AVAC PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY 2023-2026

Table of Contents

Glossary

AVAC Partners Organizations and individuals who take an active role in implementing work related to achieving AVAC's mission in collaboration with AVAC. Partners bring complementary resources to the table (e.g. expertise, financial resources, social capital) that bring mutual value to advance common objectives. AVAC's partnerships are bi-directional, collaborative, and mutually accountable. These relationships are defined by an active commitment to shared strategy and solidarity, with or without the sharing of funds.

Fixed award grants Grantmaking approach in which payments are made to grantees based upon reaching mutually agreed-on project milestones and an overall project budget set at the beginning of the project, rather than reimbursing based on actual line-item activity expenditures.

Interested parties Used throughout this document instead of the word stakeholder to indicate those with interest in/impacted by the work undertaken by AVAC and its partners.

Mentorship Medium to long-term supportive relationship in which an individual/organization with more experience, connections, or technical expertise in a specific area of work provides guidance or direction to an individual/organization with less experience in that specific area.

Partnership Norms Shared set of values that provide informal guidelines for how partners will work together.

Unrestricted Funds Grant funding that is not restricted by the donor to a specific project and can be allocated at AVAC's discretion.

Introduction

Since its founding, AVAC has been committed to durable relationships with a broad range of partners, from civil society advocates to scientists, policy makers to program implementers, and more. AVAC has built a strong reputation as a trusted coalition partner that serves a bridging and convening role for diverse networks of partners and other interested parties[1] working in HIV prevention and global health equity.

Together, AVAC and its partners
- **Track and translate** the HIV prevention science to ensure that researchers and communities are working together
- **Advocate** for evidence-based, high-impact, community-centered programs, products and policies
- **Catalyze** the relationships, partnerships, coalitions, advocacy agendas, joint commitments and action plans to collectively advance HIV prevention and global health equity

Equitable partnerships are a key enabler for achieving AVAC's mission and delivering the 2022-2026 strategic plan. Equitable partnerships are based on solidarity, respect, transparent communication, and power sharing. As a partner, AVAC strives to transition away from traditional power structures and towards a model in which those with lived experience and field expertise have influence and equal voice in the design and delivery of plans and priorities. Further, AVAC seeks to foster a community of shared agenda-setting, responsibility, and learning.

AVAC's 2022-2026 strategic planning process, AVAC's 2021 partnership scorecard and 2021 COMPASS and 2020 Fellows program evaluations identified key areas of strength in AVAC's partnerships, as well as opportunities for growth. Strengths include AVAC's unique ability to convene diverse networks of partners, show leadership, and to work effectively across the spectrum of partners and other interested parties in the HIV space, as well as the flexibility and responsiveness AVAC offers its partners. Areas for growth include opportunities for AVAC to clearly define its approach to partnerships, to increase transparency in partnership decision-making and consistency in partner experience, and to shift greater leadership roles to partners from communities most impacted by HIV.

Specifically, the AVAC partnership scorecard highlighted that partners feel that:
- AVAC values partnership and is a valued partner, resulting in impactful advocacy work.
- Relationships with AVAC are generally characterized by collaboration, respect, and trust, but there are also experiences of disrespect, poor collaboration, and lack of accountability that need to be addressed.

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[1] The term "interested parties" is used throughout this document instead of the word "stakeholder" to indicate those with interest in/impacted by the work undertaken by AVAC and its partners. This has been done to avoid the colonial connotations of the word "stakeholder."

- The partner network continues to strengthen and expand its reach, but more needs to be done to highlight partner visibility and facilitate connections as the network grows.
- Visible steps are needed to formalize and communicate AVAC's partnership approach, and address harmful structural power dynamics.
- Grants and financial requirements from AVAC for sub-grantees are generally acceptable, but could be strengthened through streamlined processes.
- It is critical that AVAC take action to respond to the feedback from partners.

In 2022 AVAC launched its Partnership Action Plan to respond to these findings. This partnership strategy will provide the framework for operationalizing the Partnership Action Plan. AVAC's partnership strategy will guide partnership work to support the evolution of partnerships in alignment with the 2022-2026 strategic plan. This strategy:

1. Articulates an updated rationale for, strategic approach to, and models of partnership at AVAC;
2. Maps out approaches for centering the expertise, voices and leadership of partners from communities most impacted by HIV in our work, shifting away from traditional power structures in partnership operations, increasing transparency in communications and decision-making, strengthening mutual accountability within partnerships, and ensuring more consistency in partners' experiences across AVAC; and
3. Outlines metrics for successful partnerships and a plan for achieving those metrics.

This partnership strategy will be launched in 2023, with operational changes being phased in over a three-year period.

Defining "Partners"

AVAC Partners are organizations and individuals who take an active role in implementing work related to achieving AVAC's mission in collaboration with AVAC. Partners bring complementary resources to the table (e.g. expertise, financial resources, social capital) that bring mutual value to advance common objectives. AVAC's partnerships are bi-directional, collaborative, and mutually accountable.

AVAC's partnership network is broad and diverse, and is not limited to individuals and organizations with whom AVAC has a current funding relationship (i.e., who AVAC subgrants to or receives grant funding from). AVAC's partnerships also include active collaborators working in tandem with AVAC to advance shared advocacy priorities on a consistent and ongoing basis. **All of these relationships are defined by an active commitment to shared strategy and solidarity, even without the sharing of funds.**

Why we partner

AVAC's advocacy is grounded in and defined by partnerships with civil society, researchers, and many other organizations and individuals working in HIV prevention research and implementation.

AVAC's partnership network brings together a broad range of perspectives, information, and expertise, ensuring that the HIV response and advocacy for global health equity is informed by community voices and experiences, as well as scientific research. Our partners push to keep prevention on the agenda at national and global levels and make sure that clear and accurate information about clinical research and complex science is made accessible to communities that are most impacted. Their voices accelerate ethical research and equitable access, and their oversight demands accountability so that interventions that work reach those who need them most.

AVAC and our partner network hold global leaders accountable for results—demanding the resources, policies and evidence-based plans needed to deliver all of today's prevention options to the people who need them and to plan for the rapid rollout of new options as they emerge.

