

ROBERT CARR FUND  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2020–2024

**Funding  
what's  
possible**

**ROBERT  
CARR  
FUND** For civil  
society  
networks

## *Funding what's possible*

*Not only what is.*

*Or already being done.*

*But what could be.*

*Funding new shoots.*

*The hopeful unknown.*

*Beginnings.*

*The educated hunches.*

*The untried and untested.*

*The wouldn't-it-be-wonderful-ifs.*

*The gloriously unproven.*

*The yet-to-be's.*

*Those who lay new track.*

*In unmapped places.*

*The responsible dreamers.*

*The trusted mavericks.*

*Funding what's possible takes courage.*

*There is no metric for possible.*

*It isn't predictable.*

*But the possible is where new answers emerge.*

*New ways found.*

*New alliances forged.*

*New associations made.*

*And a network of possible*

*finds a new, stronger voice.*

"Funding what's possible" (above) is a stylistic prose inspired by the purpose and experiences of the Robert Carr Fund. It is used here, with permission from its author, to provide depth of emotion to the ideas presented in this strategy.

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# Robert Carr Fund Strategic Plan 2020–2024

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# Executive Summary

This strategic plan of the Robert Carr Fund for civil society networks (RCF) was developed through a participatory process between February and November 2019, and approved by the RCF's International Steering Committee on November 20, 2019.

## Our Story: The History & Present of the Robert Carr Fund

The Robert Carr Fund was founded in 2012, in response to a severe downturn in the resources available to help global and regional civil society and community networks meet the needs of inadequately served populations (ISPs) — people facing a high HIV risk, morbidity and/or mortality compared to the general population, and who at the same time face systematic human rights violations and barriers to information and services. At that time, core funding and multi-year support — already a rarity — became even harder for regional and global networks to access. These constraints undermined opportunities to develop a more strategic and coordinated civil society response to HIV, and to create an environment that favored partnership and collaboration among networks.

In response to these circumstances, an alliance of civil society partners, donors and UNAIDS initiated the development of a pooled funding mechanism to bridge the gaps in resources. The funding mechanism, which would become the Robert Carr Fund, was designed to provide sustainable, multi-year support for these regional and global civil society networks, offering core funding not only to underpin strategic programmatic activities but also to develop and sustain human resources and operational costs. The RCF received initial funding from the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, Norway, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as strategic support from UNAIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

By the end of 2018, the RCF had invested USD 52,662,635, contributed by seven funding partners and allocated across 100 grants reaching every geographical region and all ISPs. The 2019–2021 recommitment process mobilized USD 39,049,429, bringing to USD 91,712,064 the total expected amount from 2012 through 2021.

As the global HIV response enters the year 2020, it stands on a precipice. In the decade ahead, the world has committed to ending AIDS by preventing new HIV infections and ensuring that all people living with HIV have access to treatment. For ISPs, however, much of this progress remains out of reach. At the same time, broader global health priorities are shifting, presenting both a risk and an opportunity for linkages, integration and realignment of the HIV agenda to better fulfill the needs of ISPs – including sexual and reproductive health and rights, co-morbidities, including tuberculosis and hepatitis C and inclusion in universal health coverage. In this critical moment, when the world sees an end to AIDS as a possibility, the RCF support of networks that meet the needs of ISPs is more crucial than ever to help bring equity to the global HIV response.



RCF Collective Impact Reflections Workshop in 2019

The strategic plan that follows is built on and amplifies the original mission and vision of the Fund, and preserves the fundamentals of how the Fund operates – while responding to the unique challenges and opportunities of the time. While the Fund will continue its pooled funding approach and participatory grant-making functions, its commitment to financing regional and global networks, and the encouragement of grantees to work in consortia, it will also boldly engage in an evolving health landscape to improve the health, well-being and social inclusion of ISPs and contribute to the global commitment to “leave no one behind”. The plan uses the RCF Theory of Change and Monitoring and Evaluation for Learning framework as beacons to guide and evaluate the next five years of the life of the Fund, through exciting and uncharted territories on a journey to fund **what’s possible and not only what is.**

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## Our Future: Where the Robert Carr Fund is Going

With the foundations of the Fund secure, the 2020–2024 strategy begins with a refresher of statements on the world that the Fund envisions, and how the Fund commits to achieving that vision.

