

BEST PRACTICES REPORT

2017 U.S.-Russia Peer-to-Peer NGO Management Exchange Forum
CAMBA and the Center for Interethnic Cooperation (CIC)

July 2018



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Purpose of Best Practices Report

This document has been developed to summarize the Peer-to-Peer NGO Management Exchange Forum (P2P Forum) hosted by CAMBA and the Center for Interethnic Cooperation (CIC). The Forum first took place in Moscow, Russia from April 25th to April 27th, 2017 and continued with a second event hosted in Brooklyn, New York from July 17th to 19th, 2017.

This document highlights best practices learned and challenges overcome in preparing and implementing the 2017 P2P Forum. The Forum was a unique opportunity to bring together leaders from diverse personal and professional backgrounds to tackle nonprofit management topics including organizational strategic planning, using effective communication strategies to reach funders and potential partners, and implementing quality assurance and compliance measures. From the initial planning stages, to setting agenda goals, and hosting one another in our home countries, the Forum illustrated how cross-national collaborations can lead to lasting relationships, better understanding of each other's countries, and improvements in our nonprofit sectors. Overall, the success of the Forum was a result of the strong partnership between CAMBA and CIC members, the dedication of Forum participants, and the support of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the host country governments.

I. Background

CAMBA is a nonprofit agency that provides services that connect people with opportunities to enhance their quality of life. Since 1977, CAMBA has helped New Yorkers transform their lives by providing holistic programs to individuals, families and communities. CAMBA takes a comprehensive approach to helping individuals, families and communities thrive, offering integrated programs in: Economic Development, Education and Youth Development, Family Support, Health, Housing, and Legal Services.¹ CAMBA's organizing and planning term for the Peer-to-Peer Management Exchange Forum were CAMBA's President and CEO Joanne Oplustil, Executive Vice President Valerie Barton Richardson, Senior Vice President Janet Miller, Vice President for Economic Development and Refugee Services Eileen Reilly, Executive Vice President for CAMBA Housing Ventures, David Rowe and Vice President for Education and Youth Development Wesner Pierre.

The Center for Interethnic Cooperation (CIC) is a non-governmental organization founded in 1997 and based in Moscow, Russia. CIC has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The main mission of CIC is to spread the ideas of tolerance and democracy in Russian society. The CIC arranges projects devoted to the struggle with intolerance among youth, the promotion of gender equality, and the resolution of conflict situations. Projects are held in twenty-five Russian Federation regions and volunteers from all over the world take active part in the realization of these projects.² The main points of contact from CIC for the Peer-to-Peer Management Exchange Forum were CIC Executive Director Ashot Ayrapetyan and Manager Marina Nikiforova and Vice Chairperson Ewegenia Nazarova.

CAMBA and CIC members came to know each other after a serendipitous meeting in New York in 2002. CIC members were visiting New

1 See CAMBA Homepage, <https://www.camba.org/>

2 See CIC Homepage, <http://www.interethnic.org/>

York City through a U.S. Department of State Visitors Bureau Program and were introduced to CAMBA as a leading non-profit organization working with refugees and assisting with their resettlement in the United States. CAMBA and CIC members stayed in contact throughout the years and submitted their first proposal to IREX (The International Research and Exchanges Board) for a U.S.-Russia NGO Peer Exchange in 2004 that focused on religious and ethnic minority mutual assistance and rights organizations, hate crimes reduction, and promoting better police community relations. CAMBA and CIC continued their collaboration and partnered on four exchange trips between 2004 and 2016. The purpose of the 2017 U.S.-Russia Peer-to-Peer NGO Management Exchange Forum was to develop a further dialogue related to best practices and lessons learned in nonprofit management among dedicated nonprofit leaders in Russia and the United States. To meet this goal, CAMBA and CIC organized Forums for nonprofit leaders to connect and share ideas. The first Forum was hosted in Moscow, Russia from April 25th to April 27th, 2017 and the second Forum was hosted in Brooklyn, New York from July 17th to 19th, 2017. To further facilitate the exchange of ideas and lessons learned from the Russia and U.S. Forums, a Management Lessons Blog and Chat Room was developed and launched in November 2017.

