

**Corporation for National and Community Service**

**2010 Social Innovation Fund**

**National AIDS Fund**

**Reviewer Comments – Phase 2**

**NOTE:** The following reviewer comments for a successful application for a SIF grant have been redacted only to the extent that they identify a potential contractor with whom a contract is not yet in place with the grantee. The posting will be updated and the redaction removed once the parties execute the contract.

## SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND 2010 EVALUATION CONSENSUS FORM

*Instructions throughout this form are indicated in red.*

Before you begin, please fill out the Applicant Name and Application ID# in the above header. This Evaluation Consensus Form (ECF) is where each panel records its consensus assessment of an application. The completion of this form may be led by any panelist; that individual will be designated the Lead Reviewer (LR). All Reviewers are expected to serve as the LR on at least two applications. **The evaluation consensus assessment should be based on the panel's examination of only the subcategories highlighted in red in the chart below, *not* the full application. In addition, Evaluation Reviewers should only assess how well applicants responded to the *specific evidence-based criteria* within the subcategories highlighted in yellow in this form.**

Category	Percentage	Subcategories
Program Design	45%	A. Goals and Objectives B. Use of Evidence C. Community Resources D. Description of Activities i. Subgranting ii. Technical Assistance and Support
Organizational Capacity	35%	A. Ability to Provide Program Oversight B. Ability to Provide Fiscal Oversight
Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	20%	A. Budget and Program Design B. Match Sources

Panels will utilize Panel Consensus Calls to discuss each application and come to agreement on the content of the Narrative Assessment for each category, the Rating for each category, the Overall Appraisal Statement and the Band in which the application will be placed. When completing this form, the LR should rely on four primary documents: 1) the application being reviewed; 2) the SIF Review Notes page from each panelist; 3) the SIF Notice of Federal Funds Availability (NOFA); 4) the Consensus Rubric at the end of this form.

**Please complete the following steps:**

1. For each of the 3 categories the LR should:
  - a. Write a 3 – 5 sentence Narrative Assessment reflecting the panel's assessment of the quality of the response in the category being assessed; it is important that this narrative include brief summary information, but more importantly, the panel's evaluation of the application's quality.
  - b. List the application's significant strengths and weaknesses and annotate each. Each significant strength or weakness **must** be supported by **at least one** of the Eligibility or Application Review Criteria that were in the SIF NOFA. (criteria are included in this form)
  - c. Taking into consideration both the Narrative Assessment and the listed strengths and weaknesses, select a category Rating by checking the appropriate box.
  
2. Complete the Overall Appraisal section. In this section, you will:
  - a. Provide an Overall Appraisal Statement, and
  - b. Select a Consensus Band that represents the quality of the application as a whole. The Bands are described in the Overall Appraisal section at the end of this form.

## **PROGRAM DESIGN (45%)**

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The Social Innovation Fund Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Program Design.

### **A. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

*The Corporation asks applicants to use a thematic approach in describing their proposed investments in community organizations. As established in the Act, there are two basic operational models of SIF intermediaries. The first is a SIF that will operate in a single geographic location, and address one or more priority issues within that location. This model is referred to as a "geographically-based SIF." The second model is a SIF that will address a single priority issue area in multiple geographic locations. This model is referred to as an "issue-based SIF." The Corporation will assess whether the application properly proposes goals and objectives as either a geographically-based or an issue-based SIF.*

#### **i. Geographically-Based SIF**

*The application must provide 1) statistics on the needs related to the issue area(s) within the specific local geographic area, and 2) information on the specific measurable outcomes related to those issue areas that the applicant will seek to improve.*

#### **ii. Issue-Based SIF**

*The application must provide 1) statistics on the needs related to the issue area within the geographic areas likely to be served, including statistics demonstrating that those geographic areas have a high need in the priority issue area, and 2) information on the specific measurable outcomes related to the priority issue area that the applicant will seek to improve.*

### **B. USE OF EVIDENCE**

*Applicants must include in their application information describing their track record of using rigorous evidence, data, and evaluation tools to:*

- Select and invest in subgrantees;*
- Support and monitor the replication and expansion of subgrantees; and*
- Achieve measurable outcomes.*

### **D. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES**

#### **i. Subgranting**

*a. Applicants must describe the process by which they will competitively select their nonprofit community organization subgrantees, and, if applicable, the process by which they have pre-selected some subgrantees. Specifically, applicants must describe how their competitive subgrant selection process will ensure a portfolio of subgrantees that are innovative nonprofit community organizations serving low-income communities and that possess:*