The Robert Carr Fund holds civil society and communities at the center of its vision and mission. Recognizing the wide range of actors which can be included in a definition of civil society and communities, for its purposes the Fund defines “civil society networks” as regional and global networks led by and/or devoted to serving the needs of inadequately served populations in the HIV response.

### Vision Statement

*The Robert Carr Fund envisions a strong, vibrant and resilient civil society leading the HIV response towards the end of the epidemic by 2030 with improved health, wellbeing and social inclusion of inadequately served populations (ISP).*

### Mission Statement

*The Robert Carr Fund invests in global and regional civil society networks to sustain and expand the role of inadequately served populations in the HIV response, with a commitment to prioritize ISP-led networks for funding to uphold rights, remove barriers to accessing services, and to contribute to sustainable financial investment in communities and programming.*

For the 2020–2024 period, the Fund will achieve its mission by building on two approaches that have been central to its identity to date: learning and partnerships.

### Learning

By promoting a culture of learning and creating space for deeper, more resilient links within the collective, the Fund will encourage networks to use reflections on their work to inform their current and future plans. The Fund will also commit to improving its operations continuously by learning from its grantees and from the work of the Secretariat, International Steering Committee and Program Advisory Panel.

### Partnerships

The Fund will nurture the links between individuals and institutions that increase and improve partnerships that benefit ISPs. By continuing to encourage the consortium model and by investing in learning between and within networks and consortia, the Fund will support partnerships as a core way of realizing this strategic plan. The Fund will also serve as a model for funders of a partnership approach



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between donors and civil society, continuing a participatory grant-making approach and collective reflection process.

Using these approaches, the Fund will focus on three strategic priorities in 2020–2024, which will serve as trail markers for achievement of the Fund’s Theory of Change:

### **Movement leadership**

To ensure a stronger, continuous, community-led and rights-based response to HIV, the Fund through its grant-making will support the continuity and succession of leadership in the HIV movement. The aim will be to ensure that youth and new leaders from under-represented communities and intersectional identities are productively linked to veteran leaders, creating a multi-generational approach and ensuring both individual organizations and the movement at large are not hindered by transitions. Core funding will also continue to help networks to step into positions of leadership, and support the strengthening of organizational leadership through succession planning for governance and advisory mechanisms.

### **Financial health and resilience**

The Fund will prioritize the financial health and resilience of ISP networks to ensure that ISPs hold a central place in the funding landscape. Grants will help networks to activate new financing streams both domestically and internationally, navigate emerging possibilities in universal health coverage, and explore other revenue generation possibilities. As a consolidator of data, RCF will also influence the rapidly evolving financial landscape for the HIV response, and demonstrate the value and importance of funding civil society networks, highlighting the importance of core funding stability to allow networks to reach their full potential for impact.

### **Innovation and creativity**

The Fund will prioritize innovation and creativity to respond to environmental changes and challenges that affect ISP communities. Through its grant-making, the Fund will invest in strategic, forward-looking ideas that enable networks to consolidate the lessons they have learned and respond to advances in science and policy, document emerging needs in ISP communities, and develop and field-test cutting-edge ideas. These investments will also allow networks to respond to and participate in emerging processes and global commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals and universal health coverage, and to define bold new roles for civil society in monitoring human rights and programming as part of global and local agendas.

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## Funding What's Possible: The Position and Value of the Robert Carr Fund in 2020–2024

Through these priorities, approached with the values of learning and partnerships, the Robert Carr Fund will embark on a journey of **funding what's possible** — ensuring that ISPs have the opportunities to realize their full potential to end the HIV epidemic and achieve better health, well-being and social inclusion. To realize this commitment, the Fund will leverage its own influence in two primary ways:

### Dialogue with funders and other international influencers to promote resource availability and accountability.

The Fund has access to an array of consolidated data and the ability to craft narratives. Together these can showcase powerful stories of how civil society and community-led responses change the lives of ISPs, while highlighting the persistent barriers that such communities face. The Fund also has access to unique audiences, to whom it can promote the added value of investing in civil society and community networks that meet the needs of ISPs. In these settings, the Fund can serve as a bridge between donors and communities, and play a large role in donor education.

