

PEOPLE ORGANIZING POSITIVELY

POP 7 RETROSPECTIVE REPORT (Abbreviated)

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Please Note: This document is an abbreviated version of the POP 7 Retrospective. The full version, containing comprehensive details and in-depth analysis, will be available digitally.

Introduction

In 2014, with generous support from the Gilead Foundation, AIDS United (AU) embarked on a bold initiative to transform the landscape of HIV advocacy and leadership. The "People Organizing Positively" (POP) program was conceived as a catalyst to reignite the grassroots organizing movement among people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWH). **The program aimed to directly combat HIV-related stigma, elevate education and awareness among policymakers, and ultimately enhance health outcomes across the continuum of care.**

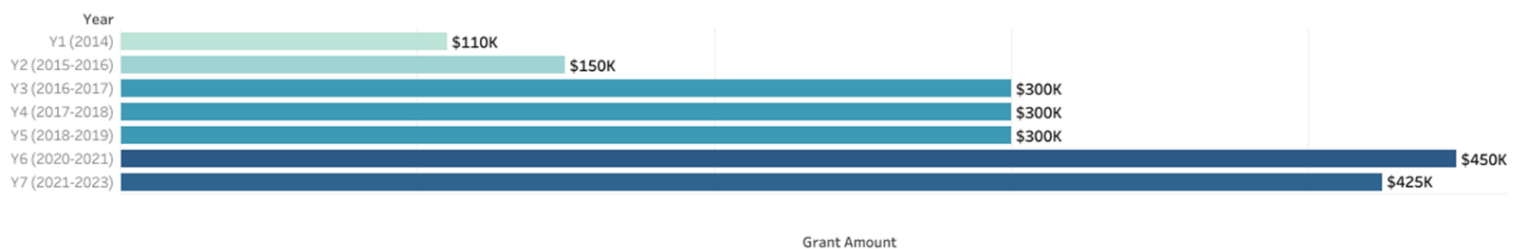
This seven-year retrospective offers a thorough review and analysis of the 54 grantee organizations supported by POP. It delves into the strategies employed, the milestones reached, and the lessons learned. **By examining the engagement of core communities, the mobilization of individuals, the cultivation of leadership skills, and the implementation of sustainable models, this report seeks to provide a clear picture of POP's far-reaching impact.**

Through this comprehensive review, **AU highlights the program's goals, the technical assistance (TA) provided, the outcomes achieved, the successes celebrated, the challenges encountered, the best practices identified, and the efforts made toward sustainability.** Additionally, this report includes testimonials from POP grantees, offering firsthand accounts of the program's influence on the ground. The insights gleaned from this in-depth analysis will serve as a testament to the effectiveness and enduring impact of POP over its seven-year journey.

Program Overview

Grant Funding

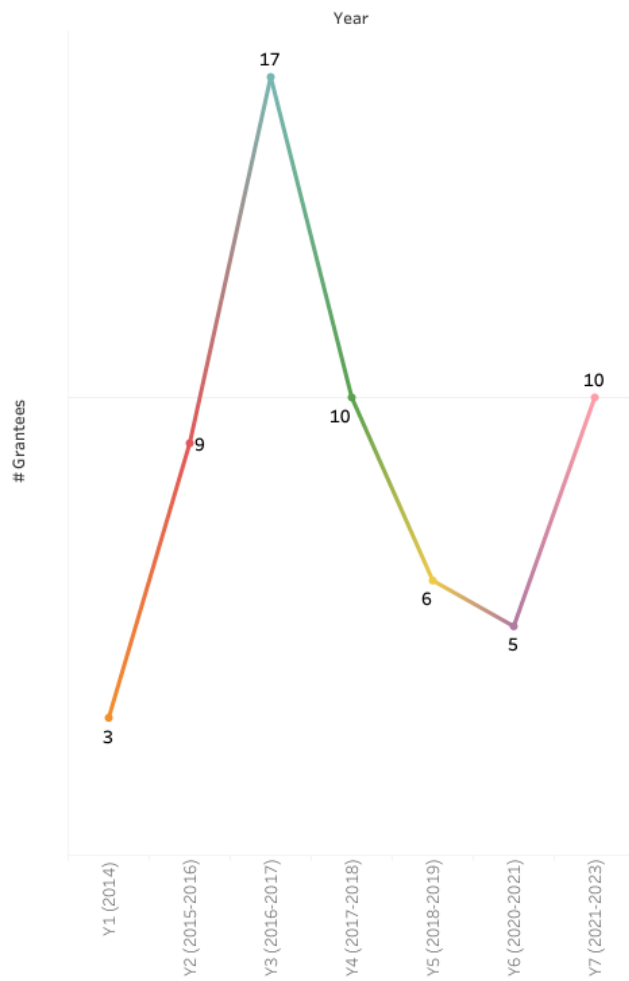
Grant Amount x Year



Throughout its seven-year span, the POP program strategically allocated grant funding to support a wide array of initiatives aimed at combating HIV stigma and promoting community engagement. **AU disbursed \$2,035,000 in grants, enabling grantee organizations to implement meaningful projects, expand their reach, and sustain long-term efforts in HIV advocacy and education.**

