

OSI-BALTIMORE

INTRODUCTION: A MODEL OF PLACE-BASED PHILANTHROPY

OSI-Baltimore was established in 1998 as a social change laboratory for OSI, focusing on the impact a place-based philanthropy strategy might have in addressing some of the biggest challenges facing Baltimore and other urban centers in the U.S. Recognizing that, as a result of devolution, much of the momentum to address social and economic problems would take place at the city and state level, OSI opened the field office to understand the dynamics at play and identify strategies that could dramatically change the status quo. As of the end of 2006, OSI had committed nearly \$56 million to this initiative.

In 2006, George Soros issued a \$10 million challenge to encourage other donors to invest \$20 million over five years (through 2010) in OSI-Baltimore's work. The office has raised over \$12.6 million thus far. The Soros Challenge provides us with an opportunity to engage wealthy individuals in systemic change. We aim to convince these individuals that positive change in the region is possible and, by investing in OSI-Baltimore, they can be part of that process. Serving as an intermediary for social change in these complex, not particularly popular, fields is an important goal for the office, providing not only new awareness and information to attack the problems, but building greater political will to engage in the solutions. We have launched an aggressive communications effort, expanded our board, and established a Leadership Council to help meet the Challenge.

STRATEGY

Concentrated poverty and racial discrimination have conspired to marginalize large numbers of Baltimoreans. For example:

- One half of Baltimore's African-American men in their prime (age 19-29) are under some form of criminal justice oversight; 50% of inmates leaving Maryland prisons will recidivate in 3 years.
- One in ten city residents is drug-dependent and often uninsured or underinsured.
- Baltimore has the 2nd highest drop-out rate in the U.S.; the majority of male students of color do not finish high school and 42% of all high school students miss 20 or more days of school.
- Approximately 23% of the population lives below the poverty line.

Recognizing the systemic nature of the issues at play in Baltimore, we have approached our work in an inter-disciplinary manner, using a variety of philanthropic tools including grantmaking, technical assistance, convenings and educational activities. Our hands-on approach is guided by a local board with deep subject matter expertise and extensive local experience and is informed by our Community Fellows, a diverse group of social innovators who provide critical on-the-ground intelligence. Collaborative work with our New York colleagues is very important to us; we regularly credit the expertise and resources we can tap through OSI-NY as a reason for our effectiveness in bringing new approaches and rigor to Maryland.

Working simultaneously at the community, city and state levels to reinforce positive reforms, staff have arrived at a shared vision of how social change in Maryland can take place. We engage policymakers and public systems from the start, with the goal of establishing partnerships that will result in lasting change in policy and practice, initiatives taken to scale, and sustainable funding. Through grants and roundtables, we build capacity among non-profit organizations and their constituencies to empower them to make their needs and interests known, to build social movements that can both respond to threats and shape new agendas, and, when appropriate, to partner effectively

with government. We also strengthen key non-profit organizations so that they have the capacity to demonstrate and measure the impact of good practices, use existing resources well, and navigate Byzantine state and city budget processes. State and sometimes national advocacy organizations are critical to this work, monitoring and publicizing public agency performance and bringing in new ideas, skills, benchmarks and audiences to leverage change. Finally, we increasingly work with business leaders to persuade them that our issues are not intransigent, but respond to well-designed initiatives and deserve their investment.

FOCUS AREAS

OSI-Baltimore supports four inter-related programs:

- I. Tackling Drug Addiction
- II. Criminal and Juvenile Justice
- III. Education and Youth Development
- IV. Baltimore Community Fellowships

In addition, to ensure that our work is visible and has a sustainable basis to continue, we also support a Strategic Communications and Donor Development Program.

I. TACKLING DRUG ADDICTION PROGRAM

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Program Overview:

In Baltimore, a city with one of the highest rates of heroin and cocaine addiction in the country, drug addiction causes tremendous devastation by contributing to HIV and hepatitis infection, overdose deaths, crime, over-incarceration of people of color, family dysfunction and unemployment. What these effects mean concretely can be understood by considering the following facts:

- Over 40% of the City's new HIV cases are transmitted via drug injection.
- Nearly 70% of patients in methadone treatment are Hepatitis C infected.
- The number of overdoses hovers close to the number of homicides.
- Baltimore has the highest rate of heroin positive drug tests among arrestees in the nation.

Expanding access to comprehensive drug treatment reduces the harm that addiction causes in Baltimore by helping marginalized residents recover from addiction and allowing them to develop the skills, resources and interests they need to participate more fully in community life.

