

# GRETCHEN VILLEGAS

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## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Twenty-five+ years of professional experience in managing international country programs to ensure program impact and effectiveness with a portfolio total of over \$230M+ funded by both public and private donors including the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Norwegian Government, Gates Foundation, MasterCard Foundation as well as multi-billion-dollar partners including private sector donors Cargill Animal Nutrition and General Mills. Extensive experience in managing program effectiveness in both domestic and global development settings in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, including all operations functions within compliance in contracts and grants, sub award management, human resources, finances, monitoring and evaluation, partnership development as well as providing technical direction to teams in leveraging public private partnerships, and agricultural value chain development with clearly defined returns on investments for market system actors. Extensive experience living and working in the Americas and East and Southern Africa regions. Awarded over \$75M+ in proposal funding from designing and writing winning market system proposals. Proven experience in donor and stakeholder relations including direct CEO to Board of Directors relationship management. Launched strategy management consulting company targeting domestic and global non-profits, social enterprises, and corporations.

## EDUCATION

### **Master of International and Intercultural Management**

School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont

### **Bachelor of Arts in International Relations**

Central College, Pella, Iowa

## PREVIOUS WORK/CONSULTANCY EXPERIENCE

### **June 2024 – Present**

#### **Chief Executive Officer and Founder, NEXUS Strategy and Growth Partners LLC**

Visionary leadership for a strategy management consulting company. I am passionate about revenue growth for global and domestic non-profits, social enterprises, and corporations. My proven **WIN Revenue Methodology** with three pillars 1) **Winning Strategy Foundation**, 2) **Increasing New Business and Impact**, and 3) **New Areas and Expansion**, along with a customized approach for each client, meets or exceeds revenue expectations. I apply 25+ years of experience working in executive level management in strategy, impact and revenue for optimum return on investments for my clients.

### **January 2024 – Present**

#### **Founding Member, The Impact Table**

Founding member of a community dedicated to connecting and supporting women mission-driven leaders in social impact for both for-profit and non-profit entities. Participate in leaders' circles, visionary speaker sessions, ally meetings and live events. Support mission-driven women achieve excellence through mentorship.

### **May 2022- Present**

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## **Member, CHIEF**

Attend sessions in optimizing leadership potential. Participate in problem-solving for women executive leaders. Support peers across industries, roles, and functions while at the same time honing my own technical and EQI skill sets for future roles with diverse responsibilities.

## **February 2022 – September 2023**

### **President and CEO Horizon Empowers, Lancaster, PA**

Led development of 2022-2030 Organizational Strategic Plan in partnership with staff and Board with goals to empower 20,000 children and youth and reach 85,000 families to prevent separation between children and families due to cyclical poverty in Latin America and East Africa. Developed and executed a change management process for evolving a 5M/annual charity into a thriving development organization by 2030. Expanded and refined empowerment model and program effectiveness to reach replicable scale, with 50% increase in children and youth support in the first year alone. Developed proprietary Child and Youth Empowerment Index as the north star impact goals with seven domain areas including Housing, Safety, Nutrition, Health, Education, Economic, and Social Well-being referencing documentation from global institutions such as World Bank, USAID, UNICEF. Created marketing material to clearly and concisely explain the model, approach and forecasted impacts with milestones. Created and executed a marketing plan to enhance e-mail, direct mail, social media, and partnership outreach to raise organizational profile. Established platinum transparency 2023 for Candid, four-star on Charity Navigator, and top-ranked non-profit on Global Giving fundraising platform. Led strategic fundraising and donor relations restructure plan including corporate, foundation, major gifts and social media outreach. Partnered with a social media marketing company to raise organizational profile with projected base revenue increase by 2M USD per month. Engaged influencer and negotiated 1M USD revenue raise through celebrity contacts over a 12-month period. Developed for-profit integration model to create long-term financial sustainability. Developed and closed partnership agreement to work with Habitat for Humanity International for all housing needs for children and families. Planned, executed, and participated in newscasts and interviews in Guatemala detailing the work between Habitat for Humanity and Horizon Empowers. Developed and executed partnerships in medical brigades, solar energy, water purification, livelihoods for families, and food needs for micro community schools and housing. Prepared and managed quarterly board meetings including programmatic updates, financial status, and risk assessments. Managed audit process with third party financial support. Provided CEO reports on a monthly basis via e-mail to keep the board informed in regard to accomplishments and challenges. Traveled to the field with board members for exchange visits. Met with board members one-on-one to understand and manage priorities and concerns. Managed 180 staff across 4 countries with 861 children and youth in my direct care. Developed an excellent Executive Team to deliver across departments of Finance, Programs, Global Strategy, Marketing, and Impact and Analytics. Created and hired the Impacts and Analytics team and developed a system to track progress against targets for all donor funds invested. Planned, prepared and executed full organizational restructure to support the newly expanded model while reducing staffing costs by 500K+ and building up expertise for future growth. Established periodic Town Halls with all Horizon staff in order to be inclusive and provide a forum for updates and space for questions. Facilitated Country Leadership Teams to ensure voices of those who care for the children and youth were included in decision-making. Developed inclusive, matrixed organization removing silos from headquarters and field operations. Created professional development plans for staff to enhance strengths and grow into higher level positions.