- *A commitment to and track record of using data and evaluation for performance and program improvement;*
- *Evidence of effectiveness, including a demonstrated track record of achieving specific measurable outcomes related to the measurable outcomes for the intermediary;*
- *Strong potential for replication or expansion;*
- *A well-defined plan for achieving specific measurable outcomes connected to the measurable outcomes for the intermediary, evaluation of program effectiveness, performance improvement, and replication or expansion; and*

ii. **Technical Assistance and Support**

- a. *Applicants must include in their application information describing how they will provide technical assistance and support (other than financial support) that will increase the ability of subgrantees to achieve their measurable outcomes, including replication or expansion. Replication or expansion may happen in various ways (including, for example, creating new sites or affiliating with another program to replicate an intervention) and in multiple contexts (including, for example, serving more people in a current geography or growing to new geographies).*

**Provide a panel assessment of the application's PROGRAM DESIGN as follows:**

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
- **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
- **Select a Rating for this section.**

**Panel Narrative Assessment**

The applicant, the National Aids Foundation (NAF), proposes to expand and replicate an Access to Care Initiative (A2C), which aims to increase the engagement of people who are aware that they are HIV-positive but not adequately engaged in care. The applicant proposes to invest in 7-9 public-private partnerships that will connect 3500 low-income individuals with HIV to quality health care and supportive services they need. The goal for SIF grantees is to assist clients and improve community and health care systems so that barriers to care will be reduced. The applicant documents the motivation for the initiative in a satisfactory manner, bringing in recent statistics and a description of disparities along racial/ethnic and socioeconomic lines. They also tie in evidence on the potential success of the A2C model, which aims to address multiple levels of barriers – including personal, organizational, and structural system factors (e.g., silos in treatment and care of STD and HIV/AIDS). Furthermore, they outline a set of outcomes by which to gauge success along each of these levels. The NAF has a strong and long (~ 20 years) track record of responsive grant-making and respected expertise in HIV/AIDS issues. They plan to invest in sub-grantees who apply evidence-based approaches, after a national review and vetting process of applicants. After a formative three month planning phase, during which sub-grantees will work with external evaluation and assistance teams housed at [REDACTED] to prepare their strategy, sub-grantees will follow a 3 to 5 year implementation plan. Grantees will be provided adequate technical assistance and NAF will develop a learning community through national conferences, on-line work space and forum, and site visits, in addition to programming calls. The NAF has already identified 15 communities in need based on a range of relevant criteria, including the size of

the underserved HIV population and HIV/AIDS case rates. However, there is a greater need for outlining methods by which NAF will assist sub-grantees in recruitment of hard-to-reach populations, given that stigma is a salient barrier to appropriate treatment among their target clients. This will be a key issue in replicating and expanding the A2C model. The applicant does not provide information on how past initiatives have addressed the outreach and participant recruitment issue or lessons learned that can be used for this model.

### Significant Strengths

(+) The applicant provides statistics that support the case for focusing on the targeted population, and for using their model to address racial and income inequities in effective HIV treatment. It is estimated, for example, that 644,000 individuals with HIV/AIDS are not receiving appropriate care or treatment. Seven of the 15 communities targeted have AIDS case rates significantly higher than the national average.

*(Program Design, A, ii)*

(+) The NAF skillfully draws in preliminary evidence of funded initiatives to support their application for expansion and replication. For example, the GENERATIONS project included funded efforts that produced statistical evidence of improved knowledge of risk factors for HIV/AIDS, and greater confidence in using protective measures among targeted clients. They have also invested in an initiative (Southern REACH) to build community capacity and policy advocacy in southern states through supporting strategically based CBOs. The evaluation of REACH is still underway, but the applicant is using appropriate evaluation tools (mix of qualitative and quantitative methods) to assess the impact. These examples demonstrate two important things: 1) the applicant's success in fostering education and knowledge empowerment at the individual level and 2) an awareness of garnering community buy-in and policy change. Together, these facets underscore the applicant's apt understanding of employing a multi-level framework to addressing a complicated issue. Furthermore, they have invested in appropriate evaluation methods to measure their own impact. *(Program Design, B, i)*

(+) The applicant clearly outlines a set of goals and outcomes at various levels by which to measure impact of their sub-grantees. For example, at the client-level, they have very specific outcomes by which to monitor success including number of patients who remain in treatment after the first implementation year, perceived self-efficacy, and ideal treatment outcomes (% of clients prescribed anti-retroviral treatment). At the organization level, they plan to monitor organizational capacity, effectiveness of collaborations, use of data-guided planning, and evaluation of evidence-based interventions. These types of goals are both measurable and reasonable to achieve within the time period of implementation (3-5 years) and the NAF will use validated measurement tools, including pre- and post-assessments, to evaluate progress, relying on their partner, [REDACTED], to conduct the evaluations.