### Investment of funds in regional and global networks to achieve results for ISPs, by strengthening institutional and advocacy capacity and sustainability.

The Fund will continue learning from and strengthening its strategic investments to support the full potential of the HIV and other movements to benefit ISPs. Particularly by providing core funding to boost the social capital and civil society infrastructure of the HIV movement, the Fund will aim to finance the generation of ideas that can transform the HIV movement. By continuing to help networks achieve their potential, rather than prescribe their growth, the Fund will demonstrate the value of **funding what's possible**.



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# 1. Developing This Strategic Plan

This strategic plan was developed between February and November 2019. The process was overseen by the International Steering Committee, including a Strategy Working Group comprised of members of the International Steering Committee and one representative from the Program Advisory Panel.

The development of the plan was highly participatory. Stakeholder feedback was gained from 148 respondents via an open, public survey. About 60 participants supplied collaborative feedback at a one-day, in-person consultation.

In-depth interviews were carried out and a validation survey was completed by 47 key stakeholders, including 2019–2021 grantees. This process has been supported by technical assistance from APMG Health. Throughout drafting, the Robert Carr Fund Secretariat provided critical guidance and review of intermediary versions. Each full draft received commentary from the International Steering Committee, which approved the final plan on November 20, 2019.



Peter Carr at the RCF Collective Impact Reflections Workshop in 2019

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## 2. Our Past: The History of the Robert Carr Fund

The Robert Carr Fund for civil society networks (RCF) was founded in 2012, in response to a severe downturn in the resources available to help global and regional civil society and community networks meet the needs of inadequately served populations (ISPs) — people who face a higher risk of acquiring, suffering or dying from HIV (see box).

While overall resources for the HIV response had grown substantially in the previous decade, funding for ISPs had not increased in proportion to their burden of disease or their needs for HIV prevention and treatment. Moreover, donors began consolidating civil society funds in support of either global funding mechanisms such as The Global Fund, or of project-based opportunities at the national level. This left regional and global mechanisms, which were critical to a robust HIV response, without the reliable core resources they needed to survive. Core funding and multi-year support — already a rarity — became even harder for regional and global networks to access, with any available funding provided in a haphazard and poorly coordinated manner. These constraints undermined opportunities to develop a more strategic and coordinated civil society response to HIV and to create an environment that favored partnership and collaboration among networks.

### What are inadequately served populations?

Inadequately served populations are groups or persons that face a higher risk than the general population of acquiring, suffering or dying from HIV, and have less access to information and services. They include people living with HIV, gay men and other men who have sex with men, people who use drugs, prisoners, sex workers and transgender persons. Depending on the dynamic of the HIV epidemic and the legal status of these populations, ISPs may also include women and girls, youth, migrants and people living in rural areas.

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In response to these circumstances, an alliance was formed between civil society partners — led by Free Space Process, an initiative of global HIV networks supported by International Civil Society Support — and funders and UNAIDS. This alliance initiated the development of a pooled funding mechanism to bridge the gaps in resources for global and regional civil society and community networks addressing the needs of ISPs. The funding mechanism, which would become the Robert Carr Fund, was intended to be evidence-informed, strategic and results-focused.

Once established, RCF set out to attract resources and disburse them through global and regional civil society networks, who could in turn bolster national HIV responses by strengthening the ability of local communities to respond more effectively to HIV.

The Fund was designed to provide sustainable, multi-year support for these networks, offering core funding not only to underpin strategic programmatic activities but also to develop and sustain human resources and operational costs. RCF received initial funding from the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as strategic support from UNAIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

## The Unique Value of the Robert Carr Fund

The RCF is unique amongst funding mechanisms in both its explicit mandate to provide core funding to networks and in its belief that the continued survival, growth and success of civil society is vital to a successful HIV response. It stands alone in its record of pooling funding from a range of funding partners to assure that regional and global networks survive and thrive, and has played a vital role over the last seven years in assuring that inadequately served populations are meaningfully represented in the global HIV response by democratically-governed networks.