Number of Grantees

Number of Grantees x Year



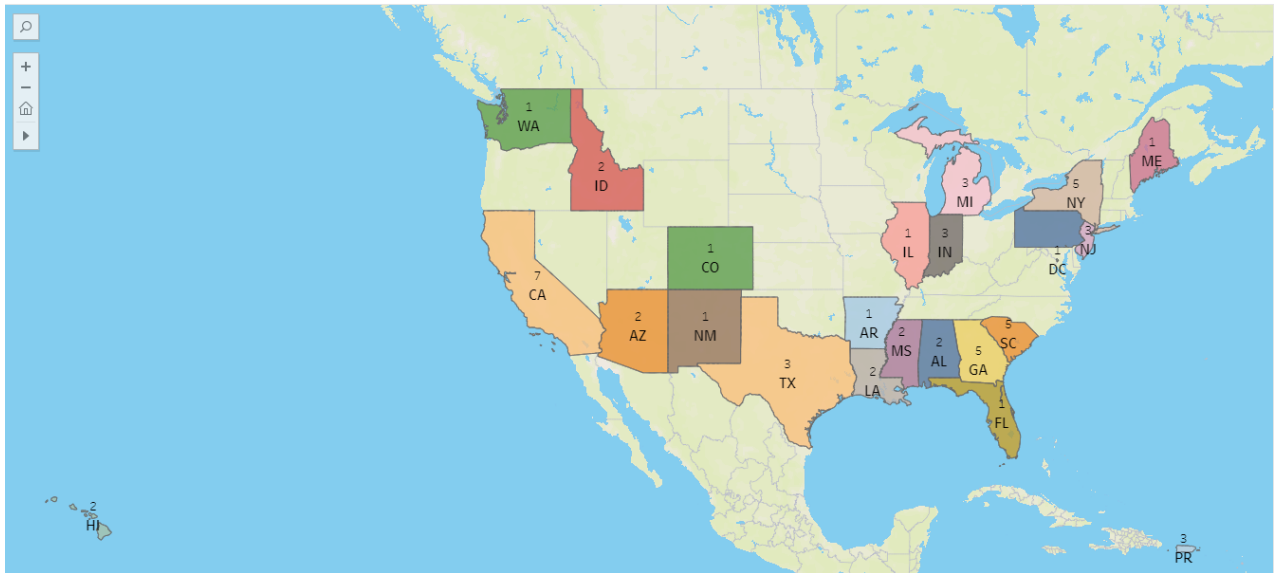
A total of 54 grantee organizations were selected to participate in the POP program, representing a diverse cross-section of communities and approaches. Each grantee brought unique strengths and perspectives to the table, contributing to a rich tapestry of advocacy, education, and leadership efforts that collectively strengthened this initiative.

Grantees Geographic Distribution

ALL Grantees by State Table

State	Count
CA	7
SC	5
NY	5
GA	5
TX	3
PR	3
PA	3
NJ	3
MI	3
IN	3
MS	2
LA	2
ID	2
HI	2
AZ	2
AL	2
WA	1
NM	1
ME	1
IL	1
FL	1
DC	1
CO	1
AR	1

ALL Grantees by State Map



POP had a nationwide impact, with grantee organizations spanning urban, rural, and suburban areas across the United States. This geographic diversity reinforced the initiative’s commitment to reaching communities in different parts of the country, ensuring that PLWH, regardless of their location, had access to the resources and support they need to thrive.

*POP Quiz: Did You Know?

- *In 2014, AU launched the POP initiative with support from the Gilead Foundation to combat HIV-related stigma, educate policymakers, and improve health outcomes for PLWH.*
- *Over seven years, the POP program awarded \$2,035,000 in grants to 54 organizations across 24 states in urban, rural, and suburban areas of the United States.*
- *The POP initiative focused on engaging communities, developing leadership among PLWH, and ensuring the sustainability of its impact.*
- *Each year, the POP program expanded its reach, influencing policies and creating lasting impact in communities nationwide.*

Program Goals

The POP initiative was meticulously designed with evolving goals over its seven-year duration, each year building upon the successes and lessons learned from the previous ones. From its inception, POP sought to lay a strong foundation in HIV advocacy by engaging core communities, developing leadership among PLWH, and integrating the principles of MIPA into every aspect of the program.

As the program progressed, POP expanded its reach and deepened its impact by partnering with a growing number of organizations dedicated to combating HIV-related stigma, influencing policy, and fostering sustainable community engagement. Each year's goals were carefully crafted to address emerging challenges, adapt to the needs of diverse communities, and enhance the leadership capabilities of PLWH. **For example, in Year 6, AU developed a new collaborative grantmaking initiative focused on multi-year investments in the leadership and capacity development of Latinx individuals living with HIV/AIDS, particularly through the Hispanic/Latinx People Organizing Positively (HLPOP) initiative.**

The goals reflected the program's continuous effort to empower PLWH, foster community resilience, and drive systemic change. **Selected grantee organizations ("POP Stars" listed in Index) played a crucial role in translating these goals into actionable outcomes, demonstrating a strong commitment to the program's mission.**

TA Activities and Program: Insights

AU entered a strategic partnership with the US People Living with HIV Caucus (the Caucus) as a TA provider. This partnership ensured the input of PLWH in the program's national HIV/AIDS strategy and policy goals, representing nearly 1.2 million people in the US living with HIV/AIDS. **The Caucus, a leading PLWH-driven leadership group in the US and anchored by seven national networks, brought extensive expertise in MIPA to all seven years of the POP initiative.**

TA Activities Overview

Over the course of POP, the Caucus played a pivotal role in providing TA to grantees, ensuring the integration of MIPA principles and supporting the development of PLWH leadership. **In Year 1, TA was delivered through phone consultations, webinars, and on-site visits, focusing on MIPA, community organizing, digital communications, and leadership training.** The Caucus also developed curricula, conducted organization assessments, and evaluated work plans, laying a strong foundation for grantee success. **As the program progressed, the TA evolved to meet specific needs of grantees, which expanded in Year 2 to include organizational readiness assessments, the development of MIPA webinars and campaign development.**