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Developed a salary program that documented salary ranges for specified positions, adjusted positions for equity and fairness, as well as gave staff a clear pathway to professional growth within the organization.

## **November 2016 – February 2022**

### **Senior Vice President, Business Development, Program Design, and Program Effectiveness, Heifer International, Little Rock AR**

Led the Business Development, Program Design and Program Effectiveness Unit. Integrate revenue strategies in close collaboration with the Area Vice Presidents that fund Heifer's Signature Programming in Africa, Asia and the Americas regions including for Heifer USA based in Arkansas and Oklahoma. Led the identification and cultivating institutional funding opportunities while at the same time integrating the corporate, foundation, and impact capital revenue streams. Responsible for managing the high quality and robust design of all Heifer proposal development and submissions across all funding sources. Integrated the Program Effectiveness functions of Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (setting Key Performance Indicators), Knowledge Management, and an Integrated Program Management System (internal tracking systems for budget pipeline, key performance milestones, and pipeline spending) to ensure transparent data and evidence for reporting to all donors, partners and executive management.

### **Vice President, Program Effectiveness**

#### **Heifer International, Little Rock AR**

#### **Senior Director, Program Effectiveness – Heifer International, Little Rock AR**

Accompany 21 field program teams managing more than \$60M in resources to implement effective inclusive market systems projects that help the most vulnerable farmers reach a living income or dignified life and positions the organization for growth in funding from corporate partners, large foundations, and institutions. Manage twelve key staff to ensure robust project design with economic analysis and metrics to drive strategic impacts to pitch to donors through both competitive bids and co-creation opportunities. Ensure after project award organized and robust data collection, management, integrity and learning. Lead development and mainstreaming of a global cloud-based project management system that supports field teams in effective and efficient management for results with data and information available for learning, adaptation, and donor reporting. Manage systems that enable country field offices to implement projects on time, within scope and budget. Lead and guide the routine assessment and analysis of Heifer's global living income goals and project specific results, its contributions to impact and the value for money that Heifer provides. Interpret results, develop learning and build knowledge sharing across the organization. Propose program modifications and improvements, and apply information and insights generated as a contribution to Heifer's thought leadership. Ensure availability of quality program data, information, analysis and insights for country staff, management, resource mobilization staff, marketing team and external donors. Ensure program effectiveness support to resource mobilization teams assuring availability of information and economic analysis that specified deliver ratios per investment in certain types of interventions.

## **February 2016 – October 2016**

### **Managing Director, Inclusive Market Systems – ACDI/VOCA Washington, DC**

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Manage \$34.3M Ghana Agricultural Development and Value Chain Enhancement (ADVANCE) Cooperative Agreement and \$23.9M Zambia Production, Finance, and Improved Technology Plus Cost Plus Fixed Fee completion contract task order. Manage all compliance, monitoring, evaluation and learning processes, as well as technical aspects with the field teams towards successful results. Direct supervision of Chiefs of Party and coordination across HQ departments for project related support including Award Management, Operational Support Services, Technical Learning and Application, Monitoring and Evaluation, as well as Finance and Accounting. Interface with donors on modifications as a result of documented learnings and best practices as the programs progress. Collaborate closely with field teams to leverage private sector investments along agricultural value chains for agro-dealer and input supply, processing, post harvesting, and replication of project proven models and approaches to private sector management in the case of Syngenta, Cargill and others. Design and manage new business proposals providing strategic vision, identifying and closing deals with partners, designing theories of change and implementation models and writing full technical responses to Requests for Proposals. Successfully submitted \$117.4M in proposals and provided insights to senior leadership in new business process management modifications for more effective proposal management.

## **July 2014 – January 2016**

### **Vice President, International Operations – NCBA CLUSA International Washington, DC**

Managed \$230M+ portfolio in 18 countries including 24 programs in West, Eastern and Southern Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Directly managed all Regional Directors and Senior Program Managers to ensure effective project management backstopping support to the field offices in maintaining compliance standards and delivering on all contracts and grants as awarded. Integrated best practices and compliance standards in both the headquarters and field offices including project management and new business processes in monitoring and evaluation, finance, human resources, sub grants and contracts management, as well as technical aspects of program implementation. Developed tools, processes and communication channels to successfully deliver all contractual obligations and documenting program models to expand new business opportunities. Provided technical advice and support in enhancing agricultural value chain management for coffee, spices, subsistence crops, livestock and dairy, among others. Managed relationships with donors and stakeholder partners across all country programs including high level visits of US dignitaries and foreign embassies. Responsible for thought leadership and strategic visioning for new business opportunities.

