Request for Proposals

COVID-19 Emergency Fund

Spring 2020
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I. THE ELTON JOHN AIDS FOUNDATION’S COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUND

Throughout our history, the Elton John AIDS Foundation has prioritised support for the most vulnerable and the most likely to be left behind in the HIV/AIDS response. Today is no exception. The populations vulnerable to HIV/AIDS that are supported by the Foundation are also those who will be amongst the most vulnerable to COVID-19. We cannot abandon our mission to help end the AIDS epidemic, nor ignore the huge threat posed by COVID-19 to that mission.

The COVID-19 Emergency Fund therefore aims to support lifesaving interventions to help mitigate adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on HIV response efforts for key population communities around the world.

[To be completed with general communications messaging about the Fund and key objectives]
II. OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT: COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUND

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT OPPORTUNITY

With this announcement, the Elton John AIDS Foundation’s COVID-19 Emergency Fund is accepting applications for solutions that have strong potential to address specific challenges that have arisen for people already living with or at severe risk of HIV/AIDS and who are now at heightened risk as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such solutions should aim to demonstrably mitigate the threat of COVID-19 on maintaining current levels of access or increasing access to HIV-related prevention, testing, care and treatment adherence services.

All applicants must provide a description of how the proposed solutions lead to impact. Proposed solutions must demonstrate readiness for rapid implementation and be able to show impact within one month of project start. Solutions proposed may include pilots and/or innovations which improve on previous successes; however, the solution design must be informed by related evidence and have a well-founded theory of change.

Further details and application modalities are outlined in this announcement.

NATURE OF SOLUTIONS FUNDED

The Elton John AIDS Foundation’s COVID-19 Emergency Fund is looking to support community-based organisations to implement lifesaving interventions to help mitigate adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on HIV response efforts for key population communities around the world. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to replace lost revenue or take over maintenance costs of organisations. The COVID-19 Emergency Fund is therefore not looking to compensate organisations for fundraising activities that have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, nor to support organisations’ general costs (e.g. everyday staff and office costs).

The Fund is looking for applications from local community-based organisations, which have been awarded an Elton John AIDS Foundation grant since January 2017, for solutions lasting up to six months. The Fund is looking for proposed solutions in the range of $10,000-$50,000.

Examples of approaches funded through COVID-19 Emergency Fund grants include:

Approaches that allow the safe continuation of existing key HIV services for key populations in view of COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges, e.g.,

- Transitioning from face-to-face models of care, for example to home-based or virtual services, that increase the capacity of community-based organisations (including in collaboration with healthcare...
settings) to offer HIV prevention (e.g. PrEP, syringe and needle programmes), testing (e.g. self-testing), and treatment services to key populations;

- Pandemic-related personal protective equipment (e.g. face masks) to keep frontline staff (including community-based activists) and community-members safe in accessing key HIV-related services;

- Decentralisation of HIV prevention, testing, and treatment service provision, e.g. HIV care in community, mobile or other (non-HIV) healthcare settings (e.g. pharmacy, primary care);

- Mechanisms for community feedback to troubleshoot and address problems with accessing key HIV services as a result of pandemic-related challenges.

The provision of new HIV-related services for key populations to respond to COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges, e.g.,

- Proactive provision of new key population-specific health and harm reduction HIV services, including prevention, testing and treatment, in feasible settings to respond to COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges;

- Provision of adherence support interventions, including reminders and community ART provision;

- Short term payments to vital new staff or volunteers to support new HIV-related interventions that respond to COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges;

- Special strategies for particularly hard-to-reach and/or very vulnerable individuals from key population groups in need of vital services amid COVID-19 related challenges.

The above are examples, and we also welcome other potential innovative solutions that take under 6 months to implement and achieve the Fund’s objectives.

**FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES**

The Foundation recognises that the global COVID-19 pandemic is an evolving crisis and that new needs, and new strategies to address those needs may emerge in the coming weeks and months. In addition to the funding opportunities announced here, there will likely be future funding opportunities through the Elton John AIDS Foundation’s COVID-19 Emergency Fund in the coming weeks and months. These may consist of funding available for the same and/or other grant types. The Foundation will advertise opportunities on our website, [www.ejaf.org](http://www.ejaf.org).
III. HOW TO APPLY

TIMELINE

The application process for the first round of COVID-19 grants has one application stage. All applications will be screened for eligibility according to the criteria outlined in Section IV of this Request for Proposals. All eligible applications will then be evaluated according to the criteria outlined in Section V of this Request for Proposals. At the point of the release of this Request for Proposals, we are inviting Application submissions.

An expected timeline is below.

