

# Valerie F. Leonard

## Qualifications

Valerie F. Leonard is a community development consultant, with a mission to strengthen the capacity of organizations to make a positive impact on the communities they serve through technical assistance, specialized workshops, resource and organizational development and project management. She has also served as a visiting senior associate at the University of Illinois Great Cities Institute, teaching program development for proposal writing and conducting organizational assessments for emerging organizations. Ms. Leonard has considerable experience in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Having held various positions that have allowed her to analyze organizations from the top down, her emphases have been finance, community development, organizational development and project management. Her client list includes After School Matters, the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Chicago Chapter-National Black Nurses' Association, Quad Communities Development Corporation, Habilitative Systems, Inc., Chicago Area Project, Taproots, Greater Chicago Food Depository, the Monroe Foundation and Sankofa Safe Child Initiative.

Ms. Leonard's civic engagement and volunteer activities include philanthropy, advocacy and professional development. Ms. Leonard is the Co-Chairperson of the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago's African American Community Outreach Committee. In this capacity, she provides input into development of the African American Male (Youth) Initiative, offers technical assistance to prospective grantees and serves on Community Impact panels to re-align the grant making process along issue areas across regions of the Chicago Metropolitan Area. Ms. Leonard also serves on Congressman Danny K. Davis' Community Participation Committee, which is charged with aligning the work of 31 advisory committees with the overall legislative agenda of the 7th Congressional District. Ms. Leonard is a member of the Institute of Management Consultants, the National Association of Youth Services Consultants, the Donors Forum of Chicago and the Association of Consultants to Nonprofits.

Ms. Leonard holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and a Master of Management degree with concentrations in finance and marketing from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management in Evanston, Illinois. Ms. Leonard's continuing education includes on-line courses in nonprofit management at the University of Illinois Great Cities Institute, a seminar in strategic management from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management, training in real estate feasibility and analysis from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, training in historic tax credits and New Markets tax credits from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and training in low income housing tax credits from Joe Guggenheim, a national authority in affordable housing issues.

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## Representative Projects

**Client:** Quad Communities Development Corporation/LISC

**Role:** Project Manager, Implementation of Board Plan to Build Organizational Capacity

**Core Competencies:** Project Management, Organizational Planning and Development, Board Development, Financial Management, Resource Development, Quantitative Analysis, Qualitative Analysis

The Quad Communities Development Corporation (QCDC)'s mission is to convene residents, organizations, businesses, and institutions within the Quad Communities to plan, guide, support, and monitor human infrastructure and community development activities that will create a sustainable, healthy, mixed-income neighborhood. Immediate outcomes of their work includes the mitigation of the effects of poverty, improved social and economic conditions in the community and increased capacity of local residents and community based organizations to take control of their economic environment. QCDC's work is mission-centered, and is supported by a comprehensive network of local residents, institutions, the Office of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward, QCDC board, staff and interns, consultants, the University of Chicago, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

Ms. Leonard was engaged by the QCDC to implement intensive organizational capacity building strategies identified by the board of directors during their board planning retreat in August, 2005. Between April and December, 2006, she worked with the board and staff to develop and implement work plans around financial management, board development, staff development and recruitment and fundraising. Project deliverables include monthly status reports to the board of directors; development of a board recruitment and orientation binder; development of a financial policies and procedures manual; conversion of financial system to Quick Books; board and staff training on roles and responsibilities as they relate to financial management and compliance; training on Quick Books and financial management; preparation for a financial audit; development of financial, regulatory and programmatic compliance schedule; a staffing and recruitment plan for an executive director and project manager; development of a fundraising plan; creation of a boiler plate proposal and identification of funding prospects; development of an annual fund campaign; reviewing and enhancing the process for recruiting board members; providing input into the application for directors and officers' insurance; writing relevant board resolutions; facilitating the creation of a fundraising committee; enhancing organizational by laws.

The contract was completed in November, 2006, and culminated in a board retreat. Ms. Leonard provided input into the development of the retreat agenda and supporting documents and provided a written and oral report of the results of capacity building activities with recommendations for future capacity building efforts. A closing presentation to the Board of Directors was provided in January, 2007. As a result of these activities the organization has enhanced its capacity to sustain its growth over the long term.

**Client:** Chicago Area Project (CAP)  
Strengthening Organizations Leading Youth Development Initiative (SOLYD)

**Role:** Organizational Development Consultant

**Core Competencies:** Organizational Assessment, Qualitative Analysis, Consensus Building,  
Capacity Planning

The Chicago Area Project (CAP) is a private, not-for-profit organization with a distinguished history and demonstrable track record of over sixty years of work in delinquency prevention and service in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods. Chicago Area Project's philosophy is to improve the quality of neighborhood life with a special focus on solving problems faced by young people and their families. The agency believes that residents must be empowered through the development of community organizations so that they can act together to improve neighborhood conditions, hold institutions serving the community accountable, reduce anti-social behavior by young people, protect them from inappropriate institutionalization, and provide them with positive models for personal development. Projects and affiliates are mandated to positively impact areas in the Chicago vicinity with high rates of juvenile delinquency or other symptoms of social disorganization. CAP has recently developed a new initiative—Strengthening Organizations Leading Youth Development (SOLYD), which is designed to increase the capacity of CAP affiliates to deliver youth delinquency prevention services in a manner that maximizes impact to their respective communities over the long term.