By Year 3, the Caucus had refined its approach, incorporating lessons learned and providing ongoing support through training sessions, coaching, and facilitating grantee convenings. The focus shifted toward

leadership development and grassroots organizing in Year 4, with tailored TA plans and extensive input on requests for proposals and the development of a MIPA Toolkit. In Year 5, the Caucus introduced webinars on leadership styles, power mapping, and decolonizing measurement, while continuing to provide peer-to-peer coaching and support. Year 6 saw targeted TA for specific organizational needs, such as supporting syringe service programs and integrating MIPA within governance structures. Finally, in Year 7, the Caucus introduced a formal evaluation component, conducted community conversations, and provided extensive coaching and mentoring, further solidifying POP's impact.

Program Impact

POP achieved significant outcomes across its seven years, with each year building on the successes of the previous one. **In Year 1, grantees** like AIDS Partnership Michigan, Legacy Community Health Services, and Lifelong **reached hundreds of PLWH, amplifying marginalized voices and fostering community engagement. Year 2 saw grantees** such as Brothers United and the Chicago Women's AIDS Project **make strides in advocacy, training, and community mobilization, while organizations like Down East AIDS Network transformed into advocacy groups that continue to drive change.**

Year 3 marked a period of ample progress, with grantees effectively raising public awareness, expanding leadership, and addressing issues like HIV stigma and criminalization. The Prevention Access Campaign's *U=U* initiative gained global traction, and organizations like Positive Women's Network-SC and Life Foundation made remarkable contributions to policy advocacy. **In Year 4, grantees** like AIDS Alabama and the Idaho Coalition for HIV Health and Safety **continued to excel in advocacy and legislative efforts, while the International Community of Women Living with HIV - North America empowered women through feminist movement building workshops.**

By Year 5, grantees had made significant advancements in policy advocacy and organizational development, with the Catharsis Project and the Idaho Coalition for HIV Health and Safety achieving key milestones. **Year 6 focused on addressing the needs of marginalized communities,** with organizations like Arianna's Center and Mariposas Sin Fronteras **empowering trans individuals of color and PLWH to become advocates and leaders. Finally, in Year 7, POP grantees continued to make strides in leadership development, community engagement, and policy advocacy, with a diverse participant base reflecting the program's broad impact across multiple identities.**

Overall, POP's TA activities and program outcomes depicted the initiative's effectiveness in building resilient communities, fostering leadership, and driving meaningful change.

*POP Impressions

- *AU's partnership with the HIV Caucus ensured PLWH played a central role in the program's national HIV/AIDS strategy and policy goals.*
- *The HIV Caucus, a leading PLWH-driven group, anchored POP's commitment to MIPA across all seven years.*
- *Year 1 TA activities laid a strong foundation for grantees with consultations, webinars, and leadership training.*
- *Year 2 saw the expansion of TA with organizational readiness assessments and campaign development webinars.*
- *By Year 3, TA support evolved with a focus on leadership development and grassroots organizing.*
- *Year 4 introduced tailored TA plans and extensive input in the development of a MIPA Toolkit.*
- *Year 5 focused on leadership styles, power mapping, and decolonizing measurement through new webinars.*
- *Year 6 targeted specific needs like supporting syringe service programs and integrating MIPA in governance.*
- *In Year 7, the Caucus enhanced evaluation, community conversations, and mentoring to solidify POP's impact.*
- *POP grantees made substantial progress in advocacy, leadership, and policy change throughout the program.*
- *POP consistently empowered marginalized communities by amplifying their voices and advancing systems-level change.*

POP Success and Insights

Advocacy and Policy Change

The POP initiative had remarkable impact across its seven-year span, significantly advancing advocacy, community engagement, and leadership development among PLWH. The program's impact was evident in its ability to mobilize thousands of individuals, foster strong community networks, and drive policy change at both local and national levels. Noteworthy achievements included the widespread adoption of the U=U campaign, which not only reached hundreds of thousands on social media but also influenced public health narratives worldwide, reducing stigma and promoting treatment adherence.

Community Engagement and Leadership Development

The program's impact was also marked by the empowerment of marginalized communities, such as Black gay men and transgender individuals, who became central figures in advocacy and policy change efforts. Initiatives like THRIVE SS and the Translatin@ Coalition **exemplified POP's commitment to intersectional leadership development, enabling community members to articulate their needs, influence public policy, and challenge systemic barriers.**

Implementation of Theory of Change

The successful implementation of the Theory of Change framework across multiple grantees further enhanced project evaluation and outcomes, providing a structured approach to measuring impact and refining strategies for future advocacy work. This framework allowed grantees to align their activities with broader organizational goals, secure additional funding, and sustain their initiatives beyond the POP funding period.

Commitment to MIPA

POP's commitment to MIPA was further solidified through strategic partnerships and the involvement of PLWH in leadership roles, ensuring that their voices remained central to the program's mission. This was particularly evident in the development of leadership academies, mentorship programs, and the integration of PLWH in grant review and TA processes, which not only empowered individuals but also enriched the program with lived experience and grassroots insights.

Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

These successes highlighted POP initiative's effectiveness in building resilient communities and fostering sustained advocacy efforts that have left a lasting impact. **POP's legacy lies in its ability to create enduring networks of empowered leaders, catalyze systemic change, and inspire future generations to continue the fight against HIV-related stigma and discrimination. POP's innovative approaches, commitment to inclusivity, and focus on sustainable impact have set a new standard for community-driven HIV advocacy and leadership development.**

*POP Big Wins

- *The U=U campaign reached 200,000 people on social media, gaining support from 300 organizations across 34 countries.*
- *Life Foundation gathered 30 PLWH in Honolulu, enhancing local advocacy through direct feedback to the Hawaii Department of Health.*
- *THRIVE SS engaged over 650 Black gay men, creating the Political and Social Action Network (PSAN) for ongoing advocacy.*
- *The Women's Collective mobilized 60 women living with HIV, partnering with Planned Parenthood and forming a speakers' bureau.*
- *AU launched the HLPOP initiative, a multi-year collaborative grantmaking effort to develop leadership and capacity among Latinx individuals living with HIV/AIDS.*
- *The HLPOP Pilot Grantee Convening fostered connections and shared successes, extending the impact of the pilot project.*
- *Grantees in Year 7 effectively used the Theory of Change (ToC) framework to enhance project impact and secure future funding.*
- *A Family Affair empowered its cisgender Black women over 50 with leadership training, improving advocacy skills and community partnerships.*
- *HMM-INDIANA trained 11 PLWH, expanding into new districts and refining project outcomes through evaluation tools.*

- *The Sero Project trained advocates to end HIV criminalization, refining goals for greater impact using the ToC framework.*
- *Waves Ahead Puerto Rico's VIVE academy equipped advocates with skills in public policy, using evaluation tools to fine-tune goals.*
- *AU's Year 7 community organizing efforts led to notable PLWH engagement, including a MIPA luncheon and leadership development in rural areas.*
- *Increased engagement with transgender communities resulted in diversified leadership and impactful advocacy, both locally and nationally.*
- *Partnerships with the Caucus strengthened mentorship and community empowerment, keeping PLWH voices central to the program's impact.*

POP Hurdles and Insights

Overall Challenges

Throughout the POP initiative, various challenges emerged that significantly impacted the effectiveness of TA activities and the overall program outcomes. **First, Year 3 grantees faced considerable obstacles in maintaining the engagement of PLWH in rural and marginalized communities, primarily due to limited public transportation and inadequate bandwidth for virtual participation.** These barriers often necessitated additional budget considerations for travel and creative approaches like video conferencing, which were not always successful. **High staff turnover and difficulties in securing community buy-in further complicated efforts,** as seen with the Louisiana Public Health Institute and Sista Space. **Cultural stigma, particularly within Native American communities, presented significant challenges for the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center, highlighting the need for tailored strategies and additional support to engage these communities effectively.**

In Year 4, similar challenges persisted, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure limitations, such as insufficient bandwidth, continued to hinder consistent engagement. The short 8-month project timeline also posed a tremendous challenge, making it difficult for grantees to ensure the sustainability of project positions and bring on full-time support. These challenges stressed the need for more robust support systems, longer project timelines, and flexible strategies to accommodate the unique needs of rural and marginalized communities.

Year 5 introduced new challenges related to organizational management and advocacy efforts. The Catharsis Project faced major issues with their fiscal sponsor, which led to serious considerations of halting activities altogether. However, with coaching and a transition to a new fiscal sponsor, they were able to continue their work. **The Idaho Coalition encountered challenges in their decriminalization advocacy efforts due to the lack of substantial representation of PLWH, leading to a shift in focus toward a longer-term power-building strategy.**

Despite these efforts, internal conflicts and leadership issues ultimately led to the early termination of the grant, highlighting the critical need for effective leadership and inclusive representation in advocacy projects.

Year 6 was particularly challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused delays in project implementation and required AU and its grantees to adapt quickly to virtual operations. The transition to virtual platforms was difficult for many grantees, particularly those working with marginalized communities who faced the digital divide and other barriers to participation. Staffing shortages, the need for flexibility in project timelines, and the challenge of finding suitable TA providers further complicated efforts. Despite these challenges, AU and its grantees demonstrated resilience and adaptability, but the experience underscored the importance of sustained support and strategic adjustments in navigating unforeseen obstacles.

In Year 7, challenges related to sustainability, leadership development, and the alignment of program goals with AU's strategic vision became more pronounced. Smaller organizations struggled with governance and the implementation of MIPA structures, often due to overcommitted staff and unclear deliverables. Recruiting staff or leaders living with HIV to advance sex worker organizing projects also proved difficult, raising concerns about tokenism and gatekeeping. The need for a new strategic vision and the departure of senior program managers further complicated efforts, requiring new staff to build relationships and manage the program's closing portion effectively. These challenges emphasized the necessity of clear leadership, sustainable funding models, and proactive planning to ensure the success and longevity of community projects.

COVID-Related Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic posed extensive challenges across multiple years, significantly affecting community engagement and project timelines. In Year 6, the pandemic delayed the launch of the POP cohort and the HLPOP work, with widespread impacts on staffing and community needs. Grantees like Arianna's Center and Intercambios-PR faced **difficulties in meeting participation goals and completing key objectives due to the pandemic**, while others, like The Wall/Las Memorias, **struggled with the transition to online sessions.** The resilience and adaptability of AU and its grantees were tested as they worked to maintain community engagement and ensure the continuity of critical services in a rapidly changing environment.

In Year 7, the pandemic continued to impact the program, particularly in terms of community engagement and connection. The shift to virtual platforms limited opportunities for community-led group learning and collaboration, reducing the program's impact and the sense of connectedness it typically fosters. Zoom fatigue and prolonged isolation further hindered engagement, making it challenging to build and maintain meaningful connections within the community. These challenges illustrated the ongoing struggle to maintain community cohesion and effective communication in a pandemic-impacted environment, emphasizing the need for adaptive strategies to keep communities engaged and connected.