*(Program Design, B, i)*

(+) The applicant demonstrates a long-standing history of working with numerous stakeholders in the HIV/AIDS community, and a track-record of providing support for and fostering community-based coalitions. With this experience, they can leverage existing partnerships to assist sub-grantees. *(Program Design, D, i)*

(+) Based on previous experience with GENERATIONS, the applicant has a plan to foster learning communities and create community-science partnerships to promote their initiative. They will also have an excellent partner [REDACTED] who will provide technical assistance, especially during the formative phases

of the implementation. Sub-grantees will be trained in research design and how to adapt interventions. They also will provide grantees with tools to sustain their efforts, including providing a web-based list of funding opportunities. The applicant also has a clear accountability system. These plans reflect the applicant's experience in working with other organizations, and employing a strategy that will appropriately monitor and cultivate learning among their sub-grantees. (*Program Design, D, ii*)

### Significant Weaknesses

(-) The justification for the pre-identification of 15 communities (from which the final applicants will compete) is not complete. For instance, the applicant notes that 7 of the 15 communities targeted have higher than average AIDS case rates, but does not bring in evidence to support the focus on the other eight communities. Are these areas where AIDS case rates are lower, but racial disparities are larger? While there is likely a sound rationale, the motivation for selecting these communities needs to be clearer, in order to assess the applicant's pre-selection process against the need for competitiveness in grant selection. (*Program Design, A, ii*)

(-) The targeted client population is hard-to-reach and hard-to-serve, which is a fact highlighted by the applicant as a motivating factor for the importance of their initiative. Given that social stigma is a significant barrier for achieving adequate and better treatment for HIV/AIDS, one of the biggest challenges for sub-grantees will be in recruiting potential clients to participate in community interventions. The applicant does not outline a clear strategy for overcoming this challenge. Moreover, the clients that do participate will be selective of those who are most inclined to seek treatment, an issue that should be addressed and discussed with regards to the ability to replicate the intervention. That is, the recruitment process and resulting evaluations may only reflect the experiences of those pre-inclined to an intervention, and likely cannot be extrapolated to the hardest to serve sub-groups (*Program Design, B, i*)

(-) Although the applicant outlines specific outcomes at multiple levels of intervention, they should also identify what the short and long-term outcomes are within each level. This is not clear in the proposal. (*Program Design, B, i*)

(-) Although alluded to in the application, it is also unclear whether and how A2C models will be tailored or reshaped based on different community contexts (some of whom will have different barriers and some who will be better equipped to implement and expand the model than others). It would have been useful if the applicant brought in examples of previously funded initiatives where mid-course corrections or adjustments to the implementation model had to be taken based on initial intake and evaluations. (*Program Design, D, i*)

Select a Rating for PROGRAM DESIGN (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

Excellent

Strong

Satisfactory

Weak/Non-responsive

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## **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (35%)**

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The Social Innovation Fund NOFA states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Organizational Capacity.

### **A. ABILITY TO PROVIDE PROGRAM OVERSIGHT**

*In evaluating your organization's ability to provide program oversight, the Corporation will consider:*

- i. *The extent to which your organization has a sound structure including:*
  - *The ability to provide sound programmatic oversight, including:*
    - *Experience with and capacity for evaluation, and*
    - *Experience with and capacity for supporting replication or expansion.*
  - *A well-designed plan and systems for organizational (as opposed to subgrantee) self-assessment and continuous improvement*
  
- ii. *Whether your organization has a sound record of accomplishment, including the extent to which you:*
  - *Have a track record of supporting organizations that demonstrate evidence of impact.*

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**Provide a panel assessment of the application's ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY as follows:**

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
- **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
- **Select a Rating for this section.**

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### **Panel Narrative Assessment**

The applicant organization has been engaged in grantmaking, coalition building, and advocacy for over 20 years. The NAF stands as one of the nation's leading philanthropic organizations dedicated to address HIV/AIDS concerns and needs, and they have cultivated and used their connections with other foundations and business partnerships over the years to strengthen the capacity of community building organizations. As part of a new strategic plan, they have decided to focus resources on populations that are most impacted by HIV/AIDS, and are committed to raising at least \$500,000 annually towards the A2C effort. They have a good track record of both fundraising and funding large-scale initiatives with large budgets, and have nine program staff who support and monitor agencies in their implementation and evaluation efforts. NAF staff members have experience in managing multi-site programs, and the applicant has established a relationship with [REDACTED], who will conduct the evaluation components. High quality evaluations are prioritized by NAF, and this is evidenced by their discussion of evaluation rigor applied to past and on-going initiatives. NAF also has experience and familiarity with federal grants and are quite capable of providing fiscal oversight.