Ms. Leonard was engaged to assess the organizational capacity of CAP affiliates, including Saint Agatha Family Empowerment (SAFE), Sembrando El Futuro (SELF), Ford Heights Youth Committee, and Mid Austin Steering Committee. Ms. Leonard assessed each organization with respect to its financial management practices (including fundraising), accounting and bookkeeping practices, board governance, human resources management, program management, and technology. Ms. Leonard administered and scored an organizational self-assessment tool, conducted informal telephone interviews, analyzed assessment results and developed comprehensive 3-year capacity building plans for each organization. While these plans were tailored to the specific needs of each organization, they were structured within the parameters set by the overall goals and objectives of the CAP organization, its SOLYD program, and individual community assessments. The project is now in its implementation stages.

**Client:** Habilitative Systems, Inc.

**Role:** Grant Writer-Needs Assessment Narrative and Community Involvement Narrative HUD Section 202 Application for Elderly Housing-Proposed Enola Dew Apartments

**Core Competencies:** Proposal Writing, Quantitative Analysis, Qualitative Analysis, Spatial Analysis, Research Methods, Collaboration, Community Engagement

Habilitative Systems, Inc. (H.S.I.) exists to alleviate human suffering by developing and providing resources to promote maximum independence, personal responsibility and dignity for mentally, physically, socially and emotionally disabled persons. HSI began in 1978 as a dream of a small group of church folk. The agency has grown from four (4) programs to fifty (50) programs which serve over 7,000 persons annually in 14 sites on Chicago's West and South sides. "Freeing the Human Spirit" is the all pervasive concept of the agency's dedication to develop disadvantaged persons into capable, competent, contributing citizens.

Ms. Leonard was recently engaged by H.S.I. to develop a needs assessment and write the community involvement section of a comprehensive proposal to finance the proposed Enola A. Dew Apartments with proceeds from a HUD Section 202 grant.

The needs assessment was used to establish the level of market demand for supportive housing for independent living senior citizens in the Austin community on Chicago's west side. Ms. Leonard presented evidence demonstrating sustained effective demand for supportive housing for that population in the market area to be served; evaluated state and local data on the limitations in activities of daily living among the elderly in the area; assessed patterns for aging in place in existing assisted rentals; researched trends in demographic changes in elderly population and households; estimated the numbers of income eligible elderly households by size, tenure and housing condition; assessed the types of supportive services arrangements currently available in the area; and the use of such services as evidenced by data from local social service agencies or agencies on aging.

The Enola A. Dew Apartments are being developed with significant community involvement. Ms. Leonard conducted a focus group discussion with tenants and members of the resident council; interviewed the president of a neighboring block club; administered a survey; and interviewed the local property manager and service coordinator. She convened community meeting, inviting local residents, tenants, members of the Chicago Police Department (community policing division), and representatives from community-based organizations. More than 40 people—most of whom were senior citizens--were in attendance. Data gleaned from these sources will be used to capitalize on opportunities to inform the design process and to be responsive to end-user needs to the fullest extent possible. Copies of the needs assessment, community involvement sections, photographs, assessment tools and results have been incorporated as attachments. Ms. Leonard created all the assessment tools and designed the questions for the focus groups and interview, and analyzed the data.

It should be noted that this engagement was completed within an extremely tight time frame-- less than 20 days. The client has recently received notification of a \$10,000,000 award.

**Client:** University of Illinois Great Cities Institute

**Role:** Project Manager/ Visiting Senior Associate  
North Lawndale Capacity Co-Op Pilot

**Core Competencies:** Project Management, Qualitative Analysis, Quantitative Analysis;  
Organizational Assessment; Proposal Writing; Program Development,  
Marketing, Community Outreach

Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago (“Great Cities”) partnered with the Steans Family Foundation (“Steans”) to better understand and support the needs of non-profit organizations in the North Lawndale community, located on the West Side of Chicago. Central to this effort was the recognition by Steans and Great Cities that the effectiveness of community-based organizations in North Lawndale is not only determined by their individual capacities, but also their broader collective capacity to connect with the resources required to effectively address the challenges faced by the North Lawndale community. Ms. Leonard served as the project manager, with responsibility for day-to-day coordination of all aspects for the engagement.

The Steans/Great Cities partnership engaged North Lawndale non-profits in a survey and assessment of their organizational and collective capacities in an effort to identify resource gaps, the potential for individual organizational growth, and ways that groups in North Lawndale can enhance communication and work together more effectively. The tools were used to inform the Steans Family Foundation’s grant making and capacity building efforts, and enabled them to be more responsive to the community’s needs.

The engagement also included the development of the North Lawndale Knowledge Base Website, courses in program development and proposal writing and technology planning, follow up assessments for course participants and convening a community-based advisory group to provide input into the program design for the Capacity Co-Op.

The North Lawndale Nonprofit Knowledge Base website, still in its development stages, will enhance communication among non-profit groups in North Lawndale, and will eventually serve as a central location for community and organizational data; on-line resources to improve organizational effectiveness; an electronic directory of North Lawndale organizations and a map of community assets. Organizations in North Lawndale will have the opportunity to link to the site, as well as have access to modify the content that they provide.

Ms. Leonard taught a course in program development for proposal writing for emerging groups and provided follow up assessments for course participants. She also ensured the delivery of a second course in utilizing technology to enhance operations. Results from student pre-and post-course assessments indicate a 35% increase in program design and proposal writing knowledge, and a 27% increase in technology planning knowledge over 8 weeks.

To ensure that the capacity-building efforts were informed by the community, Ms. Leonard convened an advisory group consisting of 23 community-based organizational leaders, including block clubs, church ministries, community-based organizations and a local hospital.