

Amplifying Community-led Innovation in the HIV/AIDS Funding Sector - Key Insights for Funders

UNAIDS, ViiV Healthcare, Elton John AIDS Foundation, and Avert worked with ThinkPlace to lead a participatory research study with HIV funders and civil society organisations to learn how to better support community-led innovations in the HIV/AIDS response. The overall goal of the research is to create a connected global innovation ecosystem to develop and scale community-led innovations.

We focused on and engaged the following groups of stakeholders:

14 Civil Society Organisations - CSOs **6** Funding Organisations

Here are some of the highlights of the research findings and recommendations for how CSOs can amplify and leverage best practices in community-led innovations.

Cycle of innovation funding

innovation

Innovation is the process of CSOs adapting something new and functional within a context that targets communities that they work with. It responds to the needs of different user groups and involves these groups in the development of innovation.

1 EXPLORE

Searching for proposals
CSOs are looking for RFPs (requests for proposals) to finance innovative programs and interventions in the communities they work.

4 VALIDATE

Proof of concept and scaling
CSOs are prepare reports and document evidence to demonstrate impact and support additional funding for scale-up.



Key Factors for innovation

2 IDEATE

Gathering information
CSOs gather information about RFPs, find partners, and set the plan for pursuing the call for proposals.

3 EXECUTE

Receive funding
Funding is received for community-led innovation and program implementation activities are conducted.

Trust
Relationship between CSOs and funders is open and transparent

Capacity Building
CSOs feel supported to do their best work and scale their impact

Knowledge Production & Sharing
CSOs are empowered to share their learnings of their work



Enabling factors for innovation

These factors are two-way and require both the funder and CSO to be aware and engaged in order to promote healthy and equitable partnerships.

These considerations can help create an enabling environment to help foster innovative funding and strengthen the relationship between CSOs and funders.

Factors	Considerations	Best Practices
<p>Trust</p> <p>Building trust throughout the innovation process to build and open and transparent relationship between CSOs and funders.</p>	<p>Building open communication channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to support CSOs at different stages of the process (from responding to the proposal to executing the project) that allow CSOs to ask questions every step of the way will help build more equal power dynamics with funders. <p>Empower CSOs to identify challenges in their communities. They understand their communities needs best.</p> <p>Application processes and eligibility requirements should emphasise the capacity and potential for innovation rather than being limited to strict financial and legal criteria.</p> <p>Recommendation <i>Invite CSOs to participate in a co-creation process to collectively work on the proposal/bid. Ideally, CSOs are part of the process of developing the terms of references and calls to proposals to help determine funding priorities, requirements, etc.</i></p>	<p>Transparent systems CSOs and funders work together to develop the right systems and mechanisms for reporting.</p> <p><i>In which stage of innovation?</i> EXPLORE > IDEATE > EXECUTE > VALIDATE</p> <p>From retrospectives to project plans Spaces for reflective practices where CSOs and funders can deliberate on progress, identify successes, weak points and plan mitigation strategies in advance.</p> <p><i>In which stage of innovation?</i> EXPLORE > IDEATE > EXECUTE > VALIDATE</p> <p>Learning from failure workshops Safe spaces and an opportunity to reflect on key aspects of program and initiative delivery.</p> <p><i>In which stage of innovation?</i> EXPLORE > IDEATE > EXECUTE > VALIDATE</p>
<p>Capacity Building</p> <p>CSOs feel supported in their work and scale their impact.</p>	<p>Enable a capacity building environment for CSOs to increase their confidence and scale their ability to contribute to building impactful projects in their communities.</p> <p>Acknowledge that due diligence processes can exclude smaller CSOs. Supporting all CSOs through the due diligence process by helping them apply to funding opportunities.</p> <p>Promote healthy competition and collaboration amongst CSOs by promoting the CSOs work and connecting them to one another.</p> <p>Recommendation <i>Consider separating grants into organisational support and growth or unrestricted funding.</i></p> <p><i>By focusing on these two aspects:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSOs can focus on what is required to complete their work but also manage and determine the best way to use the resources available to them to deliver results. Investing in team support and growth can help CSOs and funders build long-term mutually beneficial relationships. 	<p>Ask me anything Monthly meetings for grantees to come and ask questions and clarify concerns. Funders make themselves accessible to CSOs to build trust and confidence amongst teams.</p> <p><i>In which stage of innovation?</i> EXPLORE > IDEATE > EXECUTE > VALIDATE</p> <p>Big Sibling: Mentorship 1-2 staff from CSOs to be partnered with staff from other CSOs working with the same key communities either in their country or from another country in the region.</p> <p><i>In which stage of innovation?</i> EXPLORE > IDEATE > EXECUTE > VALIDATE</p> <p>Innovation Challenges CSOs from different areas to focus their knowledge and creativity on a particular challenge in the funding space. Competitions should be organised in ways that encourage teamwork while at the same time fostering positive competition and learning.</p> <p><i>In which stage of innovation?</i> EXPLORE > IDEATE > EXECUTE > VALIDATE</p>
<p>Knowledge Production & Sharing</p> <p>Share lessons learned and best practices to enable scaling promising innovations.</p>	<p>Re-evaluate the type of data and information that is most valuable in proposals, also valuing the CSO narrative on impact and collaboration. Focus not only on quantitative data and metrics but also on qualitative metrics to measure impact.</p> <p>Invest in CSOs and capacity building to help co-create a process of knowledge production and documentation that works for both parties.</p> <p>Collaborate with CSOs to create final outputs and products that can help communities have their interventions and scale their desired impact. Amplify the lessons learned and best practices that CSOs share.</p>	<p>Communities of Practice CSOs create a support network for sustainability and scaling of impact, including communities, funders and other CSOs.</p> <p><i>In which stage of innovation?</i> EXPLORE > IDEATE > EXECUTE > VALIDATE</p> <p>Meet-ups Sessions where CSOs, funders and beneficiaries, also other CSOs can interact and cross-share ideas on how to improve programming.</p> <p><i>In which stage of innovation?</i> EXPLORE > IDEATE > EXECUTE > VALIDATE</p> <p>Engaging media formats for reporting Explore interactive media formats to simplify and make it easy for beneficiaries/public audience to interact with the project.</p> <p><i>In which stage of innovation?</i> EXPLORE > IDEATE > EXECUTE > VALIDATE</p>

For further information read the full report here