By the end of 2018, the RCF had invested USD 52,662,635, contributed by seven funding partners. The 2019–2021 recommitment process mobilized USD 39,049,429, bringing to USD 91,712,064 the total expected amount from 2012 through 2021.

RCF FUNDING PARTNERS	2012–2018 contributions	2019–2021 commitments	TOTALS
U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in partnership with the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	\$ 14,959,251	\$ 13,888,890	\$ 28,848,141
UK Department for International Development (DFID)	\$ 13,171,112	\$ 7,901,136	\$ 21,072,248
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)	\$ 10,529,421	\$ 5,862,144	\$ 16,391,565
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)	\$ 6,018,983	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 9,018,983
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)*	\$ 2,083,868	\$ 8,397,259	\$ 10,481,127
The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (2014–2016)	\$ 5,300,000	\$ –	\$ 5,300,000
MAC AIDS Fund (2014–2015)	\$ 600,000	\$ –	\$ 600,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 52,662,635</b>	<b>\$ 39,049,429</b>	<b>\$ 91,712,064</b>

\* Contributions from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs are received via two separate funding streams, from 2016–2020 via the PITCH program and from 2019–2023 via direct contribution to the RCF.

The RCF has allocated 100 grants to global and regional networks, reaching every geographical region and all ISPs, benefiting a total of 96 organizations of which the majority has been receiving funds during multiple grant periods.

As it has continued to grow, the RCF has undertaken efforts to systematize its founding principles. Most critically, these efforts have included refining an organizational Theory of Change built on the Fund’s earliest articulation of expected outcomes, as defined by its founders. The formulation of the Theory of Change was a collaborative process involving the RCF collective of funders and grantees, as well as RCF governance and management. The Theory of Change captures their assumptions about how the Fund’s investments catalyze outcomes and ultimately improve the health, social inclusion and well-being of ISPs.

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## The Robert Carr Fund Theory of Change

The Robert Carr Fund provides core funding to strengthen the institutional and advocacy capacity of regional and global networks and consortia that meet the needs of inadequately served populations (ISPs). The Fund believes that if these networks – through which ISPs can find legitimate representation for making decisions that affect them – are stronger, it will enable ISP groups to have more influence over the human rights and HIV issues that affect them. Sustained influence from ISPs with regards to HIV and human rights issues at global, regional and national levels will contribute to a more enabling and rights-affirming social, policy and legal environment for ISPs, along with more accessible and appropriate quality HIV services and programs, and the corresponding available resources to create better conditions for ISPs with regards to HIV.

If the human rights of ISPs are upheld, and they have access to better HIV services, and there is appropriate resourcing to underpin the necessary services, it is believed that ISPs across the globe can have better health, wellbeing and social inclusion. For a full infographic of the Robert Carr Fund Theory of Change, please see Annex 1.

The Theory of Change, completed in late 2016, became the foundation upon which the Fund began its next undertaking: creating a framework for monitoring and evaluation for learning (MEL). The MEL and its indicators were also developed in a participatory manner, engaging grantees as well as the International Steering Committee and Program Advisory Panel. The indicators and metrics by which results are and will continue to be measured correspond to the outcome areas of the Theory of Change. In 2019, the format and data collection process for the MEL was further fine-tuned, based on grantee and funding partner feedback, to reduce the reporting burden and improve consistency of scoring progress and comparability across each year of funding and across the portfolio of grants.

The strategic plan that follows is built upon the original mission and vision of the Fund, and preserves the fundamentals of how the Fund operates. These include its pooled funding approach and participatory grant-making functions, its commitment to financing regional and global networks, and the encouragement of grantees to work in consortia.<sup>1</sup> The plan also retains RCF's original definition of ISPs and does not deviate from its focus on investing in these groups. Finally, this strategic plan uses the collaboratively developed Theory of Change and MEL framework to guide the next five years of the life of the Fund, through exciting and uncharted territories on a journey to **fund what's possible and not only what is.**

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<sup>1</sup> In 2017–2018, the International Steering Committee commissioned a Consortium Model Assessment to investigate the experience of the Fund's consortium model, by which grantees are encouraged to work in formal partnerships (consortia). The belief is that working as consortia could help the networks to increase the level of collaboration among networks working on similar themes or geographies and to limit competition. The resulting overall number of grants is thus also reduced, helping to reduce management costs and increase the funds that go to grants. The assessment ultimately affirmed the value of the model, and the ISC decided to continue the encouraged consortium practice in the 2019–2021 funding cycle.

