



JOSEPH BEAM LEGACY GRANT

Supporting Black Gay Men's Wellness

EVALUATION REPORT



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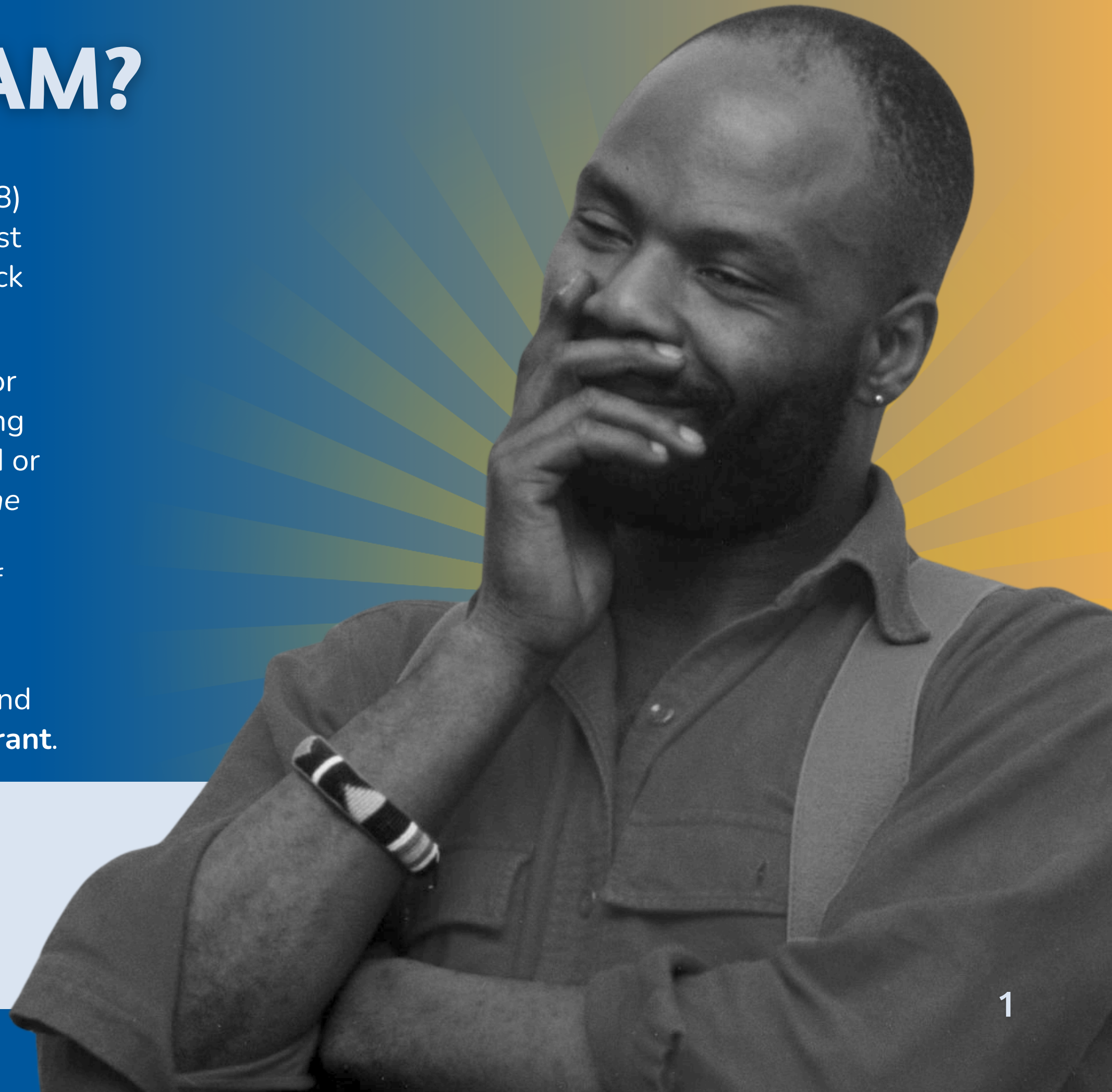
WHO IS JOSEPH BEAM?

Joseph F. Beam (December 30, 1954-December 27, 1988) was a pioneering Black writer, poet, and gay rights activist whose work continues to resonate in movements for Black LGBTQ+ wellness and liberation.

