

WORLD AIDS MUSEUM

REIMAGINING THE MUSEUM

Our History. Our Lives. Our Future.

Illustrated strategic recommendations, exhibit modernization concepts, and a multi-year naming-rights partnership framework.

DISCUSSION DRAFT | NOVEMBER 2026 | VON BIGGS

THE OPPORTUNITY

From preservation to participation

An ambitious but phased vision for a museum rooted in history and actively engaged with the present.



A living institution, not a static collection

Preserve the voices and artifacts of HIV/AIDS history while building visitor experiences that connect historical memory with science, aging, justice, young people, and contemporary community life.

Three financial questions need different answers

CAPITAL: What does each new gallery cost to design, fabricate, install and launch?

OPERATIONS: What will we invest each year in upkeep, content, staffing and education?

SUSTAINABILITY: How will naming partners, private donors, members and rentals fund the work?

Principle: editorial control, consent, historical integrity and scientific accuracy remain with the museum.

EIGHT FUNDABLE EXPERIENCES

Exhibition opportunities | 01–02

Each concept could have its own capital campaign and a separate annual presenting partner.



01 HISTORY + PRESERVATION

THE VOICES THAT CHANGED HISTORY

Historical archives, artifacts, testimony, and an interactive chronology linking organizing, medical advances, public response, and today.

POSSIBLE INVESTMENT: Touch-enabled decade timeline; digitized collections; interpretive artifact cases; accessible captions and transcripts.



02 SCIENCE + EDUCATION

HIV TODAY: WHAT HAS CHANGED

A renewable, community-informed space about HIV prevention, treatment progress, U=U, stigma, access, and public health.

POSSIBLE INVESTMENT: Commercial displays; updateable touchscreen content; modular teaching graphics; specialist-reviewed educational material.

All images are conceptual illustrations, not photographs of existing museum installations.

Exhibition opportunities | 03–04

Each concept could have its own capital campaign and a separate annual presenting partner.



03 AGING + LIVED EXPERIENCE

STILL HERE: AGING WITH HIV

An affirming gallery centered on people aging with HIV, their relationships, resilience, changing needs, and lives beyond a diagnosis.

POSSIBLE INVESTMENT: Large-format portraits; personal objects; concise films; accessible seating; optional audio stories.



04 JUSTICE + HUMAN RIGHTS

CRIMINALIZED: HIV, JUSTICE AND THE LAW

An evidence-based exploration of law, policy, science, stigma, individual responsibility, and contested histories.

POSSIBLE INVESTMENT: Primary document replicas; legal timeline; moderated discussion prompts; expert review.

All images are conceptual illustrations, not photographs of existing museum installations.

Exhibition opportunities | 05–06

Each concept could have its own capital campaign and a separate annual presenting partner.



05 YOUTH + LEARNING

WHAT THEY NEVER TAUGHT US ABOUT HIV

An interactive learning environment for young people and people of every generation to examine myths and learn without shame.

POSSIBLE INVESTMENT: Low-barrier interactive quizzes; facilitator modules; educator materials; pre/post learning evaluation.



06 STORIES + PRESERVATION

THE LIVING HIV ARCHIVE

Voluntary community oral histories that are preserved responsibly and shared with a clear consent framework.

POSSIBLE INVESTMENT: Recording and listening stations; captioned interviews; transcription; access-controlled digital repository.

All images are conceptual illustrations, not photographs of existing museum installations.

EIGHT FUNDABLE EXPERIENCES

Exhibition opportunities | 07–08

Each concept could have its own capital campaign and a separate annual presenting partner.



07 DIALOGUE + COMMUNITY

THE CONVERSATIONS WE STILL NEED

Rotating exhibitions and recurring moderated gatherings that create space for dialogue across experiences and generations.

POSSIBLE INVESTMENT: Flexible event seating; portable display surfaces; recordings where consented; accessibility services.



08 OUTREACH + ACCESS

THE TRAVELING AND DIGITAL MUSEUM

Portable experiences for schools, libraries, conferences, and audiences who cannot visit the museum in person.

POSSIBLE INVESTMENT: Modular panels; transport cases; digital collections; captioned remote access; simplified installation.

All images are conceptual illustrations, not photographs of existing museum installations.