II. P2P Forum held in Moscow, Russia on April 25th, 26th and 27th, 2017

The P2P Forum hosted in Moscow, Russia took place over the course of three days from April 25th to April 27th, 2017. CAMBA brought a delegation of 13 leaders from various nonprofit organizations throughout New York City.³ CIC selected 13 members from their umbrella network of over 200 nonprofit member organizations to attend the Forum.⁴ The selection and orientation of Forum participants started at the end of 2016.⁵ Gathering a group of diverse participants for the Forum was incredibly important to the depth of discussions, knowledge exchanges, and overall success of the Forum. Both CAMBA and CIC took affirmative steps to ensure participants from each of their delegations came from diverse personal and professional backgrounds. Ashot Ayrapetyan of CIC collaborated with Nadar Hananishvily, Vice-President of the National Association of Charitable Organizations and Vjacheslav Bakhmin, a representative of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in Russia, to recruit leaders from regional organizations throughout Russia to participate in the Forum, in addition to recruiting from their member organizations.

The CAMBA team, including President and CEO Joanne Oplustil, Executive Vice President Valerie Barton Richardson, Vice President for Economic Development and Refugee Services Eileen Reilly, Senior Vice President Janet Miller, Executive Vice President David Rowe and Vice President of Education and Youth Development Wesner Pierre, recruited a cadre of attendees from a pool of nonprofit leaders in New York City. The U.S. delegation selected participants from minority racial, ethnic and religious

3 Appendix A, List of U.S. delegation members and biographies for Moscow, Russia Forum

4 Appendix B, List of Russia delegation members for Moscow, Russia Forum

5 Appendix C, U.S.-Russia Peer-to-Peer NGO Management Exchange Forum

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backgrounds and members of the LGBTQ community. Participants also represented a range of professional backgrounds in direct services delivery, including executive directors, managers, lawyers, social workers, and former law enforcement encompassing a broad range of human service areas from youth development organizations, to higher education, immigrant and refugee service organizations, child welfare and preventative services, legal services, workforce development, and housing programs. In addition, CAMBA at its own expense recruited and sponsored Paul Thomas, Partner from The Parkside Group to be part of the U.S. delegation because of his extensive experience in fundraising, legislative and policy advocacy, and effective communications and public relations strategies for NGOs.⁶ Additionally, as an African American man who grew up in Harlem, New York, Mr. Thomas brought his unique personal experience to the Forum, dispelling misconceptions that many Russian nationals had of the leadership structures in the U.S. as being more homogeneous. Based on the great response the Moscow Forum had to Paul's presentation and the resulting discussions regarding the importance of public relations and finding "mission allies" to an NGO's success, — CAMBA invited Robert J. Bellafiore, Founder/ President of Stanhope Partners, and Steven Greenberg, Founder and Principal of Greenberg Public Relations, to present a workshop to the New York City Forum on developing clear and effective communications strategies, message development and media relations.

The three days in Moscow included an introduction to the nonprofit, charity/ philanthropy, and social services delivery landscape in Russia; presentations from both U.S. and Russian delegation members about their organizations, and discussions about challenges faced by nonprofit organizations in Russia.⁷ The first day of the Forum started with introductions of each participant, the history of CAMBA and CIC exchanges and nonprofit structures in the

U.S. and Russia. The second day of the Forum included presentations from each participant about their organizations and discussions on the effectiveness of using technology (case management systems, data collection, and social media forums) to improve the effectiveness of delivering services and seeking funding. The last day provided participants with open time to ask questions about each other's organizations and operating landscape, and to gather information about the technical needs of Russian counterparts to inform the agenda for the U.S. Forum, which would take place later in the year.

6 See Biography of Mr. Paul Thomas, <http://www.theparksidegroup.com/paul-thomas/>

7 Appendix D, Moscow, Russia Forum Agenda, dated April 25th, 26th and 27th 2017.

III. P2P Forum Held in Brooklyn, New York on July 17th, 18th and 19th, 2017

The second Forum was hosted in Brooklyn, New York on July 17th, 18th and 19th, 2017. CAMBA gathered the original participants who attended the Moscow Forum and invited additional nonprofit leaders from various organizations in New York City.⁸ CIC brought 14 delegation members, most of who also participated in the Moscow Forum.⁹

A focus of the U.S. Forum was on presentations on capacity building, fundraising advocacy and public relations. These technical training topics were selected because of the Russian delegation members' interest in seeking assistance with leveling up their organizational management skills, fundraising strategies, and building more effective communications and public relations.