### **Significant Strengths**

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(+) The Fund has in-house staff capable of and experienced with managing the major components of grant-making, monitoring progress, and reporting. It also has a reputable history of funding successful initiatives using evidence-based approaches.

(+) There is a strong commitment to evaluation at the leadership level with the CEO/President having extensive experience in evaluation of HIV/AIDS prevention and care services initiatives. The commitment has translated to consistent investment in evaluation by the organization and a demonstrated track record in using evaluation to inform programming and decision making.

(+) Though they have limited capacity in-house (outside of CEO) in term of expert evaluators (only the VP of Program and Evaluation), the evaluation team of [REDACTED] has already been selected as a partner for this initiative. The use of this [REDACTED] is a strength, as [REDACTED] has a solid and respected reputation in the [REDACTED] fields.

(+) Prior experience with GENERATIONS and Southern REACH initiatives provides NAF with legitimacy in acting as intermediary for the SIF grantees. The strategy for program design, inputs, and outputs for A2C were based on these funded efforts, and the latter initiative has a wide reach (more than 50 organizations) and impressive financial investments (\$4 million).

#### Significant Weaknesses

None.

Select a Rating for ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

Excellent       Strong       Satisfactory       Weak/Non-responsive

### **COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (20%)**

The Social Innovation Fund NOFA states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy.

#### **A. BUDGET AND PROGRAM DESIGN**

*In evaluating the cost effectiveness and budget adequacy of your proposed program, the Corporation will consider:*

- i. Whether your program is cost-effective
- ii. Whether your budget is adequate to support your program design

**Provide a panel assessment of the application's COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY as follows:**

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
  - **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
  - **Select a Rating for this section.**
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### **Panel Narrative Assessment**

The program budget requested by the applicant from SIF is \$3.6 million, bringing the total estimated funding for year 1 (includes matching funds) to \$7.3 million. Considering their approved budget for FY2010, they are proposing a large increase in current operating funds. They note that they have modeled the budget after their other special initiatives, and so have some precedence for their large request. The NAF is allotting a sizable portion (\$1million) of the budget to the formative three-month planning phase for sub-grantees. The evaluation component alone is budgeted at \$300,000, and allocation of some staff time (with expertise in program evaluation and oversight). Still, the budget allotment for evaluations seems low (about 6% including program evaluation staff time), Another \$20,000 is allotted to evaluation publication development. Also included in the budget are funds for a team of technical assistance providers (\$250,000). Provided that a significant portion of the TA funds is allotted to evaluation capacity building, the total budget will be sufficient (but on the lower bound) for this component. NAF has secured matching funds from Bristol-Myers and Wal-Mart for FY2010, and are seeking private foundation support to assure continued matching funds over the implementation period. Finally given that the targeted number of participants are 3,500, cost per participant for the program is just over \$2,000 per participant. The applicant could do a better job discussing the cost per participant and proving more context for that cost.

### **Significant Strengths**

(+) They have budgeted for a significant portion (40%) of the Vice President for Programs and Evaluations time to oversee all aspects of management and program implementation. The VP of Program and Evaluations will also be the liaison to the evaluation team. This is an appropriate amount of allocated staff time to oversee the initiative.

(+) The budget also allots funding (~\$20,000) for the development and support of web-based tools to create a learning community among sub-grantees and other community-based organizations to share information and to foster replication. This is a good use of budget funds, as detailed in the program design. Another \$20,000 is budgeted for program evaluation publication/dissemination, an important element that frequently is not budgeted for and is essential to more broadly disseminate learnings from an initiative.

(+) The foundation has over 20 years of grant-making experience at multiple levels (federal, state, and local), a Chief Financial Officer familiar with federal payment management systems, and an accountant on staff.

### **Significant Weaknesses**

(-) NAF's allocation of funds to the evaluation is on the lower bound. An appropriate budget for evaluation is roughly estimated from 8 to 10 percent of the program budget.

(-) Given the large funding request, the applicant's budget narrative would have benefited with more discussion of how budgeting for prior initiatives informed the request. This would give more context as to the cost-effectiveness of the program initiative requests.

