

ALISON ZEHR

PROFILE

Executive Manager with strong background in nonprofit administration, programming and development, with special talents and resources for strategic planning, organizational development and capacity-building, creating community and government coalitions, developing policy, programs and materials to meet community needs, and building constituency support. Skilled in professional representation, public speaking, meeting facilitation and team building. Twenty-five years work experience with responsibilities for creative program development, effective administration, program evaluation and personnel and project management. Graduate studies in Architectural and Art History, Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History and History.

EXPERIENCE

2001-present Independent Consultant

Chicago, IL

- Project Director, City of Chicago, “Advancing Chicago’s Civic Agenda Through the Arts” integrating the arts into community development.
- Strategic Facilitation and Program Evaluation
- Comprehensive Organizational Assessments
- Board Training and Fund-Raising Consultant
- Conference Planning
- Community Art/Public Art consultant
- Research and writing: Cultural Assets Indicator Project; Survey of Chicago’s Cultural Landscape; Issues in Public Collections: Chicago and Charleston; Arts Scan of Charleston, South Carolina
- Philanthropy

Current Clients: Arts Work Fund, City of Chicago (Departments of Planning and Development and Cultural Affairs), Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Community Trust, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago Film Archives, Chicago Photography Center, Chicago Poetry Center, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Illinois Arts Alliance, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Lincoln Park Zoo, Museum of Contemporary Art, National Assembly of States Humanities Councils, National Vietnam Veterans Museum, Pros Arts Studios, University of Chicago, Victory Gardens Theater, Woman Made Gallery

1999–2001 Cultural Facilities Fund

Chicago, IL

Director of Chicago office of program dedicated to securing the financial health of the arts community through technical assistance and access to low-interest loans. Provided consulting services, workshops, loan processing; responsible for fund-raising, marketing and public relations.

- Provided technical assistance and advice on organizational development and facility planning to over 300 arts and culture organizations; was ranked top service provider in the state by the Illinois Arts Council.

1997-1999 Chicago Botanic Garden Glencoe, IL

Director of Community Programs for the Chicago Botanic Garden's targeted audience programs. Five program areas (urban, school services, children, family and youth, and horticultural therapy), a professional staff of 21 and a \$1.2 million budget. Focused on education programs, research, intellectual properties and garden creation.

- Led strategic planning process to restructure department. Refocused programs and redirected efforts of staff.
- Developed partnership with public and private agencies to create teaching gardens in city schools (School Garden Initiative).
- Increased earned income by 40% in one year

1996-1997 Independent Consultant Chicago, IL

- Author, "How to Research Your House," Commission on Chicago Landmarks.
- Managed pilot program for a community and youth--designed park for the Chicago Park District.
- Coordinated business and the arts collaborative project in Rockford and Galena, Illinois for the Illinois Arts Alliance.
- Led strategic planning for Illinois Humanities Council.

1992-1996 Quad City Arts Rock Island, IL

Executive Director of a bi-state arts agency serving a population of 300,000 in 32 communities. Responsible for the development and management of a \$1 million budget and a 13 member professional staff; an exhibition gallery, publication of a monthly arts magazine (10,000 circulation), an artist-in-residence series (360 performances annually), residencies in drama and literature, a bi-state public art program, a three county grants program and two fund-raising festivals. QCA was a recipient of the Governor's Award for the Arts in 1995.

- Built coalition of 7 school districts for teacher-training program; created a larger coalition of schools and the arts for the creation of a strategic plan for arts-in-education. Developed and implemented results: the creation of two model schools with an arts integrated curriculum and an arts resource guide.
- Partnered with local civic organization, natural history museum, environmental group and regional planning authority to produce design principles for the Mississippi River edge. Developed a bi-state project to create a way-finding and interpretive system that included a community-built public art program.
- Led staff and board through community-driven strategic planning process resulting in re-organization, new committee structure and staff teams, new direction, and identification of clear program outcomes. Changed financial reporting method to more accurately reflect program costs; formalized budgeting process, cut costs and increased revenue to reverse \$26,000 loss to a profit of \$75,000 in 3 years.

1988-1992 Friends of the Chicago River Chicago, IL

Director of Education and Development

- To increase awareness of and education about watershed-related issues, developed broadly-based successful community meetings of experts and the public.

- Developed unique, inclusive planning process that elicited the needs of the public, professionals and politicians; created solutions and implemented strategies based on those needs (adopted as a pilot program by the National Park Service and supported by Federal funds).
- Developed and produced all educational programs, events and materials
- Responsible for grant-writing, fund-raising events and member services; increased individual membership six-fold in less than four years.

1981-1988 P.M. Haeger and Associates Chicago, IL
Convention Services Manager (1985-88)
Account Coordinator (1983-85)
Administrative Assistant (1981-83)

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

- Graduate program in architectural history

Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

- Graduated Summa Cum Laude; BA in Art History and History
- Member, Tulane Scholars Program; Junior year at University of Glasgow, Scotland.

ACTIVITIES

- Member, Board of Directors, Three Arts Foundation
- Founder, Rogers Park Garden Group
- Former President of the Board, Chicago Public Art Group
- Member, Center for Arts Policy, Columbia College, Advisory Board
- Member, Woman Made Gallery Advisory Board
- Panelist, Partners in Excellence, Illinois Arts Council
- Former executive committee member, Illinois Alliance for Arts Education; Chair, ArtSmart Committee
- Former member Rock Island Historic Preservation Commission
- Former Executive Board member, Iowa Assembly of Local Arts Agencies