Further, reductions in LGBTI funding often disproportionately impacted LGBTI sex workers. Red Umbrella Fund was also featured in a briefing paper from Funders Concerned About AIDS on the need for greater investment in intermediary, community-led funders.

A strong sex workers’ rights movement needs not only better funding, but also power and autonomy in making decisions about funding to fuel change.

The Fund’s participatory and sex worker-led model makes this vision a reality. Red Umbrella Fund’s 2021 grantmaking process, which involves the sex worker-led International Steering Committee and Programme Advisory Committee, was conducted online again this year. The Fund also recruited two new Programme Advisory Committee Members and its first Programme Associate based outside of the Netherlands.

Since 2012, more feminists and funders have joined the fight for sex workers’ rights. This matters because feminists believe that women should have control over their bodies and be respected for the choices they make. Women are also more likely to be employed in precarious, low-paid labour, such as sex work, with limited access to labour rights. It is crucial therefore that sex workers’ rights be added to feminists’ and funders’ agendas. While the sex workers’ rights movement is growing, sex work remains criminalised in most parts of the world, and funding for sex workers’ organising continues to be limited.

In 2021, Red Umbrella Fund received 264 applications – 44 more than in 2020. Red Umbrella Fund distributed 30 core, flexible grants to organisations around the world for a total of €921,519. This was over 80% of its total 2021 budget and the highest amount Red Umbrella Fund has ever distributed in one year!

To increase accessibility of funding, for the first time, Red Umbrella Fund organised Q&A sessions on the application process in English, French, Russian, and Spanish. The reporting template was also adapted.

As part of its funder advocacy work, Red Umbrella Fund further raised the visibility of sex workers’ rights movements, actively sharing knowledge and experience to catalyse more and better funding for sex worker-led organisations. Highlights of the year include organising a session on feminism and sex workers’ rights for employees of the Global Fund for Women.

Red Umbrella Fund participated in the development of a fact sheet exploring LGBTI funding for sex workers and providing recommendations to funders interested in supporting sex workers within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex (LGBTI) communities. The fact sheet documented that increased funding available to LGBTI communities did not necessarily translate to increased funding for LGBTI sex workers.