The first day of the Forum included a recap of the main “take aways” from the Moscow Forum and presentations on quality assurance and maintaining ethical and effective programs. The second day explored fundraising strategies and including a brainstorming session where participants exchanged ideas and experiences of successful and not successful fundraising strategies. On the last day of the Forum, participants learned about advocacy and effective messaging to attract funders, members, and partners as well as partaking in a presentation of innovative STEM learning for youth.¹⁰ The Forum also gathered feedback from participants about the functionality and design of the exchange forum's blog and how they will be able to access the exchange forums for continued dialogue between delegate partners. We also discussed desired content and next steps in the

launch of the portal and blog and how best to utilize them as a vehicle for continued exchange for sharing best practices and lessons learned.¹¹

A highlight of the U.S. visit was the opportunity for Russian participants who were able to remain in New York City for a couple of days post-Forum, to go on site visits to the offices of their U.S. counterparts. This included the Forum venue at CAMBA Gardens — an affordable and supportive housing complex built and operated by CAMBA with social services available to tenants on-site¹² — and visits to program sites and an arts festival hosted by Henry Street Settlement¹³, a Non Traditional Employment for Women (NEW) training site where women train to enter the building and construction trades¹⁴, and to one of CAMBA's school based Beacon Community Centers, located in Brownsville/Ocean Hill, New York. While there, members of the CIC delegation were able to witness first hand, the community center's after-school program activities, including band, dance, and academic enrichment/ homework help and tutoring.¹⁵ In addition there was an opportunity for the CIC member to speak with the program managers about how they structure and manage the program in response to the needs of the community.

8 Appendix E, List of U.S. delegation members for Brooklyn, NY Forum.

9 Appendix F, List of Russia delegation members for Brooklyn, NY Forum.

10 Appendix G, Presentation by Wesner Pierre of Vice President, Education & Youth Development at CAMBA.

11 Appendix H, U.S. Forum agenda, dated July 17th, 18th and 19th 2017.

12 See CAMBA Housing Ventures, <https://www.cambahousingventures.org/>

13 See Henry Street Settlements, <https://www.henrystreet.org/>

14 See Non Traditional Employment for Women (NEW), <http://www.new-nyc.org/>

15 See CAMBA Beacon Community Centers, <https://www.camba.org/programs/educationyouthdevelopment/communitycenters/>

IV. Best Practices

A critical element of the Peer-to Peer NGO Management Exchange Forums' success was the ability of both project partners' leadership to create meaningful opportunities for U.S. and Russia-based participants from different nonprofit backgrounds to meet one another, learn about each others' organizations, and exchange ideas and strategies to strengthen their organizations. These opportunities led to not only a better understanding of each others' nonprofit systems but also built respect and affection for each others' background and experiences. The following are best practices learned from planning and implementing the Forum.

a. Leverage relationships with organization leaders and key industry experts

For the initial writing of the grant proposal, addressing travel and accommodation logistics, recruiting and preparing participants, setting agenda goals, and implementing the Forum at each host country, it was critical to have committed organizers and buy-in at the leadership level of each organization. Both CAMBA and CIC had members from their executive leadership involved in the project. The CAMBA planning team included executive members of CAMBA's leadership such as President and CEO Joanne Oplustil, Executive Vice President Valerie Barton Richardson, Vice President for Economic Development and Refugee Services Eileen Reilly, Senior Vice President Janet Miller, Executive Vice President for CAMBA Housing Ventures David Rowe and Vice President for Education and Youth Development Wesner Pierre. CIC's planning team was led by CIC Executive Director Ashot Ayrapetyan, Vice Chairperson/CFO Evgenia Nazarova and CIC Youth Program Manager Marina Nikiforova.

