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COMPASS Initiative® Coordinating Centers
Working Together to Reduce HIV/AIDS-Related
Disparities in the Southern United States

EMORY UNIVERSITY ROLLINS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH • SOUTHERN AIDS COALITION • UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK • WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

SPARK! Grant Application Instructions 2023 – 2024

This document is to be used as a guide. All applications should be completed via online submission on www.gileadcompass.com. We do not accept paper applications.

Southern AIDS Coalition is accepting applications for the 2024 SPARK! Grants. *SPARK!*--**S**outherners **P**romoting **A**wareness **R**esources and **K**nowledge supports organizations addressing HIV-related stigma and increase community-level knowledge through programming and campaigns. Grants will be awarded in two tracks: SPARK Change!

SPARK Action! Funded activities address stigmatizing law and policies through advocacy, education and mobilization in communities.

SPARK! Change! Despite advances within science, research and medicine there still seems to be a disconnect in how information, knowledge and understanding around HIV and AIDS is addressed in our communities. As a result, stigma remains pervasive and is still a barrier to effective HIV prevention, care, and support. Community education emerges as an anchor, offering a pipeline to eliminate misinformation, challenge stereotypes, and instill accurate understanding of HIV transmission and treatment, thereby fostering an atmosphere of empathy and support.

The necessity of intentional community education, mobilization and advocacy becomes more evident, especially in the Southern U.S. Activations such as those previously mentioned provide active engagement of communities which empowers them to confront and overcome HIV stigma. Through open dialogues, targeted awareness campaigns, and grassroots initiatives, mobilization efforts aim to forge a collective force that challenges societal norms and prejudices. This approach leverages the transformative power of communities, encouraging individuals to become advocates within their own social rights and contributing to the creation of a cultural shift that rejects discrimination while supporting those living with HIV.

The alliance between community education, mobilization and advocacy create a dynamic and holistic strategy to combat HIV stigma. By arming communities with accurate information and enabling them to take collective action, these initiatives not only dismantle barriers but also foster inclusive environments where individuals affected by HIV can thrive free from judgment and discrimination. This collaborative approach stands as a beacon of hope in the ongoing battle to create a society that champions these community efforts.

For this cycle, we are prioritizing those projects focused on reaching people in communities that desire to implement projects that center advocacy, community mobilization, education and marketing campaigns that are designed to combat HIV stigma. While this funding opportunity is open to all communities, we will prioritize rural

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communities. We use a combination of the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of "rural" along with the Stigma Services Desert[1] map and data (found here) to define "rural." For the designation of rural, the organizations must be located outside of an Urbanized Area (defined as having a population of 50,000 or more) or in a "service desert" (shown on the map) or both.

SPARK! will provide funding and capacity building support, if necessary, up to but not to exceed $25,000 per grantee to support programs.

Funding will be provided in one of two tracks:

Track One: **SPARK! Action** aims to combat stigmatizing laws and policies through advocacy, education and mobilization in communities. This opportunity offers a platform to prepare communities with the necessary skill set to engage with local government and/or decision-makers as well as create local coalitions designed to raise awareness in communities around laws, policies and practices that perpetuate stigma and could potentially cause harm to people living with and/or impacted by HIV. Organizations are invited to apply.

Track Two: **SPARK! Change** supports community-level education addressing HIV-related stigma. Successful funded projects have ranged from media campaigns to community conversations. The common thread across successful projects has been the commitment to centering the voices of those living with and impacted by HIV in all aspects of project design and implementation. Organizations are invited to apply.

Eligibility:
Currently, 501(c)(3) organizations (or organizations with a fiscal sponsor) operating in any of the following twelve (12) southern states are eligible to apply: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Individuals are not eligible for grant awards.

Award Amount: SPARK! Awards will be up to $25,000. The amount of your request should reflect the scope of your project and related expenses, which may include costs for a consultant(s) to provide capacity building support to the organization.

How and When to Apply: SPARK! Grant applications will be accepted from February 15, 2024 to March 12, 2024. Applicants will receive notification by April 5, 2024.

Funding Parameters for SPARK! Awards:
- Maximum request amount of $25,000.
- Maximum indirect cost rate is 10%.

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- Funds must be expended by April 30, 2025
- New applicants, former grantees, and/or previous applicants to SPARK! grants program are eligible and encouraged to apply if they meet the criteria of the current Request for Proposals.
- This grant will not fund individuals, general operations, endowments, fundraising events or sponsorship of events, appeals for religious purposes (though faith-based organizations are strongly encouraged to apply for projects addressing HIV-related stigma).
- Applicants may allocate up to 20% of their grant to cover costs associated with capacity building (e.g., a strategic planning consultant, training for staff, etc.).

