

USP Senior Management Team May 3, 2011, Minutes

Staff Present: Bill, Diana, Eric, Erlin, Laleh, Lenny, Raquiba

Agenda

- Anchor grants
- SMT retreat agenda
- Data from Board members
- Consistent practices in USP re new HR rules on non-exempt staff

Anchor Grants

Aryeh's request for suggestions of grantees for large, long-term support:

There were several edits to the letter, which Directors will send to Eric so he can get the final letter to Aryeh tonight. (This is response to Aryeh's request for recommendations of grantees who should be considered for large, long-term grants, like the Human Rights Watch grant.)

USP Anchor Grantees:

- There were no changes to the spreadsheet Eric circulated.
- The SMT decided that additional funding to Anchor Grantees should be infrequent. Other Program Directors should be in the loop before such a decision is made, and when additional funding is given to an Anchor Grantee we should emphasize to the grantee how unusual this is.
- There was discussion of how we can lift up Anchor Grantees for all funds/campaigns to access. We will try to do some brown-bags, which the Executive Office will coordinate in conjunction with the lead liaison to the Anchor Grantee.

SMT retreat

There was discussion to shape the draft agenda, which will be re-circulated shortly.

Data from Board members

Directors shared thoughts from Board members about how we can more clearly show our existing strategic rigor and communicate more clearly (eg, showcasing tie-off decisions and changing the names of some funds).

Consistent practices in USP re new HR rules on non-exempt staff

The group agreed to some common principles to ensure that we're being consistent across USP. Eric is working with HR to develop common procedures for timesheets, backup approvers, etc. Eric will codify both the principles and procedures in a memo to affected USP staff and their supervisors.

Follow-up:

- Eric will write and circulate a memo to affected staff/supervisors.

**USP Senior Management Team
May 10, 2011, Minutes**

Staff Present: Bill, Diana, Eric, Erlin, Laleh, Lenny, Monique, Raquiba

Agenda

- “Good stuff”
- Mid-term reviews
- Accessing Board/Chairman line until a process is developed
- Suggestions for minimizing anxiety
- Job descriptions for overtime-eligible staff

The group welcomed Monique to the SMT, in her role as Deputy Director for Programs in Baltimore during the interim period that Diana is Acting Director of U.S. Programs.

“Good stuff”

- Monique said a report is being released Thursday on the jail-related work in Baltimore.
- Bill had a great lunch with Facebook founder Chris Hughes; they talked about priorities for a foundation Hughes wants to start. As appropriate, Bill is connecting him to relevant USP staff.
- Diana was excited by the SMT off-site meeting in Philadelphia.
- Erlin said the Technical Assistance Initiative is going forward with 42 grantees instead of 40, and virtually all who applied were accepted.

Mid-term reviews

We expect to receive Sherrilyn’s revised memo tomorrow. Several aspects of the review were discussed, including the need to briefly articulate the overarching vision/purpose of funds and campaigns, then the specific strategies and efforts. (It shouldn’t be a laundry list of activities that say what we do, but should instead explain why we do it.) The section on program implementation can include particular fields/portfolios within the fund/campaign, but shouldn’t get into individual grantees. Where applicable, the Board would welcome acknowledgement that we’re puzzled about how to handle certain areas and looking to them as thought partners. EOF, TIF and D&P can be thinking of changing their names now and can start using new names internally once they have them. Any public use of new names should be coordinated and happen at once. Laleh has a useful resource on this issue that she will share with others (a small book from Tom). Caroline is available as needed to discuss federal opportunities/challenges if it would be useful in crafting the memos. Eric has shared with her the process and timeline for the reviews.

Following is the current timeline:

Draft are due at noon on Friday, 5/20 (instead of 5/17)

We discuss them at an SMT meeting at 3:30 on Monday 5/23 (replacing that Tuesday’s SMT meeting and the other meeting we talked about having)

Final drafts are due at 3 p.m. on Thursday, 5/26

Memos are sent to Board by 5 p.m. on Friday, 5/27

Accessing Board/Chairman line until a process is developed

There was agreement that we need to be coordinated about this until the Board develops a clearer process for its grants. It is not clear how much the staff will be able to suggest grants under that process. In the meantime, ideas should be discussed at the SMT before they are mentioned to the Board.

Follow-up

- Eric will circulate the current Board/Chairman grants spreadsheet
- Directors will share information with Eric when they have developments on Board/Chairman grants they're working on (to be added to the spreadsheet)
- Erlin will follow-up on whether Compassion and Choices needs to be funded from this line
- Raquiba will prepare a write-up for the PFFA grant, which would go first to Aryeh and then the Board

Suggestions for minimizing staff anxiety

The group discussed specific ways to minimize staff anxiety during the current transitions. There was agreement about the need to share information very freely and be available to answer questions from staff. The SMT discussed the importance of thinking about this in the broader context of the foundation world – it is not unusual to review strategies midway through a strategic plan and to work closely with a governing foundation board. It's important to remember that the Board, under Sherrilyn's leadership, has reiterated over and over again their respect for staff and their desire not to undercut staff. The SMT needs to be cognizant of what's on staff's plates and develop backup systems to provide relief if some staff are overburdened.

