The ACT NOW: END AIDS Coalition Urges for Continued Community Leadership and Funding to End HIV as an Epidemic

The landscape for the national Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) initiative is changing rapidly in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Whether or not the EHE seeds planted across the nation continue to bloom depends largely on the HIV movement, funders, and public health leaders’ ability to advance in these complex times. While the efforts of responding to the global COVID pandemic are paramount to the lives of millions across the country, the nation’s and local community commitments to end AIDS as an epidemic must not diminish. The HIV movement has the public health experts, advocates, and community leaders who can, without a doubt, both directly respond to a new pandemic and adapt strategies to keep the end of another epidemic in sight. Now more than ever, funders and public health departments must invest in community driven solutions to keep proven tools that positively impact public health outcomes readily available to the individuals who need them the most.

In this spirit of community investment, the ACT NOW: END AIDS (ANEA) coalition welcomes its very first small grants cohort, funded by member organizations and ViiV Healthcare. ANEA recently distributed funds to five organizations located within the federal Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE): A Plan for America jurisdictions, specifically seeking to increase the leadership of individuals from communities disproportionately impacted by and living with HIV.

This work must center transgender communities, unapologetically Black leadership, people of color, people living with HIV, and drug-user health in the response.

“Meaningful community engagement means defining who the community at need is and what we can do to support” Bamby Salcedo, President/CEO The TransLatina@ Coalition.

ANEQA’s diverse selection committee, comprised entirely of coalition members, guided the granting process, working diligently to identify the programs best positioned within their communities to ensure that those most affected by and living with HIV can lead local EHE efforts. In the end, 25 strong applications advanced for final funding consideration. While we were unable to fund all of the creative programs reviewed, ANEA is excited to work with the outstanding community leaders selected and will continue to pursue funding to support more grants in the near future. Our first round of grantees will use ANEA funds to advance a variety of innovative work:

Abounding Prosperity Inc. will work with with Black Adults, Black MSM, and transgender individuals in Dallas, TX to empower a new cohort of individuals to join a county-wide EHE planning council.

The Black AIDS Institute’s Black Treatment Advocates Network will build the capacity of 50 Black leaders in Alabama to ensure comprehensive engagement in Alabama's statewide EHE plan.

The New Orleans Regional AIDS Planning Council will provide training for people living with HIV- specifically preparing people of a transgender experience, African American MSM, and African American Women to serve on the Fast-Track City, New Orleans EHE initiatives.

Partnership to End AIDS Inc. will establish a planning committee of 15 transwomen of color to support and improve the EHE efforts in Memphis, TN.
The TransLatin@ Coalition will build the leadership of transgender youth to meaningfully participate in Los Angeles County's *Ending the HIV Epidemic* planning process.

“We are inspired by the work of these amazing organizations, and look forward to our collaboration over the next year as we ensure that the most affected communities are not just engaged— they must lead this initiative on the local, state, and national levels.” says Charles King, CEO of Housing Works and ANEA co-chair.

Ultimately, we are hopeful that this seed funding will connect our grantees to additional funding opportunities in the next year. Thanks in part to community pressure by ANEA and other advocates, the CDC recently announced the availability of community engagement funds under its PS20-2010 grants.

Health departments that receive funding under Component A, the largest available portion of funds available under PS20-2010, have been instructed to allocate 25% of their total funds to support EHE planning and implementation by community organizations. Health departments or their Bona Fide agents are encouraged to establish funding relationships with communities not traditionally funded by institutions like the CDC in hopes of advancing what the CDC calls “disruptively innovative work”. The deadline to apply for such funding has been extended to May 1st, 2020, and we are working with the CDC and our grantees to navigate and adapt to the evolving COVID-related challenges to community- and health department-led EHE work. As economic conditions shift, community organizations will require real support from health departments to keep their doors open and essential programs thriving.

ANEa hopes our small grant funding process and technical assistance can serve as an example of what elevating the voices of those denied a seat at the table can actually look like and further strengthen the working relationships between communities and our federal, state, and local public health officials.

**ANEa is a national coalition of community-based organizations, health departments, and national organizations committed to ending AIDS as an epidemic in the United States. Since its inception the coalition has prioritized diversity, representation, leadership and meaningful participation from underrepresented, invisible, vulnerable and marginalized communities of the domestic HIV epidemic throughout all it’s endeavours.**

Follow the work of the ANEA Coalition, learn more about our community-led efforts and invest in the work of ANEA on Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/ActNowEndAIDS/](https://www.facebook.com/ActNowEndAIDS/)

Disclaimer: The content of this statement does not express the views of all members of the Act Now: End AIDS coalition or our government partners.