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### 3. Our Present: The Context in Which the Robert Carr Fund Operates

As the global HIV response enters the year 2020, it stands on a precipice: recent progress is set to continue and even accelerate but ISPs risk being left even further behind. In the decade ahead, the world has committed to ending AIDS by preventing new HIV infections and ensuring that all people living with HIV have access to treatment.

This ambitious goal is aided by the emergence of promising technologies and better understanding of the tools we have. Using effective antiretroviral therapy to prevent disease progression and secondary transmission through suppression of viral load and preventive measures such as male and female condoms, voluntary medical male circumcision, comprehensive harm reduction packages for people who use drugs and pre-exposure prophylaxis, as well as social and structural interventions to tackle gender inequality and protect populations most at risk of HIV infection, the impossible now seems possible. With more effective antiretrovirals available at lower prices and with governments committing to sustaining their own HIV treatment costs, people living with HIV should be guaranteed lives as long and prosperous as anyone's.

For ISPs, however, much of this progress remains out of reach. Systematic discrimination prevents access to services. Services are poorly tailored to their unique needs. Criminalization and other grave human rights violations threaten their safety. These problems are compounded by underinvestment in ISPs by funders and governments. The prospects of ending new infections and assuring universal access to treatment seem impossible for these groups. HIV incidence and prevalence are still rising among some populations and financial and political commitments to reverse these trends remain weak or absent. In this critical moment, when the world sees an end to AIDS as a possibility, RCF support of networks meeting the needs of ISPs is more crucial than ever to bring about equity to the global HIV response.



At the same time, broader global health priorities are shifting, presenting both a risk and an opportunity for linkages, integration and realignment of the HIV agenda that the RCF must address.

The enormous power of the dedicated response to HIV remains crucial as it helped build the HIV movement over the last decades. This power could now be used to ensure not only that the global response to HIV remains strong, but also that lessons from the world of HIV permeate the broader landscape of health and human development. While making sure that HIV remains a visible, high-priority issue on the world's broadened health agenda and within Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All (SDG3), the Fund must also collaborate with other health movements to respond to ISPs' needs — including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), tuberculosis (TB), hepatitis C virus (HCV) and other rights-related movements, such as the drive for universal health coverage (UHC). Additional opportunities exist to leverage movement in the Sustainable Development Goals to address human rights and equity for ISPs more broadly.

### Intersections of Sustainable Development Goals with Inadequately Served Population Needs

<b>SDG 3</b>	<b>Good Health and Wellbeing</b> Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages — by including ending both the AIDS and tuberculosis epidemics by 2030, combatting hepatitis and other communicable diseases, and achieving universal health coverage.
<b>SDG 5</b>	<b>Gender Equality</b> Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls — including full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.
<b>SDG 10</b>	<b>Reduced Inequalities</b> Reduce inequality within and among countries — including the elimination of discriminatory laws and practices.
<b>SDG 16</b>	<b>Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</b> Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels — including the reduction of violence and corruption, and promotion of inclusive, participatory decision-making with the explicit inclusion of affected communities.
<b>SDG 17</b>	<b>Partnerships for the Goals</b> Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development — including domestic resource mobilization and cross-sectoral partnership.

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Five years from now, global health architecture will look radically different.<sup>2</sup> It is imperative that the RCF finds its place in this new structure as a unique, relevant part of the HIV response. While much of the future of global health financing – particularly in the framework of UHC – will be determined at the national level, regional and global networks will have a vital role in ensuring that ISPs are able to navigate these spaces. It will become even more crucial for communities to share experiences and strategies across borders to amplify the voices of ISPs and ensure that they, too, benefit from the UHC principle of leaving no one behind. Furthermore, where ISPs are often criminalized at the national level, regional and global networks will continue to provide vital platforms from which communities can more safely contribute their experiences and needs to national dialogues.