THE LIVING HIV ARCHIVE

The Living Stories Studio

A welcoming recording space where community members can share stories that become part of the museum experience.



More than a podcast room

A person who lived through the earliest years of the epidemic sits down to tell what they remember. Another describes the experience of growing older with HIV. A younger advocate asks the questions their generation is carrying forward. With permission, those conversations can become short films, gallery features, oral histories and learning resources.

What the studio makes possible

Two-camera interviews and podcasts; captioned video excerpts for digital displays; educational recordings; community partnerships; consent-based preservation; and limited mission-aligned studio rental.

PRELIMINARY STARTUP EQUIPMENT + SETUP

$22,000–$59,000

Acoustics, cameras, microphones, lighting, editing station, storage and setup training. Additional staffing, annual production, maintenance, accessibility and secure archiving require separate estimates.

PROPOSED NAMING PARTNER: $50,000–$75,000 annually for three years.

Concept illustration. Any featured participant is fictional; no interview is depicted as real.

DIGITAL MODERNIZATION

Technology is more than a screen

The final exhibit budget must include content, interaction design, systems integration, accessibility, and ongoing maintenance.

Interactive timeline

Touch displays + custom story navigation

A hardware purchase does not include research, rights clearance, software or content editing.

Digital listening stations

Video, audio, headphones, transcripts

Design for hearing, visual, mobility, and privacy needs from the beginning.

Immersive storytelling

Projection, sound, and visitor circulation

Complex rooms may require environmental controls, rigging, electrical and creative production.

Updateable science content

CMS, approved workflow, display network

Budget for annual editorial review, captioning, security updates and equipment replacement.

Procurement approach: site survey -> concept design -> vendor estimates -> phased installation.

FUNDING ARCHITECTURE

Naming rights as annual partnerships

Treat naming rights as time-limited recognition attached to measurable, mission-aligned outcomes.

PROPOSED OPPORTUNITY	ANNUAL ASK	TERM
Museum-wide transformation partner	$150K–$250K / year	3–5 years
HIV Today gallery	$75K–$125K / year	3 years
History and preservation gallery	$50K–$100K / year	3–5 years
Still Here gallery	$50K–$100K / year	3 years
Living HIV Archive	$50K–$100K / year	3 years
Youth learning gallery	$50K–$75K / year	3 years
Justice exhibition	$35K–$75K / year	2–3 years
Community conversations	$25K–$50K / year	Annual
Traveling and digital museum	$50K–$100K / year	3 years

Illustrative fundraising targets, not verified market valuations or sponsor commitments.

Recognize partners as “presented by” or “supported by.” Protect curatorial independence, set renewal terms, and assess exclusivity and conflicts of interest.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The earlier budget is a pilot budget

The original $42K–$97K estimate covered early projects and excluded major construction, substantial staffing expansion, and routine operations.

PHASE 1

Assess and demonstrate

$100,000–$200,000

Space and technology assessment, curatorial consultation, content planning, sponsor development, initial contemporary exhibit.

PHASE 2

Modernize core galleries

$250,000–$500,000

Commercial displays, interactive software, fabrication, interpretation, content, installation, accessibility.

PHASE 3

Extend access and reach

$150,000–$350,000

Additional galleries, secure digital archive, traveling exhibit modules, audience and education programs.

ILLUSTRATIVE MULTI-YEAR INVESTMENT ENVELOPE

$500,000–$1,050,000

Not a vendor-validated estimate or approved budget. Do not add this to the original pilot budget without reconciling overlapping scope. Develop a separate recurring operating and replacement reserve.

SPONSORSHIP MECHANICS

One gallery. Three years. Sustained impact.

An example of how multi-year giving can support installation, programming, and long-term renewal instead of only purchasing hardware.

ILLUSTRATIVE HIV TODAY PARTNERSHIP

$100,000 / year

$300,000 over three years

Initial gallery development and installation	**$150,000**
Three years of content, programs and upkeep	**$90,000**
Future exhibit renewal reserve	**$60,000**

Recommended safeguards

Written terms should define recognition, annual deliverables, renewal, termination, reporting, appropriate recognition of in-kind support, and noninterference in museum content.