AVAC's aspirational value to our partners:
- AVAC is a trusted and credible **convener** with a unique ability to **translate the perspectives and evidence of a diverse range of partners**, including scientists, civil society, industry, communities, academics, and policymakers alike.
- AVAC **facilitates linkages** among diverse networks to ensure civil society partners have access to opportunities to engage with policymakers, researchers, and industry to bring sustained attention and accountability to community priorities, and to **build solidarity across partners and geographies**.

- AVAC brings **technical expertise in advocacy strategy and tactics** that strengthens partner advocacy approaches and supports partners to collect, analyze and utilize data for advocacy.

Partnership Values:

AVAC's partnerships are guided by our organizational values and commitment to being **inclusive, people-centered, rights-based, respectful, transparent, accountable.**

We believe that equitable partnerships are based on solidarity and mutual empowerment, respect, transparent communication, and power sharing. AVAC actively works to ensure the inclusion of partners who are most impacted by HIV, including key populations (KPs) and adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). We cultivate balanced partnerships through bi-directional learning and skills exchange, priority-setting and mutual accountability.

AVAC Partner Categories

AVAC's core partner network is broad and includes a diverse range of collaborators in the HIV, human rights and global health spaces. While AVAC's partnership values and norms, and many approaches, apply across all partner types, relationship management approaches will be tailored to different partner categories to meet our objective that communities most impacted by HIV are intentionally centered in the work and resourced to lead.

AVAC conducted an analysis to identify the major categories of partners within its network. The below table breaks out AVAC's partner network into three partner categories based on a power analysis that considers:
1. Proximity to communities most impacted by HIV.
2. Access to funding and donor relationships.
3. Access to and influence on decision making spaces that impact global health.

Within each category, partner types are outlined; these types may be further broken out into sub-categories for whom tailored approaches/partnership models are defined based on an intersectional analysis (e.g., by funding relationship with AVAC, size of organizational budget, context of structural barriers that impact that partner's work). These subcategories are not fixed, and partners may shift between sub-categories throughout the lifespan of a partnership.

Category-specific Partnership Models

Partner Category	Types of partners in this category	Power analysis
Community and National-level Civil Society Collaborators (local partners)	Civil society organizations and individuals working at community and national levels	AVAC: • Historically has greater access to financial resources and donor relationships • For sub-grantee partners, AVAC has control over project-specific resources • Currently has greater access/influence in Global North-dominated decision-making spaces • Has wide network - can be convener but also gatekeeper Global South civil society partners are essential for achieving AVAC's mission, they have: • Information and expertise from community and national level, technical knowledge/delivery capacity • Lived experience/representation, credibility and legitimacy in speaking to the issues • Direct implementation of advocacy campaigns • Direct access to most impacted communities, social capital that provides legitimacy in working with communities These partners are deeply impacted by the work AVAC is doing and can deeply influence achievement of objectives.

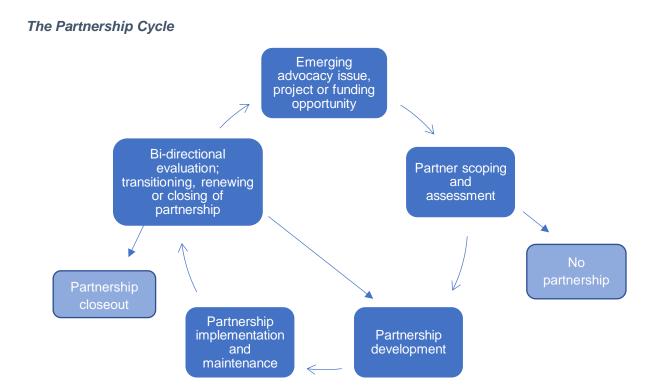| INGO and Global Policy Collaborators	International NGOs or advocates working at global or regional levels	AVAC may have access to project-specific resources, but in a less financial resource-scarce context. Some of these organizations may have equal or greater financial resources than AVAC even in situations where AVAC is sub-granting to them for a specific project. Have similar level of access to decision-making spaces and donors in Global North. These partners have specific expertise to contribute to AVAC's objectives and relationships. In some spaces these partners have greater reach, influence and access.
Researchers and Scientists	Researchers and scientists, research institutions and research networks working in HIV and other pertinent health fields	Generate/access scientific/biomedical information/technologies that inform advocacy and product development Administrators can influence how HIV research gets funded and where resources are directed AVAC makes information from these partners accessible to broader audiences. AVAC has connections to communities through partner network; may facilitate connections between communities and scientists/researchers. Rely on AVAC and its partnership network for information/data. Can also be influenced by AVAC and its partner network

AVAC's core partner network of ongoing collaborators, which is categorized in the three groupings above, is the focus of this strategy. However, AVAC also works with project-specific partners and other interested parties who are not necessarily ongoing members of AVAC's core partner network. While these project partners engage with AVAC on discrete projects or activities, they do not necessarily meet the criteria in our definition of a core partner beyond the scope of a specific project or collaboration. These project partners may include government agencies, pharma, and multilaterals, all of whom AVAC may work with on specific activities, but who do not remain engaged with AVAC on a consistent basis, with a bi-directional, mutually accountable relationship. For the first phase of the partnership action plan and this strategy document, we will focus on the core partner network, with approaches to project specific partners to be developed in a later phase of this work.

In addition, AVAC also works with funders, policy makers and product developers – sometimes in partnership, and often with these groups and individuals as audiences or targets for our advocacy. While not a partner category, it is important to consider a similar power analysis:

Audience	Types of organizations	Power analysis
Funders, policy makers and product developers	Foundation donors, donor government agencies, ministries of health, product development partnerships, pharmaceutical companies	Agenda-setting role given reach, power, influence. Shape where funding is going and what is prioritized in HIV response, as well as influence specific projects implemented by AVAC and its partners. Can make connections and champion or inhibit work. Rely on AVAC and its partnership network for information/data. Can also be influenced by AVAC and its partner network. *NOTE: From its founding, AVAC has maintained a policy not to accept any funding from pharmaceutical companies.*

Phases of partnership

Historically AVAC's diverse partnership network has grown organically, with new partnerships often formed on an ad hoc basis in response to a desire to collaborate on a certain advocacy issue, project, or funding opportunity. As AVAC's partnership network has expanded, we are applying a more structured and transparent approach to partnership development.