Organization leaders were actively involved in developing the Forum goals, recruiting and preparing participants, and implementing the agenda items at both the Russia and U.S. Forums. They used their relationships with each other and with other industry leaders

to gather ideas to shape the Forum goals and to recruit diverse participants. For example, during the planning stages of the Forum, Ashot Ayrapetyan of CIC connected with Nadar Hananishvily, Vice-President of the National Association of Charitable Organizations, who is a nationally recognized leader in the field of NGO development with over 20 years of experience in non-profit leadership and management. As an advocate and area expert, Mr. Hananishvily is very familiar with the breadth, diversity and capacity of NGOs providing a variety of services that meet the critical needs of diverse populations. In conversations about the Forum and its aims, Mr. Hananishvily stressed the necessity, relevance and importance of this project, particularly at this time.

Key planning leaders with experience in the nonprofit sector and commitment to the goals of the Forum are necessary for its success, particularly when it comes to navigating complex multi stake holder and political scenarios, operating in compliance with the grant terms and conditions and in compliance with regulations governing NGO's in Russia. For example, in accordance with Russian law, all registered non-governmental organizations are to inform the tax authorities about awards and income from activities that are funded internationally. CIC was required to file its subcontract agreement and any subsequent amendments to the Department of Justice and Tax Inspection. In addition, although not technically required to under Russian law, CIC's Executive Ashot Ayrapetyan affirmatively chose to inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the Moscow forum and assure them of its strictly non-political focus as a best practice. He succeeded in getting support from the Ministry in the form of a letter of welcome and invitation to the US members of the Forum. Navigating such matters and exercising good judgement requires a mature level of expertise and professional credibility. The experience and reputation of someone like Mr. Ayrapetyan as a counterpart was invaluable to the success of planning the Forum.

b. Identify technical needs that can be met by the expertise of partner organizations

A peer-to-peer exchange is only as successful as the relevance of the topics to the participants in the exchange. Trainings that are rudimentary or too complex can come off as irrelevant or unrealistic. Participants are taking time away from their offices and regular work commitments to invest in technical training that they can bring back to their work places and realistically implement. A goal of the P2P Forum was to share information and strategies that would be most helpful to Russian and U.S. counterparts. During the Russia Forum, time was set in the program agenda to have open discussions about the nonprofit landscape in both the U.S. and Russia. All participants gave presentations about their respective organizations. They discussed their missions and values, the populations they served, how they provided services, and different funding sources. On the last day of the Russia Forum, there was an exchange of questions on how U.S. and Russian nonprofits could collaborate and learn from each others' funding challenges, strategic planning methods, the use of technology to collect data and evaluate and improve service delivery methods, and social media to connect with potential partners. These discussions laid the foundation for the U.S. Forum agenda.

In one example, during the Moscow Forum, there were a number of exchanges about data collection and keeping records for audits and accountability of services. To turn the discussion into something more useful and tangible during the U.S. Forum, CAMBA recruited the expertise of Joan Mcfeely, Chief Compliance Officer at CAMBA and Sophie Charles, Director of Preventative Services Policy and Practice at COFCCA to present on quality assurance and compliance and measuring success through data and outcomes.¹⁶ By using the expertise of

partner organizations, the U.S. Forum built on the goals of collaboration and exchanging of expertise to strengthen nonprofit management.

c. Gather participants from diverse backgrounds to provide multiple perspectives

To enhance the value of the P2P Forum, it was critical to gather participants from diverse personal and professional backgrounds. An exchange that includes participants with multiple perspectives gives breath to discussions and provides opportunities to see how experiences can vary even within the same country, city, or nonprofit sector. The planning leaders at CAMBA were careful to ensure the U.S. delegation came from various ethnic and religious backgrounds. It was important to showcase not only the diversity in the leadership at nonprofit organizations but also to highlight the racial and religious diversity of New York and the U.S. more broadly. To prepare all participants, CAMBA hosted an in-person orientation and two conference calls to discuss the goals of the Forum and the opportunity to exchange personal and professional experiences. A number of the U.S. participants were people of color, such as African Americans and Asian and South Asian Americans, some identified as LGBTQ, and a number were members of religious minorities in the U.S. We had frank discussions about concerns expressed by participants regarding potential discrimination, bias or hate they may experience, or simply excessive or invasive curiosity. We also shared feedback from people of color and LGBTQ travelers to Russia and shared generally about how one best prepares for and responds to such encounters wherever they are experienced. In addition we planned strategies for safety and how to be partners and allies for each other while travelling.