At the same time, a range of forces are changing the broader environment in which the global HIV response and the Fund exist. Across the globe, civil society space is closing as freedom of assembly and of expression have been threatened. ISPs remain particularly vulnerable to a resurgence of right-wing populist politics. In this setting, as rapid technological advances change how information is consumed and exchanged, it is easier for networks and their constituents to access information, communicate with one another, receive training and build coalitions or consortia. But the same changes make it easier for hostile political and social forces to monitor, expose and harass networks and their communities, and to launch disinformation campaigns to sway public opinion against them.

In this complex and sensitive environment, the Robert Carr Fund has both an opportunity and an imperative to chart a bold strategic course, to respond to the external environment while staying true to its internal compass, set by its seven years of experience and its underlying commitment to its cause.

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<sup>2</sup> Stakeholders note that the first 12 months of this strategy will cover a particularly sensitive period, including follow-up actions in response to the UNGA High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in September 2019, as well as the Global Fund's review of its own mandate in 2020.

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## 4. Our Future: Where the Robert Carr Fund is Going

After seven years of operation, several core elements of the Fund's identity will continue to be central through the 2020–2024 strategy period. The Fund will continue to:

Remain **centered on the HIV response** and continue its **focus on ISPs**.

The Fund supports **rights-based approaches** in the HIV response, acknowledging that **ISPs have other needs**, which are not centered on HIV but which influence how the HIV epidemic affects them.

Retain its commitment to and belief in the **inherent and important role of civil society** as a key partner in the HIV response, working alongside multi-lateral, bilateral and government actors. The Fund understands and supports **communities' needs to be directly resourced** to do their work, to develop sound financial and organizational management systems, and to pursue resource generation and sustainability; and believes that a well-functioning network achieves results for the populations and causes that it represents.

Continue to be supportive of the role of **core, long-standing community-led networks**, while also providing opportunities for new networks to emerge and consolidate their strength to meet the needs of ISP communities. The Fund remains committed to the **value of global and regional networks in addressing the needs of ISPs**, and provides core funding to support these networks in their efforts to realize their full potential.

Maintain a **people-centered approach** in all of its operations, using **participatory grant-making** and encouraging **consortia to facilitate partnerships and collaboration**. As a **pooled funding mechanism**, the Fund seeks a **balanced portfolio** of grantees in which it invests, working to sustain what currently exists — whether thriving or in need of additional strengthening — and supporting the emergence and strengthening of the new, to achieve results for ISPs.

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## 4.1 A Refreshed Vision and Mission

With the foundations of the Fund secure, the 2020–2024 strategy begins with a refresher of statements on the world that the Fund envisions, and how the Fund commits to achieving that vision.

### Civil Society Networks and Consortia

The Robert Carr Fund for civil society networks (RCF) holds civil society and communities at the center of its vision and mission as a Fund. Recognizing the wide range of actors which can be included in a definition of civil society and communities, for its purposes the Fund defines “civil society networks” as regional and global networks led by and/or devoted to serving the needs of inadequately served populations in the HIV response.

#### Working in Consortium

The RCF considers a consortium of networks to be a network-led group of networks and/or other organizations with specific expertise that adds value or compliments expertise of regional/global networks.

### Vision Statement

*The Robert Carr Fund envisions a strong, vibrant and resilient civil society, leading the HIV response towards the end of the epidemic by 2030 with improved health, wellbeing and social inclusion of inadequately served populations.*

### Mission Statement

*The Robert Carr Fund invests in global and regional civil society networks to sustain and expand the role of inadequately served populations in the HIV response, with a commitment to prioritize ISP-led networks for funding to uphold rights, remove barriers to accessing services, and to contribute to sustainable financial investment in communities and programming.*

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## 4.2 Strategic Approach and Priorities

For the 2020–2024 period, the Fund will build on two approaches that have been central to its achievements and identity to date: learning and partnerships.

### Learning

By promoting a culture of learning and creating space for deeper, more resilient links within the collective, the Fund will encourage networks to use reflections on their work to inform their current and future plans. The continued evolution and implementation of the MEL will be of critical value, as will the rich stories shared by grantees to contribute to the overall narrative of the Fund's work. As well as supporting cross-grantee learning opportunities, the Fund will commit to improving its operations continuously by learning from its grantees and from the work of the Secretariat, International Steering Committee and Program Advisory Panel, including on financial, management, and communications issues. Through these learning practices, the Fund will continuously monitor its adherence to and achievement of the ideas set forth in this strategic plan.

