

2021 Micro Grants: Empowering Community Action

A Nontraditional Funding Opportunity

Addressing the impact of HIV among Black and Latinx gay and bisexual men, other men who have sex with men (GBMSM), transgender individuals, and Black women in Texas

The Opportunity

The University of Texas at Austin Health Innovation & Evaluation Team (UT-Austin), through funding provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), is pleased to announce a competitive funding opportunity. The initiative offers competitive funding (\$500 to \$3,000) to community members to innovatively address one or more factors that contribute to the disproportionate impact of HIV on Black and Latinx GBMSM, transgender individuals, and Black women in Texas (priority populations).

The Problem: Disproportionate Impact

HIV infection disproportionately affects Black and Latinx gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM), transgender individuals, and Black women.

Black individuals comprise 12% of the Texas population and 36.8% of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH). In 2018, GBMSM accounted for 70% of all new HIV diagnoses in Texas. Black GBMSM accounted for 32% of new HIV diagnoses among GBMSM in Texas while Latinx GBMSM accounted for 45.9%. Latinx individuals comprise 38% of the Texas population and 33.6% of PLWH.

While risk behaviors are generally equal across all racial/ethnic groups, Black and Latinx GBMSM experience disproportionate rates of HIV, are less likely to know their status, and once their status is known, are less likely to achieve viral suppression. These differences contribute to a larger proportion of people living with HIV within Black and Latinx GBMSM communities and continue to affect HIV acquisition.

Current data reveal that transgender women have higher rates of HIV infection than individuals in other risk categories, including GBMSM. The disproportionate impact on transgender women is potentially due to social isolation, economic marginalization, and lack of understanding among service providers.

In 2018, Black Women accounted for 50.7% of new HIV diagnoses among Women in Texas.

Existing Efforts to Address the Problem

To address HIV among Black and Latinx GBMSM, transgender individuals, and Black women in Texas, DSHS currently funds a variety of interventions.

Several organizations in Texas are funded to provide *HIV/STD testing and linkage to HIV medical care*. These programs, which are more connected to HIV care clinics than ever before, ensure people who test HIV-positive are linked to medical care as soon as possible.

Condoms continue to play a key role in HIV prevention. *Condom distribution* has been scaled up to go beyond the traditional outreach-based method of passing out condoms to individuals. HIV prevention programs are now more focused on *organizational and community-level changes* to increase condom accessibility, acceptability, and availability.

DSHS continues to support *behavior change interventions*. These interventions are particularly focused on working with People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) to ensure linkage to and full participation in HIV medical care. Additionally, select organizations across Texas have been funded to *support access to PrEP* for priority populations (Black and Latinx GBMSM, transgender individuals, and Black women in Texas)

HIV prevention organizations in Texas are working to engage the larger community to *raise the level of awareness* of the urgency and importance of HIV prevention among Black and Latinx GBMSM, transgender individuals, and Black women.

This funding opportunity is intended to expand upon the above efforts by creating and piloting nontraditional and innovative strategies to approach HIV prevention.

Goals of the Funding Opportunity

The purpose is to fund nontraditional, innovative approaches to addressing HIV among Black and Latinx gay and bisexual men, other GBMSM, transgender individuals, and Black women in Texas. Activities that move beyond “business as usual” and support the goals of the statewide plan; [Achieving Together: A Community Plan to End the HIV Epidemic in Texas](https://achievingtogethertx.org/achieving-together-plan/) will have a greater potential of being funded <https://achievingtogethertx.org/achieving-together-plan/>. These goals are:

1. Reduce HIV Transmission and Acquisition
2. Increase Viral Suppression
3. Eliminate Health Disparities
4. Create a Stigma-Free Climate

Proposed projects should be guided by the *Achieving Together* principles of: Social Justice, Equity, Integration, Empowerment, Advocacy, and Community.

Due to COVID-19 all projects must be conducted in a virtual setting.

While we encourage traditional HIV organizations to apply for nontraditional projects, preference will be given to individual community members and nontraditional organizations (organizations whose focus is not HIV care and prevention, rather addressing social determinants of health that contribute to disproportionate rates of HIV transmission and acquisition within priority populations ((Black and Latinx GBMSM, transgender individuals, and Black women in Texas).

Funds will be awarded for projects that:

- Raise awareness of the factors that contribute to the disproportionate burden of HIV.
- Address social justice issues that contribute to the HIV epidemic.

- Foster unity within and among communities of Black and Latinx gay and bisexual men, other men who have sex with men, transgender individuals, and Black women.
- Mobilize community members to take action to address factors contributing to the HIV epidemic.
- Maximize the impact of the funded project through collaboration with other individuals and/or organizations in the community.
- Are guided by the principles outlined in the statewide plan ([Achieving Together: A Community Plan to End the HIV Epidemic in Texas](#)), and work towards the goals identified in the plan.
- Are not already supported by existing DSHS funds.
- Are conducted in the state of Texas.

Applying for Funds

Funds may be used for a one-time or ongoing project, but preference will be given to projects with a built-in plan for sustainability and ownership by community. Funds may not be used to purchase food or alcohol.

Each application should include the following components:

- Contact Information:
 - Name of project lead
 - Organization (if applicable)
 - Email address
 - Phone number
- Narrative description of the project:
 - Show how the project is clearly tied to the goals of the funding opportunity, as outlined above.
 - Identify what goals are being addressed and what guiding principles are being incorporated from the [Achieving Together: A Community Plan to End HIV in Texas](#) (goals and guiding principles are listed in the preceding section).
 - Identify what community the project is seeking to work with (Black and Latinx GBMSM, transgender individuals, and/or Black women)
 - Include an estimate of the number of community members who will be impacted by your project.
 - Describe how your project is nontraditional and innovative.
- Project vision: What do you imagine this project will ultimately accomplish?
- Project outcomes: What are the intended results of this project as you progress toward the vision?
- Project budget: Detailed description or outline of how funds will be spent.

Funds are *not* available for the following activities (not an exhaustive list):

- Traditional HIV prevention activities, such as outreach, condom distribution, and HIV testing
- Starting a business

- Research projects or community assessments

Please note: Projects will be funded through a deliverable based contract. **This will require funded recipients to complete activities/deliverables “up front” and pay for any expenses associated with these activities before submitting an invoice for reimbursement from UT-Austin for the activities as they are completed.** These activities (deliverables) will be outlined in a contract with UT-Austin.

Previously funded micro grant projects are eligible for a second year of funding if substantial changes/enhancements are made to the original project. A project can only be funded twice.

Commitments

As part of the funding agreement, participants commit to collaborate with the UT-Austin Team to:

1. Finalize the vision, outcomes, budget, and other details of the project
2. Outline and implement an evaluation strategy
3. Participate in monthly Zoom check-ins until completion of the project
4. Participate in two group Zoom meetings with fellow project leaders from across the state throughout the entire funding period
5. Complete and submit deliverable write ups and invoices by deadlines outlined in the project contract
6. Submit all project deliverables, products, and invoices by December 1, 2021.

Disbursement of funds depends on fulfillment of the project deliverables. Failure to fulfill commitments will result in discontinuation of payments.

Important Dates

Opportunity announcement: January 18, 2021

Application deadline: **March 1, 2021**

Anticipated date for notification of selection: **April 2, 2021**

Project completion: November 15, 2021

Final project deliverable and invoice submission: December 1, 2021

Contact

To submit an application and for more information, **contact Chris Allen** of the UT-Austin Health Innovation & Evaluation Team: **callen22@utexas.edu ♦ (512) 710.9287.**