The Partnership Cycle

Emerging advocacy issue, project or funding opportunity

Partner scoping and assessment

No partnership

Bi-directional evaluation; transitioning, renewing or closing of partnership

Partnership closeout

Partnership implementation and maintenance

Partnership development

In response to emerging issues and themes, new project opportunities, and/or emerging policy and advocacy initiatives, AVAC may look to expand its partnerships to bring specific expertise or complementary resources to a project (technical, financial, etc.). Additionally, AVAC may seek new partners representing constituencies who would be most impacted by the project or initiative, to ensure that those communities are involved in project design and implementation. AVAC may also respond to issues and opportunities that existing or potential partners bring to AVAC. This initial phase of the partnership cycle will involve mapping out interested parties to identify potential partners and identifying those that are the best fit for the project and why.

Once AVAC and potential partners align that there might be a good fit, AVAC staff and partners feel it is essential to have a shared and co-created vision and terms of reference for the partnership, and that all partners proactively affirm their commitment to the partnership. These steps support stronger partnerships and facilitate greater transparency, satisfaction, and accountability in the partnership for both AVAC and its partners.

Once the partnership is developed and formalized with a partnering agreement, the relationship should be periodically assessed to identify what is and is not working well so that adjustments can be made to the partnership as necessary. These partnership health checks will also inform decisions about the future of the partnership.

Phases of partnership, key relationship management actions and tools

Phase of partnership	Key relationship management steps	Tools *(To be developed for Partnership Handbook)*
Partner scoping and assessment	• Mapping to identify key parties interested in/impacted by the proposed project and which of those could be potential partners, as well as potential inhibitors of the work • Potential partner assessment to clearly identify strategic fit, specific value proposition of the partnership, and any potential risks or conflicts	• Mapping tool • Potential partner assessment worksheet
Partnership development	• Partnering agreements • Work plan/strategic action plan development	• Partnering agreement template • Strategic action plan/work plan template
Implementation and maintenance of the partnership	Partnership health checklist/coalition health scorecard administered annually	• Norms and SOPs as outlined in Partnership Handbook • Partnership health checklist, coalition health scorecard tool
Evaluation, transitioning, renewing or closing out the partnership	Lessons learned and feedback on what worked well and what could be improved in future collaborations consolidated, documented and shared out to all partners.	• Project closeout worksheet • If project being renewed or transitioned, partnering agreement should be refreshed for next phase

Partnering agreements

AVAC and its partners will formalize the expectations for the collaboration with partnering agreements. This will ensure that the partnership values of mutual accountability, bi-directionality and collaboration are systematically embedded in the ways we work with partners.

Partnering agreements will fall under two categories, based on the scope of the partnership at a given time:
- Partnerships for which there is a defined project with a discrete work plan, deliverables, and funding.
- Partnerships with no current defined project or funding, but where partners and AVAC have an ongoing relationship defined by a shared strategy for advancing a common advocacy agenda, and solidarity.

Over the lifespan of a partnership, the scope and terms of each partner's relationship with AVAC may change with projects ending or starting up, and therefore the partnering agreement format that is appropriate will be determined by scope of the partnership at a given time. In addition, AVAC may work with a partner in multiple ways and under multiple agreements simultaneously.

Approach to partnering agreements by scope of partnership

	Type of partnership	
	Partnership with discrete project work plan providing a framework for the relationship	**Partnership with no discrete project work plan or funding relationship**
Description of partner relationship	Partnership where there is a clear work plan and deliverables, often tied to grant funding. AVAC may be sub-granter or grantee.	Partnership defined by shared advocacy priorities, strategy and solidarity, but no current shared project with a defined work plan and deliverables. Relationship may involve sharing important knowledge and information and collaborating regularly through email listserv, AVAC partner calls, webinars, and other convenings and engagement opportunities. Historically AVAC and these partners have integrated and aligned their work without any formal agreement. These partners might be called upon by AVAC as local experts on particular topic areas.
Partnering agreement approach	Partnering agreements will be co-created by both partners (whether an individual or organization) at the launch of the project collaboration, and will define the terms of the partnership, including: ● Vision/objectives of the partnership ● Structure, process and support mechanisms for the partnership ● Work plan and deliverables ● Roles and responsibilities of each partner ● Partnership norms/ground rules ● Conflict resolution approach ● Monitoring and evaluation plan AVAC's Partnership Handbook will include a template for these agreements. **Where AVAC is disbursing funds to other partners:** partnering agreements will be embedded in sub-grant agreements/program support agreement/contracts.	While there is no specific project structuring the relationship between AVAC and these partners, AVAC has received feedback that it is important that there be some terms of reference for these ongoing relationships that establishes shared values and commitments from both sides of the partnership. There is also a need to create an opportunity for partners of AVAC to proactively reaffirm their desire to remain in AVAC's partnership network. Annually AVAC will give partners an opportunity to opt-in to continue partnering with AVAC through a simplified online terms of reference tied to the annual refreshing of AVAC's partner database. Partners will be asked to sign off on shared partnership values and norms, as well as review a list of expectations for both partners in the relationship, and confirm their contact information and areas of technical expertise for AVAC's partnership database.

Type of partnership	
Partnership with discrete project work plan providing a framework for the relationship	**Partnership with no discrete project work plan or funding relationship**
In collaborations where partners are working together to develop a project or funding proposal, terms of reference should be put in place to guide the working relationship and then formalized into the sub-grant agreements when funds are awarded. **Where AVAC is a grantee/subgrantee or contracted partner:** The terms of reference in the grant agreement or contract from the grantmaking partner will serve as the primary agreement/terms of reference for the partnership.	

Implementation and maintenance of durable and equitable partnerships

AVAC's partnerships are core to our work, and building equitable, durable and trusting partnerships takes time and intentionality. These partnerships are based on a shared vision and strategy for achieving that vision, mutual accountability, consistent communication, and transparency – including an acknowledgement of the power dynamics that exist among partners and an intentional approach to upending those dynamics to achieve equity.