### Partnerships

The Fund will nurture the links between individuals and institutions that increase and improve partnerships that benefit ISPs. By continuing to encourage the consortium model and by investing in learning between and within networks and consortia, the Fund will support partnerships as a core way of realizing this strategic plan. The Fund will also serve as a model for funders of a partnership approach between funders and implementers, continuing a participatory grant-making approach and collective reflection process.

Using these approaches, the Fund will focus on three strategic priorities in 2020–2024, which will serve as trail markers for achieving its mission in line with the Fund's Theory of Change:

### Movement leadership

To ensure a stronger, continuous, community-led and rights-based response to HIV, the Fund through its grant-making will support the continuity and succession of leadership in the HIV movement. The aim will be to ensure that youth and new leaders are productively linked to veteran leaders, creating a multi-generational approach and ensuring both individual organizations and the movement at large are not hindered by transitions. The Fund will encourage mentorship between veteran and emerging leaders. A two-way exchange of perspectives will ensure that veterans pass along lessons learned and emerging leaders can contribute new perspectives, innovations and skills that will strengthen the HIV response.

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In pursuing this strategic priority, the Fund acknowledges that emerging leaders can be of any age and identity, and that there is a need to continue adding and refreshing leadership from under-represented subgroups and individuals.

## Supporting Diversity and Inclusion

While the Fund uses a standard definition for ISPs, it recognizes that there is tremendous diversity of identity and experience even within these groups. Other factors, including race and ethnicity, social and/or economic status, ability/disability status, can significantly influence rights and access to care even within the same ISP.

Moreover, simultaneous identification with more than one ISP can compound and complicate how a person interacts with peers and the broader environment.

In its commitment to building and refreshing leadership, the Fund will be sensitive to the need to include leaders from across these groups and experiences, and to provide opportunities to strengthen diverse and representational leadership.

Core funding will also continue to help entire organizations to step into positions of leadership, and support the strengthening of organizational leadership through succession planning for governance and advisory mechanisms.

## Financial health and resilience

The Fund will prioritize the financial health and resilience of ISP programs, including global and regional networks themselves, to ensure that ISPs hold a central place in the funding landscape. Through its grant-making, the Fund will invest in global and regional networks to build their own organizational financial health and resilience, as well as influence the sustainability of the HIV response as a whole. Grants will help networks to activate new financing streams both domestically and internationally, and explore other revenue generation possibilities. The Fund will also help networks and their members to effectively communicate their needs within the overall financial landscape for health and HIV responses, from global and regional discussions down to national decision-making related to universal health coverage.

As a consolidator of data, fueled by the rich information that can now be captured by the MEL, the RCF will influence the rapidly evolving financial landscape for the HIV response, to maintain and increase resources for ISPs. The Fund will demonstrate and communicate the value and importance of funding civil society networks, highlighting



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the importance of core funding stability to allow networks to reach their full potential for impact. At the same time, the Fund will use evidence from networks to encourage a diversity of funding streams from the donor community, supporting the full range of programmatic work necessary to promote the involvement of ISPs in the HIV response.

### Innovation and creativity

The Fund will prioritize innovation and creativity to respond to environmental changes and challenges that affect ISP communities. Through its grant-making, the Fund will invest in strategic, forward-looking ideas that enable networks to consolidate the lessons they have learned and evolve more effective approaches<sup>3</sup> to meeting the needs of ISPs.

Grants will support new thinking in response to advances in science and policy, documentation of emerging needs in ISP communities, and development and field-testing of cutting-edge ideas.

These investments will also allow networks to respond to and participate in emerging processes and global movements, including the Sustainable Development Goals and universal health coverage, and to define bold new roles for civil society in monitoring human rights and programming as part of global and local agendas.

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<sup>3</sup> Innovation and creativity will be promoted as needed, but this priority is not mutually exclusive with support for effective, long-utilized approaches or under-resourced areas of work.