Planning example only. Commitments and expense allocations are not negotiated or secured.

THE MUSEUM AS A GATHERING PLACE

A space to belong, learn and connect

Museums are about people, not only the objects on display. The community space should feel welcoming before a program even begins.



AN INVITING ARRIVAL



A FLEXIBLE COMMUNITY ROOM

The gathering space is part of the mission

Imagine a visitor arriving to see an exhibit and staying for a conversation. A survivor might meet someone who understands their history. A student might ask a question that never felt safe in a classroom. A family might discover language for a conversation they have been avoiding.

A multi-use room can support:

- Educational workshops on HIV history, stigma, prevention and health literacy.
- Community-led conversations, facilitated peer gatherings and partner-led support groups.
- Intergenerational storytelling, book discussions, documentary screenings and panels.
- Private rentals for mission-aligned organizations, training sessions and small meetings.

Design needs: adaptable chairs and tables, accessible circulation, sound isolation, AV display, microphones, Wi-Fi, storage, welcoming lighting and a clear booking process.

Concept imagery only. Space feasibility and location must be confirmed.

DIVERSIFIED SUPPORT

Beyond corporate sponsorship

A sustainable museum invites institutions and individuals to participate, while protecting access for the community it serves.

PRIVATE DONORS + PHILANTHROPY

Create a founders circle for significant individual gifts, legacy commitments and multi-year pledges. Offer funding opportunities for the community room, oral-history preservation, gallery renewal and accessible admission.

Suggested leadership conversations: $10,000, $25,000, $50,000 and $100,000+ gifts.

MEMBERSHIP + RECURRING GIVING

Build membership around belonging: invitations to exhibition previews, community programs, donor briefings and opportunities to support collections and education. Keep meaningful activities accessible to people unable to pay.

Illustrative levels to test: $60 individual, $120 household, $250 advocate, $1,000 patron annually.

SPACE RENTALS + PARTNER PROGRAMS

Offer the multipurpose room to aligned organizations for staff training, workshops, small receptions, meetings and facilitated community sessions. Establish affordable nonprofit rates and a clear community-use policy.

Working assumptions only: $100–$250/hour or $400–$1,000/day, dependent on space and included services.

PROGRAM UNDERWRITING

Invite individuals, foundations and companies to fund specific educational series, scholarships, accessibility, equipment renewal or a year of public conversations.

Keep program support separate from gallery naming rights and from restricted donations.

All fees and giving levels are proposals for market testing, not approved policies or forecasts.

IMPLEMENTATION

From concept to board-ready investment plan

A phased process ensures the museum knows what it is building, how much it costs, and who can sustain it.

MONTHS 1–3

Assess and listen

Inventory galleries, staff capacity, collections and equipment; gather community input; commission initial cost assessments.

MONTHS 4–6

Design and validate

Select first signature pilot; set curatorial standards; obtain exhibit and audiovisual estimates; develop sponsorship inventory.

MONTHS 7–9

Launch and cultivate

Pilot a gallery and public dialogue; test oral-history workflows; invite sponsor conversations and education partners.

MONTHS 10–12

Measure and sustain

Evaluate learning and attendance; reconcile capital and operating plans; seek multi-year commitments; approve next phase.

Start with a 90-day institutional assessment and a clear, funded pilot authorization.

A permanent home for living history

The museum deserves a destination that can protect its collections, welcome its community, and create the space to tell stories that are still unfolding.

Where the museum is today. The World AIDS Museum currently operates at ArtServe in Fort Lauderdale. That relationship is part of its history. The next chapter could be a dedicated, larger, long-term home, but only after the museum evaluates site suitability, capital requirements, operating affordability and community access.

01 Space priorities for a future facility

- **Permanent galleries**
  Accessible history and HIV Today exhibitions, with changeable digital interpretation.
- **The Living Stories Studio**
  Quiet, acoustically treated space for interviews, oral history and video production.
- **Learning and community rooms**
  Flexible workshops, facilitated groups, panel discussions and small gatherings.
- **Collections and staff support**
  Secure archives, controlled storage, preparation workspace and necessary offices.
- **Visitor experience**
  Welcoming entrance, restrooms, accessibility, wayfinding and convenient access.