**Select a Rating for COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")**

Excellent

Strong

Satisfactory

Weak/Non-responsive

## OVERALL APPRAISAL

### I. Provide a 3 - 5 sentence Overall Appraisal Statement of the application taking into consideration:

- The Narrative Assessments, significant strengths and weaknesses, and Ratings from each category; and
- The weighting of each category (Program Design (45%), Organizational Capacity (35%), Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (20%) ).

The applicant is a strong and respected intermediary organization, with a 20 year history of grantmaking, dedicated to promoting HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention, and effective treatment. Based on their experiences with prior initiatives, the NAF proposes an issue-based SIF. The goal is to use evidence-based strategies to implement models of improving Access to Care (A2C) in low-income and underserved communities with high shares of HIV-positive people who are not effectively engaged in care. The target population, while small in size, represents a hard-to-serve group with high levels of unmet health care needs, which the applicant documents well. The applicant has already identified 15 target communities, from which 7 to 9 public-private partnerships will be chosen. The NAF provides an excellent overview of two prior HIV/AIDS related initiatives (GENERATIONS and Southern REACH), which informed the program design for the current proposal. In doing so, they demonstrate a strong track record of funding initiatives that have outcomes assessment components and an ability to prioritize evidence-based models. They have partnered with a [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The NAF and their evaluator will also provide for technical assistance and early program design planning to ensure that grantees meet the goals of expansion and replication – these plans are clearly articulated. The applicant also has excellent organizational capacity to carry out and oversee the grant-making process and to invest in grantees that will bear evidence of impact. There are a few areas of weakness: 1) a better distinction of short, intermediate and long term outcomes; 2) recognition that recruitment and selection of clients into interventions might limit the ability to replicate models, alongside a strategy plan to address this concern; and 3) lower bound budget allotted for the evaluation team. But these weaknesses are strongly outweighed in comparison to the

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comprehensive and well articulated approach outlined by the applicant. For these reasons, we give this applicant a Band of "Strong."

**II. Select one Band for this application** (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")  
**Ensure that your selection is supported by your panel's Narrative Assessments, significant strengths and weaknesses, Ratings, and Overall Appraisal Statement. Take into consideration the weighting of each category.**

- Band I (Excellent):** A comprehensive and thorough application of excellent merit with very significant strengths and no/minimal significant weaknesses.
- Band II (Strong):** An application that demonstrates overall competence and is worthy of support, where the value of the significant strengths outweigh the identified weaknesses.
- Band III (Satisfactory):** An application with potential, where strengths and weaknesses are approximately equal. However, some fundamental weaknesses have been identified.
- Band IV (Weak/Non-Responsive):** An application with very significant weaknesses and no/minimal significant strengths that have been identified. This option may also include an application that is non-responsive to the published criteria.

## CONSENSUS RUBRIC

Please use this Consensus Rubric as guidance when selecting your Ratings or Bands.

**BAND I (Excellent)** — *A BAND I rating reflects that the application is compelling, consistently excellent in quality, and addresses all requirements; thereby showing the highest potential for success.*

The **Excellent** application consistently:

- ✓ Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has anticipated issues that may arise.
- ✓ Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested.
- ✓ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.

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- ✓ Provides clear evidence to support all objectives of this section (no assumptions are made).
- ✓ Supports ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting ideas to objectives.

**BAND II (Strong)** — *A BAND II rating reflects that the application is solid, good-quality, and has great potential for success.*

The **Strong** application:

- ✓ Provides a response to all of the information requested.
- ✓ Provides a realistic description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Explains most assumptions and reasons.
- ✓ Supports ideas with comprehensive plans, examples, or outlines.

**BAND III (Satisfactory)** — *A BAND III rating reflects that the application generally meets requirements for a reasonable chance of success, but is neither especially strong nor especially weak.*

The **Satisfactory** application:

- ✓ Covers most of the information requested, with a few exceptions.
- ✓ Is sometimes unclear how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained.
- ✓ Supports individual ideas with plans, examples, or outline.

**BAND IV (Weak/Non-responsive)** — *A weak/non-responsive rating reflects that the application is below standard especially in ability, skill, or quality; indicating that this application will most likely not succeed as described or is not responsive to the application requirements.*

The **Weak/Non-responsive** application:

- ✓ Does not provide one or more key pieces of requested information.
- ✓ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Gives many unsupported assumptions and reasons with little or no connection to objectives.
- ✓ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it
- ✓ Makes many assumptions and many reasons are not defined.
- ✓ Did not connect the activities to the anticipated results.
- ✓ Does not address or respond to the requirements/conditions of the NOFA.
- ✓ Proposes activities that are not consistent with the NOFA and application instructions.