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## 5. Funding What's Possible: The Position and Value of the Robert Carr Fund in 2020–2024

Through these priorities, approached with the values of learning and partnerships, the Robert Carr Fund will embark on a journey of **funding what's possible** — ensuring that ISPs have the opportunities to realize their full potential to end the HIV epidemic and achieve better health, social inclusion and well-being.

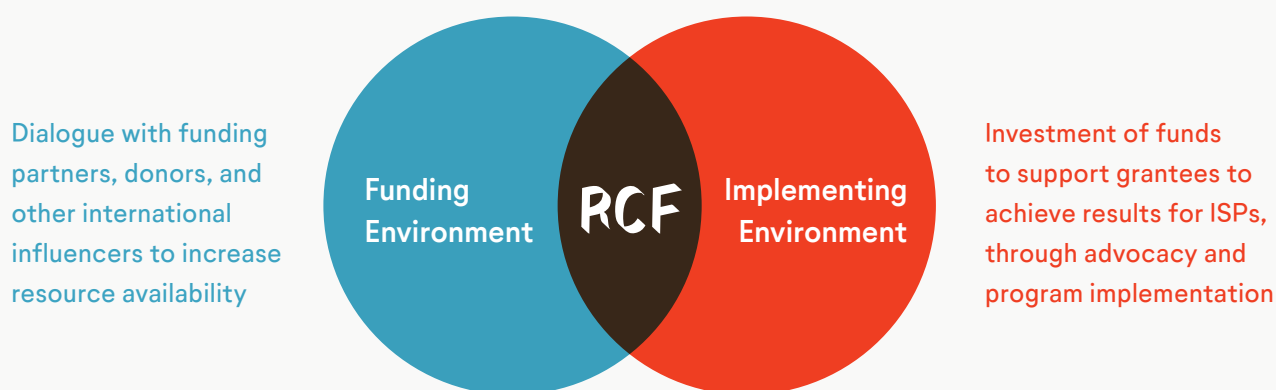
Reflecting the unique nature of the Fund, individual priorities will not be tied to targeted amounts of investment, nor will there be concrete targets for quantifiable achievement in each area. Rather, each area — movement leadership, financial health and resilience, and innovation and creativity — represents a commitment from the Fund to help networks reach their full potential to promote and sustain the role of ISPs in the HIV response. To realize this commitment, the Fund will take advantage of its own influence in two primary ways:

**Dialogue with funders and other international influencers to promote resource availability and accountability.** The Fund has access to an array of consolidated data and the ability to craft narratives. Together these can showcase powerful stories of how civil society and community-led responses change the lives of ISPs, while highlighting the persistent barriers that such communities face. The Fund also has access to unique audiences, to whom it can promote the added value of investing in civil society and community networks that meet the needs of ISPs. In these settings, the Fund can serve as a bridge between donors and communities, and play a large role in donor education. The Fund will help regional and global networks to share their stories so that donors understand that community-led responses are not a one-size-fits-all system, and that flexibility and collaboration with communities is mutually beneficial.

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Investment of funds in regional and global networks to achieve results for ISPs, by strengthening their institutional and advocacy capacity and sustainability.

The Fund will continue learning from and strengthening its strategic investments to support the full potential of the HIV and other movements to benefit ISPs. Particularly by providing core funding to boost the social capital and civil society infrastructure of the HIV movement, the Fund will finance the generation of ideas that can transform the HIV movement. By continuing to help networks achieve their limitless potential, rather than prescribe their growth, the Fund will demonstrate the value of **funding what's possible**.



Through its continued commitment to core funding, the Fund will help networks to expand their capacities to redefine what is possible in strengthening their leadership, enhancing their financial resilience, and adapting to changing circumstances.

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## 6. Supporting Sub-strategies

The implementation of this strategy will be supported by two time-bound sub-strategies, with accompanying action plans:

- A **dialogue sub-strategy** will focus on external communications of key strategy messages, tailored to meet the needs and contexts of different partners, donors and other bodies of influence.
- An **investment sub-strategy** will focus on continued replenishment of funds, expanding the pool of funding partners as well as exploring avenues for long-term commitment arrangements from current funding partners.

These sub-strategies will be developed in the first half of 2020.

## ANNEX 1: Robert Carr Fund's Theory of Change



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# Funding what's possible

**ROBERT  
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