White Paper for the HIV Alliance

**INTRODUCTION**

One of the main concerns of non-profit organizations is money; there simply is not enough of it. The HIV Alliance is no different, but unlike many of the other organizations the HIV Alliance, lacks significant support from the community. This puts an even bigger financial strain on the organization. Money will always be an issue for the HIV Alliance but there are ways the organization can improve the image it has in the community which will directly affect the flow of money it receives from donors.

**THE PROBLEM**

Resistance is the major issue the HIV Alliance faces and the main source for its financial trouble. The HIV Alliance has difficulty receiving funds from donors because of the type of organization it is. People connect HIV to promiscuity, drugs, and homosexuality, which all deal with moral issues that some people do not agree with or feel comfortable supporting. Since people do not fully understand what the organization represents they chose not to support it. As you know, the HIV Alliance relies on private donors because the grants given to it do not cover all the costs. This is why this issue is so important to address.

The HIV Alliance is in financial need to pay for operational support. This includes paying for office supplies, employees, rent, and other important things that make the organization possible. Operational finances are provided strictly by private donors because the grants do not cover it. As of now, most of the money donated pays for staff. Although this is true, it is still not enough to keep them around. There is a total of $1,168,210 to give its employees and this is split between 33 positions. According to Diane Lang, the executive director, the pay is lower than what someone working a regular 9 to 5 p.m. job makes, but its employees work far more than just 8 hour days. This causes it to be seen to many as a starter job because they cannot make much of a living with the amount of time that they put in. Since employees see their positions as starter jobs, they only stick around long enough until they can find something that pays more. This forces the organization to look for new people to fill the position, train them, and hope they do not leave the organization six months down the road. This also puts strain of the organization because there is not enough money to hire more staff to help with things like training volunteers. For example there used to be eight people on the prevention staff but that has been cut down to three to save funds. The organization is even doing without a development coordinator so those responsibilities have fallen onto Lang and one other woman to share. There are no plans to hire anyone else in order to save funds.

Lang also expressed the need for space. She is currently working out of a small building downtown that is temporarily being used as her office and is shared with another company. This is an issue because there is no space to do anything for the patients except for paper work. People want HIV Alliance to expand and open up more locations, which it would love to do, but financially it is not possible because they cannot afford to rent more space. If donations by private donors were increased this would not be an issue and the HIV Alliance would be able to reach out to many more people who are in need of its services.

**MOVING FORWARD**

One possible way to fix the financial issue is to merge the HIV Alliance with another organization that provides similar resources. By looking at the history of the organization, the HIV Alliance was formed by other organizations merging together to make one company that covered all aspects. By having it merge again there would be a bigger pool of money to draw from, providing more resources and possibilities to reach out to the community.

Another way to help with the financial need is by solving the resistance issue through education. Although the HIV Alliance does this already, the more educational programs there are the better. Once the community is educated about the topic and the resources the HIV Alliance provides, it will be more willing to donate funds. HIV/AIDS is a foreign topic to many people and when people do not understand they do not care. The community needs to understand the severity of this issue and realize how important the HIV Alliance is. The only way that educational programs will be able to occur is if the HIV Alliance receives more money. The organization needs more funding from the government to cover the costs. Once there is funding for the education, more funding will follow from private donors.

One way to educate the community about the HIV Alliance is by hosting AIDS awareness events during AIDS awareness month. Throughout the month it can host events that talk about the causes of AIDS, statistics of HIV/AIDS in Eugene, and host guest speakers who have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS to talk about their experience with HIV Alliance. One example of events that are done during this month is a condom fashion show. The University of Oregon puts one on every year during the month of awareness and it is a great success. During the fashion show information about prevention is given along with facts and statistics about the disease and prevention products are provided. Currently the HIV Alliance has an annual Cinco de Marzo event that is a silent auction held at the country club. There is a cocktail hour and live music is played throughout the evening. The HIV Alliance needs to more events like this because it gets out awareness about the issue, gathers people together in a fun setting, and raises a lot of money.

It should also have plan programs that are targeted towards specific groups. For example there should be programs focused on information that would be appropriate for middle school and high school aged students with information that would be different from what a middle aged adult information session would receive. It would also be good to host a guest speaker who took advantage of the needle exchange and decided to change their drug abuse habits because of it. This would be beneficial because it would be showing the community what the HIV Alliance does to help out the neighborhoods as well as show the benefits from the controversial resource. These events can take place at local high schools throughout the month as well as community buildings and at the university. These events would also be great publicity for the HIV Alliance because it would put its name out in the community and put it in people’s minds.

The way the community views the organization needs to change because that is where the donations will be coming from. Community members who see what they do and understand the cause are those who donate. The private donations and grants that it receives currently are not enough. This is because those who are donating are ones who have been affected by HIV first hand. These people do not have a lot of money because of the expenses they paid involving HIV treatment. Another reason why private donors donate so little is because most of them are lower to middle class and are unable to make larger donations. Those who are highly educated and higher class are less affected by this issue so the HIV Alliance is not a top priority for them to donate towards. Once that population of the community realizes that this issue affects everyone they will be more willing to help out.

For example, the needle exchange is frowned upon by many because they feel it is promoting drug use, but that is not what it is for. The needle exchange prevents those who chose to take part in drug use from HIV and Hepatitis C. It also keeps the community clean by disposing of used needles that would be in our community otherwise. It even gives resources to those using drugs so that when they make the decision to stop they know how to and they know who they can turn to. Sometimes when people cannot relate to those infected or at risk, they need to know that what their money is going towards helps them out too, and in this case that program is cleaning up the whole community and that is what needs to be explained to those who don’t understand it.

Another thing the HIV Alliance needs in order to thrive and become a stronger organization is better public relations. It is important so the public can become more aware of the HIV Alliance and what it does. Currently the HIV Alliance does not have much of an image in Eugene and that needs to change. When the public is more aware of what the organization is doing, it is more likely to support the cause. Public relations can also be a great way to let the community know the successes of the company. It is extremely important for the public to be aware of the successes so it knows what it is contributing to and the great accomplishes that it has made. Because of the type of organization the HIV Alliance is, the community does not see firsthand what it is doing, nor do people care unless they have a direct connection to it in some way. This is where public relations come into play. It is the public relations job to tell people what they need to know about the organization and why they should care. The HIV Alliance needs to be very visible within the community and it needs to stay visible to be affective.

**Conclusion**

In five years this organization should be offering its services to more counties in Oregon and the resistance given by the community should be reduced. The main areas that should be focused on are the rural counties. This is because there is a high demand for HIV/AIDS awareness and resources to prevent and manage it. This issue tends to go untouched because people in the rural areas in Oregon are more likely to be conservative and there are currently no organizations that focus on this topic. People are even scared to tell their own families they have been diagnosed with the disease because of the bad stigma behind it. This needs to be changed. The only way this can happen is if education is increased and if more money is available to provide the education and expansion. In order to move forward, these are the necessary steps to make the HIV Alliance more successful.

The purpose of this document is to address the issues the HIV Alliance is currently dealing with and give options of ways the problems can be overcome. The HIV Alliance has a lot to offer the community living in Eugene, but unfortunately only a small amount of people knows this. By receiving government funding specifically focused on educational services, it will provide the community with better education and help gain loyal donors. It first starts with fighting the resistance through education to bring in more money and beat the financial battle.