

Valerie F. Leonard

Expert, Community and Organizational Development



Valerie F. Leonard is an expert in community and organizational development with a mission to strengthen the capacity of organizations to make a positive impact on the communities they serve through technical assistance, specialized workshops and organizational development. Her clientele is diverse, and includes institutions, emerging organizations, small businesses and churches.

Valerie is a member of the adjunct faculty of the University of Illinois' Certificate in Nonprofit Management Program, where she has taught courses in operations management, strategic management, finance, program design and evaluation and proposal writing for government grants.

Valerie is the host of Nonprofit "U" blog radio talk show, an online forum where nonprofit stakeholders can discuss the latest developments in the sector and increase their capacity to serve their clients and build sustainable communities. Topics include nonprofit management, community development, capacity building and organizational development. Nonprofit "U" is downloaded in 64 countries around the world and is top ranked in BlogTalkRadio's non-profit category. The show is also among Player FM's Top 36 Nonprofit Podcasts for 2018.

Valerie expects to launch the Nonprofit Utopia online community in spring, 2018. Nonprofit Utopia is a community of emerging nonprofit leaders that provides a safe environment in which members can innovate, speak candidly about the issues and concerns they face on a daily basis, and share ideas and resources.

Valerie has considerable experience in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. Prior to starting her consulting practice, she spearheaded the spin-off of a community-based grant making organization from a family foundation and became its founding executive director; managed site planning and development activities for Jewel- Osco stores in Chicago and the six collar counties; coordinated financing in excess of \$100 million for construction, renovation and major capital equipment purchases for the Mount Sinai Health System; and developed marketing strategies for New York City's \$6 billion general obligation bond program.

Valerie is actively engaged in the community, and has played an instrumental role in developing the infrastructure for North Lawndale's first comprehensive planning process since 1958. She spearheaded the Loving Lawndale to Life campaign, sponsored by Carey Tercentenary AME Church and the Chicago Westside Branch NAACP. The campaign focused on improving community pride through self-respect and civic engagement. She has also been involved in efforts to improve education, voter registration and education and economic development.

Valerie holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Spelman College and a Master of Management with concentrations in finance and marketing from the Northwestern University Kellogg Graduate School of Management. She is also the Vice Chair of the Cook County Commission on Social Innovation's Social Capital Committee.