## **January 2012 – June 2014**

### **Chief of Party – NCBA CLUSA International, Uganda**

Responsible for implementing \$8.4M USDA-funded market-driven conservation farming initiative which contributed directly to the USAID/Uganda Feed the Future Country Development Cooperation Strategy. Managed 34 local host country national staff and capacity building for locally-funded grantees to facilitate the adoption of climate smart conservation farming technology for 60,000 smallholder farmers as a mitigation strategy to climate change while at the same time mainstreaming gender in activities and strengthening business-focused interventions within the full value chain; post-harvest handling, input supply, business management at producer cooperatives, bulking and marketing, negotiating with buyers to entice regional trade expansion as well as linkages to finance and smallholder farmers access to

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informal and formal financial mechanisms. Worked collaboratively with microfinance institutions including FINCA and Opportunity International to facilitate group lending models with cooperatives. Facilitated the setup of 2,000 village savings and loans schemes (VSLAs) where over 3M+ was saved by smallholder farmers that were linked to MFIs or Savings and Credit Unions for additional financial support. Facilitated all start-up activities including office establishment, hiring staff and drafting local employment agreements and human resources manuals. Designed and implemented web-based on-line Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning System (MELS) to closely track output and outcome indicators as outlined in the project's Performance Management Plan. Responsible for all donor and stakeholder relationship building and collaborative efforts, technical program design, staff management, monitoring and evaluation systems, grantee sub award processes and oversight, financial management as well as donor reporting. Collaborate closely with private sector companies to leverage private sector investments to scale out project components as well as create synergies with other Feed the Future Uganda partners in an effort to incorporate nutrition and health programming into the agricultural value chain. Spear headed all new business opportunities in Uganda including designing programs, writing proposals and drafting budgets.

### **September 2010 – January 2012**

#### **Chief of Party - Land O'Lakes, Tanzania**

Designed and managed sub award systems for local awards and maintained oversight of all contract and compliance issues in Tanzania as well as all technical interventions along the entire dairy value chain including activities to support Responsible for implementing \$8.1M USDA-funded market-driven dairy development initiative which contributed directly to the USAID/Tanzania Feed the Future strategy. Managed 30 local host country nationals in three offices in the northern dairy corridor, as well as all official communications with donors, local ministries and government officials. Facilitated start-up activities including procurement of capital assets, duty and value added tax exemptions, lease agreement for local offices, hiring host country nationals, drafting employment agreements and benefits determinations, creating and implementing administrative manual and policies, drafting security plan, work plans for donor submission and approval, preparation of base line survey to complete monitoring and evaluation performance management plan, and staff trainings in preparation for technical field activities. business growth of dairy cooperatives, milk collection centers, dairy processors, traders, input suppliers, and generic national milk consumption campaigns to raise awareness of the nutritional aspects of milk. Manage comprehensive training program for cooperatives in promotion of good governance and management practices, record keeping, financial management, leadership, and strategic business planning. Emphasis on gender, family planning, and formal and informal savings mechanisms in smallholder dairy cooperatives to ensure integrated and sustainable interventions.

### **March 2007- August 2010**

#### **Chief of Party – Land O'Lakes, Malawi**

Responsible for implementing \$5M USAID-funded Global Development Alliance dairy development project. Leveraged \$10M from both international and local private sector investors for program implementation activities including cash investments from US based companies. Facilitated the setup of 800 revolving funds accounts to be managed by the cooperatives and their own members. Managed 1M in grant funding to local Malawian businesses and dairy cooperatives to implement dairy development activities. Developed comprehensive monitoring system for all grantees. Managed 6 support staff in

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grant management activities and an additional 16 staff that support financial reporting, progress reporting on activities, and match contributions. Integrated USG funded Farmer to Farmer Volunteer Program into the dairy development program and other agricultural programs countrywide with a focus on developing agricultural cooperatives into more effective and efficient businesses. Responsible for developing clear scopes of work and coordinating all logistics for professional volunteers. Emphasized business development services for local small-holder dairy farmers through working with 14 local private sector input supplier businesses in feed manufacturing, veterinary services and pharmaceuticals, cattle breeding, and small-scale accounting services. Integrated feed crops into extension proposal for dairy farmers and contract farming in collaboration with feed input suppliers, emphasizing conservation farming in the design. Designed program for livestock insurance in collaboration with national insurance broker which was recovered from a financial product being offered to the smallholder farmers. Designed program and managed PEPFAR funding allocated for increased nutrition for orphans and vulnerable children as well as a school feeding program aimed at keeping adolescent girls in school. Managed General Mills funded School Feeding Program including construction of school buildings, school kitchens, latrines, and libraries, as well as conducting nutrition trainings, and integrating organic school gardens to replace food subsidies supplied by the program.

