

## **Lauren B. Simonds, M.S.W.**

### **NAMI Washington Executive Director**

**Nominated by Sue Abderholden, Executive Director of NAMI Minnesota, seconded by Kate Farinholt, Executive Director of NAMI Maryland**

#### **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 EDC membership should consider when casting their vote.**

As a representative to the NAMI Board, and as a representative from the ED Council, I will use my experience to advance the NAMI mission by bringing more cohesion in communication between these two leadership groups; highlighting non-profit best practices; potential organizational development models; issues related to NSO and NA relationships and communications, while holding the NAMI mission front and center – always through a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion lens. As the Executive Director of a NAMI State Organization, with the Standards of Excellence as a guide, I improved relationships and trust both with – and amongst – the NAMI Washington Alliance Affiliates. We live the “Better Together” motto in WA, where NAMIWA provides additional revenue sharing beyond the NAMIWALK, collaborative funding opportunities, and provides Zoom for all NAMIWA Affiliate programming. These successes were recognized In 2019, just 5 years after professionalizing, when we received the NAMI State Organization of the Year Award.

As a candidate from the Executive Directors Council, I would bring unique focus and experience as a master’s level, nonprofit professional with over 35 years of experience working in nonprofits, 18 years as an Executive Director, and 6.5 years as the Executive Director of the NAMI Washington Alliance. Spending my entire career working with nonprofits has allowed me to gain and utilize valuable knowledge related to our ever-changing “Third Sector,” the Nonprofit Sector. Being from the Pacific NW (PNW) will allow me to highlight regional differences in service needs – as well as cultural differences particular to the PNW.

#### **I have personally helped advance the NAMI mission on the council by...**

Participating in the ED council meetings, being a presenter for EDLE 2019, and a planner and presenter for Virtual EDLE 2020, working in partnership with NAMI staff. I created Zoom NAMI ED Happy Hour, which started in April 2020 during the pandemic. While this is optional, and not an official ED council activity – it has helped NSO and NA EDs create stronger connections with each other and provided a more personal 1-on-1 problem solving and discussion forum. Ensuring that our NSO and NA leaders are supported and able to take care of their health, promotes a stronger NAMI Alliance overall.

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

Recruitment and coordination of volunteers for NAMIcon 2019, NAMIWA growing our budget by 807% from 2014 to the present, and increasing NAMI Signature Program trainings from 6 in 2014 to over 20 in 2021. We revenue share with Affiliates beyond NAMIWALKs, including percentage of individual donations and conference sponsorships, and ensured continued provision of Signature Programs by hosting 11 Zoom licenses for use by

the NAMIWA Alliance. NAMIWA has participated with NAMI in collaborative grant opportunities – also shared with our NAs - for the Alignment Project, NAMI In Our Own Voice Study, the PSJ Project, the BMS relaunch of NAMI Sharing Hope/NAMI Compartiendo Esperanza.

## **NOMINATOR NARRATIVE**

**Sue Abderholden**  
**Executive Director, NAMI Minnesota**

**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 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 or you do not specifically know, please explain what qualities you feel the candidate possesses that will apply to service on the NAMI Board of Directors.**

Lauren understands the challenges faced by state organizations. We need the state organizations to be strong in order to change public policies and to grow our movement. She has raised funds from a variety of sources, including \$500,000 from donors and organizations that she did not solicit or apply for. Lauren is vocal and I think that is a good thing. We need to have robust discussions on the board and we need to make sure the board is not inserting themselves into areas that really should be staff directed. As an ED she understands these issues. Having grown her own organization, she can be helpful in supporting growth for our movement across the country.

**This individual has helped advance the NAMI mission on the Executive Director Council by...**

By attending nearly all the meetings, by being willing to speak up, by promoting camaraderie at the EDLE and by being willing to share information. She also attends the state ED meetings which are more informal and discussion oriented so she hears the issues in the field.

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

Growing her own organization, being considered a leader among EDs, her NSO being recognized by an award.