

ACON RESEARCH PRIORITIES



OUR APPROACH TO RESEARCH

Research is key to improving the health of people living with HIV (PLHIV) and people of diverse genders and sexualities (or LGBTQ+ people). It helps us better understand our communities' needs, design effective programs and advocate for policy change to improve health outcomes.

We believe that people in our communities should be meaningfully included in research – from the choice of research topics to recruitment, analysis, and community feedback. Our Research Ethics Review Committee ensures that this – alongside the prevention of harm and negative consequences for our communities – is achieved. We believe this approach is ethical and effective at generating greater insights into and for our communities.

ACON has a proud history of partnering with researchers and government agencies to deliver impactful research to build evidence and data sets on our communities' health, including surveys such as the [Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey](#) and the [SWASH Survey](#). We look forward to deepening our partnerships and forging new collaborations with community groups, health agencies and research institutions.

This document will guide ACON's research activities, including the development of new partnerships. Our focus is on ensuring the projects we support have the greatest benefit for our communities and relevance to programs, in line with [ACON's Strategic Plan 2018- 2022](#). We welcome research that addresses knowledge gaps and emerging health issues in the following domains:

OUR RESEARCH PRIORITIES

QUALITY OF LIFE OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

This priority area will focus on research that deepens knowledge on the quality of life of PLHIV and strengthens the evidence base for effective support for PLHIV. In line with our programs, we will prioritise research exploring support for people newly diagnosed with HIV, patient treatment journeys and treatment outcomes, ageing with HIV, as well as HIV-related stigma and discrimination and other social determinants of health. This priority area will also explore new treatment technologies and novel access to treatment and support.

We're interested in supporting research that is guided by the ethos of MIPA and GIPA – the meaningful and greater involvement of PLHIV – and considers intersecting factors that affect access to/quality of care. This includes age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, migration, and disability.

HIV PREVENTION



Continuing to strengthen the evidence base for effective HIV responses is key to our goal of ending HIV transmissions for all. This research priority will seek to identify emerging epidemiological, social and community trends, including any changes to sexual cultures, practices and health behaviours, including for gender diverse populations, people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, women and others. We are particularly interested in exploring the emergence and acceptability of novel HIV testing and prevention options, peer leadership and added value in these areas, person-centred care and care in community-based settings.

In alignment with ACON's testing, peer education and health promotion programs, we will pay attention to research focused on priority populations (as per the [NSW HIV Strategy 2021- 2025](#)). In particular, we will focus on those populations that have been under-represented/not meaningfully involved in HIV research, in order to build on the evidence-base to support program development, in line with the HIV Strategy.

HEALTH EQUITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY



This priority area will focus on research that provides a greater understanding of our communities' needs and dissects the causes of health inequities. It will guide our advocacy to address the systemic and other factors that contribute to poorer health outcomes for LGBTQ+ people, particularly for those who face greater barriers to accessing appropriate, high-quality, and affordable healthcare.

In line with our [Reconciliation Action Plan](#), [Blueprint for Improving the Health and Wellbeing of the Trans and Gender Diverse Community in NSW](#), and [Multicultural Engagement Plan](#), this priority area will focus on research projects that adopt an intersectional lens and unpack the ways in which gender, ethnicity, migration, culture, age, HIV status and other factors impact health outcomes.

Research projects centred on diverse lived experiences will be prioritised. This means prioritising research projects that are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse, migrant and refugee backgrounds, people of colour, and/or trans and gender diverse people. This also means meaningfully involving people with diverse lived experiences in the design, development, delivery and dissemination of research, in community engagement, in research advisory committees, research teams and, where appropriate, in study samples.

Research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must align with the [NHMRC Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities Guidelines](#) and [Keeping Research on Track II](#), which are best practice standards. We will ensure meaningful consultation, community engagement and reciprocity occurs in research with and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

EFFECTIVE LGBTQ HEALTH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

This priority area will strengthen our understanding of effective interventions to improve our communities' health. It will focus on what approaches and interventions work best so that we can improve our programs and services, establish new ones and advocate for government funding for evidence-based solutions. It will also explore reach and impact of health promotion initiatives and responses from community members.

It will generate new knowledge about access to support and services for LGBTQ+ people and PLHIV and the effectiveness of these supports and services. It will prioritise research into novel support, programs, services, and approaches to achieve improved physical, mental and social health outcomes for our communities, with a focus on peer-led approaches.

This priority area will also focus on the evaluation of services, programs and health promotion conducted by ACON. Evaluations of ACON's programs enable us to demonstrate the effectiveness of these initiatives and builds on the existing evidence base.

A SAFE, INCLUSIVE AND STIGMA-FREE SOCIETY

This priority area will examine the prevalence, experiences, impacts and responses to stigma, discrimination, cisgenderism, heterosexism, racism, sexism, and the drivers of violence in healthcare, the workplace, the home, the justice system and in the community.

This includes research into sexual, domestic and family violence, which is experienced by LGBTQ+ people at rates similar or higher to the general population and in unique forms (see [Say it Out Loud](#)).

We will seek to address research gaps in research and recognise that experiences and the prevalence of abuse, harassment and other forms of violence is not uniform within our communities (e.g., trans and gender diverse people report higher levels of harassment and abuse than cis people).

In line with our [Pride Inclusion Programs](#), we will also deliver new partnerships for research that helps make the places where our community members live, work, study and play more inclusive of LGBTQ+ people, improving the mental health and wellbeing of our community through the reduction of stigma, discrimination and social exclusion.

CONTACT

Please contact research@acon.org.au to explore partnership opportunities and ideas for the development of joint research funding applications.