### **January 2007**

#### **Program Development Specialist**

##### **Land O'Lakes East Timor**

Assisted with USAID-funded project start-up activities including researching local labor laws and drafting local employee contracts, local employee handbooks and accounting manuals and procedures. Researched and drafted security manual for expatriate and local Timorese staff. Interviewed potential local hire candidates and developed organizational structures to support administrative and technical program aspects. Conducted initial meetings with potential partners and other entities working in the same geographical areas to forge partnerships and complete the annual work plan for the first year.

### **May 2006**

#### **Organizational Development Specialist – Pan American Development Foundation, Colombia**

Developed the policies and procedures manual in compliance with USAID regulations for use in ten regional offices. Manual detailed administrative and programmatic responsibilities and procedures including staff job profiles, employment conditions, procurement and fund disbursement, travel authorizations, vehicle use, security, communication channels, and financial and programmatic reporting requirements.

### **January 2006**

#### **Business Development Specialist**

##### **Land O'Lakes Honduras**

Developed strategy for local Land O'Lakes team to work effectively with micro, small, and medium-sized rural dairy processing enterprises. Trained local staff to write and analyze business plans as well as build capacity in local dairy entrepreneurs regarding strategic decision-making in a competitive marketplace. Travelled extensively through the dairy corridor of Honduras. Reviewed activities in relation to contract

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budget as well as indicators and recommended specific efforts to enable most efficient use of program resources.

## **August 2003 – Dec 2005**

### **Deputy Chief of Party**

#### **Land O'Lakes, Colombia**

Responsible for implementing results-driven \$8.5 million Alternative Development Dairy Program with USAID/Colombia funding. Lead 15 full-time senior administrative and technical staff in program implementation, including dairy value-chain strengthening activities from farmer to market, as well as private sector SME development focused on marketing strategies and access to credit from local financial institutions for agro-processors. Managed staff security issues, monitoring and evaluation systems, financial reporting, goods procurement, grants and sub-contracts with Colombian institutions, as well as preparing and ensuring the timely completion of annual work plans and quarterly reports in compliance with USAID and Land O'Lakes requirements. Lead marketing team in agro-processor technical evaluations, including production, processing, and distribution stages in preparation for meeting export requirements. Supervised business plan development and design and implementation of investment plans, which include processor and program contributions toward strengthening linkages in the dairy value-chain. Represent Land O'Lakes at coordination meetings with USAID and other implementing partners.

## **Nov 2002 – April 2003**

### **Business Planning Specialist**

#### **Land O'Lakes Nicaragua**

Completed comprehensive business plans for three dairy cooperatives in the process of completing FDA certifications each with membership at approximately 265 producers. Plans included present operational documentation, future strategic plans for growth with detailed sales projections for both local and export sales, and strategy for implementation of plant and product modifications in order to pass FDA inspections. Advised cooperatives on more cost-effective management, cash flow projections, and potential to increase membership base and capital investments, as well as strategies to ensure market access through diversified and value-added products. Facilitated seminars and taught leadership strategic, competitive, market-driven decision-making process to ensure commercial sustainability. Worked in Camoapa and Santo Tomas.

## **2001-2002**

### **Program Development Specialist - Ramsey Action Programs**

#### **St. Paul, MN, USA**

Analyzed current low-income participant needs and agency resources. Created innovative program components to support both participant self-growth and agency impact outcomes. Integrated program performance monitoring and reporting systems. Trained key management and staff in administering program components. Developed training curriculum for low-income high-risk clients. Conducted counseling and assessment for Latino clients.

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## **2000-2001**

### **Peer lending Coordinator/Business Specialist - WomenVenture**

#### **St. Paul, MN, USA**

Created peer lending model including the manual, loan documents, database system, and small business training curriculum. Established integrated system to collect outcome data for both economic and human capital return on investment. Launched program and managed daily technical assistance and loan-lending. Trained, supervised, and evaluated support staff responsibilities. Facilitated classes in credit analysis, market analysis, pricing, financial management, sales, and operation plans. Participated in the internal loan committee responsible for underwriting the micro-loans which included approval, denial, and contingencies.

## **1997-1999**

### **Volunteer - United States Peace Corps**

#### **Suriname**

Mobilized isolated, rural community of six hundred people to prioritize, plan, and implement their own development projects. Facilitated multicultural team meetings and initiated action plans in target language with community members. Utilized Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques to evaluate communities. Trained leaders to create programs and facilitate youth activities aimed at health education. Facilitated creation of business associations and microenterprise development. Facilitated proposal development for building community school and presentation for successful donor funding from the Dutch Embassy.

## LANGUAGES

English (native), Spanish (fluent)