Born in Philadelphia, Beam was a passionate advocate for the voices and experiences of Black gay men, championing representation and visibility in a society that often erased or ignored their stories. His groundbreaking anthology, *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology* (1986) offered a powerful platform for Black gay voices and underscored themes of identity, resilience, and community.

BEAM honors Joseph Beam's legacy daily in their work and through the **Joseph Beam Black Gay Men's Wellness Grant**.

"I dream of Black men loving and supporting other Black men...Black men loving Black men is the revolutionary act" - Joseph Beam



History

In December 2022, in honor of Joseph Beam's birthday, BEAM launched the Joseph Beam Black Gay Men's Wellness Grant, in collaboration with Healthline.

The grant provides \$10,000 awards to organizations dedicated to supporting the mental health of Black gay men, aged 50+ who are living with HIV/AIDS. This population often faces unique challenges and limited access to resources, as available support is frequently directed toward younger gay men or other racial ethnic groups.

By focusing on this often overlooked group, the grant addresses critical gaps in mental health support and wellness resources, honoring Joseph Beam's enduring commitment to the well-being and visibility of Black gay men.

2023 Inaugural Recipients



JAX KELLY & TIM VINCENT

**Brothers of the Desert &
Let's Kick ASS Palm Springs**

- Palm Springs, CA -

"People wanted a safe space to express their experiences as Black gay men living in a White dominant culture. We partnered to create a discussion group, which offered opportunities for connection, education and more."



KEVIN ANDERSON

**The T.R.U.T.H.
Project, Inc.**

- Houston, TX -

"This opportunity allowed us to host a mixer and a Weekend Wellness Retreat for Black gay men 50+, which raised awareness of wellness practices such as energy healing, yoga, and sound bath."



BRYAN C. JONES

**Sankofa HIV
Initiative**

- Lakewood, Ohio -

"Thanks to this funding I was able to concentrate specifically on same gender loving men over 50 whereas before I would have to adjust my programs to address other demographics."



Evaluation

To understand the impact of the Joseph Beam Legacy Grant and highlight its influence on the recipient organizations and beyond, BEAM partnered with **Social Insights**, a Black women-led evaluation and research firm.

Recipients completed a brief survey and participated in a 90-minute virtual focus group. Each participant received a \$150 gift card as compensation for their time.

The survey and focus group discussions focused on the recipients’ experiences of joy, challenges, immediate and long-term outcomes of the grant, and the broader significance of the grant.

The Social Insights team analyzed data to identify emerging themes and insights, deepen understanding of the grant's impact, and identify areas for consideration.

Summary of Findings

Reflections of Joy	
• creating safe, affirming spaces • fostering connections • dismantling barriers to mental health support & healing	
Challenges	Joseph Beam Grant Impact
• mental health & HIV stigma • limited funding access • institutional gatekeeping • systemic exclusion	• expanded services • deeper community engagement • networking opportunities • affirmed organization’s legitimacy
Grant Significance	Considerations
• one-of-a-kind investment directly affirming Black, gay men, 50+ living with HIV • model for how to fund wellness with dignity and trust	• foster connection and collaboration among recipients • offer space for sustainability planning and visioning • deepen access to resources



Reflections on Joy

We started the focus group with a **collective grounding breath** and an invitation to share collective joy. We asked recipients, **what brings you joy in this work?**

Their responses are illustrated in the word cloud to the right

Recipients are finding joy in:

- creating safe spaces that did not previously exist
- creating meaningful connections
- reducing stigma and dismantling barriers to mental health support

"The part of my work that brings me joy is really being able to connect people and get them to feel more empowered and seen, especially in this particular geographic area."

helping people communication safe
feel empowered support spaces
helping others feel that they are not alone
gratitude connections
making people show up for our healing
feel seen community reducing stigma



Navigating Challenges

During the focus group, the recipients shared some barriers they face. Some challenges were internal, such as mental health stigma which can prevent community members from participating fully in their offerings. Other challenges were external, such as insufficient investment, institutional gatekeeping, and de-centering those with lived experience.

Internal Challenge:

- Stigma and shame often leads to isolation and barriers to engagement.