AVAC's current partner relationship management approaches can differ across workstreams and individual project managers, leading to partner experiences with AVAC that can be highly individualized and varied. Through implementation of this partnership strategy, AVAC aims to further strengthen its partnerships by ensuring more consistent, transparent approaches to partnership across AVAC, as well as identifying where AVAC can shift power, leadership and resources to partners from communities most impacted by HIV and global health inequity.

Consistent and transparent approaches to partnership management: current vs. future state

	Current state **before Partnership Strategy**	**Future state** **under Partnership Strategy**
Partnership norms	Implicit, some are reflected in sub-granting agreements	**Partnership norms explicitly stated** and signed off by all partners in **partnering agreements** and used to evaluate AVAC and partner performance and provide accountability within the partnership
Partner relationship management	Individualized approaches to partner relationship management can create a variable experience for partners working across AVAC workstreams. A partner contact list is centrally managed, but no shared relationship management platform for all staff to manage information and updates on partnerships; can lead to duplication of effort by partners who have to share information multiple times, and communication gaps among workstreams. Information about partnerships is lost when partner-facing staff leave AVAC.	**Partner relationship management SOP and Partnership Handbook** define and support implementation of consistent approaches to partner relationship management across all AVAC workstreams. AVAC **job descriptions** and **performance management** tools will define partnership relationship management expectations for each partner-facing role. All **staff and partners will be formally oriented on AVAC partnership norms, approaches and expectations**. **Shared partner relationship management platform** for AVAC staff will facilitate partner information sharing among AVAC teams and collaboration between teams working with the same partners. This will support improved institutional memory around partner

	Current state before Partnership Strategy	Future state under Partnership Strategy
		relationships and more equitable access to partnership information.
Project management	No formal project management SOP or training for AVAC staff with guidelines on proactively and consistently implementing collaborative approaches in project management that encourage shared leadership within projects. Approaches to project management vary by project manager/team. AVAC teams encouraged to use Monday.com project management tool with mixed engagement.	AVAC will introduce **a project management SOP, tools and trainings to** support consistent and collaborative approaches to project management across AVAC projects, and help staff identify power-sharing opportunities as they go through the stages of project development and management.
Sub-grants management	Approaches to sub-grants management varies by project manager/team No consistent sub-grants management SOP, tools or training for AVAC staff. This can lead to inefficiencies, such as payment delays that impact partner work and project implementation, as well as increased workload for Finance team and partners.	**Sub-grants management SOP**, tools and trainings support consistent and efficient approaches to sub-grants management across AVAC. Expectations for project vs. finance roles are clear.
Sub-granting Approach	Sub-grant payments based on financial reporting against line-item expenses as outlined in project budgets and work plans.	**Fixed award approach for sub-grants** under $250,000. Payments are made to partners based upon reaching mutually agreed-on project milestones and an overall project budget set at the beginning of the project, rather than reimbursing based on actual line-item activity expenditures. This sub-granting approach allows for • More flexibility for the sub-grantee who can pivot and reprioritize the use of funds over the year as they determine the best path for achieving their project milestones • A reduced financial reporting burden for partners as reporting focuses on

	Current state before Partnership Strategy	Future state under Partnership Strategy
		milestones, results and outputs rather than activity-level expenses • Reduced workload and delays in payment processing from AVAC's side as project and finance teams are not reviewing line-item expenses as part of project financial oversight
	For partners with no restricted project funds from AVAC, budgets may be allocated ad hoc at the discretion of the executive director to facilitate implementation of strategic advocacy by AVAC partners. Lack of transparency in how the decisions are made and how they tie to AVAC's strategic plan.	Unrestricted funds may be available to support ad hoc advocacy initiatives that closely align with and would significantly advance AVAC's strategy. Priorities will include support to partners to engage in leadership spaces, peer mentorship, and other local partner skills building/exchange opportunities AVAC will develop and ratify an unrestricted grants SOP that provides transparency in decision making around partner work funded by general operating support funds, including clarity for staff and partners on: - Rubrics for decision-making: clear criteria for which partners qualify and under which circumstances, deliverables for the grants, process for decision making and who is involved - How the supported work ties to strategic plan priorities - How the funded project will impact staff time
AVAC staff trainings	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training for all AVAC staff, but trainings do not explicitly tie EDI to partnership work. No explicit trainings or orientations on partnership norms or relationship management can lead to a variable experience for AVAC partners, and perpetuation of white supremacy culture within relationships with partners.	All **staff receive orientation on AVAC partnership norms** and approaches that embed principles of EDI. **Annual trainings and refreshers on partnership management "soft skills"** such as intercultural competency, decolonizing global health, dismantling white supremacy culture, etc. in collaboration with EDI Leadership Council. All AVAC program staff receive **training on project management and sub-grant management approaches** and skills to ensure standardized approaches across teams.

Partnership norms

AVAC's partnership norms will guide AVAC's work across partner categories and establish mutual expectations and accountability in AVAC's partner relationships. The partnership norms outline how AVAC's partnership values will work in practice and are the framework for AVAC staff interactions with partners.

AVAC partnership norms

Accountability	Communication	Knowledge Management	Resource Management
• **Collective responsilbity** to meeting the objectives of the partnership • **Interdependence** of partner participation for success of the partnership • **Bi-directional** reporting and information sharing • Commitment to **data-driven decision-making** • **Respect** as a foundation for all interactions	• **Transparency** and honesty • Commitment to **over-communicating** rather than risk under-communicating • **Timely sharing** of information • Open **recognition** of all partner contributions	• Openness to **sharing** organizational knowledge • **Consistent documentation** of partner relationships to facilitate info-shraing acrosss teams and organizations • **Accessibility** of project info and outputs to partners in a shared, open access repository	• **Transparent and collaborative** budgeting and work planning • Allocation of resources and reporting requirements **right-sized** to the needs of the partnership

Decision Making	Conflict Resolution	Meetings	Skills Building/Transfer
• **Shared** decision-making and co-creation of goals, objectives and work plans for project partners • **Most-impacted partners are fully engaged and centered** in priority and agenda-setting • **Transparency** in decision making • Commitment to **power sharing**	• Disagreements or **conflicts are discussed** before they become a problem • **Willingness to have "difficult conversations"** for the sake of the partnership and achieving mutual goals without fear of retaliation • Commitment to following mutually agreed-upon **conflict resolution and remediation** processes	• **Partners with the most relevant skills and experience lead**, not just the biggest or best-resourced organizations • Meeting **agendas are developed collaboratively** and shared in advance of scheduled meetings • Meeting notes are **documented and shared** with all relevant partners to ensure transparency and agreement on decision points and next steps	• Commitment to **bi-directional** learning, knowledge and skills sharing • Expertise from **communities will be centered**, with a focus on peer learning • **Mentorship** as a key component of skills building to support implementation of learnings

Partnership Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures

In 2023-2024 AVAC will develop and launch guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) that will streamline partnership norms into AVAC's work with partners across all workstreams, as outlined below. These SOPs will be compiled into a Partnership Handbook for easy reference and be reinforced by staff orientation and trainings.

