



Building a Newly Powerful Network

Since 2012, the Center for Popular Democracy, and our sister c4 CPD Action (together CPD/A), have worked to build organizing power to transform the local and state policy landscape through deep, long-term partnerships with leading community-based organizing groups nationwide. In 2015, our family of 42 organizations in 30 states had reached a membership of over 400,000 working people, immigrants, and residents of color and a staff of 700+.

While our scale and reach had grown dramatically since our founding, CPD/A and our partners were eager to assess how we could collectively build greater power and coordination locally and nationally to drive a more ambitious pro-worker, pro-immigrant, racial justice agenda. In 2015, CPD/A's 42 state partners, our staff leadership, our Boards of Directors undertook an intensive strategic planning process to assess our strengths as a family of organizations, and to map out a vision for how we could relate in ways to enhance our movement's collective strength moving forward. This memo provides an overview of the key lessons of the process, a summary of what we collectively envision as our new structure, and our planned next steps.

In a phrase, our process led us to the conclusion that we can be much more powerful, impactful and ambitious as a movement if CPD/A moves from a "hub" – with a national organization at the center relating primarily one-to-one with each state partner – to a fully networked entity. As a network, state-based partners will affirmatively and formally affiliate with each other *through* CPD. Partners will fully "own" CPD and engaging multilaterally (with CPD and with each other) to build our movement.

What does this mean? Several things:

- CPD/A, as a national entity, no longer exists as an "other" apart from our partners and their members, but is an *expression* of the collective desires, needs, and goals of our state partners, and their members. CPD/A will be fully accountable to the base of our partners, with that accountability hard-wired in to our governance (more on that below).
- A core goal will be to foster partner-to-partner relationships that are deep, multi-layered, and long term – at the leadership, staff, and member level.
- We will reflect our deep commitment to building the leadership of people of color and women, not only on the ground with partners, but in the composition of CPD/A's staff and Boards.

The Boards of Directors of CPD and CPD Action formally approved the new vision laid out below at meetings in December 2015. We are now working with our existing partners to undertake a process with their staff, members, and Boards to present the opportunity to undertake this collective next step. We anticipate launching the newly-imagined CPD/A publicly in early 2017. Our People's Convention in July – a national gathering of 1,500 members, leaders, and staff of our partners – will provide an important opportunity to build our identity and develop our shared vision and strategy for the coming years.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

We did not reach the decision to move forward with this new vision lightly. In fact, throughout 2015 we were engaged in a formal planning process with the support of outside consultants (the Management Assistance Group) and a formal Planning Committee comprised of CPD staff, Board members, and partner executive directors (who made up the majority of the committee).

The core questions we addressed included:

- How can CPD and our partners structure our relationship to develop mutual accountability and mutually beneficial power, thereby growing people power to win?
- How should we effectively build institutional power, and how should CPD relate directly to a base?
- How can we create mutual accountability and catalyze maximum impact?

The Planning Committee drove an intensive process over the course of 2015, including:

- Interviews and surveys of 105 CPD staff, board members, state partners, funders and allies to track CPD's perceived strengths and weaknesses, unique contributions to the movement, and opportunities for growth.
- Nine in-depth "benchmark" interviews with other national networks (labor, community, political) to glean best practices on building field capacity and effective national/state relationship.
- Two in-person retreats (two days in June, one day in October) to grapple with the information gleaned from the interviews and research, and to begin shaping the vision for the new structure.
- One-on-one calls by the CPD Co-Executive Directors to all Executive Directors to almost all of our existing 42 partners to solicit their feedback and input, which led to significant advancement and refinement of the model.

A consensus emerged from this process to formalize the network of relationships that comprise CPD/A, to structure formal governance of the organizations to ensure accountability to the state partners and their base, and to develop a set of other advisory and strategy-setting bodies that will help guide our collective agenda moving forward. The key components of this new structure, which partners will now ratify through affiliation, are laid out below. While many important decisions have been made, there is a tremendous amount of collective work to make the promise of this new

vision a reality. We will work closely with our current and newly-constituted Boards, the partner Executive Directors, and close allies throughout 2016, and beyond, to implement this vision.

CORE COMPONENTS OF THE NEW VISION

➤ *Accountability & Governance*

A core commitment of the new vision is that CPD/A be fully accountable to, and owned by, our state partners and their base. As a movement organization committed to democratic control by working communities, communities of color, and immigrants, it is crucial that CPD/A itself is reflective of that commitment. In practice, this will mean:

- A 23-25 member c4 Board (CPDA) to set strategy, vision, and making key decisions about the composition of our network and its expansion. The Board will include 10 partner EDs (6 large organizations, 2 mid-sized and 2 emerging organizations) plus 10 member leaders from those 10 organizations. Six seats will be reserved for our largest affiliates. The remaining seats filled by the Co-EDs of CPD/A, additional partner representatives (with an eye to ensuring geographic diversity), and up to 2 “ally” seats of non-partners. The Board will have a requirement for race and gender diversity (50% of staff seats on board must be held by women and 50% by people of color (cannot have 50% of board be white men)).
- A 19-member c3 Board (CPD), focusing on specialized expertise in fundraising, non-profit management and finance, deep knowledge of the field and/or component parts of CPD’s work, such as organizing, policy, workers’ rights, etc. To ensure deep alignment with the CPDA Board, the CPD Board will include 19 members: 11 independent directors with emphasis on fundraising potential; 5 designates from c4 board, who serve as an executive committee of the board; and the 3 Co-EDs. The Board Co-Chairs (of the c3) will be EDs who serve on the c4 Board.

