Sara Lawson

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A collaborative leader and accomplished administrator with 15+ years' experience in capacity building, fund development, advocacy, program development, community relations, and board development within community-based organizations. Passionate about the role that mission-driven organizations play in strengthening communities, Sara brings a collaborative, analytical, and strategic approach to her work as a consultant, teacher, and coach.

EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Faculty: Seattle University and University of Alaska Southeast. (2010-present)

- Teach masters-level courses on *Nonprofit Governance* and *Fundamentals of the Nonprofit Sector* in the MPA program of the Institute of Public Service at Seattle University. (2010-present)
- Teach masters-level courses on *Boards and Volunteers* and *Strategic Fund Developmen*t at the University of Alaska Southeast. Classes are facilitated through real-time, interactive WebMeetings, discussion boards, and other online learning tools. (2011-present)

Nonprofit Management Consultant, Shorthand Consulting. (2010-present)

- Provide technical assistance and consulting services to small-to-midsized nonprofit organizations.
- Offer a range of services, including organizational assessments, board training and work sessions, strategic planning, technical writing, interim staffing, and leadership coaching.
- Engage boards and staff in a collaborative, analytical, and strategic approach to board development, capacity building, fund development, coalition building, and community relations.

Interim Executive Director, PONCHO. Seattle, WA (2008-2009)

PONCHO (Patrons of Northwest Civic, Cultural, and Charitable Organizations) is the oldest arts funder in Washington. Since 1963, it has allocated over $34-million to more than 200 arts organizations.

During a 9-month engagement, provided operational continuity and a stabilizing influence in the midst of a leadership transition, high staff turnover, and significant reliance on volunteer teams.

Highlights:

- Facilitated the grantmaking process of the Allocations Committee, which evaluated and interviewed 70+ applicants, and allocated $305,000 in the first phase of 2009 grants.
- Secured more than $150,000 in grants, corporate sponsorships, and designated proceeds by working strategically with board leaders, meeting with key funders, submitting new proposals, and stewarding existing proposals.
- Oversaw a record-breaking Wine Auction, which grossed more than $1-million, including over $250,000 in charitable contributions dedicated to arts education and outreach.
- Assessed various facets of the organization to support the board's strategic deliberations.

Executive Director, Ketchikan Area Arts & Humanities Council. Ketchikan, AK (2002-2007)

Ketchikan, Alaska is known as one of "America's 100 Best Small Arts Towns." The Arts Council is designated by the City as the agency responsible for the advancement of the arts in Ketchikan.

- Led a thriving community arts organization by working closely with a nine-person board of directors, three staff members and dozens of volunteers, while overseeing all facets of operations and a growing array of programs and services.
- Honed advocacy and communications skills in a range of settings, including formal presentations, radio interviews, editorial articles, negotiations, and public work sessions, interacting as lead spokesperson with elected officials and government staff at local, state, and federal levels.

Highlights:

- Developed and implemented a fiscal sponsorship program to foster volunteer-initiated community arts projects, and successfully mentored volunteer teams to meet unprecedented programmatic and fundraising goals. (2005-2007)
- Revamped membership program in partnership with board and staff, resulting in a 515% increase in membership revenue. (1998-2007)
- Developed and coordinated grass-roots advocacy programs that resulted in broad message recognition, contributing to record levels of municipal funding for the arts.
- Invited by Rasmuson Foundation to participate in pilot phase of their *Sustainable Institutions* Initiative. The Arts Council was one of three organizations in Alaska to receive this invitational, $100,000 capacity-building grant. (2005-2007)
- Initiated a public art program to highlight Ketchikan's art and culture to cruise-ship visitors and local community, securing a $75,000 appropriation for pilot phase. (2007)
- Received two Chamber of Commerce Awards for *Outstanding Community Event*.

Program Director, Ketchikan Area Arts & Humanities Council. Ketchikan, AK (1998-2002)

- Implemented, evaluated, and expanded a diverse portfolio of ongoing and recurring art programs and services, including artist residencies in the schools, three annual arts festivals, a performing arts series, monthly visual arts exhibits, and a summer arts camp.

Highlights:

- Expanded audience for Wearable Art Show by 280%. (1998-2002)
- Created and implemented a program/marketing plan for a performing arts series, resulting in 380% growth in subscriptions during its first five years. (2000-2005)
- Streamlined all recurring events and programs by creating templates for planning, budgeting, evaluation, and reporting. (1999-2002)

EDUCATION / FELLOWSHIPS / TRAINING / CERTIFICATION

CFRE (Certified Fundraising Executive), CFRE International. (2011-present)

MPA (Masters in Public Administration), University of Alaska Southeast

- Recipient of the Gruening Award for Outstanding MPA Student.
- Studies included Organizational Theory & Behavior, Human Resource Management, Leadership Communications, Financial Management, Public Policy Economics, Program Evaluation, Law, Mediation & Negotiation, Managing Change, and Boards & Volunteers.

Selected professional development workshops, seminars, and programs:

- Executive Service Corps / Antioch University *Learn to Serve* Series. (2010-2011)
- Major Gifts Symposium, Association of Fundraising Professionals. (2009, 2010, 2011)
- *Creating Public Value*, a leadership series by the Western States Art Federation. (2005-2006)

Watson Fellowship, Thomas J. Watson Foundation, Providence, Rhode Island

- One of 75 college seniors nationwide to receive a grant for independent study and travel, based on a proposal about ethnocentrism and economic development. For fourteen months, I traveled and studied in Ecuador, Colombia, Japan, Thailand, and India.

BA (Bachelor of Arts), Psychology. Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut

- Faculty Honors List, 3 semesters. Research Assistant: AFSC; Department of Psychology

SELECTED COMMUNITY PROJECTS / AFFILIATIONS

- 501 Commons (formerly Executive Service Corps), pro bono consulting. 2010-present.
- Board of Directors, Arts Corps, 2009-present. Chair, Fund Development Cmte, 2010-present.
- Membership Committee, Association of Fundraising Professionals, WA Chapter, 2009-2011
- Volunteer, Volunteer Chore Services, Catholic Community Services, 2008-present.