Partnership guidelines/Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will include:

Partnership Norms Category	Guidelines/ SOPs	Description
Accountability	Project management guidelines	Defines expectations for AVAC project management, including participatory approaches to project and proposal design, work planning, budgeting, and reporting.
	Sub-grants management SOP	Consistent approaches to managing grants, turnaround times for reviews, etc.
	Partnering Agreements/Terms of reference	Establish clear partnership principles and objectives.
	Staff partnership performance evaluations	Embed assessment of partnership indicators into AVAC staff performance evaluations.
Communication	Partner Spotlight	Guidance for spotlighting partner work in AVAC communications.
	AVAC partner calls strategy	Vision for AVAC partner network calls in which agendas and content are co-defined and discussions are co-led by partners.
Knowledge Management	Partner Database	Expectations for maintaining AVAC's partner database to track partner information, areas of expertise, relationship history and interactions with AVAC.
	Advocates Bureau	Tracking partner areas of expertise, clarifies AVAC opt-in approach to sharing advocacy and speaking opportunities to expand the pool of advocate speakers/participants.
Resource Management	Fixed-rate grantmaking approach	Streamlined approach to structuring AVAC sub-grant agreements, reporting and payment schedules and expectations.
	Unrestricted sub-grant guidelines	Outlines process for making sub-grant to partners with unrestricted funds, to provide transparency into how decisions are made, how the sub-grants align with AVAC's strategic plan, and how the sub-grant will be managed.

Partnership Norms Category	Guidelines/ SOPs	Description
	Fundraising strategy	Outlines AVAC's updated fundraising strategy which includes strategic shift away from sub-granting where appropriate and partners are resourced directly to support more African partner-led grant-making, decision-making, governance within projects.
	Fundraising manual (updated)	Internal guide to fundraising processes, including a revision to include decision point during fundraising process to identify if AVAC or another partner should prime.
Decision making	Prospective partner process and assessment	Outlines steps to becoming an AVAC partner and assessment tool used by both AVAC and partner to determine if the relationship is a good fit.
	Stipend policy	Defines when and how much AVAC will provide for partner stipends for AVAC hosted, sponsored or supported meetings, calls, conferences.
	Partner travel policy	Guidance for when and how AVAC sponsors partner travel for conferences, meetings and other events.
	Event Planning	Guidance for collaboration with and support to partners in planning events.
Conflict resolution	Conflict resolution and remediation approach	Procedures for constructively resolving conflicts between AVAC and partners and establishing accountability processes.
Meetings	Pre-Meetings	Clear guidance for when AVAC should be involved in preparing for advocacy calls, how to create space for partners from communities most impacted by HIV to lead.
	Partner Call Strategy	Outlines the purpose and objectives of AVAC partner calls and plan for shared agenda-setting and facilitation.
Skills building and exchange	Staff roles and support	Updated language in job descriptions to capture expectations for partnership work embedded in all partner-facing roles, as well as partner mentorship component in relevant staff roles.
	AVAC partnership management orientation	Internal orientation trainings on partnership norms, approaches and SOPs for AVAC staff who interact with partners.
	EDI/Partnership training plan	Plan for training AVAC staff to disrupt white supremacy culture and build skills around topics such as intercultural competency and conflict resolution

Resources and Funding

As outlined in AVAC's fundraising strategy, AVAC advocates for a shift of donor resources to greater direct advocacy investment in regions and communities most impacted by HIV. AVAC will leverage its relationship with funders and policy makers to encourage funding and programming approaches that promote the leadership of communities most impacted by HIV, including:
- Localization of funds with partners that are rooted in those communities;
- Funding models that will support partners to define their own priorities, such as fixed-award grants;
- Funding that supports organizational capacity-strengthening, including increased funding for general operating support and increased overhead rates on restricted grants.

Where appropriate, AVAC will continue to actively shift governance and grant-making roles within key projects to partner-led structures, with a strategic move away from sub-granting so that funding flows directly to CSO partners as prime recipients of donor grants. With these shifts, it is anticipated that AVAC will become a sub-grantee of our partners in some projects, while still retaining our role as a bridge, convener and technical support partner across different partner groups, translator of complex science, and catalyst of action.

Fundraising approaches by partner category

Pre-2022 fundraising strategy	Under 2022 fundraising strategy	
	Partner category	**Description of approach**
AVAC primes on grants, and sub-grants project funds to project/coalition partners for implementation.	Civil Society Collaborators	• Where appropriate, partners prime on project grants, with AVAC becoming a sub-grantee partner. • In projects where AVAC shifts governance and grant-making roles to local partners, the phasing of this work will be informed by robust internal and external assessments and partner input. Transitions within projects will be phased to set new sub-granting partners up for success in managing existing funding and to successfully compete as prime recipients of funding on future proposals. This will include support for developing systems and processes needed to manage and sub-grant project funds, as well as developing new direct donor relationships. •
In some partnerships AVAC primes on grants and sub-grants to project/coalition	INGOs and global policy partners	No change; AVAC may continue to sub-grant to or receive sub-grant funds from these partners based on the specific project.

partners, while in others AVAC is sub-grantee of project/coalition partners.		
Small, ad hoc, focused, project-specific grants	Researchers and scientists	No change

Training, mentorship, skills building and exchange

Supporting the development of advocacy skills is core to AVAC's work and will continue to be a central component of AVAC's partnering. AVAC will continue to support advocacy skills development for individual advocates, organizations and coalitions through programs and projects such as Fellows, Media Cafes, Advocacy Navigator, Px/Cure ROAR, CASPR and COMPASS, among others. This will include trainings and mentorship on partner-prioritized topics such as research literacy and high-impact engagement with governments and policy makers, funders, and product developers through the above-mentioned projects and beyond.

