



Youth Hub Seed Grant Programme

Application guidelines 2025

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Youth Hub Seed Grant Programme

IAS – [the International AIDS Society](#) – awards seed grant funding to innovative projects led by and for young people. The [Youth Hub](#) Seed Grant Programme provides financial and project support for Young Leaders to implement, grow and showcase unique initiatives that respond to the priorities of young people. Young Leaders are mentored in grant reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and communications.

Seed grant details

Number of grants available: Five

Amount: Up to USD 10,000

Application deadline: Monday, 29 September 2025, 23:59 CEST

Length of grant: Six months

The IAS will support a new cohort of five Young Leaders with seed grants to scale up HIV-related innovation projects that respond to a locally defined need. Each Young Leader must be affiliated with and logistically supported by an organization working in HIV and/or sexual and reproductive health and rights or related areas.

Grant administration will be delegated to the host organization. The host organization will be responsible for mentoring the Young Leader and supporting them alongside the IAS to build capacity in monitoring and evaluation, report writing and communications. The funding is inclusive of all proposed activities and any contribution to the honorarium or salary paid to the Young Leader.

Young Leaders will be responsible for leading the implementation of their projects and drafting project reports. Timely communication with the IAS is expected so that we can provide grantees with the support and feedback they need.

The host organization will actively mentor the Young Leader and provide logistical support for project implementation. It will also manage the project finances and review and sign off on all reporting.

The IAS will provide monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) support. We will also provide capacity-building opportunities, both planned and ad hoc, to support the leadership development of the Young Leader. We will provide feedback on reports and set up all meetings.

Programme benefits

As part of the Youth Hub Seed Grant Programme, we will support selected Young Leaders with a tailored capacity-building curriculum through a series of workshops on monitoring and evaluation, reporting and communications delivered through the [Youth Hub](#). We will provide Young Leaders with networking opportunities for current, as well as future, projects.

✓ **Scholarship to attend AIDS 2026**

During the programme, selected Young Leaders will have the opportunity to attend [AIDS 2026](#), the 26th International AIDS Conference, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 25-30 July 2026. The IAS will cover registration costs, as well as travel costs, accommodation costs and per diems.

✓ **Inclusion in the AIDS 2026 Young Leaders Programme**

The Young Leaders Programme is offered at the International AIDS Conference and IAS Conference on HIV Science to ensure that the voices of young people living with HIV, young activists and young researchers are heard at international meetings. The dedicated programme provides young people with opportunities to strengthen their research and advocacy skills to support capacity building. Those selected for the Youth Hub Seed Grant Programme will have the opportunity to participate in the AIDS 2026 Young Leaders Programme.

✓ **One-to-one mentoring in monitoring, evaluation and learning**

Selected Young Leaders will be supported by a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) consultant to build their MEL capacity and capture key developments in their projects and professional growth. The consultant will host one-to-one calls with each Young Leader and their mentor to ascertain the Young Leader's specific needs and tailor support accordingly. The consultant will also hold two workshops to support the whole cohort in meeting grant reporting requirements. Host organization mentors will also play a strong supporting role in the Young Leader's MEL growth.

✓ **Public speaking training**

We believe that effective communication is a key component of leadership. Selected Young Leaders will have at least one public speaking opportunity during their grant period. We understand that public speaking can be nerve-wracking, so we provide training and mentorship to support confident public speaking and effective project promotion.

✓ **Exclusive change maker networking opportunities**

Selected Young Leaders will join a community of over 700 IAS change makers – HIV researchers, advocates, healthcare providers and others – who are selected to drive an evidence-based HIV response that puts people first. Young Leaders will have access to an exclusive range of networking and capacity-building opportunities to enhance their skills.

Eligibility criteria

To be considered for the Youth Hub Seed Grant Programme, applicants and their host organizations must meet the criteria listed below.

The Young Leader:

- ✓ Must be connected to an organization that is willing and able to provide mentorship and logistical support for the Young Leader's proposed project
- ✓ Must be between 18 and 30 years old (and ideally under 25 years old)
- ✓ Must agree to attend [AIDS 2026](#), the 26th International AIDS Conference, taking place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 25-30 July 2026
- ✓ Must be able and willing to report and communicate with the IAS in English

The host organization:

- ✓ Must be a registered charity and willing to undergo additional eligibility checks
- ✓ Must provide a point of contact who will actively mentor the Young Leader
- ✓ Must demonstrate capacity and willingness to provide ongoing logistical support in the day-to-day aspects of project implementation
- ✓ Must be able and willing to report and communicate with the IAS in English
- ✓ Must be able and willing to receive and manage all funds related to the Youth Hub Seed Grant

Submitting an application

Completed applications must be submitted by **Monday, 29 September 2025, 23:59 CEST** through [our online application system](#). As we receive a high number of applications, we can consider only completed applications submitted through the system. The applicant must include the following in their application:

Motivation

You will be asked two motivational questions to help us understand why you want to be an IAS Young Leader and how you envision making a positive impact for young people in the HIV response.

