIV outcomes are significantly impacted by poverty, racism, homophobia and transphobia, heterosexism and misogyny. As such, we will prioritize funding for organizations led by and serving Black and Latinx transgender, gender-nonconforming and nonbinary people; Black and Latinx gay, bisexual, queer and same-gender-loving men; Black women; other communities of color; and gender identities and sexual orientations of people that letters and words cannot fully describe.
- **Good Standing** - Current or previous grantees of any AIDS United funding portfolio must be in good standing with regards to reporting and all other grant requirements.
- **Grant Period** – Applicants must be able to utilize the funds within a 12-month period beginning June 12, 2023 and ending June 14, 2024.
- **Protection of Information** - All applicants will be required to provide a plan to protect patient information, including following guidelines in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), as applicable.
- **Relationship to AIDS United** – Current AIDS United grantees, including current and past grantees of iFORWARD and/or the Southern HIV Impact Fund, are eligible to apply. Organizations who have not been funded by AIDS United before are also eligible to apply.
- **Digital Marketing Expectations** – Applicants must agree to digital marketing standards that balance culturally sensitive and appropriate digital content. AIDS United retains the right to review and/or approve digital marketing campaigns in consultation with grantees prior to public release.

Approach

- **Intersectionality and Social Justice** – Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how interrelated systems of oppression support discrimination among people who share overlapping social identities. For example, a person living with HIV may face racism and homophobia, in addition to HIV stigma, all of which may present barriers to that individual’s access to care and their achievement of optimal health. Systemically, all must be addressed if we are to see an end to HIV in the United States and create real change for people living with and affected by HIV. iFORWARD grantees are expected to address HIV-related disparities through an intersectional framework through their organization’s ongoing work and be mindful of the digital divide, the gap between those who have access to technology and digital communications and those who do not, in implementation of their iFORWARD project. Applicants can leverage the following resources to deepen their understanding of this approach:
 - [We the People Report](#) (Black AIDS Institute, 2020)
 - [A Declaration of Liberation: Building a Racially Just and Strategic Domestic HIV Movement](#) (HIV Racial Justice Now, 2017)
- **Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV** – MIPA ensures that communities most affected by HIV are involved in decision-making at every level of the response, including in the development, implementation, resolution and evaluation of programs and policies that impact their lives. Competitive organizations will incorporate MIPA into their organizational management, staffing, board of directors, and governance, as well as their proposed iFORWARD project. Applicants can leverage [resources from AIDS United](#) to deepen their understanding of best practices for incorporating MIPA.

Requirements

- Participation in Evaluation** – Grantees will be asked to report the number of unduplicated beneficiaries (for grantees who receive general operating support) or the number of unduplicated beneficiaries within each category of work (for grantees who receive project support), as well as the demographic information (age, race/ethnicity, gender identity, HIV status and sexual orientation) of each beneficiary. Grantees may apply to waive the requirement to collect sensitive information in up to two of these categories if they can provide a reasonable justification about why they cannot collect it. Organizations that cannot collect such data are encouraged to request technical assistance in establishing systems that will support data collection in their application. Applicants will not be penalized for indicating a lower capacity for evaluative activities.
- Participation in Technical Assistance** – Grantees will be asked to complete a series of virtual courses intended to help organizations bridge the digital divide, participate in networking with fellow grantees, and engage in 1-1 coaching sessions if needed.

A summary of evaluation, technical assistance and grant management activities are included below. By submitting an application, the applicant acknowledges and agrees to participate in the activities as described.

Activity/Requirement/Deliverable	Timeframe/Deadline
Grant Payments	Grant payments will be made in two installments: 50% upon signing a grant agreement and 50% upon submission of a complete interim report
Welcome Webinar	By June 30, 2023
Participation in evaluation activities, including completion of a baseline, interim and final report.	A baseline report will be due by June 30, 2023, in addition to the interim and final reports noted below.
Attendance at a virtual All Grantee Convening	By September 2023
Interim Narrative Report	By November 30, 2023
Final Narrative Report	By July 12, 2024
Expenditure Reports	Submitted as attachments to the interim and final reports by November 30, 2023 and July 12, 2024
Check-In Calls between AIDS United and the Grantee	Calls will occur on a quarterly basis for the duration of the grant
Participation in other grantee meetings (in-person, online, or otherwise), local or regional advocacy or community meetings/events, and any other required grantee meetings.	As applicable
Participation in technical assistance activities, including online courses, networking, and coaching	Completed on a rolling basis throughout the grant period
Site Visits or Audits by AIDS United staff	Site visits or audits are not anticipated to occur for this program; however, AIDS United retains the right to conduct site visits or audits as needed
Completion of surveys required by AIDS United	Grantees must complete one annual all grantee survey

