



A funding partnership of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County, The City of Cleveland, The Cleveland Foundation, Cuyahoga County, The George Gund Foundation, and Mt. Sinai Health Foundation

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)
RESPONSIVE GRANTS**

The AIDS Funding Collaborative
1300 E. 9th Street, Suite 1703
Cleveland, OH 44114

Date of Issuance: May 28, 2026

Virtual Technical Assistance Meetings: June 3 & 4, 2026
Letters of Intent Due: June 29, 2026
Invited Proposals Due: August 28, 2026
Funding to Begin: October 1, 2026

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

AIDS FUNDING COLLABORATIVE OVERVIEW 2

VISION AND VALUES 2

FUNDING PARTNERS AND MEMBERS..... 2

AFC STRATEGIC GOALS..... 2

ENDING THE HIV EPIDEMIC IN GREATER CLEVELAND..... 3

FUNDING PRIORITY AREAS..... 3

FUNDING MECHANISMS 4

WHO MAY APPLY 5

GENERAL GUIDANCE..... 5

APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS..... 7

TIMELINE 7

HOW TO APPLY 7

 Letter of Intent 7

 Proposal Guidelines..... 8

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION..... 10

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MEETINGS 11

REQUEST FOR FUNDING APPLICATIONS

AIDS FUNDING COLLABORATIVE OVERVIEW

The mission of the AIDS Funding Collaborative (AFC) is to strengthen the community's response to HIV/AIDS as a public/private partnership providing coordination, leadership, advocacy and funding in Cuyahoga County.

The AFC was established in 1994 in response to a recommendation by the local Citizens' Committee on HIV/AIDS to develop a "method of allocating and distributing community-based funding from local government, health departments, and the private sector." Since that time, the AFC has leveraged and invested over \$13 million to support HIV/AIDS-related services, capacity building activities and prevention efforts in Greater Cleveland.

VISION AND VALUES

Our vision is that the HIV epidemic is ended, and Cuyahoga County is a place of health and opportunity for people living with or at greatest risk of HIV/AIDS. We believe in community involvement and leadership, with programs designed and implemented by individuals who are directly impacted by HIV/AIDS and those who serve them. We are also committed to racial equity – the HIV epidemic in Greater Cleveland disproportionately impacts African Americans, especially people who are younger, economically vulnerable, and less connected to sexual health and behavioral health services. We center people living with HIV/AIDS.

FUNDING PARTNERS AND MEMBERS

The AFC's governing body is comprised of representatives appointed by the AFC's funding partners, along with community-at-large members, and representatives of designated community organizations that do not provide funding but have expertise regarding HIV/AIDS and/or funding of HIV/AIDS programs and services. All representatives have an equal vote in the AFC's decision-making. Current funding partners are: The Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County, The City of Cleveland, The Cleveland Foundation, Cuyahoga County, The George Gund Foundation, and Mt. Sinai Health Foundation. The AIDS Clinical Trials Unit/Center for AIDS Research Clinical Core at Case Western Reserve University and the Ryan White Part A Program at the Cuyahoga County Board of Health participate in the AFC as designated organizations. The AFC is located within the offices of the Center for Community Solutions, which provides fiscal, administrative and program support. The AFC convenes multiple funders in collective grant making.

AFC STRATEGIC GOALS

In serving Cuyahoga County, the AFC has refined its strategy to focus on four goals for our community: 1) strengthening the diverse HIV ecosystem; 2) increasing access to prevention and linkage to care; 3) minimizing political and other barriers to ending HIV; and 4) ensuring the AFC is supported.

The AFC continually assesses funding gaps in the HIV/AIDS community to best use its resources to implement its strategic goals. AFC grantmaking includes: 1) **discretionary grants**, not to exceed \$5,000, for short-term or one-time HIV/AIDS-related needs in the community that are not supported by other community HIV funds; 2) **catalyst grants** of \$5,000 - \$20,000 for community organizing, pilot projects, and selected trainings and events; 3) **targeted grants**, which enable the AFC to respond in a timely manner to emerging needs by inviting organizations to submit a proposal to address specific populations or areas of unmet need as they are identified by the AFC or other community organizations; and 4) **responsive grants** on an annual funding cycle, utilizing this [Letter of Intent \(LOI\)](#) and Request for Applications (RFA) process.

