

# Partnership Policy

Policy no: 029

Version 2

Approved on: 26 October 2023

Approved by: Health Equity Matters Board

## 1. Purpose

Health Equity Matters is a community-led organisation with an extensive and diverse network of partners. Our vision is: “A world without HIV where our communities can enjoy the highest standard of health and wellness, free from stigma and discrimination. Serving our members to fully realise their ambitions for communities by 2023’. Our purpose is: “To end health inequity for our communities, with HIV the core of our mission until the epidemic is over for everyone.” Health Equity Matters’ role includes listening, coordinating, and consensus-building across these partnerships to advocate for meaningful change through its Australian and international initiatives and programs.

This policy sets out the principles that guide all Health Equity Matters partnerships. It also outlines the specific partnership development processes associated with international program partners to strengthen and support locally-led development in those partner countries.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to Health Equity Matters’ partnerships across its operations, including its Australian and international activities:

- members;
- affiliate members;
- the Australian HIV Partnership;
- Australian governments;
- governments outside Australia;
- multi-lateral institutions;
- funders and donors;
- industry;
- international, regional, and national NGOs; and
- key-population-led and community-based organisations.

Health Equity Matters has valued relationships with suppliers, consultants, and regulatory bodies and they are managed through the relevant policies, as well as procedures outlined in the Finance Manual. The Board is assisted in the oversight of the organisation’s regulatory accountability by the Finance and Audit Committee.

### 3. Defining Partnership

Health Equity Matters defines partnerships as a relationship of equality between like-minded partner organisations, which recognises and respects the autonomy of all partners, and is based on a mutual commitment to a set of clear, shared values. Health Equity Matters' key partnerships are outlined in the table below.

<b>Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Equity Matters' member organisations are in each State and Territory and include national organisations representing priority populations. Members established Health Equity Matters to be a national voice for communities affected by HIV and are part of its governance arrangements, as outlined in the <a href="#">Constitution</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Affiliate Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Equity Matters affiliate member organisations span community, research and clinical workforces and are approved as affiliates members by the Health Equity Matters Board. Affiliate members share Health Equity Matters values and an interest in ending HIV transmission and achieving greater health equity for key populations.</li> </ul>
<b>The Australian HIV Partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia's HIV response has been characterised by a partnership between affected communities, researchers, clinicians and government. This partnership is not formalised but is an informal, highly productive network of interested parties who share the common goal of virtually eliminating HIV in Australia. Health Equity Matters and its members, and affiliate members, are committed to reinforcing the Australian HIV Partnership.</li> </ul>
<b>Australian Governments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Equity Matters has, since its inception, been funded by successive Governments, regardless of which party has been in Government. This includes program funding from the Department of Health and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.</li> <li>A fundamental attribute of Australia's HIV response has been the multi-party support for progress and action in response to the HIV epidemic. Health Equity Matters works across the Australian Parliament to advise Parliamentarians of progress on HIV and the health of represented communities. This multi-partisanship has been underpinned by the Parliamentary Friends for Action on HIV, Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmitted Infections.</li> <li>Through its role as a peak body, Health Equity Matters has developed excellence delivering policy and political advocacy. From time to time it supports its members in advocating to State and Territory Governments for reform to progress action on HIV and the health of represented communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Governments outside Australia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Equity Matters works with national and sub-national governments throughout the Asia-Pacific region where it has an international program. Health Equity Matters advocates for policies and laws that will support eliminating HIV transmission, end the criminalisation of key populations, and support health equity for supported communities.</li> </ul>

<b>Multi-lateral institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Equity Matters has ongoing relationships with UNAIDS and the World Health Organization (WHO). It also works from time to time with UNDP, Unitaaid and Gavi, the vaccine alliance. Health Equity Matters works with these institutions, in their capacity as valued allies and technical advisers who can help advance a shared vision to end the transmission of HIV and achieve health equity for key populations.</li> </ul>
<b>Funders and donors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Health funds Health Equity Matters' Australian program.</li> <li>• The organisation has a formal funding arrangement with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and since 2016 has been a Principal Recipient of international program funds.</li> <li>• The organisation also receives membership fees from members and affiliate members.</li> </ul>
<b>Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This includes pharmaceutical companies and other companies interested in HIV technology. The <a href="#">Pharmaceutical Industry Sponsorship Policy</a> directs Health Equity Matters' work with the pharmaceutical industry. At the core of this policy is enshrining organisational sovereignty.</li> </ul>
<b>International, regional, and national NGOs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of like-minded international, regional and national NGOs work in partnership with Health Equity Matters to advance their shared vision globally and, in the Asia-Pacific region, where HIV transmission rates are higher, and health inequities are often greater. Health Equity Matters most commonly works with these organisations as international program partners.</li> </ul>
<b>Key population-led and community-based organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key population-led and community-based organisations are primarily formed and governed by members of key populations themselves. These organisations are often partners of programs that Health Equity Matters supports in the region.</li> </ul>

## 4. Partnership Expectations

Health Equity Matters engages with disparate and diverse communities and partners and respects differences and a diversity of viewpoints. Through respectful dialogue built upon trust, Health Equity Matters strives to navigate differences in viewpoints to progress action to achieve practical, equitable health outcomes for the communities that it represents and supports.