1. What is your motivation to become an IAS Young Leader? (*Maximum 200 words*)
2. If selected, how will you use the skills you gain through the Youth Hub Seed Grant Programme in your future work? (*Maximum 200 words*)

Skills and experience

You will be asked two CV questions to help us learn more about your skills and experience in the HIV response.

1. Describe your experience in HIV, including any of your projects or accomplishments that you believe are important for the field of HIV. (*Maximum 300 words*)
2. Please name any local, regional, national or international coalitions, networks and/or peer groups you are currently personally involved in. Please describe your engagement in these group(s). (*Maximum 150 words*)

Project plan

You will be asked six project proposal questions designed to provide us with project details typically found in a project plan.

1. What is your project statement? What need does your project respond to? *(Maximum 200 words)*
2. What are the objectives of your project? *(Maximum 150 words)*
3. What activities will you undertake to reach your objectives? Please include a timeline for these activities. *(Maximum 200 words)*
4. How will the project measure success? *(Maximum 150 words)*
5. How will your project ensure continued impact after the grant period? *(Maximum 150 words)*
6. Does your project leverage partnerships with and/or funds from other organizations? If yes, please elaborate. *(Maximum 100 words)*

Budget

You will be asked to upload a completed budget template with expenses listed in USD. Please be advised that only applicants using the specified budget template will be considered. Any submissions with alternative budget templates will automatically be rejected.

Host organization details

You will be asked to upload a letter of recommendation from the host organization. The letter must demonstrate the host organization's commitment and capacity to support the applicant through a clearly defined plan. The letter of recommendation must also include an overview of the organization's areas of work and how the proposed project fits into its current strategy.

Your prospective mentor must prepare the letter of recommendation using the official letterhead of your host organization, company or institution. Letters must be written in English and be a maximum of two pages in .pdf format.

Selection criteria

The selection of Young Leaders will be based on the following criteria:

✓ **Project plan**

Does the applicant clearly articulate a problem statement (project need)? Is the project demonstrating innovation? What are the project objectives, and what activities will help reach them? How does the project plan to measure success? The strongest applications will demonstrate innovation and provide a snapshot of the project, including activities and expected results and outcomes, while telling a clear and compelling story of why the innovation should be implemented.

✓ **Project sustainability**

Does this project leverage funds from other organizations? Is the applicant starting from scratch or have they already made progress towards the goals of this project? How does the application demonstrate that grant funds will make a catalytic difference to the trajectory of this project? Strong applications will have a specific plan for continued impact.

✓ **Strength of youth engagement**

What role do young people play in the project? The project must have a meaningful engagement component as part of its overarching objectives, which translates into at least one project activity. This means that the project should work to increase political and social will and/or work to change policies, programmes or systems that affect young people. The most successful applications will make the case for why this intervention is important now (urgency) and point to specific policy change (focus).

✓ **Leadership qualities of the proposed Young Leader**

What are the benefits of the programme to the proposed Young Leader? How has the proposed Young Leader demonstrated leadership qualities in the past? The most successful applications will provide evidence outlining why the proposed Young Leader is the right person to implement the project.

✓ **Capacity of host organization**

Why is the host organization supporting the proposed Young Leader? How will the organization support the proposed Young Leader in their work? The strongest applications will outline clear plans to mentor and logistically support the Young Leader in accordance with the eligibility criteria.

Application review and selection

Review

Once the call for applications has closed, applications will be reviewed by a team of reviewers and scored based on how successfully the applicant has met the selection criteria. Each application will be reviewed by at least two people, including at least one programme alumni and one IAS representative, and an average score will be taken across the two reviews. Where there is a large discrepancy between the two reviews, a third reviewer will be enlisted. The top-scoring applications will go through to the next round.

Shortlisting

The top-scoring applications will be discussed in depth with the Youth Hub Grant Committee.

