



IAS 2023

Tips for submitting effective scholarship applications

If you have never applied for a scholarship before or would like advice on what makes a good application, then this guide is for you. It will help you understand how scholarship recipients are selected and provide you with some tips on how best to highlight your experience and motivation so that you maximize your chances of getting a scholarship.

Eligibility criteria: Who can apply for a scholarship?

The IAS 2023 Scholarship Programme is open to anyone aged 18 and above who is working, volunteering or studying in the area of HIV. All interested candidates who meet these criteria are invited to apply. Priority is given to the following groups:

- Abstract presenters whose submission has been selected for the conference
- Applicants from low- and middle-income countries
- Applicants who are part of key populations and people living with HIV
- Young people and junior investigators below the age of 35
- Applicants who have not previously received a scholarship for an IAS Conference on HIV Science

This is to ensure that people most affected by HIV and who face significant financial barriers are given extra support to attend. However, everyone, regardless of whether or not they belong to a priority group, is encouraged to put together a strong application to increase their chances of getting selected. Please remember that scholarships are limited.

How are scholarship applications screened and reviewed?

Once all applications have been received, they are first screened internally. At this stage, any application that does not meet three basic conditions is filtered out. These conditions are the following:

- The person must be involved in the area of HIV.
- They must have included an appropriate letter of recommendation.
- The application must be in English.

Applications that pass the screening stage then move on to the review stage, where they are reviewed by two external reviewers. The reviewers are HIV professionals from different countries who volunteer to blind review applications for the programme.



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Reviewers read and provide scores on applicants' written answers, focusing on open questions, such as the applicant's work on 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.**

Don't worry if you are just starting your career in HIV or 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?

Make sure you follow these tips:

1. Get a good letter of recommendation

It is important to get a good letter of recommendation. To be accepted, this letter must fulfil the following basic criteria:

- Written in English
- Include a letterhead of your referee's organization, company or institution
- Dated within two months of the application submission and signed (original or digital signature) by the referee
- Explicitly mention you and support your scholarship application and attendance of IAS 2023

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 familiar with your work and interests. Since the letter can take some time to obtain, make sure that you contact your referee with enough time to spare before applications close.

2. Be specific in describing your expertise in the area of HIV and your motivation for attending the conference

When asked about your motivation to attend the conference, your organization's work in HIV and your own experience, it is best to be as **specific as possible**. Go into detail when describing your role and professional interests and background in HIV. Applicants who write that they are interested in a scholarship because they "would like to meet people" are not being specific enough. If you would like to network, ask yourself **who** you would like to meet



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and **why**. Similarly, instead of just saying that you are interested in the conference programme, you could specify **which sessions or topics in particular** you are interested in and how this ties into your own expertise, interests and career objectives.

3. Have a plan about how you intend to bring knowledge gained back to your community

Reviewers are interested in the benefit that your conference attendance will bring to your community back home. We like to 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.** Don't just say that you would like to share knowledge of the conference back home. **Go into detail** about **how** you plan to do this and provide examples of projects and changes you will implement after the conference and the timeline of this.

4. Tell your story

For many of us, HIV is a deeply personal issue. If this is the case for you, feel free to provide examples of how and why you are motivated by your work and the changes you would like to see in the HIV response in your community and globally.

5. Follow the word count specified for each question, but don't worry too much about grammar

We are aware that for many people, English is not their first language, so we do not judge grammar or writing style. Any form of response is accepted. You may write in an essay style, but you are also welcome to use bullet points if this is easier for you.

All of the open questions specify a word count. The minimum is 50 words and the maximum is 300 words. Make sure that you write responses that are detailed enough without going over the word limit.

We hope that these tips will help you. While an application can be submitted only once, you can save your application as a draft until you are ready to submit it. The deadline to submit your application is 31 January 2023, 23:49 CET. Good luck and we look forward to reviewing your application!