The following expectations guide Health Equity Matters' engagement with partners and, in turn, the way its partners engage with Health Equity Matters:

- shared values and purpose;
- communities' health needs, priorities and voice are at the centre of activities;
- a belief that more can be achieved together than by operating in isolation;
- mutual values of openness, honesty, respect and personal accountability;
- a commitment to multi-partisanship;
- approaches foster community empowerment, resilience, and self-respect;
- regular feedback, and mutual sharing of ideas and learning;
- clear roles, responsibilities and promotion of mutual accountability;
- minimising adverse impacts on the environment; and

- where funding is involved, ensuring robust systems are in place to prevent, detect and mitigate child and adult safeguarding, terrorism and fraud risks.

Health Equity Matters seeks to work with organisations that share these principles. In addition, at times, Health Equity Matters may also choose to collaborate with other actors that may not fully align with these partnership principles, on a limited basis to advance its vision and purpose, and potentially to progress towards a partnership based on these principles. In these cases, the development of these collaborations will be on an exceptions basis and approved by the Board.

## 5. Development of International Program Partnerships

Health Equity Matters completes a Partner Due Diligence Pre-Screening Check on all prospective international program partners to assess whether there are any significant risks to working with an organisation. This process results in a partnership either proceeding if the outcome of the assessment process is favourable, or not proceeding where significant partnership risks are identified.

Once a partnership is established, Health Equity Matters engages partners in a Partner Capacity Assessment and Development process as part of working with that partner towards achieving a shared set of organisational standards. This discussion-based process assesses the partner against those mutual standards and identifies areas (if any) where further strengthening of systems and capacity may be required.

The partner due diligence and capacity assessment process verifies that a new partner:

- has a vision, mission and strategy that aligns strategically with Health Equity Matters vision, mission and Strategic Plan;
- has the capacity to effectively monitor and evaluate project or program activities;
- has a commitment to learning and quality improvement;
- is appropriately legally constituted including in-country representation;
- has sufficient human and financial resources to achieve partnership outcomes;
- has robust and accountable organisational and governance structures;
- is financially viable and has the procedures to manage funds responsibility and minimise the potential for fraud;
- has the capacity to identify and manage any risks to projects delivered by the partnership;
- is not on the proscribed lists of terrorists and terrorist organisations;
- has systems and processes in place to prevent the transmission of funds to terrorist organisations;
- is compliant with Health Equity Matters' Safeguarding Policy and procedures for (or willing to make changes to become compliant);
- will not use project or program funds for non-development activities such as the promotion of political or religious purposes or neo-colonial approaches;
- does not discriminate based on age, gender, sexual orientation, intersex status, religion, ethnicity, physical or intellectual ability or political affiliation; and
- promotes gender equality, equal participation of people with a disability or marginalised groups and environmental sustainability.

A Capacity Development Plan is discussed and agreed upon with new partners and Health Equity Matters supports the partner to develop the identified capabilities in line with the agreed strategies.

Health Equity Matters undertakes periodic assessments and reviews of partnerships to assess their quality and effectiveness, with findings being shared and lessons learnt being adapted into future work.

Any partnerships developed for the purposes of conducting research will abide by appropriate ethics approvals.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

Who	Responsibility
<b>Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforce the organisation’s commitment to working in partnership with capable and like-minded organisations to advance its vision and purpose, while protecting organisational sovereignty.</li> <li>Approve new Affiliate Members and organisations that Health Equity Matters proposes to collaborate with, which may not be fully aligned with its partnership principles.</li> <li>Approve changes to this Policy.</li> </ul>
<b>CEO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the application of the Policy across Health Equity Matters operations.</li> </ul>

## 7. Related Policies and Documents

Policy	Title and Hyperlink
011	<a href="#">Anti-Fraud and Financial Wrongdoing Policy</a>
006	<a href="#">Code of Conduct Policy</a>
042	<a href="#">Complaints Handling and Whistleblowing Policy</a>
040	<a href="#">Counter-Terrorism and Financial Wrongdoing Policy</a>
030	<a href="#">Environmental Management Policy</a>
032	<a href="#">Human Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy</a>
019	<a href="#">Pharmaceutical Industry Sponsorship Policy</a>
041	<a href="#">Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct</a>
Templates/Tools	
	International Program Manual
	Finance Manual

## 8. Policy History

Date of update	Version	Key changes	Endorsed by	Approved by	Next review
26 October 2023	2	Updated purpose, scope, partnership definition, expectations of partners, and partnership engagement processes for international program partners.	CEO	Board	October 2024

23 January 2020	1	Establishment of inaugural policy to guide partnerships development and management	Quality Principal	CEO	January 2022
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