ENDING THE HIV EPIDEMIC IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY

In February 2019, the federal government announced its Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) initiative. EHE's goal is to end the HIV epidemic in the United States within 10 years, and specifically to reduce the number of annual new HIV transmissions by at least 90 percent by 2030. EHE was launched with increased federal resources for 57 locations with the highest rates of new HIV infections. Cuyahoga County is on this designated federal list.

To locally achieve the national Ending the HIV Epidemic goals, Cuyahoga County will need to reduce new HIV transmissions to fewer than 20 per year by 2030. Learn more about Cuyahoga County's Ending the HIV Epidemic Plan: <https://www.ccbh.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Cuyahoga-EHE-Plan.pdf>

FUNDING PRIORITY AREAS

- 1. HIV care and support services aligned with Ryan White service categories and linkage to care**
- 2. HIV prevention services, especially harm reduction and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)**
- 3. Community-led and neighborhood-based HIV programming focused on zip codes and networks in greatest need**

Proposed projects may align with more than one priority area. The examples below are not meant to be an exhaustive list but are intended to provide additional clarity about the focus and intention of each priority area.

1. HIV Care and Support Services

HIV care and support services are designed for those who are living with HIV/AIDS. These may include early intervention services, outreach, health education/ risk reduction, case management, psychosocial support, plus linkage to care. Agencies are encouraged to align services with Ryan White categories as defined here: https://hab.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hab/program-grants-management/ServiceCategoryPCN_16-02Final.pdf

2. HIV Prevention

Harm reduction strategies reduce negative consequences for people who use drugs or engage in other behaviors that can increase risk for poor health or social outcomes. Harm reduction services are provided in a non-judgmental, non-coercive manner that recognizes the complex nature of behavior. HIV/AIDS-related harm reduction interventions include peer health education; testing and treatment for HIV, hepatitis, and sexually transmitted infections; motivational interviewing; overdose prevention; referrals to drug treatment; syringe exchange; provision of fentanyl test strips; pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP, see below); comprehensive sexual health education; and outreach and preventive health services for commercial sex workers.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a strategy wherein an individual takes anti-HIV medicines prior to exposure to protect against HIV infection. An increasing number of people are aware of PrEP as a prevention option, but community outreach and navigation are needed to educate and encourage individuals to access PrEP. Examples of programs are: directly providing PrEP services; PrEP navigation; training health professionals to provide these services; and/or reducing structural barriers.

3. Community-led and Neighborhood-based Programming

Ending the HIV epidemic requires working with people in greatest need. People face disproportionately high rates of HIV not only because of their sexual and drug-use practices, but also because their neighborhoods or networks are not sufficiently reached with HIV testing, treatment and prevention services. Community programming may include local health initiatives and coalitions, community organizing and neighborhood-based projects for priority populations.

FUNDING MECHANISMS

- 1. Programmatic Support**
- 2. Community Capacity Building**
- 3. General Operating Support**

1. Programmatic Support

This funding mechanism supports HIV-focused services, interventions or programming, such as those mentioned above, by an organization whose primary mission may or may not be specific to HIV/AIDS. Proposed activities may include but are not limited to: HIV outreach for linkage to and access to care; community engagement and community organizing; implementation of emerging practices; and evidence-informed and/or evidenced-based HIV prevention interventions.

2. Community Capacity Building

This funding mechanism will enhance the availability and coordination of services across organizations. Projects funded in this area are aimed at community and organization-level objectives that have the potential to decrease stigma, change policy and create lasting positive change in our community. In this funding area, the AFC is interested in projects focused on: building, expanding and/or improving bridges between HIV services and related health and human service systems with the goal of better meeting the needs of

people at highest risk for HIV exposure and strengthening organizations delivering HIV services. Examples of projects the AFC may consider in this area include: increasing systems capacity; exploring the feasibility of coordinating services/ establishing formal systems linkages between organizations serving priority populations; physical plant improvements that directly enhance the capacity to deliver HIV/AIDS-specific services; and community infrastructure development.