Submission and Timeline

Applicants have three options to submit responses to this proposal:

1. Written applications will be submitted via AIDS United's online [Grantee Community](#) by 5p.m. EDT on May 5, 2023. Questions do not have a word limit. However, applicants should aim for written responses to the Application Narrative questions to be no longer than five pages, single spaced.
2. Applicants can submit a pre-recorded video that is no longer than 45 minutes in length, responding to the Application Narrative Questions. Videos should be sent to iforward@aidsunited.org by 5 p.m. EDT on May 5, 2023. Please send an email with a link to your video housed on a file sharing service like Google Docs, Dropbox or a similar service and include the name of your organization both in the filename and in the email subject.
3. Applicants can answer all Application Narrative questions in a live 45-minute Zoom call with AIDS United staff. To schedule a Zoom call, please use [this Calendly link](#).

Applicants submitting their responses to the Application Narrative Questions via Zoom call or pre-recorded video must submit all required attachments and responses to the Organizational Overview, Organizational Leadership and Grant Request Overview questions via email to iforward@aidsunited.org no later than May 5, 2023, at 5 p.m. EDT.

Complete applications will be reviewed by a community-based external review committee, who will make funding recommendations to AIDS United. The timeline for the selection process is:

Activity	Date
Application Opens	April 3, 2023
Technical Assistance Webinar	April 14, 2023
Application Closes	May 5, 2023
Date of Funding Notification	May 31, 2023
Grant Period Begins	June 12, 2023
Grant Period Ends	June 14, 2024

Restrictions

Grant funds may not be used for: direct or grassroots lobbying; medications or medical care; facility acquisition or renovation; deficit reduction or debt payment; displacement of existing funding sources; and indirect expenses outside of the percentage noted in your budget. An in-depth description of direct and grassroots lobbying [can be accessed here](#).

Application

Organizational Overview

1. Organization name
2. Organization EIN
3. Organization address
4. Organization city
5. Organization state
6. Organization zip code
7. Organization website
8. Primary contact name
9. Primary contact title
10. Primary contact phone

11. Primary contact email
12. Fiscal Sponsor Information, if applicable
 - a. Name
 - b. Address
 - c. Contact person name
 - d. Contact person title
 - e. Contact person email
 - f. Contact person phone number
 - g. EIN
 - h. Website
13. Organization Type (CBO/ASO/faith-based/human rights/clinic or medical provider/legal aid/health department/other _____.)
14. Total organizational budget, rounded to the nearest dollar (current fiscal year)
15. Summarize the organization's mission (two to three sentences)
16. Is a member of your staff on AIDS United's Board of Directors or is your organization a member of AIDS United's Public Policy Council (PPC)?
 - a. Yes/No
 - i. Yes (Please provide the name(s) of those/those individuals.)
 - ii. No
 1. If Yes, do you attest that this person will recuse themselves from any decisions associated with this funding?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Organizational Leadership

AIDS United seeks to understand the leadership of the organizations we fund. We define an organization as led by a certain demographic group or community when all of the conditions below are met:

1. The executive director/highest paid staff or equivalent identifies as a member of the demographic group.
2. 51%+ of senior leadership identify as part of the demographic group.
3. 51%+ of staff identify as part of the demographic group.

We recognize that these definitions are imperfect. We are committed to continued learning, updating our language and being cognizant of the ways in which HIV status, race, gender identity and sexual orientation impact people's access to power.

