

a review of the process to identify & finalize a new host organization

final report
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GFAN host search – review of process: final report

background & summary

Founded in 2011, GFAN is a global network of advocates and advocacy organizations working for fully funded and effective efforts against epidemics of HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria and for attainment of health, human rights, and sustainable development.

In August 2020, GFAN's founding and host organization since 2011, International Civil Society Support (ICSS), announced its closure. After discussions with the GFAN Steering Committee and other GFAN members to gauge early thinking on next steps, the GFAN Secretariat moved its administrative home for an

interim period to the New Venture Fund (NVF), a US-based 501(c)(3) organization that serves as a fiscal sponsor and manager for several grant-making mechanisms and has a long history of collaboration with GFAN and other allied global policy and advocacy coalitions.

GFAN then began a process to identify a long-term administrative host organization. That process resulted in the selection of the Joep Lange Institute (JLI) as the new GFAN administrative home, with JLI taking on administrative hosting functions beginning in mid-April 2021.

True to its nature as a global network, GFAN conducted this process in an open manner with support and guidance from the GFAN Steering Committee. GFAN posted regular updates to its entire network, invited input at every stage, and formed an Interim Advisory Committee composed of its members to inform and advise about the host identification and selection.

This document is a summary of the full process of GFAN's transition to a new host organization, organized to describe each phase of the process, namely:

- » Defining the need and shaping the process (August-November 2020)
- » Forming a global Interim Advisory Committee and developing an RFP (November-December 2020)
- » Launching an RFP to solicit proposals from potential host organizations (December-January 2021)
- » Reviewing proposals and selecting a host organization (February 2021)
- » Transferring administrative functions to the new host organization (March-May 2021)

In early 2021, GFAN released its [2021-2025 Strategy](#) that commits to sustaining and building a strong globally aligned advocacy movement aiming for fully funded and effective efforts against epidemics of HIV, tuberculosis and malaria and for attainment of health, human rights, and sustainable development.



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defining the need & shaping the process (August-November 2020)

What happened:

- GFAN had begun 2020 after a successful 6th replenishment of the Global Fund in which GFAN members advocated in innovative and effective ways for the largest-ever worldwide mobilization of resources for global health. In January 2020, GFAN also initiated work towards a new strategy for 2021-2025 reaching out to members through surveys, interviews, and a March 2020 consultation.
- Simultaneously, during early 2020, GFAN was in the process as Technical Partner on the NVF for Global Fund Advocacy Portfolio (NVF for GFA) of securing more than USD \$4 million of funding for Global Fund advocacy between 2020 and 2023 and was preparing an application to NVF for three years of renewal funding for GFAN Secretariat from Fall of 2020 – August of 2023.
- In August 2020, the staff of the GFAN Secretariat and NVF became aware of the likelihood of the imminent closure of ICSS, with a probable closing of ICSS operations in November. This revealed a need for GFAN to develop or secure new organizational capacity or sponsorship to continue operations.
- As the closure of ICSS became probable, a series of calls were held involving staff of the GFAN Secretariat with GFAN's regional partners, other members, funders and allies including the Global Fund Secretariat and the GFAN Steering Committee. These calls resulted in all parties agreeing that effort should be made to sustain the GFAN secretariat and its work.
- In early September, NVF offered to serve as a temporary administrative host organization for GFAN and NVF and ICSS began the process of transferring key administrative functions over to NVF. That process was completed and formal hosting was transferred on October 15th, 2020, providing GFAN with stable funding, management, and oversight for at least six months (i.e., until mid-April 2021), until a more permanent solution could be identified and finalized.
- GFAN and its Steering Committee then began to consider long term options:
 - » Remaining as a long-term hosted project at NVF was not seen as suitable either for GFAN's work as an independent civil society-owned global network and GFAN did not meet NVF's criteria for this type of hosting.
 - » Establishing GFAN as an independent charity was also put aside as an option, based on the idea that GFAN should focus its energies on programmatic work rather than organization-building.
 - » Remaining a hosted project of a GFAN coalition partner was thus the preferred option not only for administrative efficiency but also for reinforcing ownership of GFAN by its network.
 - » Most of those consulted urged GFAN to remain hosted at a partner based in a donor country in Europe or North America, on the rationale that GFAN's Regional Partners already provide a firm base in Africa and Asia and GFAN should maintain strong connections and proximity to advocates in donor countries in the "global north".
- GFAN thus decided by early October 2020 to conduct an open and formal search to identify a permanent host organization. By mid-November a consultant was found to support the GFAN secretariat in the process. On 23 November, the GFAN Steering Committee formally reviewed and approved a planned process to identify a host and a scope of work for the consultant.

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What happened well:

- GFAN benefited from a supportive funder (NVF), which offered to serve as a temporary administrative host and then helped GFAN to move over to NVF relatively quickly. As a result, GFAN staff continued to be employed without a gap, GFAN programming was not interrupted, and oversight measures were in place to provide security and confidence to external stakeholders about the management of GFAN.