Preliminary timeline (subject to change):
Request for Proposals     April 6, 2020
Deadline to email Applications to covid19@ejaf.org April 23, 2020, by 5:59 PM GMT
Notification to awardees by May 1, 2020
Negotiation and Terms of Agreement by May 8, 2020
Implementation start by May 8, 2020

APPLICATIONS

All Applications must be submitted by email to covid19@ejaf.org by April 23, 2020 at 5:59 PM GMT. Applications submitted via post, facsimile, or other form will not be accepted. The Foundation is not responsible for human error, theft, destruction, or damage to Applications, or other factors beyond its control.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUND GRANTS

Applications for COVID-19 Emergency Fund grants will require the following information:

- **General information about your organisation and your project:** Organisation name; project country(s); details of recent Elton John AIDS Foundation grants received by your organisation; project summary; project cost; project duration; target number and type of beneficiaries; implementing partners and their roles.
- **Answers to high-level questions:**
  - Please provide an overview of the specific COVID-19 related emergency your proposed project is responding to.
  - Please tell us about your proposed project. What are your planned activities? How will the project demonstrate immediate impact and what are your intended results? How do you plan to measure the success of the project?
- How does this project meet the criteria of the COVID-19 Response Fund? How does the proposal align with and advance the goals of the COVID-19 Response Fund (as described in the Request for Proposals)? How does the project differ from existing services in response to COVID-19 for the populations you seek to support?
- Risk and Mitigation: Please outline the main risks to the success of project. Please indicate if the risks are high, medium or low. How will these risks be monitored and/or mitigated?

- **A USD budget using the provided template**

Applicants with more than one project idea may submit multiple Applications. Please note each idea requires a separate Application and applicants may submit **no more than two Applications**. All Applications must be in English. Minor language errors as one would expect from a non-native speaker are acceptable as long as the proposed project and its aims can be clearly understood.
IV. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All Applications will be reviewed for eligibility before they are assessed against the evaluation criteria. The eligibility review is a pass/fail test. Once eligible, Application selection will be based on our selection criteria listed below in Section V.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility criteria for funding through the COVID-19 Emergency Fund are summarised in below, with accompanying explanations.

- **Addressing HIV-related Emergencies resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic**: Eligible applications must be seeking to address HIV-related emergencies that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Current and Recent Grantee Organisations**: In order to get funds distributed as quickly as possible whilst maintaining our protocols for proper diligence, in the first round of funding, the COVID-19 Emergency Fund is only accepting applications from organisations who have been awarded a grant from the Elton John AIDS Foundation since 1st January 2017. This is to ensure that all awarded COVID-19 Emergency Fund grants can be paid out swiftly for a rapid response.

- **Non-Profit Activities**: No organisation will be allowed to financially profit from implementation of project activities. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs.

- **Project Timetable**: The proposed grant should be implemented and all funds disbursed within six months from the date the grant agreement is signed with the Applicant.

- **Completeness and Language**: All Application information and supporting documentation must be submitted in English; any other language will be considered ineligible. Written submissions must be completed in full to be considered eligible for review; incomplete submissions will be considered ineligible.
V. SELECTION CRITERIA

After eligibility review, the Foundation will score each Application holistically, using the below selection criteria. Applicants should reflect on the below questions when considering their solution’s competitiveness and crafting their submission. While selection criteria will be used to objectively assess each Application, the Foundation reserves the right to make final award decisions to ensure an optimal portfolio of awardees and solutions.

SELECTION CRITERIA: COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUND GRANTS

Impact
- **Alignment**: How well does the solution align and advance the goals of the COVID-19 Emergency Fund? Does the proposed solution address COVID-related challenges to HIV services for affected populations, rather than supporting ‘business as usual’ activities?
- **Theory of Change**: Is there a clear idea of what the applicant is looking to change? What is the likelihood that the solution achieves what it intends to achieve, through the means it proposes to do so, in the given time frame? Is the solution feasible to implement in the local context?
- **Elton John AIDS Foundation Strengths**: Do the proposed activities differ substantially from those that other actors, such as the local government and health system, or international donors and NGOs are already undertaking?
- **Evidence-informed Impact**: Is there evidence showing that the desired impact is likely through the suggested intervention?
- **Incremental Value**: Will the proposed project complement rather than duplicate existing activities for the population(s), city/cities and country/countries in question?

Effectiveness
- **Organisational & Financial Capacity**: Does the applicant have the resources to deliver outcomes on time and on budget? Does the grantee have strong financial and management systems?
- **Cost Effectiveness**: Is the project cost-effective in delivering outcomes?
- **Budget**: Is the budget reasonably estimated, with actual costs likely to be close to budgeted costs?

REVIEWERS

A review panel will review all Applications. Some of these reviewers may not be deep domain experts in an applicant’s particular field; as such, applicants should describe their solution in clear language without the use of jargon. All applicants must adhere to the character limits specified for each question in the Application Form.