AVAC has also received feedback from partners and staff that there is need for more trainings and mentorship to prepare partner organizations to receive funding directly from large donors. AVAC will also fundraise and build the skill sets of its staff to be able to provide more institutional capacity development support for partners. Training plans will be developed based on partner needs assessments, AVAC staff skill sets, as well as the availability of local peer expert partners to collaborate on trainings. Examples of priority training topics already identified by partners include:
- Fundraising - donor prospecting, proposal development and donor engagement
- Financial and grants management
- Strategic planning
- Governance
- Monitoring and evaluation

Centering local expertise in trainings and mentorship

AVAC's will always aim to center the expertise that exists among partners from communities most impacted by HIV, and communities in which projects are located. Where possible, in its training and mentorship approaches, AVAC will prioritize amplifying local expertise and facilitating peer and bi-directional skills transfer in line with project objectives, and fund those efforts appropriately in project budgets.

Trainings will be tailored for the different needs of organizations based on their level of institutional development, and will emphasize support to most marginalized constituencies, including KPs and AGYW.

AVAC will fundraise to support peer trainings, as well as the inclusion of dedicated AVAC and

Peer training and mentorship in action:

AVAC's 2020-2021 KPIF Capacity Building Project, led by the Policy Advocacy team and funded by AIHA, applied a peer mentoring approach to support KP-led organizations in four countries to strengthen their organizational advocacy, governance and strategic planning capacities.

Through this project, AVAC identified KP peer expert mentors in the four project countries to lead trainings and longer-term mentorship for KP-led organizations in their own country. In this project, AVAC served as a convener, trainer of trainers, and facilitator of the collaboration between the peer mentors as they co-developed the training curriculum and mentorship plan, and shared lessons learned and strategies. Peer trainers received payment for their work as well as a communications stipend from AVAC for the duration of the project.

partner staff time in project work plans and budgets to support participation in trainings and mentorship, as well as to take leadership roles within projects.

AVAC will work with partners to develop metrics for measuring the impact of skills transfer approaches and iterate upon our models to ensure that they are consistently meeting partner needs.

Mentorship

Recognizing the importance of mentorship and elevating the expertise that exists within AVAC's partnership network already, AVAC will take two approaches to strengthening this aspect of its partnerships over time:

1. Facilitating mentorship by seasoned advocates to up-and-coming advocates to build their advocacy muscles and leadership skills. In projects where AVAC is sub-granting to partners, AVAC will support local partners to allocate dedicated time and define discrete deliverables in partner project work plans and budgets for mentorship.
2. Revising AVAC job descriptions for key staff roles to include a dedicated time allocation for mentorship and bi-directional learning with peers at partner organizations interested in a skills exchange with AVAC.

As noted in AVAC's fundraising strategy, AVAC will seek funding for supporting skills transfer initiatives with partners to ensure they are adequately resourced to do this work. In addition, AVAC will facilitate trainings for relevant staff and partners to build skills around mentoring, and to develop mentoring plans to maximize and monitor effectiveness of these initiatives.

AVAC will also advocate for overall funding from donors for trainings and mentorship as a key component of shifting funding, power and leadership to communities most impacted by HIV generally, to ensure civil society organizations are adequately resourced and set up for success.

Skills transfer/building approaches by partner category

Pre 2023 partnership strategy	Partner category	Under 2023 Partnership Strategy
Training and mentorship work focuses on building HIV prevention advocacy skills and research literacy Trainings are often led by AVAC staff or consultants	Civil Society Collaborators	Continued focus on supporting skills building for advocacy, research literacy, and high-impact engagement with governments and policy makers, funders, and product developers. AVAC will also seek funding to support expanding **its training and mentorship work to include institutional capacity strengthening**. This will facilitate shifts in power and leadership as it will support local partner organizations to become more competitive for receiving direct funding. **Centering local expertise**: AVAC will prioritize amplifying local expertise that already exists among its partners and facilitate peer and bi-directional training and learning exchanges. **Mentorship approach:** • Catalyzing mentorship of up-and-coming advocates by seasoned advocates and including mentorship in project work plans and budgets • Bi-directional mentorship between AVAC and peers from civil society partner organizations In addition, AVAC will facilitate trainings for relevant staff and partners to build skills around training and mentoring, and to develop training and mentoring plans and metrics to maximize and monitor impact of these initiatives.
	INGOs and global policy partners	AVAC will encourage coalition partners to focus on skills transfer and promotion of local leadership and amplification of local expertise in coalitions and project collaborations.
	Researchers and scientists	AVAC will build the advocacy skills of researchers through trainings on the forms of indirect advocacy researchers can engage in to influence HIV policy and resourcing without presenting a conflict of interest.

Prioritizing leadership of partners

AVAC will continue to support civil society partners to meet with global leaders, funders and policymakers, and push leaders to listen to and engage with civil society directly. AVAC will leverage its role as a convener with connections to a broad range of collaborators and groups working in the HIV and global health space to bring together civil society advocates in the same room - or virtual space - as global decision makers, but take a backseat and allow civil society advocates to lead the discussion.

AVAC will share data and information from partners representing most impacted communities and **facilitate direct interactions between those partners and funders and policy makers** to support data-informed decision making, priority setting and funding. Where AVAC is the prime on a grant representing a network, coalition, or grouping of AVAC partners, we will **ensure the visibility and participation of other partners in reporting and conversations with funders and policy makers**. Further, AVAC will facilitate discussions with funders and policy makers to help set realistic expectations for partnerships.

