

# UHAI EASHRI

## GRANTMAKING PRIORITY-SETTING AND STRATEGY

*What are your grantmaking and/or strategic priorities (in terms of geographic focus, issue, etc.)? Who decides the grantmaking priorities? The overall strategy for the fund? What's the process by which these decisions are made? How are these practices socialized within your organization?*

UHAI EASHRI (UHAI) is Africa's first indigenous activist fund for and by sex workers and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex (LGBTI) people. Presently, we fund civil society organizing for human rights and social justice in seven Eastern African countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. We also fund, partner with, and grow mission-aligned Pan-African human rights organizing across the continent.

UHAI supports a broad range of issues as identified and prioritized by sex worker and LGBTI communities in Eastern Africa based on the prevailing environment. We have funded critical court challenges that overturned repressive laws; established pioneer community-led HIV clinics; strengthened activist capacities to tackle regressive norms, hate, and violence; and supported marginalized communities to document their lives, organize and advocate.

We use a flexible and accessible participatory funding approach that includes support for capacity building and convenings.

As a participatory fund, we are led and informed by local human rights activists. We advance activists' voice by providing them with resources and tools essential for social change. Our participatory funding model is building agency and leadership in our communities by ensuring that activists are not just beneficiaries of support but also decision-makers for that support. Through these efforts, UHAI is contributing to a radical shift in the narrative of how Africa's human rights struggles are resourced—from dependence on foreign assistance to the ownership and self-determination of people who live those struggles.

As a participatory fund, our community (grantee) partners are involved in grant decisions. They also mentor each other in capacity support and develop and implement their own research and convening agendas.

UHAI also engages local activists in our periodic strategic planning, which provides programming and operational direction for UHAI. Activists review and develop our strategic objectives and program approaches and decide on the sort, style, size, and scope of grants. All four of our grant types derive their priorities and presentation from our strategic plan.

## TYPES OF GRANTS

*What kinds of grants do you provide (e.g., general, rapid response, capacity building, field-building, etc.)? What is the range in amount of the grants you award? Is the participatory decisionmaking process the same for all grant types and sizes? If not, why? Do you earmark funding for a specific purpose in order to ensure diversity in who/what you're funding? Who determines the type and size of grants, and how?*

UHAI does not earmark funding for specific purpose or populations, but we are committed to sustaining diversity in who and what we fund. For instance, in line with our commitment to increasingly fund the most marginalized in our movements, one-third of grants in the last three years went to sex workers; lesbian, bisexual, and queer women; intersex, trans, and gender diverse people; and gay and bisexual men.

UHAI does not pre-determine funding priorities or thematic areas; rather, our grantmaking and fundraising is guided by priorities that activists determine through our strategic planning. For example, community consultations UHHA and its partners undertook as part of its current strategic plan surfaced a need for longer-term unrestricted core support grants; in response we created a new effort called Imarisha Grants in 2016 that provides two-year general support grants of up to US \$50,000.

Our funding is open to a diverse range of issue and types of support in response to requests from our movements. Among other initiatives, we have in the recent past supported:

- ◆ Institutional Development and Core Support
- ◆ Coalition Building and Movement Building
- ◆ Convening and Meeting
- ◆ Legal and Policy Engagement and Advocacy
- ◆ Litigation, Legal Representation and Access to Justice
- ◆ Civic and Political Participation
- ◆ Security and Protection from Sexual and Physical Violence
- ◆ Media, Expression and Information Rights
- ◆ Information Communication Technology
- ◆ Research, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Documentation
- ◆ Faith Outreach and Faith-based Advocacy
- ◆ Arts, Social Networking, Cultural Events and Spaces
- ◆ Sports and Recreation
- ◆ Education and Literacy
- ◆ Entrepreneurship, Financial Independence and Career Improvement
- ◆ Labor Rights
- ◆ Food Security and Nutrition
- ◆ HIV Prevention, Treatment, and Advocacy
- ◆ Health and Wellbeing (general, non-HIV)
- ◆ Migration and Displacement

Generally, grants are determined by a Peer Grants Committee (PGC) that is made up of local activists who are organizing in the region and the Secretariat Grants Committee (SGC), which comprises UHAI staff. The PGC makes Peer Grants, and the SGC makes Strategic, Opportunity and Capacity Support Grants. The PGC also sets priorities for the SGC's grants with an eye toward complementing work supported through Peer Grants. We also do not consider an applicant for other grant types unless they have first received a Peer Grant.

All grants focus on constituency-led organizing that give diverse communities the power to determine their own journeys toward social change. Although UHAI only makes grants to registered organizations, we have an infrastructure to support unregistered organizations through fiscal hosts.