OSI-Baltimore's Tackling Drug Addiction Program seeks to increase the availability of effective drug treatment for all Baltimoreans, especially those without resources. It achieves this objective by: underwriting education and advocacy efforts to develop greater public support and public funding for treatment; expanding access to treatment by engaging a broad range of medical clinics, hospitals and practices in offering evidence-based treatment and tapping diverse funding streams, including Medicaid, to fund it; and enhancing the organizational capacity and accountability of Baltimore's substance abuse authority. The Tackling Drug Addiction Initiative supports organizations that utilize one or more of the following interconnected strategies:

- 1. Education and Advocacy.** OSI-Baltimore-funded activities in this arena have contributed to a dramatic increase in support for treatment across several mayoral and gubernatorial administrations: funding has nearly tripled, to an annual budget of \$60 million, and treatment capacity expanded from 4,100 slots in 1997 to 8,900 slots in 2003. As a result of this treatment capacity expansion, the number of individuals served increased from 11,000 in 1997 to 26,000 in 2003. In the following two years, Baltimore had the steepest decline in heroin and cocaine-related emergency room visits nationwide. Since that time, however, funding levels have remained stagnant despite the rising cost of treatment services. This discrepancy has led to an overall decrease in treatment slots and a need for increased pressure from the advocacy community.

Example Grantees

- **National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland)** seeks to raise public awareness of alcoholism and drug dependence issues, decrease stigma surrounding the disease of addiction and ensure that those affected have the resources necessary to access treatment and sustained recovery. It organizes and trains people in recovery and their families to become effective advocates. NCADD also negotiates with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to remove impediments to meaningful access to treatment under Medicaid. The organization and its partners were integral in securing an increase in treatment resources from the state this year despite tough budgetary times.

- **Community Planning and Housing Association (CPHA)** mobilizes community support for drug addiction treatment. Its “Common Ground” process builds relations between community associations and drug addiction treatment providers, thereby reducing NIMBYism. CPHA also mounts an aggressive education and advocacy campaign to reform Baltimore’s discriminatory zoning laws.
2. **Capacity Building.** OSI-Baltimore funds promising capacity building approaches that use existing and new funding streams to increase access to high quality drug treatment service. Through its work, OSI-Baltimore has increased the number of medical professionals and institutions that support treatment and made headway in establishing addiction as a chronic disease.

Example Grantees

- **Buprenorphine Initiative** - The Program has enabled community health centers, physician practices and hospital centers to initiate treatment using buprenorphine, a new and effective medication for the treatment of heroin addiction that can be prescribed by physicians outside of the usual drug addiction treatment programs. This effort permits the expansion of treatment for Baltimore’s heroin addicted residents without the need to create new treatment facilities, frees up public treatment slots for other indigent patients and makes treatment more appealing to patients who no longer have to suffer the long lines and perceived stigma of public methadone clinics.
 - **Center for Healthy Maryland** - This non-profit arm of the Maryland Medical Society provides training to increase the number of physicians who provide treatment, especially within a primary care setting. The Maryland Medical Society, in turn, uses the Center’s work to inform its substance abuse advocacy efforts in Annapolis.
 - **Safe and Sound Campaign** - To underscore that incarceration is not an effective response to addiction OSI-Baltimore has led an effort with the Department of Corrections and Safe and Sound to develop a Maryland Public Safety Compact. It will shift funds used for incarceration to support community-based treatment.
3. **Supporting System Development.** Grants focus on strengthening the ability of Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems (BSAS), the Baltimore City substance abuse authority, to design, manage, and evaluate a comprehensive, high quality treatment system. With support from OSI– Baltimore, BSAS has grown in strength and scope: its Board developed a strategic plan, implemented the nation’s largest municipal increase in drug treatment capacity in the last 25 years, and integrated treatment with other services (including childcare, job training, psychiatric treatment and health care) and streamlined procurement and contracting procedures. BSAS has also created a national model for system accountability based on key indicators.

Example Grantees

- **Scientific Advisory Committee** – Comprised of national treatment researchers and clinicians, this committee, launched by OSI, provides BSAS with expert advice, including establishing benchmarks for monitoring and improving the performance.
- **Performance Based Contracting** – OSI-Baltimore grants and technical assistance have helped BSAS to introduce performance-based contracting and to use data to change traditional funding allocations, thus ensuring higher utilization and patient retention.

II. CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAM

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Program Overview:

The United States leads the world in the number of adults it incarcerates with an alarming 2.3 million Americans languishing in overcrowded prisons and jails. The State of Maryland exemplifies this national problem. The State spends over 1 billion dollars to incarcerate about 23,000 people in its prisons. Sixty-three percent (63%) of these individuals are from Baltimore City. Maryland's inmate population is predominantly African American (over 70%), even though African Americans are only 29% of the State's population. Many people who are behind bars in Maryland have committed non-violent offenses, will complete short prison sentences and return to the community. Unfortunately, about 50% of people who are released from prison will recidivate in three years, feeding the cycle of incarceration. In response, OSI-Baltimore's Criminal Justice Program seeks to reduce the social and economic costs of incarceration in Maryland through grantmaking, technical assistance, educational activities, and advocacy. The Program supports initiatives and organizations that utilize one or more of the following four strategies and activities:

- 1. Promote Alternatives to Incarceration for Non-violent Offenders.** These alternatives include a broad continuum of community-based programs – such as public school-based programs and drug addiction treatment – that are used in lieu of incarceration. Criminal Justice Program grants also assist public agencies in their efforts to implement systemic reform that reduces incarceration by increasing the use of alternative programs.

Example Grantees

- **Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY)** seeks to improve the health, education, safety and economic security of children. OSI-Baltimore supports the work of ACY's Maryland Juvenile Justice Coalition, a group of advocates who are committed to reducing the number of youth in secure detention, improving conditions of confinement, addressing racial disparities, and increasing community-based alternatives to confinement.
 - **Johns Hopkins University – Institute for Policy Studies (IPS)** promotes effective policy across a wide range of issues, including juvenile justice reform. OSI-Baltimore funds IPS to train staff at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center to use research-based juvenile assessment, referral, placement, and treatment planning protocols that will increase the use of community-based services for young offenders and ultimately reduce their continued involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- 2. Ensure Successful Transition from Incarceration to the Community.** The Program supports public education, advocacy initiatives and demonstration projects that provide services for individuals who are released from prisons, linking them to housing, drug addiction treatment, job training and other support services, both prior to their release and once they return to the community. This strategy encourages the use of data to track results and improve outcomes. Grants also support organizations that advocate for the re-allocation of public funding to support transition services and for the removal of legal barriers that confront people who return to the community from prisons.

Example Grantees

- **Power Inside** is a non-profit organization that was founded by a former OSI-Baltimore Community Fellow. OSI-Baltimore supports Power Inside's effort to address the critical needs of Baltimore women who are detained at or recently released from local jails.
- **Safe and Sound Campaign** works to improve the health and well-being of Baltimore's children, youth and families. OSI-Baltimore supports its work on the Maryland Public Safety Compact, which is a financing mechanism to support substance abuse treatment and other reentry services for people returning to the community from prisons. Public savings from shorter periods of incarceration will be used to support re-entry services on a long-term basis.

3. **Promote Systemic Reform to Reduce Incarceration.** OSI-Baltimore's Criminal Justice Program supports advocacy that encourages systemic reforms in both the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Systemic reforms may include, but are not limited to, revisions to parole release policies, the reduction or elimination of prison terms for technical parole and probation violations, and the elimination of racial disparities in sentencing and incarceration.

Example Grantees

- **The JFA Institute (JFA)** conducts research on the causes of crime and the justice system's responses to crime and offenders. The Program funds JFA to provide technical assistance to the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Maryland Parole Commission to rewrite the state's parole risk and guidelines system so as to identify prisoners who are at "low risk" of re-offending and create clear criteria for granting parole.
- **Family League of Baltimore City** coordinates city-wide strategies and develops ongoing funding streams for issues affecting children and families. The Program supports the implementation of a strategic plan to reduce disproportionate minority representation in Baltimore's juvenile justice system.

4. **Expose the Social and Economic Costs of Incarceration through Communication Strategies.** The Criminal Justice Program works to infuse public debate on crime with a broader discussion of its causes (including the role of poverty, race, and addiction); the impact of large-scale incarceration on families, communities and economic development; the costs and effectiveness of the current system; and alternative strategies to reduce crime and recidivism.

Example Grantees

- **Job Opportunities Task Force** is a network of over 750 workforce development providers, human service organizations, advocacy groups, employers and foundations in the Baltimore region. OSI-Baltimore's grant supports an advocacy and communication effort that urges employers to hire people with criminal records.
- **Justice Policy Institute (JPI)** is a national research and advocacy organization committed to reducing society's reliance on incarceration. OSI-Baltimore's grant supports JPI's research and communications efforts to promote criminal justice reform in Maryland.