The Youth Hub Grant Committee is comprised of IAS staff, experts in the HIV youth response and former Youth Hub programme alumni. The objective of the committee is to select the five best and most innovative projects from the shortlisted applications to receive the Youth Hub Seed Grant.

At this stage, the committee may request additional documentation and/or an interview with the applicant and their host organization to help make a final decision.

Final selection

The Youth Hub Seed Grant Committee will have a virtual selection meeting, where the merits of each shortlisted application are discussed. Committee members will vote for their top five applications. The committee will be required to take into account diversity of representation when making the final selection.

Outcome notification

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their submission at each stage of the process, with the final selection being made by December 2025.

Due to the high number of applications we receive, we regret that we are unable to provide individual feedback to applicants.

Tips for applicants

General preparation

✓ Start early

Start preparing your application early so that you have ample time for thorough planning, minimize your risk of encountering tech issues, and avoid the last-minute rush. Create a checklist based on the guidelines, and tick off each item to make sure that you have everything you need.

✓ Show your spark and tell a story

Highlight what makes you and your project unique. What gets you excited about it? This is your chance to shine. Be authentic, be bold, and let your passion for making a difference in the HIV response come through in every question. We discourage excessive use of AI. Remember, we want to hear your story and idea. We prefer an application that may not be perfectly worded over one that is AI-generated. Please note that we will evaluate applications for AI usage, and those that rely heavily on AI will receive a lower score.

Imagine you are telling the story of why your project is needed to a friend entirely unfamiliar with the project. This will help you communicate the needs, objectives, activities and success measures in a way that is easy to understand.

✓ Check your tech

Upload your answers and documents to the application system. All open questions specify a word count, so keep your answers clear and concise. The application system will not allow you to submit answers that go beyond the word count.

The budget and host recommendation letter must be uploaded in the correct formats as indicated in the guidelines. Please make sure that your file views and opens correctly after uploading it. If the file does not open or is empty when we open it, we will have to consider your application invalid. You will be asked to start with uploading your supporting documents to allow them to be uploaded correctly.

✓ Ask for help

When working on your application, do not hesitate to seek assistance. Numerous online resources provide detailed guidance on crafting compelling applications, covering everything from motivation questions to project plans.

Given that English may not be the first language for many applicants, we encourage you to involve your host organization by having them review your

answers before submission. Their insights can be valuable in refining your application.

However, final answers must genuinely reflect your own thoughts and experiences. While external input is encouraged for improvement, avoid plagiarism (copying and pasting) or using AI tools to create responses. Applications found to be plagiarized will be rejected.

Answering the motivation questions

✓ Share your ambitions

When discussing what you will gain, dream big but be specific. Instead of a generic interest, provide a detailed reflection on what particular aspects of the Youth Hub Seed Grant Programme resonate with you and why. Explain how gaining knowledge in these areas will enhance your daily work, studies or volunteer activities beyond the programme. This will help demonstrate that you have considered the specific benefits of this programme to your personal growth.

✓ Share with your community

When considering how you will bring your learnings to your community, have a clear plan of what you are going to do. Think about workshops, social media campaigns or any creative ways to share your newfound wisdom. When addressing how you intend to bring knowledge back to your community, go beyond general statements. Outline a step-by-step plan showcasing a proactive approach and the practical results expected from your participation. This demonstrates that you have considered impact beyond your own personal growth.

Answering the CV questions

✓ Spell out your impact

Outline your experience by providing specific examples of your work, school or personal experiences and how they are important for the field of HIV. Keep in mind that the external reviewers do not know you, so you will need to convince them that you are the right fit for the programme. When describing your current engagement in the HIV response, tell us what your tasks and responsibilities are and how they contribute to the HIV response. We do not expect you to have many years of experience. However, you can still elaborate on what led you to be involved in HIV, your current role and its relevance to the HIV response. This helps paint a picture of the skills you have and how you put them to use.

✓ Demonstrate your engagement

Start by clearly listing the local, regional, national or international coalitions, networks or peer groups you are currently part of. For each group mentioned, elaborate on your personal engagement. Explain the nature of your involvement, such as roles, responsibilities or contributions you make within these groups. Be concise and focus on the most significant aspects of your engagement to provide a clear and impactful answer. This will help reviewers understand how engaged you are in the HIV response.

Creating a strong project plan

✓ Tell the story of your project

Capture the reviewers' attention right from the start with a succinct introduction, treating it as a compelling elevator pitch for your project. In one or two sentences, precisely express what your project is and what you hope it will achieve. Then explain why your project is needed: outline the problem your project addresses, providing context and incorporating statistics if applicable. This makes clear the importance of addressing this issue within your community.

