

Bio: Tara Smith



Tara is all about partnership, persistence and grace. Whether it's encouragement to take on a new challenge, a connection to a new resource, a sympathetic ear, or a needed reality check – Tara thrives on helping clients learn and grow.

Having spent nearly 20 years working in nonprofits as an Executive Director, Development Director and Board Member, Tara not only has a comprehensive view of the sector, all those years of fundraising have made her relatively dogged and fearless.

Tara loves to help people learn. Whether serving as a guest instructor for UW Professional & Continuing education, chairing conferences and workshop series for NDOA (now AFP Advancement Northwest), serving as Pride Foundation's Board Development Chair, mentoring

employees or coaching clients, Tara thrives when the people around her are seeking to grow.

Tara earned her B.A. in Economics and English at the University of Washington. She is also a graduate of the UW Nancy Bell Evans Center's Nonprofit Executive Leadership Institute (NELI). Following college, Tara began her career at United Way of King County, moving from Loaned Executive to Campaign Manager to Assistant Director within the workplace giving team. This provided connection with and exposure to corporate settings ranging from accounting firms, banks and insurance providers to hotels, manufacturers and media companies. After six campaign seasons, Tara was ready for a new adventure and moved on to become Development Director at Seattle Works. There too, she was recognized and promoted, serving as Associated Director, Interim Executive Director and ultimately, Executive Director.

Given Seattle Works' mission to connect volunteers and develop emerging leaders, Tara's programmatic expertise is in volunteer engagement, most notably board development. As an executive director, she bolstered her organization's financial health, navigated a challenging staffing plan to reduce dependence on the AmeriCorps program and garnered national recognition as an innovator in the volunteer movement. During this time she served on the executive committee of the Volunteer Centers of Washington and was one of ten national leaders elected to the inaugural HandsOn Network Affiliate Assembly.

People enjoy working with Tara thanks to her high energy, humor, creativity and work ethic. She approaches problems with curiosity and goodwill and seeks practical, actionable solutions. Among all missions, her favorite is building strong leaders and strong communities, and she feels truly lucky that Crux enables her to do that every day.