III. EDUCATION AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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Program Overview:

OSI-Baltimore's Education Program focuses on public school and out-of-school youth. In 2006-07, Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) enrolled about 82,000 students; more than 90% of whom could qualify for subsidized school meals. Nearly 18% were classified as Special Education students, more than half lived in households where no adult worked full-time, and 30% had parents with no high school diploma. Students in the public schools are nearly all African-American - only 7% are Caucasian and less than 3% are Hispanic.

Despite the challenges, Baltimore schools have made progress over the last ten years due to increases in education funding, out-of-school-time programs, and public pre-school slots, as well as effective school leadership. As a result, BCPSS has demonstrated upward trends in many measures of academic achievement. Nevertheless, improvements are strongest for young students and negligible for older students. Most troubling is the evidence that school attendance, engagement, and student discipline policies and practices, coupled with myopic test score accountability, are systematically pushing, urging and forcing youth out of schools before they graduate – often before they enter high school.

City schools handed out suspensions to more than 10,000 of its 82,000 students during the 2006-07 school year. This suspension rate of 12.5% is close to double Baltimore's rate of a decade earlier. Levels of student absence are also at epidemic levels: fully 42% of high school students and 33% of middle school students were absent 20 or more days in one year. Given that children do not learn well if they do not attend school regularly, it is not surprising that only 34.7% of 9th graders make it to 12th grade and graduate. The city has the highest percentage of 16 to 19 year-old youth in the state who are not in school or employed. In short, Baltimore is still failing most of its children.

The Program supports initiatives and organizations that utilize one or more of the following three strategies and activities

- 1. Creating Public Schools to Serve All Baltimore Students.** Public education, pre-K through grade 12, is still America's only public program designed to provide opportunities for all children. Despite its universal mandate and relatively generous levels of public resources, Baltimore's schools retain substantially less than half of the city's students through high school. The failure to serve so many city children is a clear signal that drastic reforms are necessary: schools must be reformulated to meet the needs of Baltimore students and held accountable for doing so. In this program area, OSI's primary strategies are to support fundamental system and school reform, including the creation of autonomous and engaging schools, the expansion of community partnerships to address students' needs, and independent research and evaluation to guide district and school decision making.

Example Grantee

- **Baltimore Education Research Consortium (Johns Hopkins University)** to conduct independent and strategic data analyses and research to improve the public school system

- 2. Increasing Student Engagement.** An extraordinary number of Baltimore city public school students do not attend school regularly. School absence, whether due to illness, school disciplinary actions or truancy, puts children at great risk of school failure and substantially limits their chances of graduating from high school and living a life free of poverty. The Program supports efforts to attach children more securely to school and to promote policies and programs that fix the root causes of high suspension, expulsion and truancy in Baltimore. It has convened a series of roundtable discussions with educational leaders and advocates, compiled findings about these issues in white papers and fact sheets, and worked to bring public attention to the connection between attendance and school success. Program staff also work with BCPSS to improve school climate and reform discipline policies and practice; it has been instrumental in supporting the revision of the BCPSS discipline code so that suspension and expulsion become the last resort options that they are designed to be.

Example Grantees

- **Advancement Project** to help the BCPSS draft a new discipline code
 - **Johns Hopkins University** to implement *PATHS to PAX*, an initiative to improve students' behavior, social and emotional skills in five Baltimore K-8 schools
 - **The University of Maryland Baltimore Foundation, Inc.** to improve school climate and reduce suspensions at Calverton Middle School by offering mental health care
- 3. Increasing Out-of-School-Time Opportunities.** OSI-Baltimore believes that the time youth spend out of school is just as crucial to their healthy development as the time they spend in school – particularly for students from high poverty communities. Good quality out-of-school learning opportunities lead to improved academic, social and emotional outcomes for youth, while unsupervised hours increase the risk that youth will become involved in harmful and illegal activities. Over the past ten years, OSI-Baltimore has invested \$8 million and played a vital role in developing a city-wide initiative to make out-of-school-time safe, enriching, and educationally engaging for all children.

OSI is also dedicated to increasing programming during the summer months when school is not in session. Research shows that most children lose academic ground in reading and math during the summer. These losses are far greater for children from low-income families and those who live in high poverty neighborhoods. For them, summer also may mean a break from regular meals, health services, physical activities, exposure to educated adults, and opportunities to socialize safely with peers.