✓ Show clear innovation

Demonstrate why this project should be selected for an innovation grant. This does not mean it has to be a completely new approach, but it must be innovative or new in some way. It could be that a project like this has never been done before in your region, or you are scaling up a project that has shown results like no other, or you're focusing on an overlooked target population. Remember that this is an innovation grant, so we need to see the innovation in your project more than anything!

✓ Set achievable objectives

Clearly state the objectives of the project; your objectives are like mini-goals. Consider what specific outcomes you hope to accomplish. Are they realistic and directly aligned with the identified need? Justify the feasibility of your objectives by outlining the resources, expertise and community support that make these objectives achievable. This shows practicality and strategic thinking.

✓ Outline a detailed action plan

Break down the major steps needed to achieve your objectives. Outline the key activities you will need to undertake to move your project forward. Present a realistic timeline for each activity. This helps demonstrate not only your planning skills, but also a well-thought-out approach to project implementation.

✓ Explain how you will measure success

Identify concrete quantitative and qualitative indicators that you will use to demonstrate progress towards your objectives. Describe the tangible impact you expect to see: this could be changes in behaviour, improvements in a specific area, or any other measurable outcome that will bring about positive changes in the community or target area. This helps showcase what success looks like for your project.

✓ Think beyond the grant

Describe your sustainability strategy for ensuring that the impact of your project lasts beyond the grant period. This could involve sustained community engagement and capacity building to continue the project, integration into existing systems, or future fundraising plans for continued implementation and/or scale up. This shows that you have considered how impact can continue after IAS funding ends.

✓ Consider collaborations

List any planned collaborations or funding with other organizations or bodies expected during your project and describe the nature of these partnerships. This demonstrates a collaborative approach, which can enhance the implementation and sustainability of the project.

Demonstrating the host organization's capacity

✓ Ensure your organization understands the commitment

Acting as the host for the project involves a substantial commitment from your organization. It is important to discuss the requirements outlined in these guidelines with your host organization to ensure a clear understanding and full commitment.

✓ Identify a mentor

Collaborate with your host organization to identify a mentor who possesses both the capacity and passion to support you and the project. This mentor should be proficient in English, possess expertise in project planning and reporting, and provide a supportive environment for you.

✓ Secure an outstanding letter of recommendation

The letter must explicitly reference you and explain why you are an ideal candidate for the programme. It must also clearly demonstrate your host organization's capacity and willingness to provide ongoing logistical support for the day-to-day aspects of implementing the project, as well as how it plans to mentor you.

The most impactful letters go into detail about your experience, professional background and motivation in the area of HIV. They present a clear mentorship plan, outlining how the mentor intends to support your development and the logistical aspects of the project.

Since recommendation letters can take some time to obtain, make sure that you contact your mentor with enough time to spare before applications close. We do not accept any late applications or reference letters.

Next steps for successful applicants

Host organization eligibility checks

The host organizations of successful applicants will be required to undergo additional eligibility checks. These checks can include the following:

- ✓ The organization's bank details, along with an original bank deposit slip, cancelled cheque or bank statement
- ✓ A copy of a governing document, for example, statutes, trust deed, constitution, memorandum and articles of association, articles of incorporation or bylaws (with a copy translated into English if applicable)
- ✓ Proof of the organization's tax exemption and/or proof of registration as a charity or not-for-profit (with a copy translated into English if applicable)
- ✓ A description of the organization's programmes and activities
- ✓ Details of the organization's key controllers

Contracting and reporting

The IAS will conclude a contract with both the Young Leader and their host organization outlining the responsibilities of all parties, payment schedules and reporting deadlines. Reporting includes the following aspects:

Check-in calls with the IAS project manager will be scheduled (approximately every six weeks) to provide support and feedback to Young Leaders and their host organizations.

A baseline project report will set Young Leaders up for success; it will include defining project aims, setting up a project log frame, and defining a timeline for key activities, goals and milestones. The baseline report will be attached to the grant contract and will help Young Leaders measure progress against project goals.

Interim and final narrative and financial reports to monitor progress will be submitted every three months. The reports will have to be reviewed and approved by the Young Leader's host organization mentor.

Questions?

If you have any questions related to this call for submissions, which have not been covered in these guidelines, please contact YouthHub@iasociety.org.