*POP Snags

- *Rural engagement struggled with limited transportation and bandwidth.*
- *High staff turnover caused delays and project disruptions.*
- *Stigma and cultural barriers hindered community buy-in.*
- *Short 8-month timelines limited project sustainability.*
- *COVID-19 delayed timelines and challenged virtual engagement.*
- *Organizational issues threatened the success of advocacy efforts.*
- *Digital divide and Zoom fatigue reduced community participation.*

POP Sustainability, Legacy and Insights

Grantees' Strategic Approaches and Funding Diversification

Over its seven-year span, the POP initiative laid a strong foundation for sustainability by empowering grantees to adopt strategic approaches that would ensure the longevity and impact of their projects.

Building on TA and Business Development: The Catharsis Project/C.R.E.W **focused on leveraging the TA received in business plan development, reviewing project scopes, and exploring new funding avenues** to ensure their continued growth and impact.

Expanding Advocacy through Innovative Mediums: The Counter Narrative Project **utilized its invitation to join a nonprofit cohort using documentary films for advocacy, securing grant funding from Working Films.** This allowed them to screen documentaries like "Tongues Untied" to address HIV-related stigma and criminalization, expanding their reach and impact.

Pursuit of Local, Regional, and National Grants: PWN-SC actively pursued local and regional grants to sustain their ongoing projects, particularly in HIV decriminalization, while also receiving support from PWN-National for additional funding opportunities.

Diversification of Funding Sources: The Transgender Law Center/Positively Trans diversified its funding sources by expanding fundraising efforts for general operating support and attracting new funders, such as the Hewlett Foundation and Heising Simons.

Integration of POP Initiatives into Broader Programming: THRIVE SS focused on increasing and diversifying its funding streams while integrating initiatives from the POP Grant into its broader programming. This was supported by funds from AU's Southern HIV Impact Fund and the Fund for Resilience and Equity and Engagement, ensuring sustained impact.

AU's Role in Enhancing Sustainability

As POP progressed, AU played a crucial role in advancing sustainability by equipping grantees with the tools needed for practical evaluation, program management, and financial resilience.

Providing Tools for Evaluation and Program Management: AU's support and development efforts included providing grantees with the tools necessary for practical evaluation, program management, and financial sustainability. This led to a deeper understanding of goals, objectives, and outcomes, which in turn enhanced the effectiveness and impact of their projects.

Engagement with Rural and Marginalized Communities: In the final year, AU's strategic approach facilitated deep engagement with rural communities across the Carolinas, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Texas, ensuring that the lessons and successes of POP would continue to resonate and inspire beyond the life of the program.

Future Planning and Strategic Vision: Looking forward, discussions about the future of POP emphasized the importance of extending grant periods for capacity building and fostering direct collaborations between grantees and funders to ensure ongoing support.

Extending Grant Periods for Capacity Building: AU recognized the importance of extending grant periods to allow for comprehensive capacity building and ensuring the sustainability of projects.

Direct Collaborations Between Grantees and Funders: The program encouraged opportunities for grantees to work directly with funders on sustainability planning, ensuring long-term support and the continued success of community-driven initiatives.

Integration of POP's Legacy into AU's Strategic Plan

AU's new strategic plan, which integrated the legacy of POP, focused on multi-year investments in leadership and capacity development, particularly within Latinx communities disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS.

Multi-Year Investments in Leadership and Capacity Development: AU's future initiatives will be centered around multi-year investments in leadership and capacity development for Latinx individuals living with HIV/AIDS, with the goal of reducing stigma and enhancing the coordination of services, advocacy, and movement-building.

Centering Lived Experiences in Solution Development: By emphasizing lived experiences in the development of solutions, AU will ensure that those most impacted by HIV/AIDS remain at the forefront of advocacy and movement-building efforts, ensuring that the legacy of POP continues to drive meaningful change.

*POP Forward

- *The Catharsis Project/C.R.E.W. strengthened sustainability by refining business plans and exploring new funding avenues.*
- *The Counter Narrative Project secured funding to screen impactful documentaries, leveraging film for HIV advocacy.*
- *PWN-SC actively pursued local and national grants to sustain their HIV decriminalization efforts.*
- *The Transgender Law Center/Positively Trans diversified funding sources, attracting new supporters like the Hewlett Foundation.*
- *THRIVE SS integrated POP initiatives into broader programs, boosting sustainability through diversified funding streams.*
- *AU engaged rural communities and honored HIV/AIDS legacies through flexible grant programs, inspiring cross-movement ecosystems.*
- *Grantees received tools for evaluation, management, and financial sustainability, enhancing project impact and effectiveness.*
- *Future planning discussions led to recommendations for extending grant periods and improving evaluation systems.*
- *AU's strategic plan focused on multi-year investments in Latinx leadership and capacity building through the HLPOP initiative.*
- *Emphasis on lived experience ensured those most affected by HIV remained central in developing solutions for systemic change.*

POP Best Practices and Insights

The POP initiative demonstrated the power of strategic approaches and adaptive methodologies across its seven-year span, consistently refining and implementing best practices that amplified the impact of its grantees. From innovative community engagement strategies to adaptive leadership development, these best practices not only addressed immediate needs but also laid the groundwork for sustained, long-term change in the fight against HIV.

