

**Vanessa Fernandes, SHRM-CP**  
**Nominated by NAMI North Texas**

**CANDIDATE NARRATIVE**

**Strengths and attributes the NAMI Board has identified as high-priority needs for the 2021-2022 board; any strengths/attributes identified by the candidate are starred and in bold:**

- **Diversity of age, race, ethnicity, language, experience and national geography\*\***
- **Knowledge of the philanthropic community and track record with donor cultivation\*\***
- **Experience with a variety of revenue models and financial oversight and management\*\***
- **Human capital management including professional experience in human resources and personnel development & management\*\***
- **Legal and risk management\*\***
- **Criminal Justice experience, professional and/or lived\*\***

**In 250 words or less, please explain how you will use your skills in the above areas to move the mission of the NAMI Board forward. If you do not have any experience in these areas, please explain what qualities you possess that the NAMI Board of Directors should consider when making their recommendations to the membership.**

NAMI's core purpose is to create and manage a broad coalition of diverse individuals representing the lived experience of mental illness in order to drive changes in attitudes, policy, services and support for those impacted.

My experience in the for-profit space where I lead and support change, attitudes towards business, service, employee needs and company needs translates to what NAMI affiliates, state organizations and national teams need. I have experience working with a diverse employee base across multiple states and with various sizes of teams.

Those skill sets translate well to work being done by NAMI to ensure People Get Help early. Example - I have supported teenagers, LGBTQ+ and minority communities, individuals entering the workplace via social channels and channels and technology relevant to them.

My sales development experience translates to fund raising, donor and philanthropic grants cultivation which helps support and fund efforts that ensure People Get the Best Possible Care.

My community and employee engagement skills (Chamber of Commerce, engagement of local officials) along with PR training transfers to identifying and building partnerships like the AT&T partnership that can help finance and influence conversations that support our goal to get People Diverted from Justice System Involvement.

My retail experience in pivoting to growth, leading with a growth mindset to gain market share helps me identify opportunities for NAMI to Lead the Conversation on Mental Health and Illness in physical and digital spaces.

**I have personally helped advance the NAMI mission in my community by...**

Leading the conversation with top employers, universities and leaders to support a diverse community. I have also worked to help the field with resources through fund raising, development and capacity building & leadership development efforts.

**I work well in coordination with other leaders to accomplish goals as evidenced by...**

Partnerships with National Team to support ERG and donor events that benefit all three levels of our organization - not just National. Because, we do not exist without our affiliates, staff - state and local.

## **NOMINATOR NARRATIVE**

**Athena Trentin**  
**Executive Director, NAMI North Texas**

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- **Knowledge of the philanthropic community and track record with donor cultivation\*\***
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- **Human capital management including professional experience in human resources and personnel development & management\*\***
- **Legal and risk management\*\***
- Criminal Justice experience, professional and/or lived

**In 250 words or less, please explain how the candidate will use their skills in these areas to move the mission of the NAMI Board forward. If the candidate does not have any experience in these areas, please explain what qualities you feel the candidate possesses that the NAMI Board of Directors should consider when making their recommendations to the membership.**

Vanessa Fernandes is a champion advocate, connector and cultivator of relationships in North Texas. In addition to her achievements these past three years on the NAMI National Board of Directors, Ms. Fernandes has been a vital partner to NAMI North Texas. She has helped us develop critical relationships with corporations in the DFW area who now partner with us to raise awareness for mental wellness, provide financial support and expand our networks among the North Texas business and philanthropic communities.

Ms. Fernandes is also a powerful advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in both her professional and philanthropic lives. She contributes to the mental health community in North Texas by using her high profile platform to spread the word about the NAMI mission as well as the importance of recognizing that mental illness does not discriminate. Her professional experience with DEI also plays a strong role in helping NAMI North Texas ensure we optimize our impact throughout our service area. She not only connects us to underrepresented groups from the South Asian and other ethnic communities, she also helps us strengthen our own DEI policies and practices.

Her experience building sound financial foundations and cultivating critical partnerships among diverse professional and cultural communities will help take NAMI National to new levels. Ms. Fernandes' passion for mental health awareness and her influence in the business world will also continue to amplify advocacy efforts and raise public awareness in support of NAMI's mission and vision.

**This individual has helped advance the NAMI mission in my community by...**

being a true partner in developing mutually beneficial relationships that will increase our community impact and strengthen our fundraising efforts. The relationships Ms. Fernandes helps us build continue to give us a stronger voice in North Texas, inserting us into conversations where we can increase awareness and help make mental wellness a priority. The more we normalize the conversation, the more corporate and community support we receive, thus strengthening the organization and our impact on a state that ranks 50 out of 51 for access to mental health resources.

**This individual works well in coordination with other leaders to accomplish goals as evidenced by...**

the way she prioritizes her responsibilities and relationships. Ms. Fernandes knows how to utilize her resources for maximum impact and is not hesitant to pass along tasks or responsibilities to someone who may have more experience or resources in an area than she. She has very high emotional intelligence, recognizes her own strengths and areas for improvement while honoring others' areas of expertise. She values strengthening

alliances, financially, organizationally and among diverse communities to ensure everyone has a voice at the table.