In addition to racial and religious diversity, including participants from various leadership levels in the Forum was also valuable. The U.S. delegation included executive directors, a chief financial officer, vice presidents, program managers, social workers, affordable housing

16 Appendix I, Presentations of Joan Mcfeely,

Chief Compliance Officer at CAMBA

developers, and lawyers, all of whom held various leadership and supporting roles in their organizations. The Russian delegation remarked on how seeing leaders at different levels collaborate with one another was a big lesson for them, noting that in Russia, in many cases, the director is a “big boss” and very seldom communicates directly with staff below them. By observing organizational structures and cultures of U.S. nonprofits (specifically CAMBA), the Russian delegation saw how leaders at the top can creatively solve more problems and be more successful by working in collaboration with “lower level” staff. Lastly, the delegation included representatives from a number of different organizational types and models — youth serving, advocacy/ umbrella organizations, higher education, community based, economic development, immigrant/refugee serving organizations and a public relations firm specializing in non-profits. This diversity was important to understanding the depth of the respective non-profit sectors and also to seeing the connections between providers around the populations served and types of services provided.

d. Invest in quality language interpretation services and equipment

With native English and Russian speakers as hosts and participants, the provision of quality interpretation services and equipment was key to the success of the Forum. We accomplished this through the investment in quality interpretation services and the use of a network of volunteer interpreters. During the Moscow Forum, the interpretation agency, Da Vinci Interpretation Firm, was knowledgeable and accurate, as attested to by the bilingual conference attendees. CIC members vetted different interpreters and discussed the context, concepts and goals of the project. CIC and CAMBA also prepared introductory materials for Da Vinci in order to orient them to the participants and the vocabulary, terms of art and abbreviations they would encounter. Similarly, we took the same thoughtful care in selecting professional interpretation services in the U.S. At the conclusion of the New York Forum, the translators we hired from the firm of

Lexicon-Global asked if they could both say a few words to the forum members. They shared how impressed and heartened they were by the work of the forum and that they were grateful to be a part of it. Moreover, they volunteered to provide free services to us in the future as their personal contribution to the work of the P2P Project. In addition, we vetted and recruited additional CAMBA staff volunteers, fluent in Russian and English to translate conference materials and to help interpret in less formal settings and over lunch and dinner to facilitate conversation. The expertise, openness and collegial flexibility of interpreters in both Russia and the U.S. was of real benefit and significantly contributed to the positive experience of the members, to the building of relationships, and to the Forum’s overall success. The investment in selecting interpreters and orienting them to the format and goals of the Forum prepared the interpreters and made them even more effective. The importance of this attention and commitment of resources to quality interpretation and equipment services cannot be overstated.

e. Set partnership and shared project goals to maintain peer-to-peer exchange relationships

The opportunity for nonprofit leaders from two different countries to meet one another, learn about each others’ organizations, and exchange organizational successes and challenges leads to memorable discussions and shared lessons. Building on the relationships that are formed during exchanges such as the Forum provides more learning opportunities and potential for future collaborations. Setting post-Forum partnership goals and working on a shared project can assist with further developing these relationships that may otherwise fall apart.

For the P2P Forum, the relationships developed during the Forum did not end in Moscow or New York City. They laid the foundation for continued discussions and exchanges of ideas to scale up nonprofit management in the U.S. and Russia. The Forum participants from the U.S. and Russia were highly qualified and ready and willing to devote their time and effort to the Forum. Russian participants shared that the presentations of organizations both from

U.S. and Russia were interesting and useful alongside the possibilities to start communication and development of partnership relations with American colleagues. A Management Lessons Blog and Chat Room was developed to facilitate further exchange of ideas between U.S. nonprofits and Russian NGOs. The Management Lessons Blog provides a place for participants to gain more strategies on topics such as private and government partnerships, board member development, models and pricing for successful income generating activities, and the use of technologies — areas of great interest to the Russian delegation. CAMBA, CIC and their partners are steadfastly committed to the success of the Management Lessons Blog and Chat Room. All P2P members have been invited to join the on-line blog portal community and many have been credentialed as users, have contributed content and utilized content posted by others. The electronic versions of the P2P Forum presentations are available through the blog portal as will this Best Practices Report. We are hopeful that the Management Lessons Blog and Chat Room will be able to facilitate ongoing robust exchanges between the participants.