Integrating Art, Advocacy, and Community Engagement: Grantees like the Catharsis Project/C.R.E.W. exemplified how integrating art and performance with advocacy could build community resilience and address complex issues such as internalized stigma, food insecurity, and structural violence. **This approach, seen throughout the years, was mirrored by other grantees who used creative mediums to engage and empower marginalized communities, fostering both a sense of belonging and a strong political voice.**

Flexibility and Adaptation in Leadership Development: A consistent theme across the POP initiative was the importance of flexibility in planning and execution. The Idaho Coalition on HIV Health and Safety, among others, **showcased the ability to pivot when original goals became unfeasible**, focusing instead on leadership development and succession planning. **This adaptability was crucial in ensuring that grantees could continue**

to meet their objectives despite changing circumstances, emphasizing the need for inclusive, people-first approaches that incorporated racial and gender justice into advocacy efforts.

Coalition Building and Policy Advocacy: Throughout the program, grantees like Positive Women’s Network – SC and the Transgender Law Center demonstrated the effectiveness of coalition building and targeted policy advocacy. **By centering efforts around those most affected by HIV, particularly marginalized communities, these organizations were able to influence policy and raise awareness on critical issues such as HIV decriminalization and healthcare access. Their incredible work in legislative education and data-driven advocacy provided a model for other communities to follow,** highlighting the power of strategic alliances in driving systemic change.

Innovative Approaches to Accessibility and Inclusion: As POP evolved, AU refined its approach to grantmaking to ensure greater accessibility and inclusion. **The implementation of low-barrier application processes, particularly for initiatives like the HLPOP pilot, allowed for broader participation from diverse communities. AU’s commitment to language justice, demonstrated through bilingual support and inclusive interview processes, ensured that all voices were heard and respected.** Additionally, innovative reporting methods, such as Zoom interviews, made it easier for grantees to share their progress, reducing the barriers traditionally associated with grant management.

Supporting Grassroots Organizations and Early Evaluator Involvement: In the later years of the program, AU’s focus on supporting grassroots organizations with limited access to traditional funding avenues became a hallmark of its best practices. **By targeting grants to organizations with annual budgets under \$1 million and introducing Evaluators early in the process, AU ensured that these organizations could design and execute their projects effectively. This approach, combined with clear communication of expectations and proactive measures to support grantees,** reinforced the program’s commitment to transparency and impactful project outcomes.

The cumulative best practices of the POP initiative reflected a deep commitment to empowerment, inclusivity, and strategic advocacy. **By continually refining its approaches and learning from each year’s successes and challenges, POP not only enhanced the effectiveness of its grantees but also created a legacy of sustainable, community-driven change in the fight against HIV.** These practices set a standard for how targeted, adaptive strategies can drive meaningful, long-lasting impact across diverse communities.

*POP Strategies

- *AU used low-barrier, bilingual application processes for the HLPOP Pilot, ensuring inclusive and accessibility in grant-making.*
- *Hispanic/Latinx Think Tank engaged participants in their preferred language, generating community-informed recommendations.*
- *AU conducted mid-project Zoom interviews, simplifying reporting and enhancing grantee engagement.*

- Year 7 AU targeted grassroots organizations with budgets under \$1M, focusing on those committed to HIV advocacy.
- Early involvement of Evaluators improved coordination and clarity in project evaluation from the start.
- AU minimized Zoom fatigue by setting clear expectations for meetings and support throughout the grant cycle.
- Clear communication of expectations and early assistance ensured grantees had the resources to meet their goals.

Conclusion

The POP program leaves a lasting legacy through the creation and implementation of enduring networks, driven by empowered leaders who have sparked systemic change in communities nationwide. Through its commitment to advocacy, leadership development, and the integration of MIPA principles, POP not only addressed immediate challenges but also laid the groundwork for sustained impact. As these leaders continue to drive the fight against HIV-related stigma and discrimination, POP’s influence will inspire future generations to carry forward this vital work, ensuring that the progress made over the past seven years continues to resonate and evolve.

Testimonials: Voices that POP

Year 4 Testimonials

Grantee Organization	Personal Accounts
The Creative Remedy & Education Workshop (C.R.E.W)	<i>"I came back to this group and will continue to come back because for the longest I felt alone with myself, until I came here. At first, I was afraid and then grew comfortable with everyone, which encouraged me to attend and open up and continue to be here. Attending these meetings has been a great influence on me physically, mentally, emotionally, and has allowed me to better myself." JR. (JR attended the POP Year Four convening four months after receiving his HIV diagnosis and two months after beginning work on the project.)</i>
THRIVE SS	<i>From DD with THRIVE SS: "AIDS United continues to allow community-based organization to create new solutions for communities impacted by HIV. Efforts like POP and the Southern HIV Impact Fund has created a new space for Black same-gender loving men living with HIV to not only talk about HIV but create sustainable networks and change."</i>

Year 5 Testimonials

Grantee Organization	Personal Accounts
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Positive Women's Network-SC	<i>From MR of PWN SC: "While presenting an eight-hour training at Palmetto Community Care in Charleston, S.C., we engaged a HIV+ support group with several members who didn't want to have their photos taken (which we support and completely understand). After a few hours of those of us facilitating the training giving these participants some pertinent information about the HIV Criminalization Laws in our state as well as sharing some of our personal experiences living with HIV, three black women had a change of heart and mind and decided they did want us to take their photos. While this may not seem like a (large success, it was great to see and experience their transformation, as evidenced by this seemingly small shift. These women also want to start another PWN chapter in the Charleston area and a couple of them attended the first SC Women's Summit on October 15, 2019 at Brookland Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C."</i>
Transgender Law Center	<i>From the Transgender Law Center regarding the Positively Trans "We were particularly struck by the work in Mississippi. When we held the two-day on-site meeting, there were a lot of new people in the room, and participants said that bringing people together made a real difference because there was such a deep need for community. People felt engaged and felt that their stories were taken seriously. Individuals kept saying to us, 'This is amazing. We want to do more. We want to learn more.' There is enormous potential to build leadership and make change."</i>