Peer Grants—the majority of UHAI's grants—are flexible and made yearly in an open, competitive, and participatory process that follows a call for proposals. The PGC is made up of 13 activists nominated by and from sex worker and LGBTI communities across Eastern Africa, representing a diversity of the countries and communities we support. Together, they recommend proposals for funding, and their decisions are final. Peer Grants are processed in about four months.

Peer Grants provide a range of support—seed funding, project, and larger program funding, as well as multi-year, unrestricted core support. There are three categories of Peer Grants:

- (i) **Msingi Grants** provide one-year seed funding for new small-scale activities and are capped at USD\$5,000. Msingi Grants are usually awarded to organizations that have not received a grant from UHAI before, but pre-existing grantee partners may apply.
- (ii) **Tujenge Grants** are one-year grants for large-scale projects and program continuation with funding of up to USD\$15,000. The grants may also support core costs of developing organizations and programs. Both new and pre-existing grantee partners may apply for Tujenge Grants.
- (iii) **Imarisha Grants** are two-year general support grants that provide unrestricted support/core funding to established organizations of up to USD\$50,000 to US\$250,000 yearly). Imarisha grants help consolidate and sustain organizations, coalitions, and networks over the long-term.

Applicant organizations must have been in existence for no less than three years, have previously received funding from UHAI, are up to date with their grant reports and fiscally responsible; and have a track record of using and reporting on awarded funds on schedule. All applicants must submit their current strategic plan; financial, procurement, human resource, and administration policies; and their latest audit report.

**Strategic Grants** support large-scale, longer-term initiatives and based on current needs within our movements. The grants may be solicited by UHAI or community partners may propose work. These grants are targeted, non-competitive, and determined by UHAI's secretariat. The executive director gives the final approval. They are flexible in amount and duration, are made year-round, and have a fast turnaround time. Recent funding priorities have included support for long-term litigation and access to justice efforts, HIV treatment access, and programs to address violence.

**Opportunity Grants** address critical and urgent opportunities that emerge outside the Peer and/or Strategic Grants cycle. Recent grants have supported innovative and urgent advocacy opportunities; security and protection needs; and emergency assistance in response to threats of violence. These grants are considered by the secretariat of UHAI and approved by the executive director. Based on the urgency of the requests, these grants may be made in a matter of days. Opportunity Grants are also flexible in amount and duration and made year round.

**Capacity Support Grants (Uwezeshaji Grants)** respond to community partner requests for self-identified learning needs that will help them advance their mission and goals. Needs may include strategic planning, advocacy skills strengthening, professional development for program teams, leadership development, and transition planning. The grants are capped at USD \$ 2,500, processed in one to six months, and are considered by the secretariat all year-round.

## APPLICATION PROCESS AND GRANTMAKING DECISION PROCESS AND PANEL

**Eligibility.** UHAI prioritizes funding to organizations that are led and managed by sex workers and LGBTI people. Mainstream organizations that work with our movements are also eligible to apply for funding, particularly when they can demonstrate meaningful community engagement.

**Outreach Process.** UHAI sends out a call for applications for Peer Grants each year through varied digital platforms such as email, our website, social media, and list serves and by contacting key coalitions and networks. Additionally, UHAI's programs team reaches out to potential and current grantees throughout the year through phone and email contact; organization visits; and meeting at conferences, including UHAI's biennial convening, "Changing Faces Changing Spaces." UHAI also periodically conducts outreach within and as follow up to capacity support interventions.

**Technical Assistance.** Applicants receive assistance in preparing their applications either through one-on-one telephone/virtual conversations and/or emails with the grants team.

**Information for Proposals.** UHAI's Peer Grants application collects information about the organization's membership, staffing and, as appropriate, their identities; leadership; target beneficiaries; program areas; previous, current, and proposed activities; proposed objectives, outputs, and outcomes; budget and current funding sources; and partnership and collaboration details. This information is

solely for the purpose of grants review and processing and is only available to UHAI staff, the PGC and board—all of whom sign strict confidentiality commitments.

**GrantMaking Panels.** UHAI has four types of grants; Peer, Strategic, Opportunity, and Capacity Support (Uwezeshaji) Grants. Decisions on the Peer Grants, which is our largest portfolio, are made by the Peer Grants Committee, and decisions for the other three grants are made by the Secretariat Grants Committee.

**Peer Grants Committee (PGC):** UHAI's Peer Grants Committee (PGC) comprises 13 activists who are nominated by and from sex worker and LGBTI communities across Eastern Africa, representing a diversity of the countries and communities we support. PGC members review grants requests voluntarily; however, we support all logistical costs associated with attending orientation and review meetings and offer a modest allowance of \$100 per day for incidentals during in-person meetings.