Examples Grantees and Program Activities

- **Safe and Sound: Baltimore's Campaign for Children and Youth, Inc.** to increase high quality out-of-school-time opportunities in Baltimore, particularly for middle and high school aged youth and to create a network to increase out-of-school-time opportunities statewide
- **Johns Hopkins University** to support the Center for Summer Learning's efforts to expand summer programs in Baltimore and to launch its National Summer Learning Commission
- **Publications:** Finding the Resources for Summer Learning Programs, *New Directions for Youth Development*, Summer 2007. 109-121. Jossey-Bass
- **Forum Series:** *School Discipline Policies and Their Criminal Justice Consequences* (2004 to 2007); *Getting Kids to School: Truancy and School Engagement* (2008)

IV. BALTIMORE COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIPS

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Program Overview:

The OSI-Baltimore Community Fellowship Program identifies and provides resources to “social entrepreneurs” who will use their experience, ingenuity, and dynamism to remove barriers and create opportunities for a targeted population in Baltimore City. The program is intended as an “open valve” for the Foundation – a vehicle that can recognize and respond to a good idea and encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply. This approach fits with the open society premise that no one has absolute knowledge and that a robust democracy requires the active participation of each citizen. The Program gives life to the open society belief that, in the social context, a laissez-faire approach is misguided; rather, individual citizens use their energy, ideas, and ingenuity to improve social conditions—and to empower others to speak out and work on their own behalf.

Top program priorities:

- Continue to build a corps of individuals skilled at and committed to revitalizing Baltimore’s underserved neighborhoods;
- Institutionalize the Community Fellows alumni so that they constitute an established community of social change agents, serve as an ongoing resource to Baltimore and provide support to past and present Fellows (by sharing ideas, resources, and contacts and offering venues for shared reflection and encouragement).

Successes:

- The program has awarded 101 Baltimore Community Fellowships to support individuals with innovative ideas to work with Baltimore’s underserved or marginalized communities;
- Of these individuals, 87% continue to work in Baltimore city after the fellowship term and 65% work in a field directly related to their original project;
- The community fellows have established 20 non-profit initiatives, which are flourishing and sustained by public and private resources; other Fellows have assumed leadership positions in public agencies and established non-profits;
- The program continues to elicit broad interest and approximately 250 applications per year; established a very active alumni network, working in partnerships throughout the city, enhancing the Fellows’ continued collaboration and success.

V. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND DONOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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Program Overview:

In response to the Soros Challenge to raise \$20 million between 2006-2010, the office established a communications and development program in 2006 in order to raise awareness and then raise dollars. The most obvious challenge was that OSI-Baltimore did not have a natural constituency from which to raise funds and had to build one quickly. Although well known and respected by the non-profit sector, leaders in government agencies and other local foundations, OSI had not established strong relationships with business leaders and wealthy individuals. Given the campaign's timeline, the communications effort has needed to make OSI-Baltimore well-understood and compelling—quickly!—in order to captivate the hearts and minds of wealthy individuals and persuade them to support the continued work. The program aims to develop messages in accessible language that make the work understandable to lay people who might support OSI, both through their influence and financial support. At the same time, the development program continues to cultivate support from local and national foundations and corporations, putting OSI-Baltimore forward as vehicle through which they can help develop sustainable solutions to some of the greatest challenges facing urban centers, and the Baltimore region in particular.

Top priorities:

- Build greater visibility in the Baltimore metropolitan region of OSI-Baltimore, its goals, accomplishments, and needs;
- Engage individuals, foundations, corporations in OSI-Baltimore's work so that we attract investments and raise an additional \$7.4 million to reach the \$20 million goal by 2010.

Successes:

- Dramatically increased media coverage on features, op-ed and editorial pages;
- Raised funds totaling \$12.6 million from venture capitalists, civic leaders, established foundations and generous individuals who have taken up the charge;
- Created a Leadership Council to serve as ambassadors for OSI-Baltimore's mission and work;
- Held roundtable discussions with important civic leaders and key public officers to present work and accomplishments in key issue areas;
- Utilized various communications methods—e.g., frequent electronic messages, active use of website, new printed newsletter—to inform various audiences about OSI's activities and impact;
- Created new, distinctive identity program, including tagline, so that OSI-Baltimore is top of mind;
- Launched new blog (www.audaciousideas.org) to feature the ideas of community leaders, staff, board and partners and engage multiple audiences in discussion about critical OSI issue areas;
- Sponsored successful new public radio segment, "Just Words," that allows underserved individuals to tell their stories—in their own words—each week.
- Launched a successful year-long education and culture series, "Talking About Race" in partnership with the Pratt Library that draws a large, engaged and diverse audience.