What should have been done differently, or would be done differently with current knowledge:

- The ICSS announcement in August of an imminent closure came as a surprise, and GFAN and NVF were forced to respond without time to plan. It would have been helpful if the ICSS Board had been able to communicate earlier to GFAN about the challenges ICSS was facing and the possibility of closure. If GFAN and NVF had more advance notice, a wider range of hosting and transition options might have been explored.
- NVF set its temporary administrative hosting at a period of at least six months (i.e., from mid-October to at least mid-April 2021). This created an implied deadline to try to identify and finalize a new permanent host organization by mid-April. If GFAN and NVF had set a longer temporary hosting period (such as for 12 months), this would have provided more time for GFAN to seek proposals from potential hosts and therefore might have expanded the pool of potential administrative host organizations.

defining the need & shaping the process: lessons learned

forming a global Interim advisory committee & developing an RFP (November-December 2020)

- Following the GFAN Steering Committee meeting on 23 November, a total of 12 individuals were asked to serve as an Interim Advisory Committee to guide and inform the process of selecting a new host organization. Of the twelve, eight individuals (listed below) agreed to participate and four recused themselves either because of workload or potential conflict of interest as a potential applicant. A total of four individuals (listed below) representing the Gates Foundation and the Global Fund agreed to serve as non-voting observers to the Interim Committee.
- On 30 November, a survey was sent to the Interim Committee members and to several other stakeholders with a deadline of 7 December to determine priorities for the content of a GFAN Administrative Host RFP. From this outreach, 16 responses were received. Questions were also posted to the entire GFAN list in the GFAN annual survey and a total of 42 responses were received.
- On 11 December, a synthesis of survey responses and a draft RFP were sent to the Interim Advisory Committee for their review. Committee comments and edits to the draft RFP were compiled and the host RFP was finalized and launched on 18 December to the full GFAN list with a due date of 17 January 2021.

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interim advisory committee participants

- Chris Collins, Friends of the Global Fight, U.S.
- Maurine Murenga, GFAN Speaker, Kenya
- Molly Burchfield, NVF, U.S.
- Oanh Khuat Thi Hai, SCDI, Vietnam
- Olive Mumba- EANNASO / GFAN Africa, Kenya
- Olivia Ngou- Impact Santé / GFAN Africa Francophone, Cameroon
- Rachel Ong, GFAN Asia-Pacific, Singapore
- Sylvie Chantereau, Friends Europe, France

GFAN staff

- Katy Kydd Wright
- Tara Hogeterp
- Sive Stofile

non-voting members

- Edwige Fortier, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, U.K.
- Kieran Daly, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, U.S.
- Pauline Mazue, The Global Fund, Switzerland
- Linda Mafu, The Global Fund, Switzerland

what happened well:

- Most everyone invited to serve on the advisory committee said yes and then everyone participated in calls and responded to surveys when needed.
- Advisory committee members from multiple organizations and world regions provided a useful range of perspectives on GFAN's new host criteria and search process.
- The advisory committee was remarkably aligned in its ultimate recommendations about criteria and process, all emphasizing the importance of GFAN independence, sound financial management, etc., which made development and approval of the RFP relatively fast and easy.
- GFAN was able to convene and support the committee efficiently and on schedule.

what should have been done differently, or would be done differently with current knowledge:

- The short timeline for the hosting process required engagement of the advisory committee at the end of the calendar year and through holidays, which wasn't optimal.

forming a global Interim advisory committee &
developing an RFP: lessons learned

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launching an RFP to solicit proposals from potential host organizations (December-January 2021)

- Throughout the process, GFAN Secretariat staff had kept a list of “suggestions” that were made informally or formally of potential hosts. After the host RFP was launched on the GFAN listserv on 17 December, individualized emails and messages were sent to a total of 16 organizations on both 18 December and 4 January to be sure that the RFP was seen by possible applicants and publicly and transparently open to any interested organizations.
- The RFP invited any potential applicant to ask clarifying questions; follow up calls were held with four organizations to provide additional information about the RFP.
- A call was held with the Interim Advisory Committee on 11 January to review the RFP and outreach, and to collect input about draft proposal review criteria and process.
- In total, four organizations sent in proposals by 17 January.

what happened well:

- Sixteen potential applicants did receive and consider the RFP; multiple proposals were received.
- Potential host organizations were given an opportunity to speak directly with GFAN to get more information about the proposal and opportunities related to partnership with GFAN. GFAN had conversations with several organizations, including Aidsfonds, AVAC, HealthGap, the International AIDS Society, and ITPC.
- The feedback about the RFP and calls with potential candidates were very positive and might lead to future collaborative work between GFAN and new partners.

what should have been done differently, or would be done differently with current knowledge:

- At least two organizations that had been thought likely candidate hosts decided not to send in proposals. Five other organizations contacted GFAN saying they were actively considering a proposal but then decided against. Follow up indicates that the timing of the RFP and other workloads in early 2021 might have dissuaded potential host organizations from sending in proposals. Potential host organizations also expressed concerns about the potential unfunded costs and obligations that might come from hosting GFAN.

launching an RFP to solicit proposals from potential host organizations: lessons learned

reviewing proposals & selecting a host organization (February 2021)

- Following receipt of the four proposals on 17 January, all proposals were sent to the Interim Advisory Committee for their review, ranking and comments by 1 February.
- Simultaneously GFAN and NVF staff conducted a preliminary administrative proposal review and then scheduled “exploratory calls” with each applicant during 8-11 February to answer clarifying questions and collect basic due diligence documents.
- On 7 February, compiled committee rankings and comments were sent to the committee and these were discussed on a committee call held on 23 February. On that call, the committee arrived at a nearly unanimous vote and consensus recommendation to move forward with JLI as the new host organization.
- During the last week of February, JLI and the three other organizations were notified of the committee’s recommendations, as was the GFAN Steering Committee.

what happened well:

- The advisory committee reviews came in on time and were largely aligned in terms of overall ranking and in the content of comments about strengths, needed clarifications, and other feedback.
- The simultaneous collection of due diligence documents allowed NVF, as the primary funder, to affirm no major concerns with any of the leading candidates.
- The advisory committee was largely aligned about the ranking and relative strengths, leading to two proposals being seen as the strongest and a nearly unanimous vote about the final selection. This concurrence allowed the decision to be made quickly and efficiently without multiple calls.

what should have been done differently, or would be done differently with current knowledge:

- The process was fast and efficient, with the advisory committee reaching a nearly unanimous vote in just one call. A longer timeline might have allowed the advisory committee to have more time to explore and discuss relative strengths of applicants.

reviewing proposals & selecting a host organization: lessons learned

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transferring administrative functions to the new host organization (March-June 2021)

- Beginning in early February, GFAN and NVF began collecting basic administrative documents from all applicants to begin the due diligence process.
- Following the 23 February 2021 recommendation of the Interim Advisory Committee that Joep Lange Institute (JLI) be the new GFAN host organization, a memorandum of understanding was created and signed by representatives of the GFAN Steering Committee, JLI and the GFAN Director.
- All necessary documentation was then submitted in March to GFAN's interim host and largest funder, the New Venture Fund (NVF), allowing NVF to prepare to transfer hosting responsibilities over to JLI.
- With its new host, GFAN completed and submitted an application for funding from the NVF for GFA portfolio on April 12th to initiate funding through JLI for GFAN's work.
- During this transfer of host organization and funding, employment contracts and payroll arrangements were updated by mid-May, ensuring continuity in employment for GFAN's staff in Canada and South Africa.
- GFAN had begun informing external partners about the new hosting arrangements and announced the new partnership on a May 25th GFAN call. A more formal written communication was posted online and shared over the GFAN listserv on June 10th.

what happened well:

- JLI was able to provide all required documentation and was available to connect with NVF to answer questions about financial and operational management. GFAN's steering committee provided advice and support throughout. Results Canada was supportive and was able to provide all information needed for continuity for Canada-based GFAN staff. As a result, NVF was able to transfer hosting responsibilities over to JLI and to then initiate funding through JLI for GFAN's work in a timely manner.

what should have been done differently, or would be done differently with current knowledge:

- If there had been more time in the transition process, GFAN would have launched and finalized its new expanded international steering committee to involve this larger group in the process. Instead, the development of the GFAN steering committee is happening in June through September 2021 after the transition to JLI has been finalized.

transferring administrative functions to the
new host organization: lessons learned

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conclusion

GFAN is a relatively small organization with a very large mission and a global network. This organizational transition took substantial time and effort. Even without the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this transition had the potential to be disruptive to GFAN's ongoing work.

Further, success in finding a host organization for GFAN was not certain. Few organizations around the world have a mission and mandate that includes hosting a global advocacy network, fewer have the capacity, and even fewer have the resources to take on the obligations and responsibilities of hosting with minimal overhead reimbursement.

Despite this, GFAN succeeded in conducting an open and transparent search process and succeeded in identifying and securing a long-term administrative host organization.

The success of this process would not have been possible without strong support from NVF and other GFAN funders and partners. The financial support and flexibility shown by GFAN's funders allowed a transition that was thought out and implemented carefully, allowing staff to continue working throughout.

The process not only produced its intended outcome (a new host arrangement) but did so in a way that allowed GFAN members and other allies and partners to be informed and provide input and guidance at all stages. The openness and collaborative nature of the process was therefore aligned with and reinforcing of GFAN's overall values and approach, and may help produce future benefits to GFAN's visibility, reputation, and partnerships.

This document is publicly available as a resource for other advocacy organizations that might be engaged in similar transitions. Questions and input about this summary are welcome. Please feel free to direct all questions to: Katy Kydd Wright, Director, Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN), at katy@globalfundadvocatesnetwork.org