"The internal challenge is that Black men oftentimes don't want to talk, and discussion isn't an easy thing for many Black men. The group we have is committed to being part of a community that *does* talk and shares feelings and emotions and their knowledge and wisdom. But I think any of them would say that the challenge is to encourage their buddies to join in and do the same."

External Challenges:

- Limited resources is a barrier to sustaining and scaling the work.
- Gatekeeping by larger institutions and stakeholders exclude Black-led and community-based organizations from decision-making spaces despite their lived experience and wisdom.

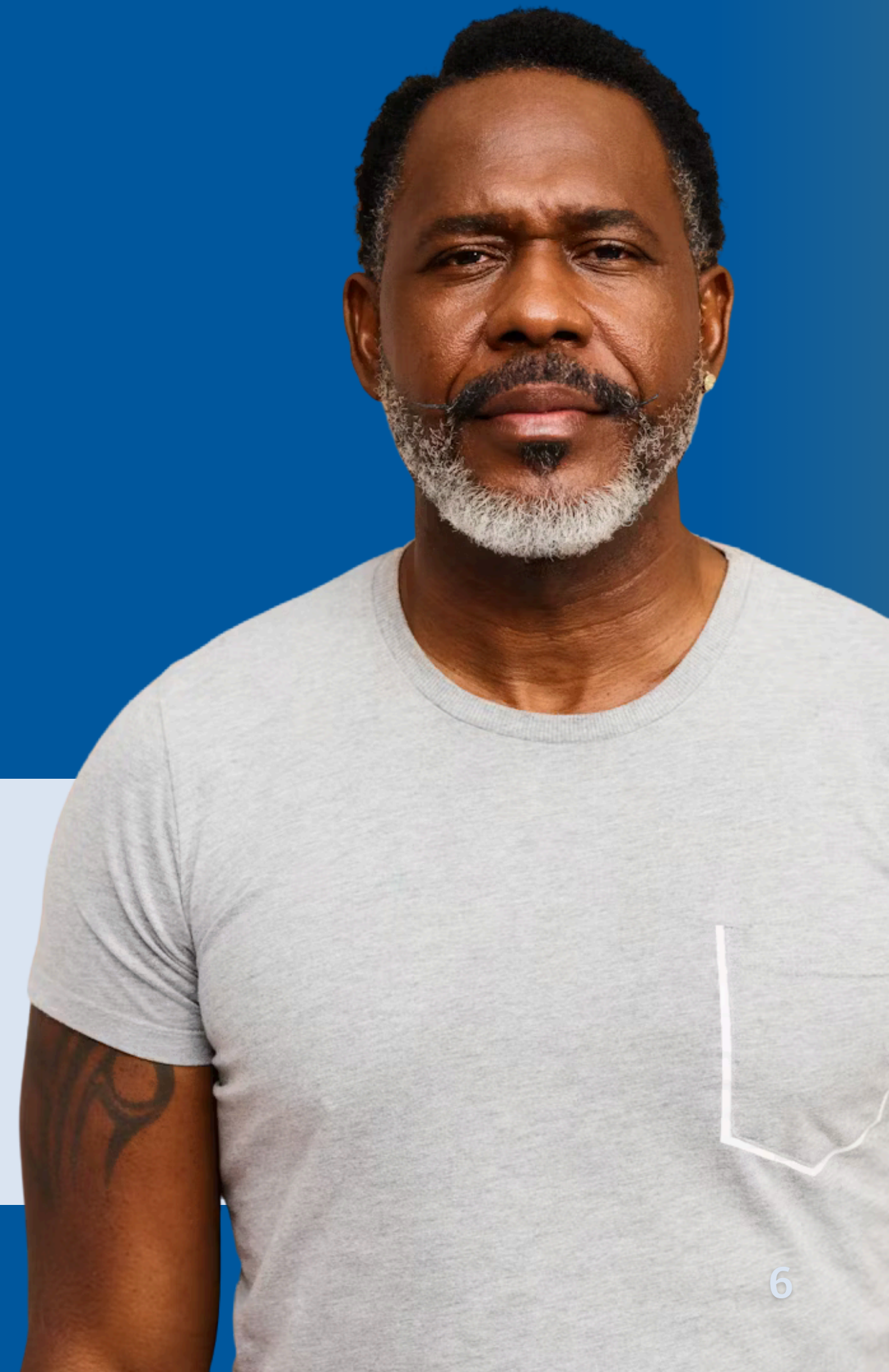
"Not everyone wants to fund a Black men's discussion group. So that's a big challenge. We need to not only create the safe space, but also appropriately pay people to do the work."