Allowable Expenses: SPARK! Awards can be used to pay for program-related costs, including appropriate staff costs, supplies, technology, incentives, and membership fees for required platforms. However, there are prohibited expenses.

For this grant cycle, funds will support projects under the two tracks outlined below, *SPARK*! grant applicants may request and include a line item in their proposed budgets for capacity building support needed to successfully implement their projects. Capacity building support can include training for program staff, hiring of external experts, including but not limited to hiring a subject matter expert (SME) consultant to assist with particular areas of growth.

You **cannot** use grant funds to pay for or offset the cost of any of the following:

- Medications or purchasing of medications
- Direct medical expenses, including lab expenses
- Existing deficits of organization
- Biomedical research or clinical trials
- Projects that directly influence or advance Gilead's business, including purchase, utilization, prescribing, formulary position, pricing, reimbursement, referral, recommendation or payment for products
- Individuals, individual health care providers, or physical group practices
- Events or programs that have already occurred
- Government lobbying activities
- Indirect costs above 10% of the direct costs

Tips for a Successful SPARK! Application:

Track One: SPARK! Action!

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- Clearly articulate how your project will mobilize community members around a specific issue, policy, or challenge in your community in an effort to combat HIV-related stigma.

  Clearly explain how your project will actively engage and mobilize community members to address a specific issue, policy, or challenge within your community, with a primary goal of combating HIV-related stigma through effective advocacy initiatives.

- Clearly articulate how you will deliver your program, including the planned platform that will be used for communication and how you will ensure that participants can effectively access the program.

  Clearly describe the methodology for delivering your program, including the communication platform. Outline the steps taken to guarantee participants can easily access and actively participate in this advocacy campaign.

- If appropriate, make it clear who will be providing professional services (e.g., mental health services).

  If relevant, identify the entities responsible for delivering professional services within mobilization and advocacy endeavors.
  Highlight the community-centric approach of these services to strengthen the impact for HIV stigma.

- Clearly outline the evidence you have that demonstrates why this particular campaign or program is not only needed, but why it is likely to be successful.

  Thoroughly present the evidence supporting the necessity and potential success of this specific initiative, emphasizing the community-focused strategies.

- Don't worry about your project being "too small". We want to support grassroots efforts that can reach deep into the heart of community need.

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Track Two: SPARK! Change!

- Clearly articulate how your project will address stigma related to HIV.

- Clearly articulate how you will deliver a community-level initiative.

- If creating a media campaign, make it clear how you will leverage one or more platforms to deliver your message (e.g., radio, billboards, print media, social media).

- If creating a media campaign, make it clear who will be providing professional design or production and their track record with previous projects (provide samples if available). Also detail how you will disseminate the media to the intended audience.

- If creating some other form of community-level education initiative, make it clear what community (e.g., faith leaders, health providers, social networks) you are focused on reaching and the impact you intend to make.

- Clearly outline the evidence you have that demonstrates why this particular campaign or program is not only needed, but why it is likely to be successful.

- Clearly explain how the tone of your messaging will empower the community, rather than use fear and shame. Instead of using scare tactics, opt for an evidence-based, compelling message that is designed to spark dialogue or curiosity to learn more.

- Don't assume your audience understands the basic facts of HIV transmission, testing, or biomedical interventions.

- Think focused rather than big, broad campaigns. We want to support grassroots campaigns that can reach deep into a community rather than campaigns that try to reach everyone across the spectrum.

Additional Attachments Necessary: In order to have a complete submission and be considered for a SPARK! grant, you are required to upload the following documents:

1. Your organization's 501(c)(3) verification OR 501(c)(3) letter of a fiscal sponsor

2. Letter of Support from fiscal sponsor (if applicable). *This letter should demonstrate fiscal sponsor's commitment to providing the applicant with*

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financial management of grants funds and administrative support as needed.

3. Organizational Operating Budget. *The applicant's 2024 operational budget (not to be substituted by fiscal sponsor's operational budget).*

4. SPARK! Grant Budget Attachment. *A thoughtfully prepared budget demonstrates that you have considered all the costs associated with your request, as well as the resources needed to ensure the project's success. Please use the provided template.*

Grantee Orientation Requirement: Grantees will be required to participate in an orientation meeting at the beginning of the grant period. The date, time, and other details will be provided once the grantee has received the notification of funding.

