



**ELTON JOHN
AIDS FOUNDATION**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

EVALUATING ELTON JOHN AIDS FOUNDATION'S U.S. POLICY-RELATED GRANTMAKING TO IMPROVE PREP ACCESS

BACKGROUND

The Elton John AIDS Foundation is committed to ending the HIV epidemic through grantmaking and strategic initiatives. Our mission in the U.S. centers on advancing access to quality and compassionate HIV care and prevention by meeting people where they are and building capacity across communities and systems of care - all while helping to advance a supportive policy environment at state and national levels.

In the United States, approximately **1.2 million people are living with HIV, 150,000 of whom remain unaware of their status**. A disproportionate burden persists across demographic groups, including those living in Southern states, Black women, men who have sex with men, and people who use drugs - many of whom face systemic barriers such as discrimination, stigma, and inequitable access to quality healthcare. While effective solutions are available throughout the US health system, they remain under-utilized.

Systemic-level challenges in the U.S. continue to hinder progress toward HIV goals, especially when it comes to prevention solutions like pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), including cost of lab testing and PrEP medication, complex and opaque health system navigation, disparate systems of care, and general inequitable access to quality care. **The U.S. policy ecosystem often falls short of supporting critical improvements to health care access - especially for people living with HIV or who could benefit from HIV prevention.** Activists have pointed to persistent stigma against these populations and HIV in general as a major barrier. As a result, although an estimated 2.2 million people could benefit from PrEP (Kourtis, 2025), only somewhere between 400,000-600,000 people (CDC, 2022; AIDSvu, 2024) have been prescribed it. Grave disparities in access persist along racial/ethnic, gender, and other sociodemographic lines.

Preserving and advancing supportive policy has been critical to ensuring access to HIV care, treatment and prevention in the U.S., and is fundamental to the Foundation's strategy in the U.S. In recent years, the Foundation has supported a range of organizations working across the U.S., aligned around a central goal: advancing policy support for improved PrEP access, particularly among



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communities disproportionately impacted by HIV. Partner efforts at the state and national levels have included: educating and advocating for a national PrEP program; pursuing policy change at state level for pharmacists to provide PrEP directly; building and strengthening diverse coalitions; creating tools and resources to support work at state and national levels; engaging legislators in key states to encourage transformative policy shifts, raising awareness and understanding; and more.

PURPOSE

The Elton John AIDS Foundation's purpose in pursuing this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of our partnerships toward **advancing a supportive ecosystem across the U.S. to improve PrEP access and uptake among communities in greatest need**. This evaluation is also intended to support the Foundation's **ongoing learning** about what has worked best and what opportunities remain to inform **future strategic direction** for the Foundation's policy-related grantmaking and strategic initiatives across the U.S.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

1. To assess progress toward **interim outcomes** made by the Foundation's grantees on the path toward longer-term change, with a focus on **increasing access to PrEP**.
2. To **surface successful models** for advancing PrEP-related policy objectives at state and national levels, and illustrate the challenges, opportunities and potential adaptations that could further the Foundation's efforts (especially in a variable political context).
3. To **understand how the Foundation's partnerships have complemented** efforts of other actors across the HIV policy landscape, and to **inform** potential opportunities to further strategic positioning and connectivity via the Foundation's grantmaking.

SAMPLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation should address, but not be limited to, the following questions:

1. How are Elton John AIDS Foundation's grantee partners currently positioned toward their specific target audiences and desired changes, to advance supportive policy related to PrEP access? How effective are efforts tailored to influence and inspire specific action toward these changes?