Year 6 Testimonials

Grantee Org	Personal Accounts
Arianna's Center	<i>"For Arianna's Center Puerto Rico, this project has given us the opportunity to more directly incorporate the trans community over 50+ living with HIV and the importance of the inclusion of this population. The intention is to continue to provide support and leadership opportunities to program participants who received technology. Participants expressed the lack of leadership opportunities in the community and the lack of incentives for the involvement of community leaders. There is a need to advocate for this population that has been declared as one of the focus populations for the Ending the HIV Epidemic."</i>
Mariposas Sin Fronteras	<i>"There are many things we are proud of having accomplished during this series. We were able to create more community connections with more LGBTQ Latinx folk and also community resources such as the community clinic El Rio, the Mexican Consulate, and The Department of Health for Southern Arizona. Most participants are now aware of low-cost programs in regard to STI/HIV testing, hormone therapy, mental health services, and legal services, available to them. All the community resources mentioned want to continue collaborating with us to assure that they are aiding the LGBTQ Latinx community. We are excited to continue creating safe spaces for LGBTQ Latinx folk living with HIV in the medical sphere specifically here in Tucson, Arizona. Thanks to these workshops we now have this opportunity. During one of our last workshops, 'A History of AIDS Activism: In Support of Personal Strength', we recognized the importance of creating spaces where the knowledge and stories of trans women can be shared."</i>

The Wall / Las Memorias	<p><i>“This grant has increased the capacity of our POZ Group participants through a four-part workshop series called ‘Voices that Lead’, focusing on leadership, advocacy, the Los Angeles County Commission on HIV, and social media for advocacy. Through the momentum created by this opportunity, TWLM will continue to build leaders within our community and increase HIV awareness and visibility on a local level. Not only did POZ Group members benefit from the workshops, but the excitement and visibility of the series attracted new community members to join the group. We are most eager that the workshop series was able to ease the concerns and doubts of our participants on many levels. Members were able to hear first-hand the importance of becoming active in these influential spaces. The presentation even inspired TWLM Community Organizer and POZ Group facilitator, JM, to get involved and apply to be part of the commission. JM was interviewed and accepted into the commission as an affiliated community member because he accesses HIV services in the Los Angeles area and being affiliated with TWLM which also provides services to consumers.”</i></p>
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Year 7 Testimonials

Grantee Org	Personal Accounts
Engaging Arkansas Communities	<p>We asked our cohort members to share a personal story highlighting the success and positive impact of the AIDSWatch and HINAC training on them. Here are a few of their answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Meeting the cohort for the first time in person, knowing some of them for years online, and knowing the struggle and stigma are still very real, and we must continue the good fight.”</i> • <i>“I gained strength in hearing other cohort members' stories and being more open to telling mine.”</i> • <i>” The response from people who heard me speak has been overwhelming and instilled so much confidence in me.”</i> • <i>“It's made me want to be a better advocate.”</i> • <i>“I was nervous to meet with the legislators and didn't think I'd do this well. I was so nervous I wrote down my thoughts beforehand. Our group was mixed; this session had more long-term survivors sharing their stories. In listening to them, I had a moment when their experiences connected with me. I had to speak up to stress to the legislative assistant how incredible it is for us to have our long-term survivors. How this first-hand exchange of experiences borne out of some of the most desperate times of the epidemic by our elders cannot be understated but understood with urgency. I could take a piece cultivated in me by my family and connect that with my advocacy. It breathed life into how I advocate. By sharing my story, I am doing the same for others. It was a sincere gratitude that brought tears to my eyes.”</i> • <i>“I gained more understanding of HIV and aging - facing some of my mortality. If I weren't living with HIV, I probably wouldn't be as aware of issues with aging or what resources are available. There isn't much in the direct HIV services, so I need to reach out to other statewide aging resources. With the exposure I got at AIDS Watch, I feel like I know what questions to start asking.”</i> • <i>“This training academy helped energize me and gave me more confidence to grow as an activist.”</i> • <i>“I have better relationships with other advocates and connected with advocates nationwide. I feel energized and ready to get some work done in Indiana.”</i> • <i>” I received my first standing ovation for my career, which boosted my confidence in public speaking.”</i>

The Sero Project

“My name is [AH], and I have been where you may be now: Living and thriving with HIV. Finding out that I was living with HIV was a huge struggle for me back in 2009. The stigma and fear that surrounded me, like the sun setting into the night, was all that I could think about the week after my diagnosis. Especially as a mixed gay man from the east side of Detroit, my biggest fear was someone finding out my status and compromising my safety. I was educated on how to try to keep myself negative, but I had no clue what to do when it came to actually living with HIV. During the first years of my diagnosis, I lived in a state of depression, battling internalized stigma and feelings of worthlessness. These thoughts of “I did this to myself” would wear me down and create harmful moments that threatened my health and safety.