1. Based on the definition above, is your organization led by people living with HIV?
 - a. Yes, we are led by people living with HIV based on the definition above.
 - b. No, we are not led by people living with HIV based on the definition above.
 - c. We do not collect the data needed to answer this question.
2. Based on the definition above, is your organization led by Black people, Indigenous people and other people of color (BIPOC)?
 - a. Yes, we are BIPOC-led based on the definition above.
 - b. No, we are not BIPOC-led based on the definition above.
 - c. We do not collect the data needed to answer this question.
3. Based on the definition above, is your organization led by transgender and gender non-conforming people, including nonbinary people?

- a. Yes, we are TGNC/TGNCNB-led based on the definition above.
 - b. No, we are not TGNC/TGNCNB-led based on the definition above.
 - c. We do not collect the data needed to answer this question.
4. Based on the definition above, is your organization led by lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, aromantic and same-gender-loving people?
- a. Yes, we are LGBQA+/SGL-led based on the definition above.
 - b. No, we are not LGBQA+/SGL-led based on the definition above.
 - c. We do not collect the data needed to answer this question.

Grant Request Overview

1. Project title
2. Total funding amount requested
3. One paragraph summary of project or grant request
4. Type of grant request (general operating support or project support)
5. Geographic area to be served by project or grant (urban, suburban, rural, reservation, statewide, region, campus, etc.)
6. If relevant, how many unduplicated individuals will participate in grant-funded activities?
7. What services or programming will be supported by this grant? Please check all that apply. For the services or programming that will be provided, please provide estimates of how many people will be served and/or how many services will be provided via grant funds during the project period.

Please note that many of these service categories may not apply to your iFORWARD project. Please select the service categories that are applicable to your proposal. Higher estimates are not assessed more favorably; please provide a realistic estimate for your proposed project and community.

- a. Prevention
 - i. How many HIV tests do you anticipate administering?
 - ii. How many people do you anticipate engaging in HIV, STI, viral hepatitis, mpox and/or COVID-19 prevention education?
 - iii. How many people do you anticipate referring for PrEP?
 - iv. How many people do you anticipate directly prescribing PrEP to?
 - v. How many people do you anticipate referring for PEP?
 - vi. How many people do you anticipate directly prescribing PEP to?
- b. Linkage to care services
 - i. How many people do you anticipate linking to care?
- c. HIV care and treatment (directly provided by your organization)
 - i. How many people do you anticipate providing HIV primary care to, including telehealth?
- d. HIV care and treatment (referrals to other providers)
 - i. How many people do you anticipate referring to partner organizations for HIV primary care?
- e. Retention in care services
 - i. How many people do you anticipate engaging in programming to support retention in care?
- f. Social services (directly provided by your organization)

- i. How many people do you anticipate providing social services to, including but not limited to housing, food, employment, transportation, or childcare assistance?
 - g. Social services (referrals to other providers)
 - i. How many people do you anticipate referring to partner organizations for supportive services, including but not limited to housing, food, employment, transportation, or childcare assistance?
 - h. Digital campaigns and events
 - i. How many people do you anticipate engaging in digital campaigns that promote linkage to care and/or treatment as prevention, address barriers to care, and or address social and structural determinants of health?
 - ii. How many people do you anticipate engaging in digital or hybrid events or workshops?
 - i. Harm reduction
 - i. How many people do you anticipate providing safer injection, smoking, and/or snorting supplies to?
 - ii. How many people do you anticipate providing overdose prevention supplies to?
 - iii. How many syringes do you anticipate distributing?
 - j. Training and leadership development
 - i. How many people do you anticipate engaging in a training or leadership development program?
 - k. Advocacy
 - i. How many people do you anticipate engaging in advocacy activities, including but not limited to education, mobilization, and voter registration?
 - l. Additional services or programming
 - i. Please specify
 - m. Not applicable (grant is for general operating funds)
- 8. Please indicate which of the following groups your proposal is designed to reach. *Check all that apply.*
 - a. Black/African American/African/Afro Caribbean people
 - b. Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine people
 - c. American Indian, Native American, Native Hawaiian or Alaska Native people
 - d. Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander people
 - e. White people
 - f. Young people
 - g. People aged 50 and older
 - h. Women of trans experience
 - i. Cisgender women
 - j. Men of trans experience
 - k. Cisgender men
 - l. Gender nonbinary, gender nonconforming or genderfluid individuals
 - m. LGBTQA+/SGL people
 - n. People living with HIV or AIDS
 - o. People living with viral hepatitis
 - p. Sex workers