V. Lessons learned through challenges and solutions offered

A Forum that involves international travel logistics and accommodations, the securing of visas, bilingual language interpretation, international electronic funds transfers, and the requirement that our Russian partners file the details of their grant partnership with government actors, even with the substantial combined experience and expertise of CAMBA and CIC, requires creative problem solving when challenges arise. Below we share our main challenges in implementing the Forum and what we learned.

a. Banking and budget

The two electronic bank transfers of project grant funding from CAMBA's bank, M&T, to CIC's bank, Sberbank in Moscow, were held somewhere in between and took between three to four weeks before they were received. Although the funds were verified removed from CAMBA's account, they were not immediately deposited into CIC's account. Both host organizations spent significant time and energy inquiring about the transactions, which ultimately appeared but not without causing delays to the payment of project expenses.

When the budget was first prepared it was based on the costs of items such as visas, airfare, accommodations, and interpretation services prevalent at that time. Price increases took place over the course of ten months between the initial submission of the proposal to when the first payments were due. Additionally, the original budget did not take into account the efficiency of having money that needed to be spent in Russia appear on our Russian partner's side of the budget. Examples include the Moscow translators and equipment fees, the airfare and visa costs for the Russian members to travel to the U.S., and some food costs. Similarly, our original proposal and budget did not take into account the advantages to the project of having our Russian partner develop and manage the lessons-learned blog, nor did the initial budget

accurately estimate the costs associated with developing the blog, in addition to other cost and effort estimations, like the RF visa costs, that proved insufficient. Moving additional money to CIC's budget to accommodate needed changes required a budget and contract amendment and the amendment's subsequent filing with the Russian Tax authorities. Reimbursements were also burdensome because of the delays with banking money transfers as mentioned above.

b. Securing travel visas

Securing Russian visas for the U.S. participants was incredibly challenging and required CAMBA to pay for business visa processing costs of \$600 for each participant. After thorough reading of the visa instructions and requirements from the website of the Consulate General of the Russian Federation, Eileen Reilly of CAMBA was denied entry into the Consulate and informed that visas were not issued at the Consulate (although this was listed on the website) but at the ILS Russian Visa Center. During Ms. Reilly's meeting with the ILS representative, the letters of invitation from CIC for the U.S. participants were scrutinized. Although the substance of the letters was correct, the ILS representative took issue with the format and order of the words in the letter and wholly rejected the visa applications of all U.S. participants. He then informed Ms. Reilly that because he was not accepting the applications until they were fixed, the Russian visas would not be available in time for the trip unless an expediting fee of \$600 was paid for each visa. Without many options left and a departure date imminent, CAMBA hired Passport Plus to assist with the visa application process. The company successfully submitted the visa applications directly to the Russian Embassy in Washington, DC and the visas were timely received. The high cost of the visas was seemingly unavoidable even with significant due diligence by the CAMBA and CIC organizers.

An additional visa challenge also impacted who was permitted to take part in the Forum. On January 27th, 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump issued an Executive Order, also known as the "Muslim Travel Ban," banning nationals from seven Muslim majority countries including Sudan, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, and

Yemen, from entering the United States. CAMBA had invited three highly qualified nonprofit leaders to participate who regrettably and painfully declined because they feared they might be banned from re-entering the U.S. upon returning from the Moscow Forum. One invited participant was the founder and Executive Director of a preeminent African immigrant-serving agency. She is a Sudanese national with Political Asylum status in the U.S. and a legal permanent resident with U.S. citizenship pending. Another was an Aleppo Syrian-born CEO of a highly regarded national nonprofit, and the third was a Palestinian born immigration attorney and Executive Director of an Arab professionals' network in New York. The expertise of these participants was thankfully not lost because they were able to participate in the U.S. Forum.

c. Staffing Capacity and Project Costs

A successful project at this level of professionalism and quality requires a substantial investment of time and effort and creates additional work tasks for each of the leaders organizing the Forum. The ability to fully fund a dedicated coordinator for the project, who did not already have multiple projects under their portfolio, would have been more efficient. Increased funding would allow for this.

