

MEETING 20/06/22

Ref: 19267

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Cornerstone Fund Round 2

Africa Advocacy Foundation

Amount requested: £246,242

{Revised request: {£275,000}}

Amount recommended: £275,000

Adv: Julia Mirkin/Jenny Field

Base: Lewisham

Benefit: London-wide

The Lead Organisation

Africa Advocacy Foundation (AAF) is a community-led organisation that was registered as a charity in 1996. It supports and empowers migrant communities experiencing disadvantage through a range of targeted programmes addressing issues such as: violence against women and girls; support for people with HIV; awareness raising of HIV prevention; development and roll-out of digital health support packages; young people's programmes and the development of co-produced HIV care with Black African patients. AAF has a track record of successful partnership working, seen recently in its role as Comic Relief's intermediary grant distributor, supporting grant-making through the Global Majority Fund.

AAF is a member of The One Voice Network (OVN), an independent collective of 10 Black-led community organisations that work together to improve the health of Black people living with HIV in the UK. This application has been submitted by AAF on behalf of the OVN to support the Unheard Voices initiative, that will be delivered in collaboration with the National AIDS Trust (NAT). Although AAF will be legally responsible for any funding awarded, leadership of Unheard Voices will be steered by a Community Advisory Board. AAF recognises its role in enabling this community-led delivery model and ensuring Unheard Voices builds capacity in OVN members.

The Partnership

The OVN brings lived experience of inequality in healthcare to this partnership, which is experienced by those OVN represents - through stigma within primary care settings, exclusion from research, and limited access to information and treatments.

The National Aids Trust (NAT) describes itself as the UK's HIV rights charity. It aims to stop HIV being a barrier to health, dignity, and equality. It also aims to stop HIV transmission by increasing public awareness about prevention, and by promoting testing and early diagnosis.

NAT is recognised for its achievements in challenging the criminalisation of HIV. For example, its work helped stop the prejudicial use of HIV status data in immigration tracing. This led to HIV services being free, regardless of immigration status and HIV guidance is now available in immigration removal centres because of NAT's campaigning. NAT has had a strong influence on HIV policy, expertise that strongly supports the Unheard Voices partnership, for example, it was a lead partner of the HIV Commission, convened to end new cases of HIV in England by 2030. Through this partnership with OVN, NAT hopes to extend the reach of its community engagement, ensuring its policy work is informed by a diversity of voices.

The Proposal

Unheard Voices will tackle three systemic issues affecting engagement with HIV services by Black people. The first issue is unequal representation of Black people

and their experiences in the planning and delivery of HIV services. To address this, Unheard Voices will recruit and train a panel of six community members from its networks and support them to engage meaningfully with the co-production of HIV programmes, alongside research institutions and other relevant stakeholders. It is hoped that this will generate more representative research, evidence of need and experiential insights, all of which can improve the experiences and increase engagement of black people with HIV services and treatment.

The second systemic issue is how HIV services are commissioned by Local Authority Public Health Commissioners. Unheard Voices will work to make commissioning practices more inclusive, evidence-based, and equitable by submitting Freedom of Information requests to access information about commissioning practices. OVN and NAT will collaborate to recommend how commissioning practices could adapt to meet local needs more effectively by drawing on local HIV data. Recommendations will be shared with Commissioners in each borough along with a request to meet in person. Unheard Voices hopes to open new lines of communication with Directors of Public Health through this workstream.

The third systemic issue addressed by Unheard Voices is the accessibility and value of primary care for Black people seeking HIV treatment and support. Unheard Voices will survey OVN community members about their experiences engaging with primary care providers. Focus groups for specific segments of OVN's community, such as LGBT, youth, older people, and women, will draw out further evidence to share with Primary Care Networks and the Royal College of GPs about the needs of Black communities. The data collected will also be disseminated at meetings and conferences to advocate for greater patient and community engagement and increased HIV knowledge within primary care providers.

To achieve the above, a programme of training will be delivered to ensure that community organisations and individual advocates have the capacity to engage with the three workstreams. The training will involve providing information and statistics to equip advocates to make the case for change. It will include an introduction to the professional culture of the NHS, and it will offer advanced communication and facilitation skills training.

Following discussion at the assessment meeting, the project team was invited to review the evaluation plans presented for Unheard Voices. It was the view of CBT officers that the legacy of Unheard Voices could be enhanced by investing more in the project's evaluation to support greater understanding of what aspects of the project's design are most effective. A revised project budget was submitted, including modest budget increases for research, learning and communications activities. The most significant change, however, is in the budget line for evaluation, which has increased from £4.4K to £15K. To support the management of this expanded evaluation proposal, AAF has also increased its management and admin costs by just under £15K. The total request has increased by £28,758.

Cornerstone Fund Outcomes

This proposal meets all the long-term outcomes outlined in the Cornerstone Outcomes framework, namely, building capacity and capability; drawing on co-production; improved gathering and use of data and intelligence; enabling voice and influence and involving partners in collaborative working practices.

Equity Considerations

All 15 of the organisations in the One Voice Network are Black led, and member organisations have lived experience of HIV at governance and staff level. The One Voice Network organisations are firmly rooted in their communities and have extensive knowledge of the issues and needs of different segments of the Black community, who are living with, or at risk of, HIV.

Drawing on the reach of OVN's network, Unheard Voices will engage people from Black communities in the review of existing healthcare, commissioning, and primary care practices, bringing policy and practice closer to people directly effected by their design and delivery. This aspect of Unheard Voices directly addresses the well-documented health inequalities experienced by racialised communities with HIV.

By building individual capacity-building into the project's design, Unheard Voices is adopting an equitable and enabling approach, ensuring that the voices of historically disadvantaged groups can be heard and can actively shape service redesign.

Unheard Voices will be overseen by a Community Advisory Board, ensuring that underrepresented and disadvantaged people who are most affected by inequality in healthcare are steering the development of this project and ensuring it continues to meet their needs.

Financial Information

AAF's increasing turnover is attributed to a growth in the demand for its services, caused by the impact of the Pandemic. AAF has successfully fundraised, allowing it to meet this demand. Income during 21-22 also includes £288,000 that AAF distributed on behalf of Comic Relief as part of the Global Majority Fund.

AAF's unrestricted free reserves are above its reserves policy target. Trustees are considering increasing the reserves policy target to between four and six months of expenditure to provide a larger financial cushion as the organisation's turnover increases.

Year end as at 31 March	2021	2022	2023
	Signed Accounts	Management Accounts	Budget
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,020,155	1,207,230	1,477,127
Expenditure	(778,636)	(1,117,447)	(1,386,950)
Surplus/(deficit)	241,519	89,783	90,177
Reserves:			
Total restricted	312,017	324,986	355,374
Total unrestricted	609,987	686,801	746,590
Total reserves	922,004	1,011,787	1,101,964
Of which: free unrestricted	273,263	350,077	409,866
Reserves policy target	194,659	279,362	346,738
Free reserves over/(under) target	78,604	70,715	63,129

The Recommendation

£275,000 over two years (£130,733; £144,267) towards the salary costs of staff within the One Voice Network and National Aids Trust involved in delivering the Unheard Voices project; funding also covers project costs; evaluation and project support costs.