### Procedure for PGC members:

- ◆ Nominate themselves or are nominated by others within our movements;
- ◆ Identify as sex workers and/or sexual and gender minorities;
- ◆ Have a track record of work on sex worker and/or sexual and gender minorities rights;
- ◆ Come from diverse professional and activist backgrounds;
- ◆ Have knowledge of and/or professional experience in the Eastern Africa region;
- ◆ Have a demonstrated commitment to human rights, diversity and equality (including respect for sexual and gender diversity);
- ◆ Are deemed credible and trustworthy in their peers' eyes;
- ◆ Have easy access to email and telephone communication;
- ◆ Are currently involved in full-time, field-based activism in the Eastern African region.

PGC members are identified through an open call for nominations, which is circulated to UHAI's partners who can either nominate themselves or nominate someone else. The list of nominated partners is short-listed by the Secretariat Grants Committee (SGC) and then approved by the board. In short-listing the PGC members, the SGC ensures that committee has balanced representation across the various identities and countries we serve.

**Confidentiality and conflict of interest:** Because the PGC has access to a lot of information about groups in

the region and may also be members of these groups, confidentiality and conflicts of interest are critical to identify to ensure a credible process. To that end, PGC members sign confidentiality and conflict of interest agreements that require them to not discuss anything that occurs during the PGC meetings and review process. They also must declare conflicts of interest that may occur. For example, a PGC member cannot review a proposal from an organization of which they are a member, for which they helped to develop the proposal, to which they contributed to in a way that may make them biased to the organization. They also must step out of the room when this proposal is being discussed.

At times, PGC members prefer to be anonymous so UHAI does not reveal the identity of the team members. All that is externally communicated is the composition in terms of identity and geography.

**Term limit:** To ensure continuity, at every grantmaking cycle, five members transition off the PGC, leaving six who have been previously engaged in the process. On average, a PGC member serves three terms, though this might be longer, depending on the difficulty of finding a member representing the same constituency to replace them.

### Orientation and support for the PGC

Once the PGC is constituted and before they start reviewing proposals, they attend an orientation meeting convened by UHAI's program manager: capacity support. This meeting is held virtually and allows for the team to get to know one another and learn more about the expectations and responsibilities of their participation. Confidentiality and conflict of interest are also addressed, and members are asked to sign statements. They are also taken through the review documents they will use for scoring. Existing members share their experiences with newer members, and any questions are addressed.

### Decision Making Process—Peer Grants

- ◆ A call for proposals is sent out in English, French and Swahili at an agreed-upon time depending on UHAI's work plan.
- ◆ All received applications are checked by the SGC for eligibility against UHAI's criteria, values, and philosophy; those that do not align with the latter are automatically disqualified.
- ◆ Proposals that are eligible are translated so that every PGC can review proposals in their native language.
- ◆ Each proposal is virtually reviewed by three PGC members: a primary reviewer, a secondary reviewer and a tertiary

reviewer. Reviewers score the proposals, which are then discussed at an in-person meeting attended by all reviewers. At this group review meeting, the PGC discusses each proposal, scores each again, and develops the list of approved proposals for funding. This list is determined by ranking the average scores of proposals; however, the PGC exercises discretion in cases to ensure that the final list includes marginalized groups that may have high scores but not enough to make the final cut.

- ◆ UHAI's role in the PGC meeting is administrative, as well as providing the committee with information about organizations' grant reporting histories, accountability, and capacity needs.
- ◆ The list of approved proposals is sent to the UHAI board for their endorsement because, as UHAI's governing body, they have fiscal responsibility for the organization. While the board will review the PGC decisions and ask questions for clarification purposes, they cannot change or decline PGC decisions.

### Decision Making Process—Secretariat determined grants

The Secretariat Grants Committee (SGC) comprises UHAI staff members, including the deputy executive director, the programs team, the finance manager and finance associate. The program officer: grant making and administration, assisted by a programs officer cultivates relationships with grantees and receives applications for strategic and opportunity grants. Applications for capacity support grants are received by the programs manager: capacity support. These proposals are presented to the SGC who review them and make funding recommendations to the executive director, who approves funding.

## INITIAL VETTING/SCREENING/ DUE DILIGENCE

All applications are checked by the SGC for eligibility against UHAI's criteria, values, and philosophy; those that do not align with the latter are automatically disqualified. Because activists are located where the work happens and know organizations that may not be undertaking work they claim to be doing, their involvement itself acts as a screening process.

Before any new applicant is awarded a grant, UHAI staff must visit the group as part of due diligence. This visit is an opportunity to meet the group and its members and identify capacity support needs.

