

Moving the World Toward More Humane and Effective Drug Policies

Open Society Foundations, Global Drug Policy Program



Since 2008, the Open Society Global Drug Policy Program (GDPP) has worked with governments, policymakers, and NGOs to transform prevailing drug policies from a punitive—and counterproductive—approach to one rooted in human rights, social justice, and public health. Says GDPP Director Kasia Malinowska:

“ Current drug policies aren’t merely failing. They are fueling violence, human rights violations, and health crises.

While GDPP’s mission remains unchanged since its founding, the strategy for achieving it has since been revisited and revised, with TCC Group serving as facilitator, thought partner, and strategic consultant.

“TCC Group’s experience in education, grantmaking, and coalition building—and, importantly, its commitment to social justice—have figured crucially in helping us move toward meaningful change,” says Malinowska.

As one of the few funders in this arena, much of GDPP’s work in the past few years has focused on supporting efforts leading up to the landmark April 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Drugs—the first UN special session on drugs since 1998. With the special session over, GDPP wished to undertake a fresh assessment of its strategic priorities and approach to account for a shifting drug policy environment.

Strategy

Grantmaking & Foundation Management

Health

Immigrants & Refugees

Social Justice

Working closely with the GDPP program staff team during a period of significant institutional transition, TCC Group Director of Philanthropy and Strategic Partnerships Melinda Fine and Senior Consultant Naomi Polin guided GDPP's staff through consecutive research and strategy engagements that resulted in GDPP re-articulating its program strategy to reaffirm its core commitments, while embracing new regional and issue priorities in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia.

"This meant understanding gaps in the field, identifying new partners in different parts of the world, reallocating resources," says Deputy Director Matt Wilson. "Before we could begin to shape a new strategy, we had to figure out what we didn't know." Toward that end, GDPP relied on TCC Group to provide landscape research to inform its strategic priority setting, facilitate staff decision-making meetings, and develop new strategy materials articulating its goals in alignment with OSF network-wide drug policy reform priorities.

"Funding in the global drug policy arena has extremely high stakes," says Polin, who joined TCC Group from Open Society Foundations. "We understood going in that this would have to be a highly iterative process, and that we could add the most value for GDPP by being a flexible and adaptive partner—and by listening."

But at no point has the TCC Group team held back on voicing its insights. "The clarity and candor they've provided have been invaluable," says Malinowska. "Melinda and Naomi clearly believe in the work we're doing, but they have also gotten us to think strategically about how to maximize our capacity and resources—and not allow our enthusiasm to overtake reality."