

Professional Profile

I bring to my consulting work 25+ years of experience and history as an executive and senior leader working at the local, state, and national levels in the public, non-profit and philanthropic sectors. I am a visionary leader with demonstrated ability to define, articulate and guide a group, team or organization toward a common vision that results in achieving desired results and outcomes. One of my strongest assets is my extensive professional and personal knowledge, experience and leadership working on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, belonging and liberation. I am a well-nuanced listener with a keen ability to assimilate information quickly, identify connections, think clearly in the moment, and ascertain paths for moving forward using sound judgment and initiative to resolve challenges and navigate complex situations. My career has been focused on advancing racial justice, social equity and changing systems for children, families and communities that have been most impacted and marginalized by systemic inequities and injustices.

Career Summary

Co-Founder | Interconnected Alchemy *June 2023 – Present*

Interconnected Alchemy (IA), a fiscally sponsored project of the Praxis Project, was created as a culturally responsive strategic hub to co-design solutions with BIPOC nonprofit organizations and coalitions to assist them in successfully building strong and durable infrastructures to advocate for the systemic change needed to promote thriving BIPOC communities for children and families who are most marginalized.

- C-suite level work and leadership for this emerging national start-up non-profit with a vision of a future where children, families, and communities of the Global Majority are thriving and flourishing unapologetically with their own self determination to drive the transformation they seek

Principal | vav amani *October 2010 - Present*

Designed and delivered consultation services as a strategic thought partner, facilitator and experience designer who applies a lens of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion to concept development, strategy/initiative/program development and the development and implementation of structured learning experiences and convenings.

- Consultant partner in philanthropic project focused on power building in communities of color (2022-23)
- Advisor and facilitator for development of BIPOC Coalitions in eight states for the Pritzker Children's Initiative. (2022-present)
- Facilitator Early Relational Health Funders Community 2022 Summit. (2022 and 2023)
- Lead process for Junior Achievement Washington to identify how agency programs could emerge from the pandemic with strong programming that continues to reflect innovation, continuous program improvement and grow JAWA programmatic capacity to reach more children and youth. (2022)
- Conducted board structure and governance assessment for Junior Achievement of Washington. (2018)
- Provided technical advising for King County Best Starts for Kids supported RFP processes, community engagement strategic planning process. (2017)
- Designed, developed, and implemented the inaugural community engagement process for Best Starts for Kids a King County voter-approved initiative to support every baby born or child raised in King County to reach adulthood happy, healthy, safe, and thriving. (2015)
- Successfully developed and facilitated four national learning gatherings and two annual conferences for W.K. Kellogg Learning Labs Network. (2010-2011)
- Developed professional development recommendations for the Committee for Children Second Step Program for Early Learning and the Field of Early Learning and Implications for Second Step Program for Early Learning concept paper on program design and development. (2010)

Program Officer | MK and JB Pritzker Family Foundation, Pritzker

Children's Initiative *March 2020 – April 2022*

National effort focused exclusively on expanding high quality supports and services to children and families during the prenatal to three-year old stage, the foundational period of the first 1000 days of life. Responsible for strategy development, relationship building, on-going support and thought partnering with diverse community, state, and national partners.

- Developed and executed a prenatal to three child well-being/child welfare prevention strategy involving five states.
- Forged a new relationship between two national Latinx organizations supporting the development of a new partnership for working on prenatal to three issues in Latinx communities.
- Developed an approach for inclusion of lived experience through parent/family leadership.
- Instrumental leadership of key elements of the foundation's justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion strategy.

Executive Director | HealthConnect One *July 2018 – March 2020*

Responsible for overall leadership of the leading national organization for peer-to-peer support during the first 1000 days encompassing pregnancy, birth, and early parenting with a focus on equity, community level systems change and advocacy for maternal, infant, and early childhood health and wellness in communities that are marginalized because of systemic oppression.

- Identified organizational financial weaknesses and initiated an organizational turnaround strategy.
- Established a for profit/nonprofit cross sector partnership focused on national systems change through the development of a sustainable reimbursement pathway for doula services.
- Began the process of re-establishing the organization as a national thought leader through written articles and public speaking.
- Initiated and developed new program and funding partnerships.

Senior Director Programs and Partnerships, U.S. Programs | Save the Children Federation, Inc. *March 2012 – October 2017*

Promoted from Senior Early Childhood Development Specialist (March 2012 – June 2013) to National Director Programs and Partnerships (June 2013 – May 2016); to Senior Director of Programs and Partnerships (May 2016 – October 2017).

Responsibilities included providing leadership, oversight, and expertise for the US portfolio of programs, advancing the agency education and protection agenda, oversight of the national program team, cultivating and managing external relationships, assisting in fund development with public agencies/foundations/corporations, acting as an agency spokesperson, ensuring effective knowledge management and evaluation processes are in place for the execution, learning and advancement of US programs.