## GENERAL STRUCTURE

*What percentage of staff members are “peers”, i.e. of the population the foundation seeks to benefit? What percentage of board members are peers? What percentage of the grantmaking decision-making committee(s) are peers? Are there other committees or operational processes that involve peers? How does the role of paid staff differ from that of peers? Do you pay members of your panel/committee?*

Remaining true to our identity as an activist fund, our board is made up of six Eastern African activists representing sexual and gender minorities and sex worker movements. To ensure that UHAI remains activist-led, the board composition requires that two-thirds of members are activists affiliated with LGBTI and sex worker organizations in the Eastern African region. At least a third of the board are members who are not associated with an organization that could be a UHAI grantee.

With an activist board sometimes made up of UHAI grantees, we always employ and adhere to a strict conflict of interest policy. Until December 2017, the UHAI board had a grant approval role, and no board member could review or approve a grant from an affiliate organization. Beginning in 2018, however the UHAI board will move to a purely governance role and no longer have any role in grant approval.

UHAI's staff is also made up of highly qualified activist professionals recruited from and representing the diversity of Eastern Africa's sex worker and sexual and gender minorities and allied movements. Recognizing that staff members are often part of the communities and movement we serve, our conflict of interest policy states that if staff are serving in leadership roles in a grantee (or potential grantee) organization; involved in romantic relationship with its leadership; and/or have family members who are a part of its leadership, that organization cannot receive funding.

UHAI also involves activities in a planning taskforce that determines the agenda and theme of our biennial conference, “Changing Faces, Changing Spaces Conference” (CFCS), Africa's largest convening of LGBTI and sex worker activists and donors. This ensures that the agenda and overall structure of the conference is activist determined. The results of this conference—including priority issues that emerge from the discussions—are used to shape UHAI's grant and program strategies.

## REPORTING, LEARNING, AND PROCESS ITERATION

*What, if any, are your reporting requirements for grantees? Who develops them? Do you do any kind of formal evaluation? If so, what is asked of grantees and who conducts the evaluations? How do you evaluate impact? How do you learn about participants' experiences, both as selection panelists and applicants? With whom do you share the results of what you learn? Have you made changes to your programs based on feedback? If so, what is an example?*

Grantees are required to submit progress and final narrative and financial reports. All grants above USD 30,000 require project audit reports. The narrative report includes information on the inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact of the project—information that UHAI uses for our monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

UHAI also regularly assesses our internal evaluation procedures and how we determine outcomes and progress indicators. For long-term impact analysis, UHAI evaluates how our programming efforts contributed to movements every year when we review and write our annual and strategic plans. Our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework, which guides institutional planning, is based on a continuous assessment of the current organizing context (social and political operating environment) against anticipated results, successes, and learning.

All of our evaluation is guided by our theory of change in which we seek to realize:

- ◆ A shift in the legal and policy environment
- ◆ A shift in public discourse
- ◆ A shift in lived realities
- ◆ A shift in organizing
- ◆ A shift in advocacy
- ◆ A shift in UHAI's institutional capacity

As a responsive fund whose agenda is shaped by the movements we serve, our program design is continually under review to ensure our approach to advancing our mission remains timely and relevant. Our MEL Framework is anchored by our current strategic plan, which shapes the program design direction for a three-year period. We undertake periodic progress reporting and evaluation

against three-year and annual targets so that we are able to continuously learn and adapt to meet emerging gaps.

Grantee partner application and reports ask for information about baselines, proposed outputs and outcomes, and sustainability plans. We also seek feedback on our grantmaking and other program support. Our capacity support interventions start with a baseline capacity assessment against which we plan and track progressive outputs, outcomes, and changes during the learning journey.

As a learning organization, UHAI gathers and uses summaries of implementation data from grantee partners to continuously inform our planning, programming strategy, and operations. We continually gather and use data that is desegregated by gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation that allows for comparative impact analysis across communities. We prepare quarterly reports for our board, as well as periodic donor reports and annual public reports. In addition, we do a mid-term evaluation and an end-of-strategic-plan evaluation to assess UHAI's impact and draw lessons for strategic reviews and shifts.

To advance mutual accountability and ensure inclusive and participatory monitoring and evaluation, each December UHAI holds a meeting for both staff and board members to review progress against the annual work plan and budget and to develop the following year's work plan and budget. Also, a mid-term evaluation and end-of-strategic-plan evaluation are undertaken to assess the impact of UHAI's program plans and draw lessons for continued programming and best practice.

For more information about UHAI EASHRI, contact Mutisya Leonard at [mutisya@uhai-eashri.org](mailto:mutisya@uhai-eashri.org).

This resource was developed as a companion piece to the GrantCraft guide on participatory grantmaking. This resource is part of a suite of resources that showcase the rich and varied practices of participatory grantmaking across various organizations, reducing the burden on each funder to repeatedly outline their model. The guide and companion resources give insight to the philanthropy landscape about the what, how, and why of participatory grantmaking.

Visit [grantcraft.org/participatorygrantmaking](https://grantcraft.org/participatorygrantmaking) to explore further.