Evaluation Requirement: Grantees will be required to complete a pre- and post-grant assessment for the organization. Additionally, grantees will be provided with web-based evaluation tools to streamline data collection processes. Evaluation support will be provided to grantees. Grantees are expected to use the tools provided (if they do not have their own tools for data collection) and to work with the evaluators, when applicable.

Reporting Requirement: Grantees will be expected to provide quarterly project progress updates online via a link provided upon funding. They will also be expected to provide a final report at the conclusion of their grant period—that is, on or before April 30, 2025. Reports will need to include how the grant funds were used, successes and challenges experienced during the grant period, project outcomes, and a budget expenditure report.

Note: You will submit your application via an online grants system, Open Water. Please have all materials ready prior to starting your submission. After submission, you will receive automated confirmation. You will hear from the Southern AIDS Coalition Grants Office if any additional information is needed or requested.

If you have any questions, please contact us at [justinbs@southernaidscoalition.org.](mailto:justinbs@southernaidscoalition.org)

References

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SPARK! Grant
Application Questions

Note: **The** *SPARK!* **Grant is an online application. These questions are offered as guidance so you can prepare your formal application.**

In addition to these questions, you should be prepared to respond to basic information regarding your organization, your fiscal sponsor (if applicable), and general information about your organization's service delivery (e.g., geographic reach, demographics of those you serve).

General questions for both tracks:
- *Funding request amount*
- *Program Title*

- *Track you are pursuing in this proposal.*
Select one: SPARK! Mobilization or SPARK! Change

1. *What specific goals do you hope to achieve? What objectives do you propose that will lead to those goals?* *Try to make your objectives SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound). We understand that this method of delivery may be new for some organizations.* ***[10 points]***

2. *How would the desired changes that you seek to solve benefit the community?* *Talk about the community or communities you plan to reach and the changes you want to establish due to the work you are promoting.* ***[5 points]***

3. *How do you plan to make this project happen? Please use this template to provide a basic work plan that includes a timeline of key activities.* *This should include any infrastructure planning (e.g., learning curve for staff using certain platforms) and demonstrate the meaningful involvement of persons living with and impacted by HIV in your program design and delivery.* ***[15 points]***

4. *How will you disseminate information? Share your planned platform for engagement?* *Be sure to outline the steps you will take to gather and share information with the community(ies) served and the broader public.* ***[5 points]***

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5. *How many people do you hope to reach?* Please be realistic in your estimation. If you have specific demographic information (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) of the people you are likely to reach, please also include that information. *[2 points]*

6. *What impact do you hope to make? How will you know your program has been a success?* Your impact should be directly connected to and address the need you outlined earlier in the application. Identifying benchmarks for success will strengthen the application. *[10 points]*

7. *In what areas could your organization's capacity grow? If you engaged an outside consultant to assist you with this capacity growth, who would you use? If funded through this grant opportunity, how much of those funds would you like to put toward capacity growth?* We all have areas where we could grow our capacity and SAC would like to assist you in growing yours. Please share openly as this will not negatively affect the outcome of the grant application. *[3 points]*

Questions specifically for SPARK! Action Track:

8. *What policy or issue in your community do you seek to address through this funding, and how does it correlate with the perpetuation of HIV-related stigma? [20 points]*
9. *How will your advocacy efforts impact those living with HIV in your community, and how will the voices and experiences of those living with HIV be centered and prioritized? [10 points]*
10. *What existing networks do you intend to partner with, or engage, for your advocacy and mobilization efforts? How will you engage additional participants in your efforts?* Please outline the steps you would take to strengthen or build connections with community members. Give any evidence you have that demonstrates that your organization is successful at community engagement. *[20 points]*

Questions specifically for SPARK! Change Track:

8. *How is HIV-related stigma showing up in your community and impacting those you serve?* Be sure to demonstrate your understanding of HIV stigma and its effects on the community you serve. *[20 points]*
9. *What, if any, previous media campaigns or community-level interventions has your organization implemented? How were they impactful?* Even if previous campaigns/interventions were not as successful as planned, please be sure to share that experience. Be sure to include what could have been improved or built upon. *[10 points]*
10. *How will this campaign or intervention allow you to reach new audiences? What change do you anticipate as a result of your efforts?* Be sure to build

upon the description of the current audiences that you reach that was outlined in the earlier question so that it is clear this is an expansion of the audiences. When describing the change(s) you anticipate, be sure to make a connection between this campaign or intervention and the expected changes. *[20 points]*