Approaches for centering leadership of communities most impacted by HIV and Global Health Inequity by partner category

Pre 2023 partnership strategy	Partner category	Under 2023 Partnership Strategy
AVAC is a convener, able to make connections across different partners and other interested parties in the field that would not otherwise have access to one another. Often AVAC represents priorities on behalf of partner network, rather than facilitating opportunities for local partners to take the lead in representing civil society and have their own seat at the table. Partners feel that AVAC doesn't	Civil Society Collaborators	AVAC will leverage its role as a convener with connections to a broad range of collaborators and groups working in the HIV and global health space to bring together civil society advocates in the same room - or virtual space - as global decision makers, but take a backseat and **allow civil society advocates to lead the discussion**. The **pre-meeting SOP** provides guidance to AVAC staff on supporting partners to prepare for and follow up on these convenings as needed while making the space for partners to lead. *Advocates Bureau:* To ensure that AVAC is identifying speakers with a wide range of voices and perspectives to join these engagements, AVAC will establish its **Advocates Bureau, a roster of advocates available to represent the diversity of people and communities impacted by HIV and global health inequity**. With this approach, partners will self-identify their areas of technical expertise and opt-in to be part of a pool of civil society representatives available to speak on their areas of expertise. AVAC will support the Advocates Bureau partners to build their skills and confidence in engaging in these spaces of influence through advocacy and communications trainings and mentorship opportunities, and, in-line with our data and stipend policies, support costs for travel or data/airtime as necessary.

step back to allow them to set the agenda and strategy. When connecting partners with opportunities to speak on behalf of civil society at high-level engagements such as conferences, webinars, and high-level meetings, AVAC often calls on the same partners to represent civil society. AVAC is sometimes perceived as a gatekeeper, rather than letting partners engage directly with one another.		*Facilitating Communities of Practice:* AVAC will help **facilitate peer learning collaboratives** that bring together partners working on similar issues from across AVAC's network and workstreams to collaborate directly to share strategies, tactics, best practices and lessons learned. AVAC will catalyze the launching of these collaborations, with partners driving the content and strategy and collaborating directly with one another and, where appropriate, co-developing shared advocacy agendas.
	INGOs and global policy partners	**Interested/Impacted parties mapping** (tool to be found in partnership manual) will support decision making around whether AVAC or its policy partners – and which partners - are best suited to lead on particular advocacy priorities, in line with AVAC's policy agenda.
	Researchers and scientists	AVAC will continue its role as a bridge between 1. *Community and researchers:* **ensuring communities most impacted by the research are connected to researchers, and are informing ethical, inclusive and community-centered research design.** This includes linking community members who have relevant expertise to research partners to ensure that community representatives are in physical and virtual spaces where they can speak directly on behalf of their communities. 2. *Researchers and policymakers:* AVAC will facilitate the **collection of feedback and inputs from a range of researchers,** including intentionally seeking out the input of researchers of color and those from communities most impacted by HIV, on policy and resources for HIV and **synthesize that feedback into clear and actionable advocacy asks of policy makers.**

Partner engagement and communications platforms

AVAC has multiple communications platforms through which we engage with partners to share information, opportunities and updates. These platforms are key not only for building and maintaining durable partnerships with our partners, but also for facilitating peer networking and relationship-building among AVAC's partners and amplifying work done in partnership.

- ***Monthly AVAC partner calls*** are an opportunity for all partners to convene in the same virtual space to share information and advocacy priorities and strategies across partners and geographies. Launched during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, these calls have been a platform for all AVAC partners to engage monthly and make connections across geographies. In 2023 AVAC will work with partners to develop a strategy for partner calls going forward, to encourage shared agenda- and priority-setting, content development and moderation for the calls between AVAC and partners.

- ***AVAC's @partners email list*** includes AVAC's civil society, policy, and product introduction partners and is a platform for AVAC and those partners to share key information and updates with each other.

- AVAC hosts **virtual information-sharing networks** that keep partners up-to-date on the latest information, resources, and convenings and facilitates discussions among partners and other collaborators
    - **Advocates Network emails:** The *Advocates' Network* is an electronic network for organizations and individuals interested in receiving timely updates about developments in the biomedical HIV prevention field. Network members receive periodic email alerts that include coverage of trial results, "roundups" that provide intervention-specific updates, notifications of HIV prevention events and civil society webinars, and links to additional resources of interest. AVAC will expand the use of this platform to spotlight work our partners are doing to the broad audience reached. Partner spotlights will be co-created with the featured partner, along with a link to learn more about their work.
    - **The Choice Agenda (TCA):** TCA is a global forum for HIV advocacy that hosts monthly webinars, curates and disseminates through email resources for education and advocacy, and moderates passionate, highly-informed discussions with advocates and experts across the field. TCA encourages multi-directional information sharing and engagement among the listserv members. This platform may be used by partners, as well as AVAC, to share resources and initiate engagement on priority topics with a broad group of interested parties.

- **Project- and topic-specific WhatsApp groups** established by AVAC allow for multi-directional communication between partners on shared topics of interest or common projects, and to facilitate direct partner-to-partner relationship building and networking. WhatsApp platforms offer a less formal setting for partners to share ideas, resources and commentary with one another.

- **Project and topic-specific calls and webinars** are opportunities for AVAC and partners to convene virtually to discuss updates in the field, emerging advocacy priorities and more.

- **Engage online learning platform:** Engage is a platform for peer-to-peer resource sharing, collaborative learning and joint strategy development. AVAC offers partners free online courses, webinars and networking spaces for partners through Engage. AVAC will continue to promote the Engage platform among partners and within its projects to ensure wide access to the learning and networking opportunities provided by the platform.

- **In-person engagements/convenings** were paused during 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing that in-person convenings are essential for building strong interpersonal relationships, partner-to-partner networking, and sparking conversations that don't happen as naturally in a virtual space, AVAC will explore opportunities to convene larger groups of partners in-person again.

- **Px Pulse podcast** is a project of AVAC and our partners in the Coalition to Accelerate and Support Prevention Research (CASPR). Each month this podcast uses interviews, discussion and first-person reflections to explore vital topics confronting the field of HIV prevention research, and often features the voices of AVAC's partners.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Illustrative Partnership Metrics

A mix of output and outcome indicators will be used to track AVAC's performance in its partnerships and in implementing its partnership strategy. The table below outlines partnership priority areas and partnership norms and illustrative examples of indicators that might be used to track progress and identify areas for continued improvement.

