

# ACCELERATE!

Meet Me Where I Want to Be:  
Listening to the Men of Baltimore and Jackson.



Aligned with the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, ACCELERATE! is ViiV Healthcare's four-year, \$10 million commitment to fund innovative projects that support the health and well-being of Black gay men in two cities hardest hit by HIV—Baltimore, Maryland, and Jackson, Mississippi.

ViiV Healthcare believes that the **perspectives of those most affected by HIV are essential** to designing, applying, and evaluating promising projects and programs. Through this **person-oriented lens**, the ACCELERATE! team conducted a series of activities to better understand men's experiences through prevention, care, and treatment. There was a focus on **recognizing their unique needs and aspirations**, and on **identifying opportunities for action and investment**.

**“RESEARCH IS FORMALIZED CURIOSITY.  
IT IS POKING AND PRYING WITH A PURPOSE.”**

— ZORA NEALE HURSTON

## Our Process

Funded by ViiV Healthcare, ACCELERATE! began with a comprehensive literature review and environment scan 🔍 to inform key questions for the ethnographic research and to establish an understanding about the contexts in which Black gay men operate—at home, in the clinic, and out in the world.

This initial work guided the in-depth **ethnographic research** 👁️ conducted by ReD Associates on behalf of ViiV Healthcare. The study focused on 30 HIV- and HIV+ men, their friends, their family members, and their influencers in Baltimore and Jackson.

From here, the team brought together local communities and national advisors 🗣️ in order to identify areas of strategic opportunity to serve as the foundation of future programming for ACCELERATE!



## Our Insights

Insights from this process are structured along a four-stage HIV continuum, with insights about identity forming the background.



## Our Takeaways

These insights into the HIV journey have immediate implications for strategies and messages relating to care. They show that care cannot be delivered effectively by assuming homogenous identities, by equating knowledge of disease information with action, or by ignoring men's aspirations.

- 1. Care is for everyone, not just for those who are HIV+ and in treatment.** Addressing messages, clear information, and holistic strategies for everyone should result in fewer infections, more sustained care, and less stigma.
- 2. Men need a reason to enter and stay in care.** Current efforts emphasize vague, abstract, or unclear goals about the long-term future, when the reasons should be clear and concrete—beating the odds, staying strong, and staying healthy.
- 3. Concrete individual benefits**—rather than abstract and potentially unrealistic goals, like stopping HIV or improving society—should be emphasized.
- 4. Messages shouldn't treat Black gay men as a single, homogenous group.**
- 5. With men focused on growth and self-improvement,** messages need to acknowledge men's ambitions and offer them choices that are in line with those personal aspirations.

“I don't want to get an assumption on me just [because of who] they think I am. I want them to see me for my attributes, for what I bring to the table.”

— Research participant

“I wasn't trying to be a statistic; I was just trying to be in love. I'm a statistic now... and with medication, that's not going to change.”

— Research participant

## Activate to ACCELERATE!

During the next several years, ACCELERATE! will activate these insights and provide a platform for new projects and collaborations. We will support enhanced, community-driven efforts and innovative opportunities that inspire and support men to seek and maintain quality healthcare.

**“SILENCE KILLS THE SOUL; IT DIMINISHES ITS POSSIBILITIES TO RISE AND PLAY AND EXPLORE.”**

— MARLON RIGGS

ViiV Healthcare was established to [take an innovative approach to the challenge of HIV](#)—and we do. It's who we are.

An innovative approach means we [go beyond developing new medicines](#). We [seek insights](#) to better understand the unmet needs of people living with HIV. We [connect individuals and communities to help drive solutions](#) focused on providing the same [standard of care](#) for all people living with HIV. We [develop and support community programs](#) that focus on HIV prevention, care, and treatment. The [voice of the HIV community informs everything we do](#).

As the [only company solely focused on HIV](#), we [think differently, act differently, and connect differently](#) to improve the lives and outcomes for all people affected by HIV.

To learn more, visit [viivhealthcare.com/us](http://viivhealthcare.com/us) and follow us [@ViiVUS](#)