VI. Feedback From U.S. and Russian Participants

Initiating and hosting a meaningful peer-to-peer exchange between international partners is not a simple task and does not happen overnight. It requires committed partners who have shared values and goals from the initial planning stages to the execution of the program and addressing all of the challenges in between. This is why it is critical to identify organizations with similar organizational goals that are committed to planning a forum at this level. CAMBA and CIC built on the relationship they had since hosting their first exchange in 2004 and carried it through to the P2P Forum in 2017. The respect, patience, and trust that CAMBA and CIC had for each other were critical to the success of the project and informed the atmosphere of mutual trust that the P2P Forums realized. We share the words of the participants below to highlight this success, their experience and aspirations to continue what we have started.

Quotes from Russian P2P Participants:

“The conference in New York was a huge lesson as we learned a lot about the approaches, methods and strategies our peers in the U.S.A. use in their work, and some of the lessons learned as they were developing and scaling up. The importance of building ethics, quality and compliance standards into the delivery of the work was of particular interest. Having a clear message and knowing how to communicate it, and learning different models of fundraising were also very valuable.”

“During both conferences in Moscow and New York, the project participants worked as one team being very kind and open sharing, discussing and learning the realities of work in two countries. It is important to say that the Moscow conference was a starting point that we built on where the P2P participants got acquainted with each other and learned information about the organizations participating in the project.”

“We want to highlight that due to the project ‘NGO Management Exchange Forum’ — Russian organizations got the opportunity not only to know their peers from the U.S.A. but also for them to find out more details and information about the history context and work their colleagues realize in Russia.”

“The participants of the Moscow conference expressed the hope that organizing the Forums of Russian and American non-governmental organizations will become a good and permanent tradition that will allow us to not only to exchange successful technologies of

providing a variety of critical services to the communities we serve, but will also help to improve the relations between our peoples.”

“In general there were a lot of things at the New York conference that you can get to know only in person by being at a place and not any video or other materials can provide you with this knowledge and experience. From the organizational point of view the whole project was a huge learning space — as far as bringing people together to different places requires lot of logistical details and we did a good job of collaborating with CAMBA to accomplish this.”

“It was a wonderful example of peoples’ diplomacy, focused not on political ambitions and controversies, but on the search of uniting points. American partners seemed sincerely interested to figure out the mechanisms of social institutions in our country and how they could best offer and apply their experience positively to our reality. It was very useful to get acquainted with the examples of work of NGOs and socially-oriented structures in USA in general and in New York in particular. Apart from the informational component — the atmosphere of trust and benevolence was great.”

“We are very much interested in the experience of our colleagues working in the same field as us: work with convicts, conflict resolution, development of volunteering, work with students and youth development, sheltering for homeless, interethnic conflict resolution, prevention of extremism including religious extremism, etc. Presentations of organizations both from USA and Russia were interesting and useful. Alongside the possibilities to start communication and development

of partnership relations with American colleagues, good opportunities arose to discuss the possibility to develop new partnerships and projects also with our Russian colleagues. I also liked the easy informal atmosphere — without affectation and officialdom. Everybody felt at home. These are warm salt of the earth people our American colleagues. It was easy to feel close to them quickly”

“I would like to point out that, despite temporary hardships in Russian-American relations, the people working for NGOs speak the same language as they are the kind of people eager to help others — that was what we realized during this forum. This fact leads to the conclusion of the importance of such a project and the useful and informative meetings in which we can exchange the best approaches, lessons and models for mutual benefit”

“We are both born into societies with mutual phobias about the other that appear as the reflection of political processes ‘at the top’ and as the result of the corresponding media tune. ...We shall broaden the borders of our knowledge, create partnership cooperation. At the same time it is very important to separate general policy and civil issues, to develop a ‘Civil Society Mind’. Crisis is a time of short horizon planning. To come out of the crisis with success we need to understand that we need to ‘rise over the situation’ in order to broaden this horizon. This project and the relationships begun here are widening and enlightening the horizon. It is a hopeful view, this horizon”

Quotes from U.S. Participants

“The P2P experience for me was very much a life-changing experience. I approached the conference with a cautious, if not skeptical eye, clouded by prior misconceptions and stereotypes of my Russian counterparts. The moment I landed in Moscow and was picked up by a friendly Russian driver who exclaimed ‘I love my job, I love you’ that seemed to set the tone for my entire trip. The conference was eye-opening. Through various break out, mini-group discussions we were able to deepen our connection with our Russian counterparts. It was in those moments that I realized that while we live in two very different parts of the world with many other differences from our government structures, to language, culture and many more — in the face of all those differences, we easily found common ground. We openly talked about our shared experiences and genuine desire to do good in the world. We quickly learned that while we have many differences it is our shared humanity that unites us and that was truly eye-opening and heart-warming to experience. I am hopeful that this dialogue and exchange will continue in a meaningful way and that we are able to once again visit, share and learn from one another.”