Partnership norm/ priority	Indicator	Data Source
Fundamentals of partnership	% of partners who indicate there is a shared vision for the partnership with AVAC	Partnership Scorecard
	% of partners who indicate partnership with AVAC adds value to their work	Partnership Scorecard
	% of partners who believe the partnership is advancing HIV prevention and global health equity goals	Partnership Scorecard
Accountability	% of partners who report roles and responsibilities within the partnership are clear	Partnership Scorecard
Communication	% of partners who indicate AVAC's Information sharing with partners is effective and timely	Partnership Scorecard
Knowledge management	% of partners reporting they have access to information relevant to the partnership at will	Partnership Scorecard
Resource management	*In partnerships where funding is involved:* % of partners report having insight into the budget and how funds are allocated	Partnership Scorecard
Decision-making	% of partners reporting they are empowered and enabled to contribute to the partnership	Partnership Scorecard
	% of partners who report there is equity and balance among the partners in decision making	
	% of partners reporting there is transparency in how decisions affecting the partnership are made	Partnership Scorecard
		Partnership Scorecard
Conflict resolution	% of partners indicating there are clear guidelines for how to address conflicts that may emerge in the partnership	Partnership Scorecard

	% of partners who feel that when conflicts arise they can be addressed and remediated without negative consequences to their relationship with AVAC	Partnership Scorecard
Meetings	% of partners reporting meeting agendas are developed collaboratively by partners and shared in advance of meetings	Partnership Scorecard
	% of partners with the most relevant experience and skills are leading meetings, not just the best-resourced or biggest partners	Partnership Scorecard
Skills building/transfer	# of trainings implemented for AVAC staff	Training attendance sheets, training curriculum
	# capacity trainings implemented for partners	
	% change in knowledge pre- vs. post-training	Pre- and post-tests
	Other skills building indicators to be developed based on training topics	
		Organizational capacity assessment (OCA) tools
Communities most impacted by HIV have opportunities to lead	% of partners who say AVAC facilitates opportunities for local partners to speak on behalf of their communities with high-level decision makers	Partnership scorecard
	# of projects where AVAC has transitioned at least one aspect of leadership to partner from community most impacted by HIV/global health inequity	Project report, project organogram
Operationalizing Partnership Improvements	# operational guidelines developed, validated with partners and launched to facilitate partnership activities	Operational guideline documents
	# of AVAC partnerships with partnering agreements in place; % of AVAC partners signing agreements	Partnering Agreements
	# of relevant AVAC job descriptions updated to include expectations around partnerships work	Job descriptions
	Partnership management platform identified and launched and in use	Partnership management platform

Partnership Assessment Tools

AVAC Partnership scorecard

Across all categories of partners, AVAC's partnership scorecard is the primary tool for evaluating AVAC's partnerships, including power dynamics and satisfaction with the partnership relationship with AVAC. AVAC conducted a baseline partnership scorecard in 2021. The feedback from that first round of the scorecard revealed key areas of strength and priorities for improving AVAC's partnerships, and informed the development of this partnership strategy and the overall Partnership Action Plan.

With the launch of the partnership strategy in 2023, the design of the partnership scorecard online survey tool will be updated by AVAC in collaboration with partners to reflect and track performance against the partnership approaches laid out in this strategy. Moving forward, the partnership scorecard will be implemented annually to measure changes in the health of AVAC's overall partnerships over time against the baseline of the 2021 scorecard, and to continue to identify challenges and areas of success to build on.

Coalition health scorecards

The AVAC partnership scorecard was based on the project-level COMPASS coalition health scorecard developed by the COMPASS coalition MERL team, led by partner PZAT in collaboration with AVAC. Within COMPASS the tool is implemented annually to monitor coalition dynamics and identify strengths and challenges within the coalition work. Findings from three years of data collection have shaped the COMPASS work plan for the phasing the handover of COMPASS leadership to African partners, and has informed the development of more participatory and transparent coalition governance and sub-granting approaches.

Where appropriate, AVAC will adapt the coalition-level scorecard model for other project-level coalitions and partnership networks it co-leads to monitor and improve coalition health at the project level in a more targeted and data-informed way. Information gathered will provide the basis for a roadmap for continuous improvement and also create opportunities for partners to provide feedback specific to their project.

Partnership Health Checklist

It is important that all partners have accountability for their piece of the partnership. AVAC will develop a simple partnership health checklist in line with AVAC's partnership metrics that both AVAC relationship managers and partners can complete annually to monitor the health of the relationship and identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement for each partner and the partner relationship. The checklist will facilitate open and honest conversations about the status of the partnership from both partner perspectives, and transparency into how decisions about the future of the partnership are being made.

Anonymous online feedback tool

While AVAC strives for open and honest communication in all of its partnerships, there may be vital feedback that partners wish to share with AVAC ad hoc and in an anonymized way. AVAC will offer an anonymous online feedback option where partners can submit feedback at any time.

Operationalizing the partnership strategy

The partnership strategy will be phased in over a three-year period from 2023-2025.

	Steps for operationalizing partnership strategy
2023	• Partnership strategy validated and launched • Partnering agreements and partnership health checklist developed and launched • SOPs developed on partner relationship management, sub-granting and making space for partners to lead during advocacy engagements • Job descriptions for partner-facing AVAC staff updated to embed partnership management expectations • AVAC staff trainings on partnership norms and partnership relationship management • AVAC partner call strategy updated • Partnership metrics updated to reflect partnership norms and strategy • Partnership scorecard redesign • AVAC begins shifting leadership and funding for key projects to local partners
2024	• Second partnership scorecard conducted; partnership action plan (strategy and operationalization plan) adjusted as necessary to respond to feedback • Partnering agreements being completed annually • Introduction of partner relationship management platform • Advocates Bureau launched • Further partnership SOPs and tools developed and launched • Partner feedback process piloted for AVAC staff performance evaluations
2025	• AVAC mentorship initiative concept developed and launched • Remaining partnership SOPs and tools completed and launched • Partnership handbook completed and launched • Partnership scorecard being implemented annually

Resources

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