HIV/AIDS Funding: Data is the Key

Funders Concerned About AIDS (FCAA) issues a call for data.

April 24, 2018 By Caterina Gironda

The HIV/AIDS funding environment is more challenging than ever.

Ill-informed policies threaten to roll back progress.

Bilateral funders are decreasing resources.

The majority of philanthropic resources are concentrated among a handful of donors.

At this moment in time, we must deploy all the weapons in our arsenal to fight both the epidemic itself as well as an environment that has become inhospitable to progress. One of the most effective tools we have at our disposal is data.

Philanthropic funding comprises just two percent of global HIV/AIDS resources. But that two percent can make a significant impact, if it is strategically aligned and allocated to the areas of greatest need. Over the past few decades, philanthropic resources have grown dramatically, becoming an integral component to the global response. What began with only five private foundation grants and $216,000 in 1983 has increased, most recently, to $680 million per year. Such resources have greatly contributed to progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS, particularly in regions hardest hit by the epidemic.

That is precisely why, each year, Funders Concerned About AIDS (FCAA) collects and analyzes data on thousands of grants, awarded by hundreds of foundations in countries all over the world. By assessing gaps, trends, and opportunities in HIV-related philanthropy, this information helps funders to identify new partners; leverage and strengthen their own work; and build support for a new project or challenge in an under-resourced region.

In addition, with this data, FCAA is able to shine a spotlight on important issues and specific populations and geographies. In 2017, for example, we looked at funding for:

- Advocacy and human rights
- HIV philanthropy for older adults
- HIV in the U.S. South

Funder data also has the power to influence global and national decision makers, providing valuable context for appropriators and parliamentarians. It is an important complement to epidemiological data when making arguments for the resources required for an effective response.

By analyzing the landscape, we are also better positioned to address the social and economic dimensions of the HIV epidemic. To do so, we must look beyond “traditional” HIV funders to those that address health equity, racism, homophobia, poverty, and reproductive health and justice – issues that intersect with, and often fuel, the epidemic.

But it all starts with data.

Each spring, FCAA issues a call for data, asking that any funder who has given even a single HIV-related grant in the prior calendar year submit their information. We then begin the rigorous task of coding each grant list to determine the intended geography, population, and strategies targeted for these particular funds. This is then synthesized into our annual report, Philanthropic Support to Address HIV/AIDS. The report also provides a list of all identified HIV-related funders in the given year (most recently, for 2016).

But understanding the environment of HIV/AIDS-related grant making is only made possible when funders provide us with their data. The more we have, the better we can accurately map the landscape.

In a complex and less-than-hospitable environment — and with many pressing issues competing for attention — there is reason for concern that HIV/AIDS will no longer be a priority for funders and policy makers. Should that be the case, we risk not just stalling, but very likely reversing progress.

Of course, private philanthropy, alone, isn’t a panacea. But its contributions can make a critical difference. That is why funder dollars must be maximized like never before. For funders and service providers alike, data is the key to ensuring continued support — public, political and financial — for HIV/AIDS.

How can YOU help?

1. If you’ve given even one grant to HIV-related efforts, please review our call for data materials and submit a list of your HIV-related grants today! This is the only way to have your data counted in our next report, and our ongoing discussions and efforts to raise awareness of the philanthropic response to HIV and AIDS.
2. If you’ve received even on private grant for HIV-related efforts, please share this piece with your funding organization to encourage them to participate in the report.

Caterina Gironda is the research and communications associate for Funders Concerned About AIDS (FCAA).

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