- Managed (remotely) three direct reports and responsible for 40 indirect reports: 120 program sites in 16 states with a budget of approximately \$11M.
- Responsible for the design/updating of the US Programs strategy focused on education, psychosocial development and resilience resulting in a new community continuum, prenatal to 3rd grade, place-based strategy.
- US Programs representative for international Innovation Champions program.

National Director Programs and Partnerships (2013 - 2016)

Responsible for the execution and management of U.S. state-based model, oversight of education program development and growth, ensuring full integration of U.S. program capabilities at the state level and translating program design into high quality implementation and assisting in fund development with public agencies/foundations/corporations. Managed (remotely) four Deputy State Directors with a total budget of approximately \$5M.

- Led the successful launch of the largest school age program start up for Save the Children US Programs as part of the Kansas Reading Roadmap initiative.
- Led the successful development and launch of US Programs cross sector community engagement strategy that resulted in the successful implementation of a two-year federal grant from the Department of Education.

Senior Early Childhood Development Specialist - Western Region (2012 - 2013)

Responsible for national level support in the implementation of the Early Steps to School Success program (ESSS). Lead implementation in the Western Region including support/supervision (remotely) of seven (7) Program Specialists in four (4) states, development of training and support for all program staff, development of new sites, continuous quality improvement and quality program implementation.

- Led the successful establishment of the largest early childhood program start up in Colorado for Save the Children US Programs.
- Successfully worked with national state leadership team to develop stronger integration of roles and responsibilities for local program implementation.

Director of Programs | Thrive Washington *February 2007 - October 2010*

Founding staff member responsible for leading the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of program initiatives for children birth to five years of age and their families in the state of Washington. Represented the agency at various events around the country.

- Facilitated and guided the successful implementation of an \$8M co-funded (with the Gates Foundation) annual investment in two early learning demonstration communities in the State of Washington focused on serving children, families and communities that are marginalized, underserved and vulnerable.
- Cultivated strong working relationships with national partners such as the Kellogg Foundation and the Ounce of Prevention Fund resulting in key initiatives being implemented.
- Built a successful foundation for Thrive as a leader of home visiting programs.
- Successfully assisted in the development of numerous fund development activities with foundations and donors.

Founding Executive Director | Contra Costa County Children and Families

Commission *January 2000 - October 2005*

Founding executive director responsible for overall leadership of a \$13M public agency funding programs, services, and activities for children 5 years of age and younger, their families and communities.

- Successfully founded First 5 Contra Costa, a public agency, funding a \$10M annual investment in comprehensive early childhood development with a focus on school readiness for marginalized children birth to age five and their families.
- Founding member of the First 5 California Association, which represents all California counties. Actively participated in the Executive Committee leadership in various elected positions.
- Co-founded the Family Economic Security Partnership a public, private, and nonprofit collaboration dedicated to increasing the income and building the assets of low-income families and individuals living in Contra Costa County.
- Initiated and mobilized successful public-private collaborations focused on children and families such as Safe and Bright Futures for Children Exposed to Domestic Violence.

Additional Work Experience

Director of Programs | Talaris Research Institute

November 2005 – December 2006

Director Homeless Programs | Contra Costa County

March 1995 - December 1999

Education

Master of Arts | John F. Kennedy University

◇ Organizational Psychology

Bachelor of Arts | Rollins College

◇ Developmental Psychology

Awards

- ◇ EverThrive Illinois 2022 Change Agent of the Year
- ◇ President's Award Save the Children US Programs 2014 and 2017
- ◇ Resolution Declaring "Brenda Blasingame Day", Contra Costa Board of Supervisors November 8, 2005
- ◇ Proclamations for Service Assemblyman Canciamilla and Senator Torlakson State of California, 2005
- ◇ Contra Costa County People Who Make A Difference Award, 1995

Select Affiliations Presentations and Facilitations

- ◇ Member NASEM Forum for Children's Well-being, 2022 to Present
- ◇ Member Nurture Connection Collective Impact Steering Committee, 2022 to Present
- ◇ Guest Lecturer Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health MPH Program, 2020-2022
- ◇ Maternal Mental Health Equity Fund Advisory Group 2024
- ◇ Trust Based Philanthropy 2021 Cohort
- ◇ Rocky Mountain Children's Health Foundation, Keynote 2020
- ◇ Columbia University Center for Science and Society Featured Speaker December 2020
- ◇ March of Dimes Prematurity Collaborative, 2019 to 2020
- ◇ Birth Summit IV Delegate, 2019
- ◇ Coordinated Perinatal Referral Task Force, Early Learning Executive Council Chicago, 2018
- ◇ Human Milk Banking Association of North America Symposium, Opening Keynote, 2019
- ◇ Eight Annual Home Visiting Summit Plenary, 2019
- ◇ Equity from Birth Article, Giving Compass 2018
- ◇ Equity From the Start, Forward for King County Social Justice Annual Report, December 2015
- ◇ Adjunct Professor, University of Washington School of Social Work, 2015
- ◇ Open Arms Board of Directors (2012 - 2015) President (2013 - 2015)
- ◇ Adjunct Professor, J.F. Kennedy University, Graduate School of Psychology, 2005