➤ *Engagement & Strategy-Setting*

The Boards of Directors will be critical, formal decision-making and governance structures that set the strategy and trajectory of the two organizations. But it will also be important to develop a diversity of structures that facilitate broad investment in, and ownership of, the joint effort. We currently imagine the following additional bodies or structures to support the work of CPD/A:

- Regular calls and active list-serv of all partner EDs;
- A Leadership Council of 1-2 senior staff and 1-2 member leaders from each affiliate that meets annually or bi-annually and generates proposed strategy, political, and organizational priorities for review and approval by the Boards.
- A Strategic Partnership Council of key allies and fundraisers (including labor) to ensure their input and alignment of our strategies (consultation but not formal decision-making).
- A Coordination Committee of the largest and most aligned affiliates, who meet 2-4 times a year on strategy, priorities, etc.

- Working Groups as currently exist or as needed (e.g., focused on a campaign, geography, cohort of partners, etc.).

➤ ***Resource Generation for Our Work***

Partners who formally affiliate with CPD/A will pay annual dues, as a way to raise unrestricted money for shared national work, and to promote real shared investment among the partner organizations that co-govern the institution. Dues will be based on the combined size of the c3/c4 budgets, at a rate of approximately .5% of those budgets a year.

CPD/A will support partners in raising funds to cover their dues. Affiliates fall behind on dues will have an opportunity to submit a corrective action plan to the c4 board, which will decide how best to proceed. No affiliate will be expelled for failing to pay dues for just one year.

A primary goal of CPD/A will be raising significant funds for our partners in the field – raising (subgranting or leveraging) a dollar for the field for every dollar that supports national infrastructure. CPD/A's Boards will work to create guidelines around transparency and accountability on subgranting. CPD/A will also focus on building an aggressive, ambitious fundraising campaign for unrestricted revenue for the network, including grassroots fundraising, direct mail programs, digital strategies, and other approaches.

➤ ***Alignment & Relationship to Our Base***

CPD and our affiliates are deeply committed to participatory, democratic base-building work – indeed, accountability to our members, and a growing membership base, are essential to our theory of change. Affiliates and/or CPDA Board members will articulate clear membership and power growth policies and expectations. A committee of peers will evaluate CPD/CPDA and affiliate organizations regularly, and will prepare reports for organizations' Boards of Directors in order to help ensure organizational efficacy. This same committee will evaluate the work of CPD/A and share that evaluation with the c4 Board, as well.

Even as CPD/A and our partners work to formalize our network, we recognize that there are a number of organizations who are deeply aligned with our vision and politics but are not yet ready to fully affiliate with CPD/A. CPDA's Board will develop a second category of relationship for organizations that are not at a stage of formal affiliation. These "Key Allies" or "Partners" (or some other name) will be approved by the c4 Board, using criteria including the on-going nature of the relationship, the strategic importance of the relationship to CPD existing affiliates and nationally, the movement importance, geographic diversity, and/or constituent diversity. Key Allies will not serve on the c3 or c4 board in seats designated for full affiliates. Benefits of status as "Key Allies" or "Partners" will be developed by the CPDA board, and could include:

- Opportunity to participate, typically without stipend, in CPD partner meetings, relevant working groups, OCB trainings, or other CPD-hosted convenings or meetings.

- As resources allow, to receive CPD support on campaigns, research/policy, or capacity building.
- Opt-in to list sharing, on approval of CPDA Board.

At all times, 2/3 of the network must be affiliates, to ensure that CPD's resources and attention do not get pulled too far from its core affiliates.

We also recognize that there is value, for both CPD nationally, and for state-based affiliates, of sharing and aggregating our relationships – for national campaigns, for digital organizing, possibly for fundraising. CPD/A will continue to build national c3 and c4 email lists. Affiliates will have the opportunity to opt in to list sharing with CPD (sharing list with CPD/A, and adding to their lists individuals in their geographic footprint from CPD and CPDA's lists). We will develop clear ground rules, including how frequently CPD can contact people, in whose name CPD can contact people, when affiliates have opportunity to pre-approve certain communications, limits on fundraising, splits for fundraising done off each other's lists, etc.

NEXT STEPS

We are working with our existing network of partners to educate their members, staff and Boards of Directors of the opportunity to join this network of organizations. In July 2016, the newly conceived network will engage in a critical public debut of our vision, mission and power with our National Convention. We will bring together 1,500 members, staff, and leaders of our partners and CPD/A national staff to develop a shared political vision, set our course for the coming few years, and build deep relationships across the network. We envision the July event as an important moment to cement our relationships as a network, in advance of our public launch in 2017.

During this period, we will be working with core allies including funders, organized labor, and other allies to apprise them of this next step and engage their best thinking and energy on mapping out our collective strategy to build our social justice movement to scale.