"It's constantly having to fight for our space and make sure that our voices are being heard... I'm tired of taking my work and having to compromise it to fit their needs when it was conceived by people who lived with HIV."



Navigating Challenges

"I have problems with *other* stakeholders feeling like they need to mute our voices...as if they know what's best for *us*...feeling that they own the space, not utilizing a racial equity lens, and not understanding that [our] organizations add value to the conversation. Even [without] the staff or the funding, the fact that we have the **trust of the community** is very important, and we must take that into account. We must also utilize people living with HIV and AIDS every chance that we get **because our voices matter the most, and we know what needs to be done.**"





Impact

Recipients shared that the Joseph Beam grant had both **immediate and long-term impacts on their work**. Importantly, the grant affirmed the value of their community-rooted models and lived experience, allowing them to offer something that was unprecedented for this population- **with their own wisdom and experience leading the way**.

Immediate Impact:

- Participants were able to launch new programs, expand existing services, and curate offerings specifically for Black gay men aged 50+ living with HIV/AIDS- filling a critical gap in mental health and wellness support.

"It provided an opportunity for us to really create an unprecedented project that really is focusing on the emotional and wellness needs of Black men in our community. That has not ever happened before. We used our own models and our own experience to build that."

Sustained Impact:

- Participants shared that the grant legitimized their work broadly, helping them secure additional funding and recognition. It opened new networking opportunities and elevated their visibility.

"It made our [local] health departments and other stakeholders sit up and take notice that someone else was respecting our work had awarded us for the work that we do.... especially totally outside our jurisdiction. [BEAM] was a *national* organization that took notice and said, '*Hey, the work that you're doing does matter*'."

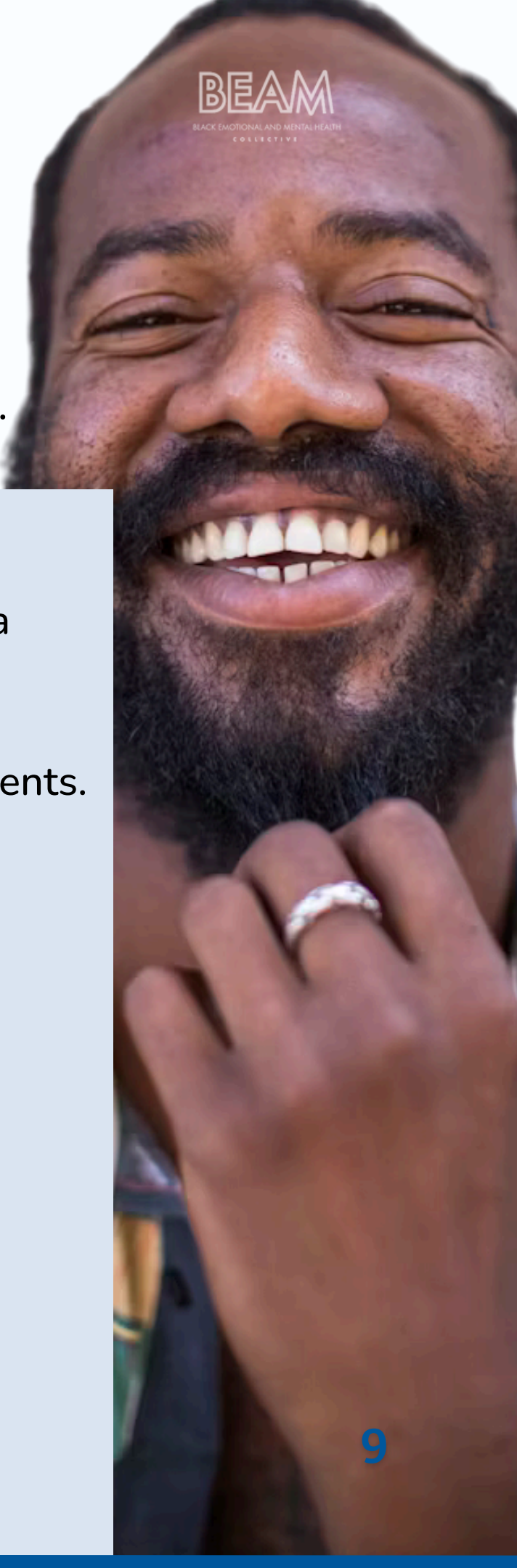


Barbershop Discussion Group

Brothers of the Desert and Let's Kick ASS Palm Springs launched a monthly discussion group for Black gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, and straight allies to discuss important topics (e.g. identity, friendships, family, coming out).

