



## Executive Director

New York, NY *(currently remote through pandemic)*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The **Immigrant Defense Project (IDP)** is a vibrant and growing social justice organization whose mission is to promote fundamental fairness for immigrants who have had contact with the criminal legal system. IDP fights to end mass criminalization, detention, and deportation through a multipronged strategy including advocacy, litigation, legal advice and training, community defense, grassroots alliances, and strategic communications. In order to advance this work, IDP is seeking a new **Executive Director** to set the vision, direction, strategy, and governance structures for the organization, and to advance IDP's mission through effective fundraising, organizational development strategies, and by cultivating a strong, resonant external presence.

For the past 20 years, IDP has created cutting-edge legal and advocacy strategies to support immigrants in contact with the criminal legal system, on an individual, local, and national level. IDP seeks not only to change law and policy, but also to change the discourse toward ending criminalization. Specifically, IDP seeks to minimize the harsh and disproportionate immigration consequences of contact with the criminal legal system by working to transform unjust deportation laws and policies, and by educating and advising immigrants, their criminal defense attorneys, and other advocates.

IDP began as a small organization of mostly lawyers focused primarily on legal strategies and litigation to drive change. Over the years, the organization has grown in stature and impact, expanding its slate of programs and services to include advocacy, community education, and state and federal policy work. With this expansion, IDP has become a national leading voice in matters related to the intersection of immigration and criminal justice. As a result, in the past five years, the number of staff has grown from 11 to 20, including lawyers, paralegals, advocacy campaign specialists, and communications strategists. In order to reach its full potential, IDP is seeking an Executive Director who will bring strong management, financial acumen, and organizational leadership to an organization that has grown quickly in a short space of time.

Within a culture of inclusivity and shared leadership, the Executive Director will be a dynamic and creative leader committed to and passionate about justice for immigrants impacted by the criminal legal system. The Director will collaboratively set vision, direction, and strategy for IDP's work and continued success; partner with the leadership team in designing and implementing organizational development and management priorities, including building efficient operations, governance, and administrative systems; represent the organization externally and lift up its groundbreaking work and impact; and build and diversify its fundraising strategies and efforts. The ideal candidate will be a visionary and strategic leader and manager

who brings deep experience managing nonprofit organizations, including fundraising, fiscal management, and operations. They will be a strong facilitator of people and ideas, and a thoughtful leader committed to cultivating a growing, learning environment. In addition, the new Director will bring a level of maturity and vision that fosters a healthy, robust, and supportive environment in which staff can thrive.

This search is being conducted by Callie Carroll and Yuniya Khan of [NPAG](#). Application instructions can be found at the end of this document.

## ABOUT IMMIGRANT DEFENSE PROJECT

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IDP was founded by Manny Vargas, a well-known and highly respected attorney in New York City, who sought to address the emerging human rights crisis following Congress' passage of harsh immigration laws in 1996. IDP works to transform a racially biased criminal legal system that violates basic human rights, and an immigration system that tears thousands of immigrants with convictions each year from their homes, families, and communities.

As IDP has grown, its strategies to fight against mass criminalization, detention, and deportation have evolved, and are aimed at challenging the immigration and criminal legal system at multiple points. These strategies, which form IDP's program areas, include:

- **Policy and Advocacy:** IDP advocates for local, state, and federal laws and policies that advance our mission.
- **Community Defense:** IDP equips grassroots organizations and communities on the frontlines with strategies and tools to protect and expand their individual and collective rights.
- **Education, Advice, and Training:** IDP educates immigrants, advocates, and lawyers on the complex intersection of federal immigration and state criminal law.
- **Strategic Communications:** IDP counters the demonization of immigrants and people with criminal convictions and changes the conversation by exposing the human toll of unjust policies.
- **Impact Litigation:** IDP orchestrates the strategy behind litigation in the Supreme Court and Circuit Courts and challenges unfair laws to expand the organization's reach exponentially.

IDP's multi-pronged strategy often means it is the first to spot trends in immigration policing and transform these findings into bigger-picture social change efforts. While IDP's work is focused primarily in New York, it provides support for campaigns across the country, and coordinates efforts that can yield national impact. IDP is viewed as an organization that provides cutting edge thinking on issues that impact the human rights of immigrants who have been criminalized, using innovative legal arguments, advocacy campaigns, and communication strategies.

Recently, IDP has achieved notable successes, including contributing to U.S. Supreme Court victories, successfully challenging ICE policing, helping local public defender offices to integrate the provision of immigration advice and representation, and sharing critical information to communities through the "Know Your Rights" campaign. IDP is proud to be a nationally recognized resource for directly impacted people, attorneys, advocates, and elected officials on criminal-immigration issues.

IDP operates under a fiscal sponsorship, and has a staff team of 19 talented, highly engaged and knowledgeable attorneys, paralegals, policy experts and organizers, and communications strategists committed to advancing IDP's mission, rooted in the principle that no one is disposable.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FACING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Broadly, the new Executive Director will provide vision and leadership for a growing and dynamic organization and represent and champion IDP to the broader community, funders, partners and other external audiences. Specifically, the new Director can expect to engage in the following areas:

**Collaboratively set vision, direction, and strategy for IDP's work and continued success.** While ensuring that IDP's core work continues to advance, the new Director will engage with staff and advisors to set and uphold organizational priorities, ensuring alignment with IDP's mission and vision for the future. They will collaborate with staff to build consensus and clarity around IDP's theory of change and organizational stance on relevant issues and promote a culture of ongoing mutual learning and growth. The Director will foster an environment that invites discussion, debate, problem-solving, collaboration, and learning. The new Director will be a strategic thinker who understands the role of and difference between tactics and strategy in cultivating the kinds of alliances that moves IDP's work forward. They will bring a growth mindset, seeking opportunities to identify and raise pressing issues with which IDP needs to grapple — these might include issues related to the opportunities and limitations of a new Democratic administration, or the impact of the expanding power of far-right groups in the U.S. and globally — and looking at the potential implications of these issues on IDP's work.

