

## Increasing Leadership Diversity in the HIV Workforce

**TARGET POPULATION:** Gay men/MSM of color

**LOCATION:** Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**PROGRAM DESIGN:** Leadership Development Fellowship

**ESTIMATED COST:** \$67,500 annually

**FUNDING SOURCE:** State Partnership Initiative Grant from the Office of Minority Health, HHS

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### CORE ACTIVITIES

#### AGENCY BUY-IN

Recognizing the need for leadership that is reflective of the populations most impacted by HIV, the Wisconsin AIDS/HIV Program sought to design a leadership development program that would operate within existing organizations successfully providing HIV services. In order to do so, the program worked with top leadership at five local agencies in Milwaukee to develop the Wisconsin Health Leaders Fellowship. Agency leaders first gave their input in individual interviews and then came together as a group to approve the program design and formalize their commitment.

“Rates of HIV are unacceptably high and increasing among young Black gay and bisexual men and transgender women. Increasing workforce diversity, particularly at the leadership level, is crucial to addressing the disparate impact of the epidemic on these populations. The Wisconsin Health Leaders Fellowship is a one year leadership development program designed to increase the number of leadership positions held by people of color, particularly men who have sex with men (MSM) of color, in organizations providing HIV services in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Fellows come from five local agencies which have committed to the program and to supporting staff to participate as fellows. The fellowship is coordinated and supported by the Wisconsin AIDS/HIV Program at the Wisconsin Division of Public Health.”

## WISCONSIN HEALTH LEADERS FELLOWSHIP

The Fellowship is a one year leadership development program which aims to increase the number of leadership positions held by people of color in agencies providing HIV services. Each participating agency nominated one or two staff of color who have demonstrated leadership but are not in formal leadership positions. Fellows will participate in facilitated group meetings, individual professional coaching, trainings, and professional development opportunities at their workplace. Each fellow will have a workplace mentor to cultivate opportunities for the fellow.

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## OUTCOMES

**Agency buy-in and commitment from top leadership** has been a great success of the Wisconsin Health Leaders Fellowship thus far. Such high-level buy-in is critical to changing the systems and structures that have resulted in the current lack of leadership diversity. CEOs and executive directors of five leading HIV service agencies in Milwaukee have committed to making the fellowship successful. They are dedicated to supporting their fellows to participate in fellowship activities on work time and to providing opportunities at work for fellows to apply the skills they will develop through the fellowship.

## DATA

While planning for the fellowship, AIDS/HIV Program staff conducted semi-structured interviews with leaders of agencies providing HIV services in Milwaukee to elicit their views on barriers and opportunities to increase leadership and workforce diversity. The results of the interviews are summarized below.

### **Needed by agencies to increase diversity:**

- Trainings on racism and implicit bias
- Better investment in and support for staff prior to and after promotion into management roles

### **Skills needed by staff for promotion:**

- Stronger interpersonal skills
- Strategies for maintaining professional boundaries in work
- Technical and administrative skills

### **Benefits of increasing leadership diversity:**

- Valuable experience contributed by staff who are community members
- Strengthened client buy-in and agency credibility
- Improved client outcomes

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## EVALUATION

A mixed methods evaluation will be used to measure the outcomes of the fellowship. AIDS/HIV Program staff and the Center for AIDS Intervention Research will collaborate to

- Conduct in-depth pre- and post-fellowship interviews with fellows;
  - Conduct post-fellowship interviews with preceptors, the fellowship facilitator and coach, and AIDS/HIV Program staff involved in developing and coordinating the fellowship; and
  - Develop a pre-post quantitative assessment to measure fellows' self-perceived leadership skill levels and surveys to assess the effectiveness of each training throughout the fellowship.
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## Anticipated Fellowship Outcomes

The fellowship began in November of 2016 and will go through October of 2017. It is anticipated that the Wisconsin Health Leaders Fellows will increase their skills in the following areas: program development and management, fiscal management, communication, professionalism and ethics, and supervision. At the same time, leaders in the participating agencies will increase their commitment to diversifying their staff in management positions. In the long-term, the goal of the fellowship is to increase the number of staff of color in leadership positions in agencies providing HIV services in Milwaukee. Ultimately, this will lead to an increase in the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate HIV services which will contribute to declining rates of HIV infection and a reduction in disparities in HIV infection.

The fellowship design and content have been driven by input from agency leadership whose support is critical to the success of the program.

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“This direction that AIDS/HIV Program is taking is a dream come true for me as a Public Health Professional ... I always struggle to find qualified staff and spend an enormous expense (especially time) on training only for people to leave for more money or career mobility. I hope this helps me grow [our] future replacements!”  
– Participating agency leader referring to the Wisconsin Health Leaders Fellowship

## STRENGTHS

**Stakeholder Input and Buy-In:** The fellowship design and content have been driven by input from agency leadership whose support is critical to the success of the program.

Leadership from participating agencies have fully committed to supporting the program.

**Systems-Level Approach:** The fellowship aims to address systems-level barriers to reducing disparities in HIV infections and to stopping the epidemic, specifically the lack of diversity and representation of populations most affected by HIV in leadership.

## FUNDING & COST

The Wisconsin Health Leaders Fellowship is funded by a State Partnership Initiative grant from the Office of Minority Health. The five-year grant provides \$200,000 annually to the Wisconsin Minority Health HIV Partnership Initiative of which the fellowship is a key component. The estimated annual cost for the fellowship is \$67,500. The fellowship also receives in-kind support from participating agencies and will use the Capacity Building Assistance (CBA) Provider Network funded by the CDC to provide trainings.

## STAKEHOLDERS

Lead partners who have committed to supporting the fellowship and having staff participate as fellows include AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin, Center for AIDS Intervention Research at the Medical College of Wisconsin, Diverse & Resilient, Greater Milwaukee Center for Health & Wellness, Inc., and Sixteenth Street Community Health Center.

## LIMITATIONS

Despite the clear need for increased diversity in leadership across the field of public health, there are few models to look to when designing a leadership program for staff of color in public health. As a result, the fellowship had to be newly developed rather than adapted from other similar programs that have proven to be successful. This first year of the will serve as a pilot to inform future years of the fellowship.

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## PROGRAM CONTACT

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