Job descriptions for overtime-eligible staff

The SMT reiterated its concerns about how HR has conducted this. The biggest issue going forward is the PA job descriptions. There's a need to strip out of the NY-based PA job description duties that the ACs handle and put in some of the more programmatic support duties. This will be a challenge because HR is being extremely cautious about the level of programmatic work in the descriptions.

Follow-up

- Eric is meeting with the consultant hired by HR to manage this process and will see how much we can get changed.

**USP Senior Management Team
May 17, 2011, Minutes**

Staff Present: Bill, Diana, Eric, Erlin, Laleh, Lenny, Monique, Raquiba

Agenda

- “Good stuff”
- Mid-term reviews
- Staffing check-in
- Other issues

“Good stuff”

- Laleh reported on TIF’s trip to New Orleans; grantees have evolved into a permanent fixture in New Orleans and are working with the mayor. TIF and CJF grantees are credited with success fighting the local jail; this is the direct result of collaboration we sparked.
- Monique reported on progress on jail issues in Baltimore.
- Bill reported on the first Excluded Workers Congress, which includes a number of grantees.

Mid-term reviews

There was discussion about people’s experiences drafting the mid-term review memos. Directors provided input and feedback on specific questions that people are facing as they draft the memos. Key points:

- There’s no need to repeat the questions in the memos; people can save space by using short headings and numbers.
- We should avoid getting into too much detail of specific numbers and grantees and instead focus on the substantial points.
- We should be mindful of what we know will be covered on the phone calls, and we shouldn’t include that information in the memos.
- Where we’ve made conscious choices (for example, providing general support to major organizations), we should explain why and make it clear that this was an intentional choice.
- We should avoid jargon and focus on key principles (for example, “field-building” and “intersectional” – we should explain what we’re doing and why, without relying on jargon).

Follow-up

- Eric will circulate the foundation “jargon finder” that Debra Rubino found for the trainings she and Eric did last year.

Staffing check-in

- The SMT discussed the revised job descriptions and the need to engage in open dialogue with affected staff and to be clear and consistent.
- There was separate discussion about our collective progress in ensuring that the AC role is seen as a partnership with program staff, and discussion about the type and level of support program staff experience.
- This year, support staff who attend the Soros Justice Fellows conference will be given assignments to help Adam and Chrissy (there are no outside event planners who put on the conference, which is a large undertaking). Eric reported that he has had discussions with Adam about the needs and CJF's plans. It was agreed that sending PAs to the conference is a priority because they can both provide support and deepen their connection to the fellows (which enables them to help deepen their program's connection to the fellows and to the issues explored at the conference). Eric said it would be ideal for four PAs to attend to provide support in workshop tracks, and that one or two other support staff would likely attend to provide more general support to the conference. There was discussion about travel expectations for PAs. Two trips per year were budgeted for PAs. Program Directors work with their PAs to determine which trips to prioritize (ie, which support the programmatic work as well as the PAs' learning).

Follow-up

- Program Directors will talk amongst their staffs and get clearer about people's interest, and then share that with Eric, who will coordinate with Adam.

Other issues

Diana said another INSEAD management training is being planned for late August in Montreal. She said USP can recommend two people to attend. Bill and Laleh expressed interest.

Follow-up

- Diana will follow up with HR and Bill and Laleh.

USP Senior Management Team May 23, 2011, Minutes

Staff Present: Bill, Diana, Eric, Erlin, Laleh, Lenny, Monique, Raquiba

Others Present: Andy, Nancy, Mimi (by phone), Shawn (by phone)

This was a special SMT-plus meeting to provide feedback on the draft midterm review memos. Everyone's drafts were circulated to the group in advance, and the SMT spent 5-10 minutes per fund/campaign providing peer critique. Notes were taken by the directors

or managers who were receiving feedback, so that they could quickly incorporate it into the drafts.

**USP Senior Management Team
May 31, 2011, Minutes**

Staff Present: Diana, Eric, Erlin, Laleh, Lenny, Monique, Raquiba

Agenda

- “Good stuff”
- Update on large, long-term grants
- Brainstorming regarding new Board members
- Initial discussion of state and local work

“Good stuff”

- The group agreed that the peer review/critique of the draft midterm review memos was extremely helpful.

Update on large, long-term grants

Our recommendations were received (in response to Aryeh’s request for groups who should be considered for large grants, like the Human Rights Watch grant). A list will be presented to the Global Board, and then we’ll hear more. Project support would be very rare for any organizations who receive these grants.

Brainstorming regarding new Board members

We have an opportunity to suggest additional Board members for consideration. The Board hopes to add a few new members soon. They are looking for diverse candidates who are generalists and “thinkers.” Some possibilities were discussed, and the SMT agreed to give the question more thought and circulate names within the week.

Initial discussion of state and local work

The SMT will spend the month of June fleshing out our thinking on state/local work (the State Strategies Initiative) and then meet in early July with appropriate Board Advisors. This will be the focus of most SMT meeting time in June. We will draft a short memo with our initial thinking and open questions, to be shared with the Board Advisors. The collective Board/staff thinking will then be shared with the full Board.