3. General Operating Support

General operating support ensures stable infrastructure for an organization. Grants made under this priority will support an organization's mission, rather than a specific program. Organizations with a primary mission specific to HIV/AIDS and a demonstrated commitment to the AFC's funding priorities are eligible to apply for operating support. General operating support grants are capped at \$50,000.

WHO MAY APPLY

All applicants must:

- Be nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations or public agencies;
- Serve or engage in work that impacts a population affected by HIV/AIDS. Applicants need not provide HIV-specific services, but the proposed project must address a funding priority described in this RFA. The exception is for organizations seeking general operating support, which are required to have a primary mission specific to HIV/AIDS and a demonstrated commitment to the AFC's funding priorities;
- Serve Cuyahoga County residents, as required by the regional funding parameters of the AFC's current funding partners. The exception is applications focused on state-level policy change, intended to impact Cuyahoga residents as well as a broader population.

Organizations may submit only one application for a single-organization responsive grant. If an organization submits a proposal in collaboration with other applicant(s), they may also apply for support of another project on their own. Organizations responding to this RFA are also eligible to apply for discretionary, catalyst and targeted AFC grants. Please visit www.aidsfundingcollaborative.org for more information.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

- 1) Proposed projects may fit into more than one priority area but should only utilize one funding mechanism. Indicate these in your application.
- 2) Geocoding of local HIV epidemiologic data shows that while no neighborhood is immune to HIV, some are harder hit. **Priority will be given to those projects and organizations demonstrating service to individuals living in the most affected neighborhoods.** According to a [five-year data snapshot](#) (2019–2023) released by the Ohio Department of Health, neighborhoods on both the east and west sides of Cleveland are carrying the highest burden of new infections, specifically in the following zip codes: **44102; 44105; 44106; 44107; 44109; 44110; 44111; 44120; 44121; and 44128.**

- 3) Based on epidemiology and knowledge of gaps in local programming, proposals must focus on one or more of the priority populations bulleted below.
 - **Neighborhoods/ zip codes identified by epidemiologic data; see 2) above**
 - **Gay, Bisexual, and other men who have sex with men**
 - **African Americans**
 - **High-risk youth (13–24 years old), specifically LGBTQ+, homeless, and/or those involved in the juvenile justice system**
 - **Incarcerated or previously incarcerated populations**
 - **Transgender people, and those who are non-binary**
 - **People involved with transactional sex**
 - **People who inject drugs**
- 4) The AFC believes in community involvement and wants to promote leadership of people living with HIV. As such, special consideration will be given to programs and organizations that meaningfully involve people living with HIV/AIDS in the conceptualization, delivery, and/or evaluation of proposed programs.
- 5) The AFC values effective use of resources in the nonprofit sector and encourages nonprofit organizations to work together to reduce redundancy by sharing services or collaborating on programs. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are required upon submission of proposals for those organizations partnering to serve affected communities. Organizations that submit a joint application outlining the collaborative use of their common resources to achieve efficiency, in addition to the other review criteria, will be given special consideration.
- 6) The examples of types of projects that might match each priority area are not meant to be an exhaustive list, but are included to provide additional clarity about the focus and intention of the priority area. Applicants are encouraged to propose projects that align with the priority areas and meet organizational and/or community needs.
- 7) AFC responsive grants awarded over the last few years have ranged from \$20,000 to \$50,000. Organizations should carefully consider a realistic budget for the project they propose and apply for the amount of funding that they assess is necessary for achieving a successful outcome. \$50,000 is the maximum request for general operating support proposals. The AFC encourages conversations about program budgets during letter of intent (LOI) and proposal preparation. Be sure to include a detailed budget narrative.
- 8) The priorities for this RFA *do not* include funding for:
 - Endowment;
 - Capital-only requests not otherwise responsive to the funding priorities;
 - Fundraising events.

APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

The AFC's Responsive Grants Committee has primary responsibility for review and evaluation of LOIs and proposals for our annual responsive grantmaking.

