



**AIDS 2026**

## How to submit an effective scholarship application

If this is the first time you are applying for a scholarship or if you would like advice on how to strengthen your application, this guide is for you. It explains how scholarship recipients are selected and gives tips on how to highlight your experience and motivation so that you can maximize your chances of getting a scholarship.

### Eligibility criteria: Who can apply for a scholarship?

The AIDS 2026 Scholarship Programme is open to anyone who is at least 18 years old and working, volunteering or studying in the area of HIV. All interested candidates who meet these criteria are invited to apply. Priority is given to:

- Abstract presenters, workshop facilitators and co-facilitators, and Global Village organizers and co-organizers whose submission has been selected for the conference
- Applicants from low- and middle-income countries
- Applicants who are part of key populations or people living with HIV
- Young people and early-career investigators below the age of 35
- Applicants who did not previously receive a scholarship for an International AIDS Conference

This is to ensure that people who are most affected by HIV and face significant financial barriers receive extra support to attend. At the same time, everyone, regardless of whether or not they belong to a priority group, is encouraged to apply. Every year, many thousands of people apply, and scholarships are limited, so taking the time to prepare a strong, thoughtful application will increase your chances of success.

### How are scholarship applications screened and reviewed?

Once applications have been received, they are screened internally. At this stage, the applications that do not meet four basic eligibility requirements are filtered out. These requirements are:

- The applicant must be involved in the area of HIV (as a student, volunteer or professional).
- They must have included an appropriate letter of recommendation.
- The application must be in English.
- The application is original and written by the applicant (not copied, plagiarized or entirely generated by an AI tool).



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Applications that pass this screening stage move on to the review stage for the attention of two external reviewers. The reviewers are HIV professionals from different countries who volunteer to blind review applications for the programme.

Reviewers read and provide scores on applicants' written answers, focusing on the open questions, such as the applicant's experience in HIV, their motivation to attend the conference, and how their conference participation will benefit their community. **The reviewers do not look at such aspects as the financial support requested, attendance type or personal details.** We are careful not to assign applications to reviewers from the same country as the applicant, and we do not share the name of the applicant, nor their organization, with the reviewer.

Don't worry if you are just starting your career in HIV or if English is not your first language. We always ask reviewers to be lenient when evaluating the experience of a young professional, and we do not judge applications based on writing style or correct use of English grammar.

## How can I best highlight my expertise and motivation in my application?

### 1. Get a strong letter of recommendation

To be accepted, your letter must:

- Be written in English
- Be on the official letterhead of your referee's organization, company or institution
- Be dated within two months of your application submission date and signed (original or digital signature) by the referee
- Clearly mention you and support your scholarship application for AIDS 2026, explaining why you would be a good candidate for the scholarship

The best letters of recommendation are those that go into detail about the applicant's experience, professional background and motivation in the area of HIV. So, it is best to choose a referee who is a manager, colleague or professor familiar with your work and interests.

Please remember:

- Since the letter can take some time to obtain, make sure that you **contact your referee with enough time to spare** before applications close. We do not accept any late applications or reference letters.
- The file types we accept for the reference letter are PDF, PNG and JPEG. Please make sure that your file views and opens correctly after uploading it. If the file is empty or it does not open, we will consider your application invalid.



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### 2. Provide details when describing your expertise in the area of HIV

Keep in mind that the external reviewers do not know you, and so you will need to convince them that you are the right fit for the conference. You can start by outlining your professional background, including relevant experience you've had in the area of HIV, and accomplishments you are particularly proud of. Then describe your current role in detail. What tasks and responsibilities do you have now? And how does your role contribute to the HIV response? Be specific about your contributions, responsibilities and achievements. **If you are a student or a young professional, we do not expect you to have many years of experience. Focus on what led you to be involved in HIV and the relevance of your current activities.**

### 3. Explain what you would like to learn at the conference

The conference is an opportunity to learn and collaborate. Reflect on this when you describe your motivation and go into as much detail as possible. Explain **what** you are interested in learning at the conference and **why**. Instead of just saying that you are interested in the conference programme, specify **which topics in particular** you are interested in and how this would improve your own daily work, studies or volunteer activities in the area of HIV.

### 4. Show how you intend to bring knowledge gained to your community and improve services back home

We select candidates whose conference attendance will bring positive impacts not just for their own careers, but also for the overall HIV response. **For this question, again, it is best to be as specific as possible.** Describe **how** you plan to bring what you learn back to your community and **what** you would like to change or influence in your current role. Provide **examples** of workshops, trainings, projects or new initiatives you intend to implement based on the knowledge you gain from the conference.

### 5. Share your story

For many of us, HIV is a deeply personal issue. If HIV has shaped your personal journey, you are welcome to share that. Personal experience can help reviewers understand your motivation and commitment to the HIV response and how this has evolved over time.

### 6. Don't worry about writing style, but be clear and personal in your answers

For most applicants, English is not their first language, so we do not judge grammar or writing style. However, it is important to be clear in your answers. It is fine to use tools like spell-checkers or translators, but your responses must remain your own work and be personal to you. Applications copied, plagiarized or entirely generated by AI tools will be discarded.

All of the open questions specify a word count. Make sure that you write responses that are detailed enough without going over the word limit.



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## How do I link a submission (abstract, workshop, Global Village activity) to my scholarship?

After submitting your abstract, workshop or Global Village activity, you may apply separately for a scholarship. The system will automatically link your submission(s) to your scholarship application, provided that you use the same email address for both. On the last page of the scholarship application form, you will find a list of your submissions.

Scholarship prioritization:

- For abstracts, only the presenter (maximum one person) of an abstract accepted for the conference will be prioritized.
- For workshops, only one facilitator and one co-facilitator (up to two people) will be prioritized.
- For Global Village activities, only one organizer and one co-organizer (up to two people) will be prioritized.

Each person must apply for their scholarship separately, using the same email address provided in their submission.

If you don't have a submission, you can just skip this step.

## Application deadline

For your application to be considered, it must be submitted **by Tuesday, 27 January 2026, 23:59 Central European Time (CET)**. We won't accept any applications after this date.

Although you can submit an application only once, you can save your application as a draft until you are ready to submit it.

**Start your application early.** Some documents (like the letter of recommendation) may take time to obtain, and it's a good idea to review your written answers before submitting.

While all applications submitted by the deadline will be considered equally, avoid waiting until the last minute to submit your application. If you have technical difficulties or poor internet connectivity close to the deadline, we may not have enough time to help you.

## Final advice

Take your time, start early and be specific in your answers. A clear, detailed and personal application stands out.

Good luck! We look forward to reading your application.

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