**Collaborate with IDP's leadership team and Advisory Board in developing and implementing efficient organizational and management infrastructure and ensuring ongoing financial health.** In partnership with IDP's leadership team, the new Director will assess and refine IDP's management structure and processes, ensuring sound leadership and transparent, inclusive, effective decision-making practices. They will lead efforts to build efficiencies around IDP's financial management structures and practices, and create a strong, resilient foundation for its continued financial health. They will ensure efficient, streamlined operations and administrative systems aligned with IDP's culture, priorities, and growth trajectory. The new Director will actively engage with the Advisory Board and implement strategies to expand and deepen the scope of professional expertise represented in the group. They will assess, make recommendations, and oversee any relevant changes to IDP's governance structure.

**Represent IDP externally, strategically leveraging opportunities to lift up IDP's groundbreaking work and impact.** The new Director will cultivate IDP's presence externally through events, conferences, meetings, and other speaking engagements, drawing attention to its ongoing efforts and victories on behalf of those trapped at the intersection of immigration and criminal legal systems. The Director will collaborate with staff to refine the organization's overall communications strategy, including outreach to new audiences and a diverse set of traditional and new media outlets. They will ensure that IDP has strategies in place for sharing strong, compelling messages that highlight IDP's central role in fighting to end mass criminalization, detention, and deportation of immigrants from the US and will invest in and cultivate staff capacity to represent IDP in external contexts. They will work in collaboration with program areas to develop and maintain strategic partnerships with public officials, as well as legal, service and community-based organizations, and law school clinics.

**Drive and diversify IDP's fundraising goals and strategies.** The new Director will strengthen IDP's existing relationships with individual donors and foundations and cultivate new donors. They will devise creative, effective methods for prospecting new grants, and develop strategies for identifying and pursuing novel funding sources. In order to meet IDP's long-term fundraising goals, the new Director will assess systems and capacity currently in place and identify needed supports and resources to move IDP towards its fundraising and communication goals. This may include hiring additional development or communications staff or implementing new tools and practices that support these goals.

**Collaborate with the leadership team in creating a healthy organizational culture built on equity, learning, and growth.** The new Executive Director will proactively build on IDP's culture of camaraderie and collaboration and will cultivate an environment that fosters creativity and innovation, while seeking to build on the deep passion, commitment, and strengths of IDP's staff. The new Director will bring a deep and nuanced understanding of power differentials, including those related to race, class, immigration history, formal education levels, and gender normativity, and work proactively to foster meaningful inclusiveness and equity within the organization. The Director will be a skilled and self-aware manager who will set and model realistic work expectations based on healthy workload distributions. They will invest in the growth and development of staff by engaging in effective mentoring, designing efficient performance assessment systems, and recognizing the strengths and contributions of IDP staff. They will implement systems and practices for resolving conflict and establishing accountability at all levels of the organization. In addition, the new Director will bring a level of maturity and vision that fosters a healthy, robust, and supportive environment in which staff can thrive.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

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The ideal candidate will be a visionary leader with a well-developed ability to build consensus, develop and execute plans, and foster an environment of growth and learning. While no one candidate will embody all the qualifications below, the ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

- Demonstrated commitment to advancing social justice and direct experience in an advocacy, organizing, policy or legal organization working the areas of criminal justice or immigrants' rights, and ideally at the intersection of the two; personal or professional experience centering the perspectives and voices of communities harmed by multiple and intersectional systems of oppression is also highly valued;
- Experience in a director, leadership, or management role in a nonprofit organization;
- Demonstrated experience directing and overseeing the growth of a nonprofit organization, including financial management, governance, fund development, and grant writing;
- Exceptional communication skills, and the ability to engage with diverse groups of people in an open and respectful way;
- Superb interpersonal skills and proven capacity to forge strong relationships with a variety of stakeholders;
- Demonstrated ability to employ a growth and learning mindset, and to bring an inclusive, collaborative approach to managing and building consensus;
- Ability to develop and implement effective communication strategies, including press outreach, website management, and social media;
- Demonstrated experience in nonprofit fiscal management;
- Ability to nurture a positive and healthy work environment for staff; and
- An advanced degree in law, public policy, nonprofit management, or another related field is helpful, though equivalent relevant experience and related understanding of theories of change and programmatic frameworks can be substituted.

**Compensation:** IDP is fiscally sponsored by Fund for the City of New York (FCNY), through which a generous benefits package is provided. Compensation for this position is targeted at \$125,000 - \$140,000 with final salary commensurate with experience. New team members are not expected to start at the top of the range, but particular exceptions will be considered.

## TO APPLY

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More information about the Immigrant Defense Project may be found at: [immigrantdefenseproject.org](http://immigrantdefenseproject.org).

This search is being led by [Callie Carroll](#) and [Yuniya Khan](#) of NPAG. Due to the pace of this search, candidates are strongly encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Candidates may submit their cover letter, outlining their interest and qualifications, along with their resume via NPAG's [candidate portal](#).

**The Immigrant Defense Project is an equal opportunity employer and proudly values diversity.  
Candidates of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.**