“The U.S./Russia peer-to-peer exchange was a fantastic and important opportunity for peer-to-peer diplomacy. In addition to sharing information about how our civic society organizations are run, the exchange helped break down barriers between citizens of our two nations, and helped us find commonality on ways we can work together to strengthen civic society organizations in both the U.S. and

Russia. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in Russia as we seek to strengthen both our civic society communities”.

“The opportunity to join the peer-to-peer exchange in Moscow was a unique and beneficial experience for me in my role leading a nonprofit in New York City.”

“Through this conference, we were afforded the rare opportunity to develop strong relationships with colleagues doing similar work addressing similar needs. Through presentations, panels, meals, cultural events and organization tours — both in Moscow and in New York City — we were able to fully realize the vast similarities in the work we do and the missions and visions we share, namely to provide meaningful opportunities to those in need, which in turn enabled us to clearly identify learning opportunities and transferable models and initiatives.”

“One of the benefits of participating in this opportunity was that I did so with other New York City workforce development leaders that I sit on the board of the New York City Employment and Training Coalition with. That we were able to participate in this type of cross-cultural in-depth discussion of the work we all do was eye-opening and truly newly informs the work we do and how we influence and inform the work the City does for those in need.”

“This experience has expanded my ideas about the possibilities for the people we serve and has led me to explore other ways that global learning opportunities

and cross-cultural collaborations can innovate and inform the work we do at our organization and sector-wide.”

“What a fantastic opportunity it was to participate in this dynamic exchange. Despite differences of culture and language, there was so much synergy and openness. Although our worlds are very far apart, we ended up having so many things in common. It was particularly striking how similar our work truly is, which made the conferences really useful and relevant. I look forward to continuing the dialogue that was started through this project and looking for new ways to share and collaborate with our Russian friends and colleagues.”

“The international sharing was impactful as it reinforced the basic fundamental need for human services are universal and transcends borders. The sharing of ideas and how to accomplish meaningful services for youth, underserved groups and others in need will collectively help us build better frameworks.”

“It was a true privilege to have the opportunity to learn about the structure, philosophy and operations of the NGO organizations led by our Russian colleagues. The peer-to-peer exchange highlighted many similarities about our work, some of which weren't obvious at first. For example, my organization operates programs in rural areas of the United States, and it was valuable to hear from colleagues working in rural Russian communities about the strategies they use to provide services to citizens who have to travel to get to their programs. Over the two weeks of in-person dialogue, both in Moscow and New York City,

we were able to build a strong foundation of understanding about our programs and the systems we operate within.”

“Truly an amazing experience. I look forward to working with and helping our Russian colleagues improve the lives of their people, while learning humility and steadfastness from them.”

“Both contacts with our Russian colleagues were two of the most rewarding professional involvements that I have ever experienced. It was truly amazing to travel to Moscow and learn that they have human service organizations that seek solutions to common challenges. While our U.S. agencies are operationally, years ahead of our Russian colleagues, our seniority advantage has not eliminated the need for government support, private dollars, and legislative efforts to deal with many of the same challenges faced by children and families in both countries. In essence, I learned that the fight for child safety and the struggle to connect children to loving families, safe environments, and education are universal. I also learned that my professional expertise in preventive services and child welfare was very valuable to my Russian colleagues and I was thrilled to have the opportunity to share it both in Moscow and New York City. It was an excellent strategy for each country to host a meeting on our home turfs and to obtain a full sense of “otherness.” In doing so, we have confirmed that we are the same. We have the same objectives: 1) to help children and families thrive, 2) to build and fund agencies that support young people and parents, and 3) to fulfill our passions and sense of professional self-worth.”