HIV SCIENCE GENEVA 2027

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 HIV Science Geneva 2027 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:

- Applicants from low- and middle-income countries
- Applicants who are part of key populations or people living with HIV
- Young people and young investigators below the age of 35
- Applicants who did not previously receive an IAS scholarship
- Abstract presenters whose submissions have been accepted for presentation at HIVR4P 2027 or IAS 2027

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. 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 must be original and written by the applicant (not copied, plagiarized or entirely generated by an AI tool).

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/s, 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 HIV Science Geneva 2027, 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.

2. Demonstrate your involvement in the HIV response

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/s. When describing your organization, explain its main HIV-related activities.

When describing your own work, studies or volunteer activities:

- Be specific about your responsibilities.
- Explain how often you engage in these activities.
- Describe the populations you support or serve.
- Provide examples, outputs, achievements or approximate numbers whenever possible.
- 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.

The strongest applications include concrete examples, rather than general statements.

3. Highlight your experience and impact

Reviewers are interested in understanding what you have personally contributed to the HIV response. When describing a project or initiative:

- Clearly explain your role, describe what you did personally, and explain what changed because of your involvement.
- Include specific details, such as dates, locations, partners, tools, outputs, campaigns, research activities, policy changes or other measurable results.

The strongest responses provide evidence of impact and demonstrate how the applicant contributed to achieving results.

4. Explain what you want to learn at the conference/s

The conference/s are opportunities to learn, collaborate and strengthen your work. Be specific about:

- The challenge/s you currently face in your work, studies or volunteer activities
- The theme, topic or area of research from IAS 2027 and/or HIVR4P 2027 that interests you
- Why this topic is relevant to your work
- How the knowledge gained at the conference/s would help you address the challenge

Avoid generic statements, such as "I want to learn about HIV". The strongest responses identify a specific issue and clearly link it to conference content.

5. Show how you will share and apply what you learn

Scholarships are awarded to applicants who will use conference knowledge to strengthen the HIV response in their communities, organizations and networks.

Describe:

- One realistic activity you will carry out within three months after the conference/s
- Who will benefit from this activity
- How you will implement it
- Why it is achievable based on your current role and networks
- A clear timeframe and the main steps involved

The strongest responses present a realistic and actionable plan that you genuinely intend to implement after attending the conference/s.

6. Share your perspective and lived experience

Your background, lived experience and community context can provide important perspectives for the global HIV response.

You may wish to describe:

- Experiences that motivated your involvement in HIV
- Challenges faced by your community
- Perspectives that are underrepresented in global discussions
- How your personal, professional or community experience informs your work

Personal experiences are welcome where relevant, but there is no requirement to disclose information that you are not comfortable sharing.

7. Be authentic and provide original responses

Applications are not evaluated based on English fluency, grammar or writing style. Responses should reflect your own experiences and perspectives and include specific details and examples where possible.

You may use spelling, grammar or translation tools. However:

- Your responses must be your own work.
- Responses copied from other sources, plagiarized or entirely generated by AI tools may be disqualified.
- Generic responses that could apply to any applicant are less competitive than responses that include specific examples and personal experiences.

Within the stipulated word limits, aim to be detailed and specific. The strongest applications demonstrate genuine engagement in the HIV response, provide concrete examples, and clearly

explain how conference participation will contribute to both the applicant's development and their community's HIV response.

How do I link an abstract submission to my scholarship?

After submitting your abstract, 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.

Each person must apply for their scholarship separately, using the same email address provided in their submission. Only the presenter of an abstract accepted for the conference/s will be prioritized for a scholarship.

There is no obligation to submit an abstract to apply for a scholarship. If you don't have a submission, you can just skip this step.

Application deadline

For your scholarship application to be considered, it must be submitted **by Wednesday, 20 January 2027, 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