Site-selection tests: lease or purchase terms; ownership versus long-term control; total usable space; visitor access and parking/transit; accessibility; insurance and flood exposure; climate control; security; ability to host public events; and the full cost of occupancy.

Create the World AIDS Museum Building Fund

A designated fund can give individual supporters, families, institutions and foundations a clear way to invest in a permanent home, without confusing property costs with annual museum operations.

02 A fund with clear stages and safeguards

STAGE 1 Launch and feasibility

Board authorization; legal and accounting review; restricted-fund policy; building requirements; site and market study; initial leadership gifts.

STAGE 2 Quiet leadership campaign

Recruit campaign chairs; cultivate founding families, philanthropists, corporate partners and foundations; test gift capacity before announcing a public target.

STAGE 3 Public capital campaign

Announce a verified target tied to a viable project; invite naming gifts, multi-year pledges, community giving, planned gifts and matching challenges.

STAGE 4 Acquisition, fit-out and stewardship

Secure the facility only after affordability and governance review; fund the move, exhibit fit-out, reserves and ongoing maintenance.

Important: Set a campaign target only after a facility study and professional cost estimates. Gifts restricted to the Building Fund should be tracked separately and used according to donor agreements and board-approved policies.

From vision to a responsible campaign

The strategic question is not merely how much a building might cost. It is which long-term home best serves visitors, communities, collections, and the museum's financial future.

03 Three facility pathways to evaluate

LONG-TERM LEASE

Potentially faster; may require substantial tenant improvements and offers limited property control.

PURCHASE / RENOVATE

Creates a more durable home; requires acquisition, code review, repairs, fit-out and reserves.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Most customizable; likely highest complexity, extended timeline, permitting and financing risk.

04 Cost model to prepare before a campaign goal

Facility acquisition or lease obligations
Market quotes and legal due diligence

Renovation, code, accessibility and fit-out
Architect and contractor estimates

Exhibit fabrication and digital infrastructure
Exhibition designer / AV bids

Moving, collections care, IT and opening
Detailed transition workplan

Contingency, reserves and annual occupancy
Finance model and board policy

Recommended board action: Authorize a feasibility and space-needs assessment, adopt the Building Fund concept, and establish a capital campaign committee before selecting a site or public fundraising target.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The next decision is about ambition

Is the goal to refresh selected exhibits or to reimagine a connected museum experience for the next generation?



Recommended board actions

1. Authorize a 90-day assessment of existing infrastructure, exhibition space, audience and operating capacity.

2. Establish a working group including board, staff, community members, curatorial and accessibility expertise.

3. Commission vendor-informed concepts and budgets for one permanent gallery and one traveling or digital pilot.

4. Approve a sponsorship policy before selling naming recognition or entertaining exclusivity.

5. Develop a donor-facing prospectus with naming inventory, private giving, membership, community-space rentals and a renewal strategy.

Our History. Our Lives. Our Future.

Discussion draft | Not an approved World AIDS Museum institutional plan.

A museum needs the people to sustain it

A permanent home requires a permanent workforce. Staffing must be built into the operating model before any relocation or major gallery expansion.

The promise behind the positions

A museum that records living testimony, welcomes students, protects sensitive archives, and hosts community gatherings cannot succeed through technology purchases alone. Its people make the space safe, reliable, welcoming, and worth returning to.

Core full-time positions

Executive Director: strategy, financial stewardship, governance, external partnerships, and accountability. Curator and Collections Manager: collections stewardship, historical interpretation, preservation, and exhibition integrity. Community Engagement and Education Director: partnerships, workshops, intergenerational learning, and community participation. Museum Operations Manager: facilities, scheduling, vendors, security, and accessibility. Visitor Services and Administrative Coordinator: front-desk experience, membership support, bookings, and daily operations.

Growth positions as funding and attendance increase

Development Director: annual giving, memberships, major gifts, grants, and the Building Fund campaign. Digital Storytelling Producer: studio recordings, participant consent workflows, editing, digital gallery content, and archive coordination. A second visitor services or program assistant adds coverage for expanded opening hours and events.

Professional standards and safeguards

Leadership should establish transparent job descriptions, reporting relationships, salary bands, benefits, staff training, succession plans, and annual performance expectations. Community involvement and lived experience are valued, but should not be used as a substitute for fairly compensated professional labor.