"It really is meant to build connection and destigmatize some of the ways we feel about HIV in the Black and gay communities...It's nice to have a safe space to be who we are right now."





Significance of this Grant

Similar to [previous evaluations](#) of other BEAM grants, the recipients of the Joseph Beam award shared that it fills gaps where other funding sources are scarce, non-existent, or misaligned with their values. The grant was created for them, with intentionality, which they shared felt affirming, thoughtful, and liberating.

Increased Visibility for Small Organizations

- The grant offered increased visibility for smaller, often overlooked organizations doing transformative work- allowing them to stay true to their missions while expanding their reach.

"When I saw the other awardees, it made me feel safe that there were other people who were with small organizations like myself were doing great work, doing work that was bigger than the size of their organization, and that we were being noticed."

Alignment

- The recipients remarked that this was the first time a funding opportunity explicitly aligned with their identities, their community, and their values. It eliminated the need for shapeshifting to fit requirements.

"I've never seen anything that said '*Black, gay, and 50+*'. I've been grant writing for some years. You usually have to be really intentional with your writing and make it fit. So...with this, I didn't have to '*make it fit*'. The alignment was just there!"

"The [application] process was very easy. I had a comfort that '*they get it.*'"

Phase T.W.O (Together We Overcome)



The T.R.U.T.H Project hosted a weekend wellness retreat for Black Gay Men 50+ living with HIV titled, Phase TWO (Together We Overcome).



"We focused on healing and wellness practices...yoga, energy healing, sound healing, good ole food, group discussion, and lots of laughter centered the experience. A huge THANK YOU to BEAM for seed planting this experience!"



Significance of this Grant

By creating a grant rooted in trust, alignment, and accessibility, BEAM sent a powerful message to recipients: **your work matters and has immanent value**. Participants shared that this process helped them feel seen, trusted, and safe.



Accessible and Approachable Application Process

- The process of applying for the grant was simple and accessible. Participants felt that BEAM honored and respected their time by not requiring a strenuous application process where they had to *prove* their worth.

"I could tell that it was a lot of intention with [the application process]...It does not force you to dip into your fluff jar to wax on about why you *deserve* this money...I love that the interview did not feel stuffy or tight. It just felt like a conversation."

Honoring Recipients' Vision

- Participants shared that BEAM trusted and supported them and allowed them to stay true to their goals without the burden of extractive, time-consuming reporting processes that could detract from executing their vision.

"I was told by [BEAM's grant manager], 'We *support what you're trying to do.*' So, I wasn't met with resistance... I wasn't micromanaged or overloaded with paperwork and stuff that needed to be turned in."

The Sankofa Healing Weekend



The Sankofa Healing Retreat offers support for Black Same Gender Loving Men age 50+ living with HIV+. The weekend includes critical discussions, educational workshops, talent shows, and community building.

"My first time at Sankofa, I was skeptical...but once I got there I learned that there were loving, caring people...in a safe space. I got the chance to feel freedom"

click to play a video about Sankofa



Grantee Considerations

Recipients expressed deep appreciation for the grant and excitement about its future, offering thoughtful considerations to strengthen the experience for future cohorts.



Connection Among Recipients

- Recognizing their alignment and collective brilliance, they expressed desire to be convened earlier in the grant period to connect, share strategies, and visions for the work.

Intentional Space for Sustainability Planning

- Recipients had interest in exploring how to sustain and expand their projects beyond the life of the grant.

Access to Non-monetary Resources

- Some wanted to deepen collaboration with BEAM beyond the financial investment, such as resources to enhance their offerings or leverage for other funding opportunities.