I knew that I had to wake up and start loving myself enough to make a change--not only for myself but my family, friends, and peers who were living with HIV. I cannot thank the Health care team that took care of me as a young person living with HIV enough to save my life. Through the education I gained about HIV and what it was doing to my body, my family and I were able to grow stronger and support each other. I found my voice that has kept pushing me to learn more, love stronger, and find faith in myself. It was this same power that I saw come from the fantastic people who were living fabulously with HIV. To see people who were living with HIV for so many years thriving and obtaining everything that they wanted in life was incredible and inspirational. Their stories and work meant everything to me and how I wanted my story to turn out. HIV will not stop anything you want in life; find your inner power and love yourself ferociously. That light and joy you will obtain will flow over into someone who may be where you came from. Today, I help people living with HIV find resources to help better their overall health and social needs. Giving back to the same community that has poured into me has become a battle cry. This helps me to grow the light inside and help others to find theirs. This is not the end of the road; fight and never give up!”

Gratitude

We at **AIDS United** extend our deepest gratitude to **The Gilead Foundation** for their unwavering support and partnership. Your generosity empowered us to fund 54 grantee organizations that made profound impacts in their communities. Without your commitment, the transformative work of the POP initiative would not have been possible.

We also want to express our heartfelt thanks to the **US People Living with HIV Caucus**. Your expertise and leadership were invaluable in ensuring that the voices of PLWH were central to every aspect of this initiative. Your dedication to advocacy and the integration of MIPA principles enriched the program and strengthened our collective mission.

Our deepest appreciation goes to the **Evaluators** who were instrumental in guiding the POP program, ensuring that our strategies were effective, and that our impact was meaningful. Your insights and careful assessments were crucial in shaping the success of this program.

To the **AU staff**, thank you for your tireless efforts, dedication, and passion. Your hard work behind the scenes was the backbone of this initiative, ensuring that every grantee was supported, every challenge was met with strength, and every success was celebrated.

Finally, to all the **grantees**, we offer our heartfelt congratulations. Your service, innovation, and unwavering commitment to your communities have been truly inspiring. You have not only achieved remarkable successes but have also laid the groundwork for lasting change. **POP's legacy is one of enduring networks, systemic change, and the inspiration for future generations to continue the fight against HIV-related stigma and discrimination.** We are incredibly proud of the work you have done and the impact you have made.

Together, we have made a difference, and together, we will continue to build a brighter future. **Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this journey.**

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*POP Stars

Year	Grantee Org	City	State	
Y1 (2014)	AIDS Partnership Michigan	Detroit	MI	
	Legacy Community Health Services	Houston	TX	
	Lifelong	Seattle	WA	
Y2 (2015-2016)	Brothers United	Indianapolis	IN	
	Chicago Women's AIDS Project (CWAP)	Chicago	IL	
	Down East AIDS Network	Ellsworth	ME	
	Equality Foundation of Georgia	Atlanta	GA	
	Housing Works	Brooklyn	NY	
	Louisiana Public Health Institute	New Orleans	LA	
	Mazoni Center	Philadelphia	PA	
	Positive Women's Network Philly	Philadelphia	PA	
	Unified (formerly AIDS Partnership Michigan)	Detroit	MI	
Y3 (2016-2017)	AIDS Alabama	Birmingham	AL	
	Harlem United Community AIDS Center, Inc.	New York	NY	
	International Community of Women Living with HIV - North America	Summit	NJ	
	Life Foundation	Honolulu	HI	
	Louisiana Public Health Institute	New Orleans	LA	
	National Native American AIDS Prevention Center	Denver	CO	
	New Mexico Community AIDS Partnership	Santa Fe	NM	
	Palmetto AIDS Life Support Services	Columbia	SC	
	Positive Women's Network-SC	(Statewide)	SC	
	Prevention Access Campaign	Brooklyn	NY	
	Special Service for Groups	Los Angeles	CA	
	SunServe	Wilton Manors	FL	
	The Women's Collective	Washington	DC	
	THRIVE SS	Atlanta	GA	
	Thrive Tribe Foundation	Los Angeles	CA	
	UNIFIED-HIV Health and Beyond	Detroit	MI	
	Y4 (2017-2018)	AIDS Alabama	Birmingham	AL
		Harlem United	New York	NY
Idaho Coalition for HIV Health and Safety		Pocatello	ID	
International Community of Women Living with HIV - North America		Summit	NJ	
Life Foundation		Honolulu	HI	
	Positive Women's Network-TX	Dallas/Ft. Worth	TX	

	The Catharsis Project / The Creative Remedy & Education Workshop (C.R.E.W)	Los Angeles	CA
	THRIVE SS	Atlanta	GA
Y5 (2018-2019)	The Catharsis Project	Los Angeles	CA
	The Counter Narrative Project	Atlanta	GA
	Transgender Law Center	(Multiple Cities)	NY, FL, MS
Y6 (2020-2021)	Arianna's Center	San Juan	PR
	Intercambios	(Multiple Cities)	PR
	Mariposas Sin Fronteras	Tucson	AZ
	Translatin@coalition	Los Angeles	CA
	The Wall / Las Memorias	Los Angeles	CA
Y7 (2021-2023)	A Family Affair Living Our Best Life	Orangeburg	SC
	Community Health Prevention, Intervention, Education, and Research	Greenville	MS
	Engaging Arkansas Communities	Little Rock	AR
	HIV Modernization Movement Indiana	Indianapolis	IN
	The Best Practices Policy Project	Morristown	NJ
	The Black Sex Worker Collective	New York	NY
	The Normal Anomaly Initiative	Houston	TX
	The Outlaw Project	Phoenix	AZ
	The Sero Project	Milford	PA
	Waves Ahead Puerto Rico	San Juan	PR

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