- 1) All organizations wishing to apply for grant funds must first submit a Letter of Intent (LOI), which will provide the AFC with basic information about the proposed project. The AFC's grant committee will review all LOI's and will then invite full proposals from a limited number of applicant organizations, based on the quality of the LOIs, alignment with the AFC's funding priorities, and the AFC's available grantmaking resources.
- 2) Organizations will be notified if they are invited to submit a full proposal. An invitation to submit a proposal does not guarantee funding and the AFC will make final funding decisions after a full evaluation of the proposals we receive.
- 3) The AFC will conduct technical assistance meetings with organizations that have been invited to submit proposals as part of our review process in order to provide guidance and answer questions.
- 4) Invited proposals will be reviewed by the Responsive Grants Committee. Funding recommendations will be submitted in writing to the full AFC for discussion and final decision-making at the September 2026 AFC Advisory Committee meeting.

TIMELINE

Grants will be awarded to start October 1, 2026, for a one-year duration.

AFC Activity	Date
Request for applications is released	May 28, 2026
Technical assistance sessions for grantseekers	June 3 and June 4, 2026
Letters of Intent are due	June 29, 2026 (<i>by 11:59pm</i>)
Proposals are invited	July 28, 2026
Site visits with organizations invited to submit a proposal	Weeks of August 3-6 and 17-20, 2026
Invited proposals due	August 28, 2026 (<i>11:59pm</i>)
Awards begin for 2026-27 funding	October 1, 2026

HOW TO APPLY

Letter of Intent

All applicants must submit a letter of intent (LOI) using the required LOI form, available at www.communitysolutions.com/aids-funding-collaborative/grantmaking. The information included in the LOI will determine if the AFC will invite the applicant to submit a full proposal for the proposed project; applicants should give careful consideration to the information presented in the LOI and provide a clear, focused case for support. We reserve the right to exclude from consideration LOIs that do not meet formatting and submission criteria. Please refer to the form for instructions.

If the project is a collaborative project, the LOI should be submitted by the lead organization, functioning as the fiscal sponsor of the project.

Proposal Guidelines

Organizations will be notified if they are invited to submit a full proposal. The AFC will review only those proposals received from organizations that were invited to complete a proposal, and proposals must be for the project for which the invitation was extended.

We reserve the right to exclude from consideration proposals that do not meet formatting and submission criteria. The proposal narrative (section D below) is not to exceed 10 double-spaced pages, using 12-point font on standard 8.5 x 11-inch paper, with one-inch margins. Please number the pages of your proposal. Applications must address all components and requested information outlined below, and the proposal should use the section headings and subheadings specified in “D” below.

A. Proposal Cover Form

<https://www.communitysolutions.com/aids-funding-collaborative/grantmaking>

B. Cover Letter

A cover letter must be signed by the executive director. If the project is a collaborative endeavor, the cover letter must be signed by the executive director of the lead organization or fiscal sponsor; please include a statement that lists all partner organizations and indicates that each organization’s leadership supports the contents of the proposal.

C. Executive Summary (maximum one page, double-spaced)

Provide a short summary of the proposed program or project and the ways it aligns with the AFC strategic goals. For organizations seeking operating support, describe the strategic goals of your organization, here too, noting areas of alignment. The AFC may use the executive summary to describe the project, if funded, on our website and in other materials.

D. Proposal Narrative (maximum 10 pages, double-spaced)

- 1. Organization Background:** Please give a brief history of the organization, its mission, and how it has evolved since it was founded. If it is a collaborative proposal, include a description of each organization and any previous experience working together.
- 2. Problem Statement & Need:** Briefly describe the HIV-specific problem you plan to address and, if applicable, the priority population and the organization’s access to that population. [Consider using this HIV data dashboard.](#) For general operating support requests, please respond from an organizational perspective. How does the organization or proposed project fill an unmet need, how have you determined that need exists, and why is this program a priority for your organization and the local community?
- 3. Priority Area:** Indicate which AFC funding priority(ies) the proposed project addresses and why. For organizations seeking general operating support, please describe the organizational commitment to the [AFC’s strategic priorities.](#)