Reaching Similar Organizations

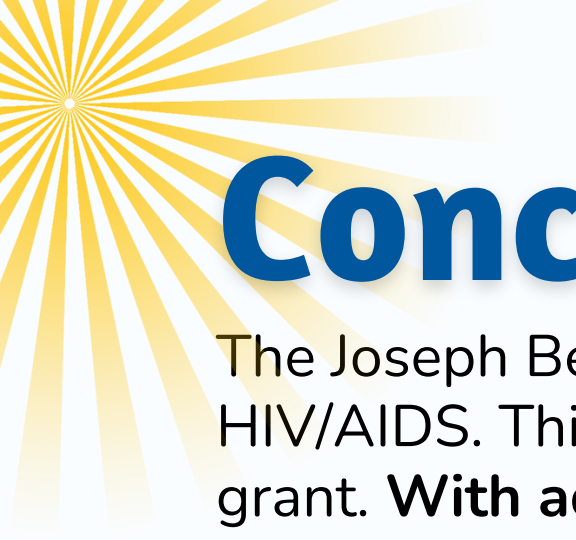
- Recipients were interested in recruitment efforts and were curious about what role past recipients could play in ongoing outreach to future recipients.

"Thinking about how do we further support this group... I remember when I saw the [[Healthline article](#)] I was excited.. like, 'Wow, there are others out there doing the work like me!'... I was hoping we would come together at some point."

"How do we make this project sustainable? How do we make this project attract more grants and more interest?... I think that might be something to consider going forward with future recipient to try to steer them towards sustainability."

"BEAM referred me to some other grants. I think making that process a little more open might have been helpful, too...Also, if they could have provided a letter of support that might have made a difference, too."

"I think the biggest challenge might be, how does [BEAM] continue to identify people like us that would actually benefit from a similar grant?"



Conclusion & Recommendations

The Joseph Beam grant plays critical role in supporting the mental health of Black gay men aged 50+ living with HIV/AIDS. This evaluation offers an opportunity to consider approaches to maximize impact of BEAM's namesake grant. **With additional funding from committed partners, BEAM can expand its reach, enhance support services, and implement recipients' suggestions to fortify this vital offering and ensure its long-term sustainability.**

Broaden Outreach and Visibility

Recipients learned about the grant from social media or colleagues connected to BEAM. While it's social media presence is vast, BEAM may extend its reach to connect with smaller organizations that may fall outside of it's immediate network. To increase awareness, BEAM could incorporate partnerships with former recipients who could act as ambassadors within their networks.

Multi-Year Funding Options

Given the grant's specific focus, multi-year funding would offer recipients more stability to deepen their work and create lasting change. Alternatively, providing fewer recipients with higher funding amounts each year could enable organizations to build stronger, long-term initiatives that align closely with BEAM's mission and legacy.

Facilitate Recipient Connections

Given their shared interests and goals, BEAM might consider facilitating convening spaces for recipients to share strategies, resources, and support. Virtual or in-person spaces could foster a community among recipients, allowing them to address common challenges and exchange best practices specific to supporting the needs of this demographic.

Strengthen and Sustain the Legacy

To further honor and sustain the legacy of this grant, BEAM might consider expanding community involvement by establishing an advisory group comprising past recipients and community leaders who understand the unique needs of this population. By continuously adapting the grant with input from those closest to the work, BEAM ensures the grant remains responsive and impactful.

Acknowledgments

We are deeply grateful to all of the participants who generously offered their time and shared their personal experiences and stories. Your contributions have been instrumental in demonstrating the impact of the Jo BEAM Grant. As always, we thank BEAM for allowing us the honor to partner in this work and for trusting us to capture these stories.

In Community,
Social Insights Research



The Joseph Beam Black Gay Men's Wellness Grant is a part of BEAM's Black Wellness Innovation Fund, a funder collaborative that supports innovative, wellness work in Black and marginalized communities.

This grant is sponsored by Healthline Media.

healthline

IN LOVING MEMORY OF BRYAN C. JONES

BEAM and Social Insights honor the life and legacy of Bryan C. Jones, who passed away in December 2024. Bryan was a tireless advocate for justice, liberation, and the reduction of stigma surrounding Black gay men living with HIV/AIDS. His unwavering commitment to this work left an indelible mark on his community and beyond. His voice, passion, and dedication continue to inspire. We are deeply grateful for his contributions and the impact he made through his advocacy.

“We need to keep on doing what we're doing because it does make a difference.”

- Bryan C. Jones