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2. To what degree have Elton John AIDS Foundation grantee efforts influenced progress toward specific policies targeted for change across the U.S.?
3. Looking across distinct organizations, contexts, and tactics, what key components emerge that are associated with enhanced effectiveness and impact of program models?
4. How are other actors (funders, organizations, activists) positioned within the landscape, and where/how do the Foundation's partnerships particularly complement or conflict?
5. What can be identified as opportunities for synergy - across Elton John AIDS Foundation's portfolio and externally - toward broader goals of preserving and advancing supportive policies related to PrEP access?
6. What interim outcomes have been relevant to understand grantee progress? (E.g., increased awareness, attitudes/beliefs, public and/or political will; strengthened coalitions; mobilization of voices and messages; new champions and allies galvanized; social media reach and coverage; collaborative action taken.) What have been unintended and negative outcomes?
7. What learnings emerge for the Foundation to further refine its U.S. policy-related grantmaking strategy, esp. given current and potential political, economic, social context shifts?

APPROACH / METHODOLOGIES

The selected evaluator will be expected to conduct a **comprehensive evaluation of the Elton John AIDS Foundation's U.S. policy grantmaking strategy**, which began in 2023 and is still ongoing, focused on PrEP access initiatives. This includes three grantees and one strategic advocacy partner, at variable stages in their partnership journey with the Foundation.

The evaluation should be guided by key considerations and principles for evaluating policy efforts, especially from the perspective of a funder looking across specific grantee partners - and working across the unique context of HIV/AIDS in the U.S. These include the **dynamic political context** of fluid strategies and actors; the **collective nature** of this work which affects how we understand contribution and change pathways; the **non-linear and longer-term** nature of policy change; the **intersectionality** of social and structural issues related to HIV systems of care in the U.S.; the longstanding **stigma** and discrimination around HIV; **geographical** variability across the U.S.; etc.

The Elton John AIDS Foundation seeks an exceptional evaluation partner who will pursue an approach which is **iterative and adaptive**, rather than rigidly linear. We



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value an approach which supports both **accountability and learning**, providing a framework for understanding successful models and challenges, mapping themes and complementarity, and considering how the Foundation might enhance its future approach.

Proposals should cover both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analytical methods that respondents believe are best suited for this type of evaluation, which may include but not be limited to:

- Interviews with grantees, policy influencers, and decision-makers
- Document review (grant reports, policy briefs, media coverage)
- Analysis of media coverage.
- Methods to gauge policy maker support
- Systems and network mapping to capture ecosystem changes
- Retrospective case studies to understand why change did or did not occur.

DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables are expected:

1. **Brief inception report** detailing the finalized evaluation questions, methodology, data collection tools, and work plan with timeline.
2. **Regular progress updates** to discuss findings, challenges, and potential adaptations (likely in the form of meetings among key team members, and briefs where appropriate).
3. **Mid-term briefing** summarizing initial findings and insights
4. **Draft final report** addressing all evaluation questions comprehensively and with actionable recommendations
5. **Final report** incorporating feedback from the Foundation.
6. **Executive summary or brief presentation** translating to other Foundation staff board members and other relevant partners key findings and recommendations

EVALUATOR QUALIFICATIONS

The evaluator(s) should possess the following:

- Demonstrated experience evaluating efforts to address U.S. HIV policy, particularly across various organizations working in distinct contexts toward specific goals.



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- Expertise in policy evaluation.
- Experience evaluating in the philanthropic funder context.
- Strong public health background, particularly HIV prevention and care.
- In-depth understanding of U.S. health sector and political landscape related to HIV/AIDS
- Expertise in qualitative research methods (and relevant quantitative methods).
- Excellent analytical, writing, and presentation skills.
- Ability to communicate findings effectively to diverse audiences, including funders, grantees, policymakers, and community organizations

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Interested parties are requested to submit their 3-page proposals which should include:

- A technical proposal with evaluation plan, specific data collection and analysis methodologies proposed (with rationale for inclusion), and timeline.
- A description of the evaluator(s) qualifications and relevant experience.
- A financial proposal.
- Brief examples and/or case studies from previous similar work.

Please submit proposals by COB October 17, 2025 to laura.hollod@eltonjohnaidsfoundation.org

The Elton John AIDS Foundation hopes to kick off this work in November 2025, with the majority of the evaluation work taking place from January through June 2026, and has anticipated a budget range of \$40,000-\$50,000.