

Lauren B. Simonds

Nominated by Sue Abderholden, Executive Director of NAMI Minnesota and
seconded by Brenda Scott, Executive Director of Mt San Jacinto

Nominator Narrative

NAMI Board service demands experience, knowledge, commitment, and time to help others. Board members must be passionate about NAMI's goals, values, and beliefs. This year, the NAMI Board is highlighting specific skills that they are seeking in candidates to strengthen the current skill sets on the board. You can review the [2024 Open Letter](#) from the NAMI Board President for more information on the call for candidates.

Please list the skill areas identified in the Open Letter in which this candidate excels.

Lauren Simonds has extensive experience as an executive director and thus has worked with boards for many years. She understands finances, personnel, and legislative advocacy. She has organized conferences, fundraising events, and has worked with her local affiliates. She brings strong knowledge of the field and nonprofit management.

Lauren works tirelessly to educate the alliance on JEDI Initiatives, she is a strong voice and keeps this lens in the forefront of all the work she does and is involved in, and has had excellent suggestions on speakers for ED's at our Annual meetings and for EDLE. NAMI has used some of those suggestions in their presentations to the community. Lauren is passionate about her role as a NAMI board member and represents the field with meaningful input.

Lauren identifies as Jewish and is part of the LGBTQ community. She also identifies as a person living with several mental health conditions and is currently a caregiver for a person who has schizoaffective disorder.

Lauren took NAMI Washington from an organization of \$151,000 in 2014 to an organization of over 1.8 million in 2024. All of her work has included fundraising direct mailing, one on one asks, planned giving and events.

She spent her entire career working with non-profits and has work for over 30 years with non profits and over 20 years as an executive director of 4 different non-profits. These include a PAC, 501 C 3 and a 501 C 4.

She has done human capital management but is not certified HR professional. She has done personnel development and management and has expertise in writing organization policies, procedures and bylaws.

Explain any additional skill areas in which this candidate excels not identified in the Open Letter that you believe would be an asset to the NAMI Board.

Lauren created youth outreach in her local area and works with staff to support a graduate and under graduate field placement program working within the school districts in WA. She grew the ETS program in her state with a series of grants.

Lauren has sat in the seat of the ED representative and now that NAMI is in the position to implement 10x, continuity from the EDC is important. She is trusted in the field and by her fellow ED's.

This individual has helped advance the NAMI mission on the council by...

Attending meetings, providing input on many levels due to her vast knowledge of non-profits and how NAMI organizations are run.

Helping plan the EDLE event for Executive Directors. She has been on the planning committee for a few years and has presented at the event. She helped to create NAMI Washington's My Little Monster coloring book which was donated to the National organization, which in turn supports the field and members have access to this at no charge. She understands the role of an Executive Director and the challenges Executive Directors face and does not hesitate to advocate for finding better ways to work together.

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

The respect she has earned from other EDs, especially other state EDs. She has been supportive of the affiliates in her state and has set an excellent example to other state and affiliate ED's on ways to support their organizations.

She has successfully and continually raised funds to give directly to affiliates beyond NAMIWalks totaling over \$250,000 a year. She understands the 3 levels of NAMI and works to improve relationships within the structure of the NAMI organization.