- 4. Funding Mechanism:** Indicate which AFC funding mechanism is preferred and why it is the best fit. Answer either question A, B, or C:
- A. (For Programmatic Support) Project Description:** Please provide a short summary of the proposed program or project. Describe the evidence base that supports the program design. What will happen because of your program or project? How will you document progress and measure success? Identify key staff/consultants responsible for implementing the activities, including their experience and qualifications.
 - B. (For Community Capacity Building) Collaboration:** Describe the project, including overall goal(s). Where does the organization and the proposed project fall within the ecosystem of HIV/AIDS prevention and care services for the region? With which organizations will your organization collaborate to accomplish its work?
 - C. (For General Operating Support) Implementation Plan:** Describe the strategic goals of your organization and include the overarching capacity goals of the program and/or organization.
- 5. Continuation:** Do you plan to continue the work after the 12-month funding period? Describe how you plan for the work to continue (e.g., future funding/support sources including the AFC, other funding sources, internal resources, new capacity of staff/organization).
- E. Answers to AFC Questions** (use as many pages as needed to answer the questions)
If your proposal invitation included specific questions stemming from the review of your letter of intent (LOI), please list each of those questions and provide answers.
- F. Financial Information**
- Project Budget and Narrative (not required for general operating support proposals): a line-item income and expense budget for the entire project indicating committed and anticipated funding sources and organizational contributions to the project. *Use the AFC's budget form available at www.communitysolutions.com/aids-funding-collaborative/grantmaking.*
 - NOTE: A budget narrative is required that fully describes each budget line item.
 - The AFC has a policy to fund up to an additional 10% of the total project costs to support overhead (indirect) costs for responsive grants, with up to 15% in some cases. *Please contact the director prior to submitting at higher than 10%.* The AFC budget form reflects this policy. For a detailed explanation of what costs the AFC considers project costs and indirect costs, please refer to our "Policy for Funding Overhead Costs" on the "Grantmaking" page of our website.
 - A list of current HIV-specific grants for your organization, including the funder, the amount of each grant, the grant period, and a general description of the activities supported by each of these HIV-specific grants. HIV-specific grants would include any grants for which there are explicit activities related to HIV prevention or services.

- 2026 Organizational Budget

G. Attachments

Please check the box on the proposal cover form to communicate the following are available. They will be requested if an award is approved.

- IRS exemption letter or identification of fiscal agent
- IRS form W9
- List of current board of trustees and their professional affiliations
- Most recent audited financial statement and management letter if provided
- Organization's written non-discrimination policy
- Support letters (required from all partners in collaborative proposals; optional for non-collaborative proposals)

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

Email an electronic copy of your complete application including attachments to jpatterson@communitysolutions.com with the subject line "AFC 2026 Responsive Grant Proposal." Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted. If you do not have the capacity to submit a signed cover letter electronically or do not have electronic copies of the attachments, please contact us well in advance of the deadline to arrange a hard copy submission of those elements of your application.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MEETINGS

The AIDS Funding Collaborative will host two technical assistance meetings for grant seekers via Zoom. Attendance is not required.

AFC 2026 Responsive Grants Technical Assistance Meeting #1

Time: Jun 3, 2026, 11:00 AM Eastern Time

Register for Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/oLdX5w14QhCtSJ8gZmYzBg>

Meeting ID: 835 8501 9553

Passcode: 165045

AFC 2026 Responsive Grants Technical Assistance Meeting #2

Time: Jun 4, 2026 1:00 PM Eastern Time

Register for Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Zj56cowaTxa14GPtuLQ3_Q

Meeting ID: 898 0313 0948

Passcode: 222518

Afterwards, a summary of the technical assistance meetings will be posted on our website under “Grantmaking” at www.aidsfundingcollaborative.org

You are encouraged to reach out to program staff if you have questions, are a first-time applicant, or have not been funded in the past two years, especially if you are not able to attend one of these meetings. Applicants should not contact AFC Advisory Committee members, except in the context of technical assistance in which AFC members are participating.

Program Staff Contact:

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