Campaign for a New Drug Policy

2014 Portfolio Review

Summary Report

The Campaign for a New Drug Policy[[1]](#footnote-1) (CNDP) portfolio review was conducted on April 22, 2014. The staff presentation was led by Andy Ko[[2]](#footnote-2) and Dr. Kima Taylor,[[3]](#footnote-3) with the support of CNDP Program Associates Jamie Wood and Ruzana Hedges. The discussion was moderated by Lenny Noisette, [[4]](#footnote-4) with Chris Stone[[5]](#footnote-5) and Bryan Stephenson[[6]](#footnote-6) as discussants. Also participating were Steve Coll,[[7]](#footnote-7) staff of the Justice Fund (USP), Global Drug Policy Program, International Harm Reduction Development Program, Latin American Program, OSF-DC and OSF-Baltimore. To encourage interactive conversation, participation in the review was limited to one representative from each associated program. However, all interested OSF staff were permitted to listen to the discussion by conference call line.

**Overview of the portfolio & scope for review**

The Campaign for a New Drug Policy (CNDP) was established in 2010 to help develop a new paradigm for American drug policy through strategic grantmaking and direct engagement with the field. Drug policy reform is OSF’s oldest area of work in the U.S. The involvement of USP has ranged from in‑house research and public education work through the Lindesmith Center (now the Drug Policy Alliance) in the 1990’s, through periods of ad hoc drug policy grantmaking by various USP funds, to outsourced grantmaking, to CNDP’s current model of dedicated staffing and strategy driven work.

With this most recent stage in the development of USP’s to drug policy reform efforts, CNDP has sought to develop closer and more consistent collaborative relationships with other drug policy programs within the OSF network, engage directly with the field and other funders to expand and shape a range of capacities in the field, and direct OSF resources to fill critical funding and strategic gaps in American drug policy advocacy. CNDP has adopted a problem solving approach – broadly exemplified by its work to establish (a) the infrastructure for a health based drug policy and (b) community level alternatives to punitive policies – and taken steps to strengthen the capacity and stability of a standing corps of drug policy reform advocacy groups. Assessment of CNDP’s overall progress in these efforts was the central purpose of this portfolio review, which required review of the full range of interrelated grantmaking and programmatic opportunities pursued (and not pursued) by the campaign.

Summary of Discussion

Following introduction of the participants, moderator Lenny Noisette opened the session and Andy Ko made brief opening remarks. Andy recalled that the Campaign for a New Drug Policy was established following an almost two-year assessment and OSF planning process regarding the drug policy reform field, the highly interdisciplinary nature of drug policy reform advocacy, and the engagement in drug policy reform of OSF broadly and USP specifically. Andy noted that this deliberate process led USP and network partners to establish CNDP, quoting a passage from a 2010 planning memo written prior to the staffing of the campaign:

The campaign builds on ideas generated at a December 2009 meeting with a broad range of stakeholders and advocates involved in drug policy related activities, which highlighted the importance of fostering the sharing of knowledge, information and practices across disciplines.

Andy closed his opening remarks by noting that a complex, unavoidable question in reviewing CNDP’s work is the level of funding allocated to the Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) – more than the rest of USP’s drug policy grantmaking combined. Andy noted that, while DPA is a critically important actor in the field, this large allocation to DPA is not indicative of the relative importance of other dedicated drug policy reform groups in the field. He also observed that, “In some respects, CNDP is a reflection of DPA and a response to its limitations.”

Lenny then invited discussants Chris Stone and Bryan Stephenson to comment on the portfolio review document and to pose additional questions regarding CNDP’s work.

Bryan began by commenting on the value of the circumspect self-evaluation of the CNDP narrative memo – in particular commending Dr. Taylor’s assessment of choices made and subsequent adjustments to the campaign’s work to bring health care actors more actively into efforts to reform drug policy. Bryan also noted that that, as a USP advisory board member, his own confidence in programs increases when they acknowledge their own mistakes and explain what they have done to correct course. He also stated that he found the organization of CNDP’s strategy in three interrelated, but discrete, areas of work particularly useful. Bryan then said that he agrees that it is important to consciously identify the areas in which CNDP is doing work where DPA, as primarily an advocacy organization, is not active or less effective. He concluded his comments by outlining four broad areas for future consideration:

1. Continued development of partnerships with actors from divergent perspectives, such as law enforcement, elected officials and the faith community;
2. Continued expansion of the campaign’s efforts to build the infrastructure for a health base based drug policy through engagement with the health care establishment and related fields;
3. Expanded support for the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program now being implemented in Seattle, WA and Santa Fe, NM. “If we engage with law enforcement to deal with [the number of] people in prison, that’s going to be the quickest way to meaningful reform. It would be advantageous if there was a way to increase our capacity to move that work forward. Not all grantees are supportive of this idea, but I am.”
4. Bryan concluded by expressing his appreciation of the emphasis in the review memo on a solution based strategy: that the CNDP’s strategy was not built only on a critique the myriad failures of the drug war, but instead is focused on efforts described and establish systems to manage the problems that drug addiction causes within an environment of reform.

Chris Stone echoed Bryan’s appreciation of the written materials, particularly the self-critical approach taken by CNDP, which Chris described as “exactly the point of the [portfolio review] process.” Chris then posed three overall questions to the CNDP staff that corresponded to each of the three components of the CNDP strategy.

1. Regarding the campaign’s health system work, Chris noted that staff had written about the struggle to bring academics, insurers, and government and health care providers into collaboration with the activist partners. Chris asked to hear about one coalition that was better than others – that worked better together and achieved more than expected.
2. Regarding LEAD, Chris stated that he shared Bryan’s enthusiasm, but also had one concern that he asked staff to address: the risk of any new idea failing because it becomes too identified as a project of a particular foundation and not enough with actors in the field and the broader needs that the program seeks to address.
3. Regarding the campaign’s support to key organizations in the field, Chris asked CNDP’s four staff members to identify which grantee each of us considers “to be learning the most.”

Lenny then asked Steve Coll for additional thoughts. Steve replied that he had many of the same reactions to the written materials as Bryan and Chris, but also asked staff to consider where they saw the greatest potential for reform – i.e., whether the most important models for change will occur in population centers like New York City, in bastions of frontier libertarianism like Colorado – or elsewhere. Remaining conversation among the participants raised the importance of cross-program collaborations, sharing of information and expertise, and coordination of resources.

Overall, the conversation broadly affirmed the essential components of CNDP’s strategy and resulting programmatic engagement and grantmaking of the past three years. The review also highlighted the critical importance of ongoing assessment of individual funding decisions, willingness to course-correct when needed, and the need to bring additional resources to the field in a timely fashion when we identify high priority opportunities to substantially advance our efforts to achieve OSF’s drug policy reform objectives.

1. U.S. Programs, Justice Fund [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Campaign Manager (CNDP) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Director, National Drug Addiction Treatment and Harm Reduction Program (CNDP) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Director, Justice Fund (U.S. Programs) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. President, Open Society Foundations [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Executive Director, Equal Justice Initiative and U.S. Programs Board Member [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Dean, Columbia University School of Journalism and U.S. Programs Board Chair [↑](#footnote-ref-7)