- q. People who use drugs
- r. System-impacted individuals (i.e., those in jail, prison)
- s. Immigrant populations
- t. People who are homeless or unstably housed
- u. People in rural communities
- v. Additional groups (specify)
- w. Not applicable (grant is for general operating funds)

Application Narrative

1. **Statement of need:** Identify the need your project will address and the context in which you are working. Please share relevant local and/or client-level data describing the HIV epidemic in your community (not nationally) and intersectional issues that your project will address or, if you are applying for a general operating support grant, that your organization as a whole addresses. **(10 points)**
2. **Organizational overview:** Please provide a brief overview of your organization and your history implementing similar work/engaging communities of focus for the proposed project. Why is your organization best positioned to implement the proposed project? **(10 points)**
3. **Partnerships:** If you will conduct your proposed project in partnership with other organizations, please name your partners, outline the roles and responsibilities of each, and describe any history of past collaboration. **(unscored)**
4. **Program description:** Please describe how you plan to use the requested funds, including specific goals and objectives for your project, timelines, and related activities. **(20 points)**
5. **Evaluation:** Describe your plan for evaluating the proposed project. When and how will you collect data? What are your anticipated outcomes? How will you measure progress towards these outcomes? **(15 points)**
6. **Health equity:** How will your project improve health equity and/or address social determinants of health? How has your organization embedded strategies to improve health equity and address social determinants of health in your work to date? **(15 points)**
7. **Racial and social justice:** How will your project address key social and/or racial justice issues that impact the HIV epidemic in your community? How has your organization been involved in addressing these intersectional issues to date? **(15 points)**
8. **MIPA:** How have people living with HIV been involved in the development of your proposed project to date? How do these leaders reflect the local epidemic and communities of focus for the project? **(15 points)**
9. **Protection of Information:** What is your plan to protect clients', patients' and communities' demographic information and follow guidelines in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)? **(unscored)**
10. **Exemptions and Technical Assistance:** Do you intend to seek an exemption from collecting any of the data requested for the project evaluation? If yes, please describe the exemptions you would seek and provide brief justification(s). What technical assistance would you anticipate requesting to support implementation of your proposed iFORWARD grant and evaluating that work? **(unscored)** *(Note that AIDS United does not view applications asking for an exemption or for TA any less favorably than those that don't.)*

Attachments

1. **Budget:** Please use the budget template found [here](#). Other budget formats will not be accepted. Please refer to the instructions tab of the budget workbook to complete the template and provide a clear description and justification for each line item.

2. **Representation Table:** Please complete the representation table found [here](#). Refer to the workbook's instructions tab to complete it.
3. **Annual Operating Budget:** Please provide your organization's current annual operating budget, including both expenses and income.
4. **Board of Directors List:** Please attach your current list of Board of Directors with their professional or community affiliations. If your organization does not have a Board of Directors, please send your fiscal sponsor's Board information. If neither is available, a letter of explanation is required.
5. Most recent **audited financial statements**, *including cover page and the auditor's notes/findings*. If your organization has a fiscal sponsor, please send your fiscal sponsor's audit. If your organization does not have an audit or a fiscal sponsor, please submit your IRS Form 990 for last calendar year. If you do not have either document, you must provide a detailed letter of explanation.
6. **Fiscal Sponsor Agreement (if applicable):** If your organization has a fiscal sponsor for this grant application, please attach the fiscal sponsorship agreement signed by both your organization and your fiscal sponsor.
7. **Memoranda of Agreement or Letters of Support (optional):** If your organization is partnering with another entity/ies, please provide a letter detailing the relationship.

Technical Assistance During the Application Process

AIDS United is committed to assisting applicants with the preparation of a complete and responsive application. Our staff will be available to answer any questions and provide technical assistance. Please direct all questions to iforward@aidsunited.org. Additionally, a webinar will be held on April 14, 2023 from 12:00 PM-1:00 PM p.m. EDT to provide clarification about the grant announcement and key application submission tips. Register [here](#).

For assistance with navigating our Grantee Community or with other technical issues, please reach out to Shannon Wyss, senior grants manager, at swyss@aidsunited.org.

Thank you for your interest in iFORWARD and your commitment to ending HIV in the South!