Budget for salaries and benefits

Illustrative annual planning ranges for a small professional museum in South Florida. These are not current payroll figures, approved pay bands, or employment offers.

Role	Annual base salary
Executive Director	$95,000–$135,000
Curator / Collections Manager	$65,000–$90,000
Community Engagement / Education Director	$60,000–$85,000
Museum Operations Manager	$55,000–$75,000
Visitor Services / Administrative Coordinator	$42,000–$55,000
CORE SALARY TOTAL	$317,000–$440,000

Core team including employer costs

Applying a provisional 28%–38% allowance for payroll taxes, health insurance, retirement contributions, paid leave coverage, and other employer benefit expenses gives approximately $406,000–$607,000 annually. Actual rates depend on plan design and insurance quotes.

Expansion positions	Annual base salary
Development Director	$70,000–$100,000
Digital Storytelling Producer	$55,000–$80,000
Additional visitor services / program staff	$42,000–$55,000
EXPANDED SALARY TOTAL (8 FTE)	$484,000–$675,000

Expanded team including provisional employer costs: $620,000–$932,000 per year.

These figures exclude museum-wide nonpayroll operating expenses, occupancy costs, debt service, capital projects, and any staff already on payroll. They must be reconciled with actual compensation and benefits data.

The true annual cost of opening the doors

Capital campaigns build spaces. Recurring, unrestricted revenue keeps the museum staffed, insured, maintained, and accessible to the community.

Employee benefits and protections

Budget for employer payroll taxes, medical coverage, retirement contributions, paid time off, parental and medical leave obligations, workers' compensation, training, professional memberships, and employee assistance where feasible. Obtain local broker and payroll estimates rather than relying indefinitely on a flat percentage.

Insurance and institutional risk

Evaluate general liability; property and collections coverage; directors' and officers' liability; employment practices liability; workers' compensation; cyber and media liability; special-event coverage; and studio-use policies. The final mix and premiums should be determined by an insurance broker familiar with museums, archives, events, and nonprofit operations.

Other recurring operating expenses

Plan separately for building occupancy or lease costs; utilities; cleaning; security; preventive maintenance; exhibition content reviews; digital equipment replacement; software and storage; transcription and captioning; archive management; accounting; audit; legal services; marketing; supplies; and community program delivery.

A disciplined fundraising architecture

The Building Fund should remain dedicated to feasibility, acquisition or construction, and approved capital needs. A separate Annual Museum Sustainability Fund should support staffing, insurance, operating expenses, and reserves. Restricted naming-rights gifts should specify how much is available for annual operations and how much is committed to installation or renewal.

Financial readiness before relocation

Before signing a long-term lease or purchasing property, the board should approve a five-year operating forecast, staffing ramp, insurance estimates, maintenance reserve, liquidity policy, and conservative revenue scenarios. The new facility should not open without a viable plan to pay the team that will operate it.

Grow the team with the mission

A phased hiring plan protects the museum from expanding faster than its unrestricted revenue and professional capacity can support.

Stage	Suggested hires / decision gate
1. Stabilize	Fund Executive Director and core operations; assess existing staffing and gaps
2. Program expansion	Curatorial leadership and Community Engagement / Education Director
3. Audience and archive growth	Visitor services coverage and Digital Storytelling Producer
4. Campaign and relocation	Development Director and capacity for building campaign administration
5. Permanent home opening	Reassess full staffing coverage, security, facilities, and public opening hours

Board oversight and accountable growth

The board should approve position descriptions and compensation philosophy, review comparable South Florida nonprofit and museum roles, and assess employment costs alongside program demand. Some responsibilities may initially be contracted, but the long-range plan should clearly identify which functions require stable full-time salaried employment.

Research anchors for compensation review

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Archivists, Curators, and Museum Workers (May 2025 data): https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/curators-museum-technicians-and-conservators.htm . BLS, Public Relations and Fundraising Managers: https://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/public-relations-managers.htm . Local museum salary examples should be reviewed when recruiting.

Board decision: Require a fully loaded staffing and operating forecast as part of any permanent-home feasibility study.