

Caira Benson



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Summary

Experienced author, researcher, grant author and manager, and policy guru with in-depth experience in veteran, military, and caregiving issues and dynamics. Proven organizational executive and leader who has successfully developed and enacted strategic plans to grow organizations. In-depth experience in government agencies, regulations, and statutes. Proven ability to simplify complex messages into plain language for widespread distribution. Proven growth in grant development, managing, and reporting.

Core Competencies

Leadership | Writing and Editing | Policy and Regulatory Issues | Public Relations | Strategic Partner Relations | Strategic Design | Program Implementation

Experience

VETERAN SUPPORT & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES SPECIALIST, CODE OF SUPPORT FOUNDATION, OCTOBER-PRESENT

- Complex case management for veteran clients to include relationship building; develop and manage individual care plans that address emotional, physical, and mental well-being; coordinating with VA, healthcare providers, social services, and nonprofits to secure necessary supports and resources; monitor client progress and maintain accurate and timely documentation.
- Identify, evaluate, and support initiatives and projects that align with COSF's strategic plan.
- Cultivate and maintain relationships with key stakeholders, including VSOs, community partners, and governmental agencies.
- Collaborate with the Executive Director and Directors of Programs/Development to coordinate and implement strategic project plans that strengthen delivery and organizational capacity.

CONSULTANT, ELIZABETH DOLE FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON, D.C. – JULY-PRESENT

- Part-time consultant.
- Provide analysis and feedback on testimony, agency reports, proposed regulations, proposed laws, and other documents relevant to the wounded, ill, and injured veteran population and their caregivers.
- Attend briefings and events relevant to the needs of wounded, ill, and injured veterans, their caregivers, and their families to help inform policy, legislative agendas, and proposals.
- Provide subject matter expertise, advice, and advocacy to help EDF resolve individual cases.
- Investigate root causes and offer constructive solutions to potential systemic issues faced by caregivers, injured veterans, and their families.

CONSULTANT, GLOBAL NEURO Y CARE, MADISON, WI – JULY-PRESENT

- Project based consultant.
- Interviewing youth living with family members of those across the globe living with ALS to build provider training to enable supported discussion with youth family members.

DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, RETRIEVING FREEDOM, SEDALIA, MO — 2024-2025

- Worked with CEO and Board of Directors to outline, maintain, and update RFI's strategic plans and goals.
- Worked collaboratively with the CEO, CFO, Director of Training, and the and the development team to support current and develop new cross-disciplinary projects within RFI's strategic priorities.
- Oversaw the creation, distribution, implementation, and collection of items to report data including client metrics and/or program metrics, including key performance indicators and impact measurements.
- Researching and managing new grants and strategies while managing existing grants and reporting.
- Collaborate with the CEO to develop new projects and community relationships within the parameters of RFI's strategic goals.
- Collaboratively developing cohesive messaging for internal and external communications.
- Administer Salesforce database and manage data integrity.
- Highlights include growing grant portfolio growth, helping achieve state funding, and working with partners to include a first in field grant from Bob Woodruff Foundation.

MEMBER, FEDERAL VETERANS' FAMILIES, CAREGIVERS, AND SURVIVORS ADVISORY COMMITTEE — 2023-PRESENT

- Federally appointed position (SGE, unpaid).
- Member of the Caregiver Subcommittee.
- Provide informed suggestions for improvements to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs regarding the administration of benefits and health services for Veterans, caregivers, and survivors.

CAREGIVER TO A POST-9/11 VETERAN (VOLUNTEER), ADVOCATE — 2010-PRESENT

- Worked with VHA administrators (local) and providers to achieve the greatest medical outcomes for my care recipient.
- Worked with VHA administrators (local) to help identify and include needs of younger veterans and caregivers within VA's care.
- Researched and learned VHA and VBA regulations, lexicon, policies, and procedures to enhance communication efforts when achieving desired results in care for care recipient.
- Coordinated care of veteran across multiple VISNs and VAMCs.
- Spoken, by invitation, at events to senior VA personnel on the importance of inclusive care, holistic whole health, and veteran support structures.

- Invited by CSP to speak with local enrolled caregivers.
- Provided guidance to other caregivers through advocacy and articulating the complexities of VHA system in an easy-to-understand way.

PROPOSAL WRITER, APTIVE RESOURCES, ALEXANDRIA, VA — 2024

- Research, develop, write and edit tailored content for federal proposals, to include executive summaries, technical solutions, management approaches, or past performance volumes.
- Analyze requirements within a request for proposal (RFP), statement of work (SOW), or performance work statement (PWS) to align written response with tailored content.
- Write and edit content in a consistent tone and voice with other authors and/or subject matter experts (SMEs).
- Edit proposal documentation with an emphasis on the consistent use of grammar, punctuation, and syntax.
- Proofread and prepare documents for release and/or publication (e.g., White Glove).
- Proactively collaborates and communicates with proposal resources, including the Proposal Manager, SMEs, fellow writers/editors, and Aptive leadership

SENIOR ASSOCIATE, ARTEMIS ARC, ALEXANDRIA, VA — 2023-2024

VHA, Office of Healthcare Transformation (OHT), TOPR 7.16 Acquisition SOP Development

- Researched existing and developed new content for OHT Acquisitions Development Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) to include onboarding, offboarding, contract management, and acquisition package development.
- Researched VA Directives and Regulations to support the new content of the new SOP drafts.
- Drafted, edited, and produced requested SOPs including integrated links, appendices, graphics, etc.
- Worked with Subject Matter Experts to refine SOP process.

VHA, High Reliability Organization (HRO)

- Updated and modified existing comprehensive campaign plan/strategy to include stakeholder analysis and HRO best practices.
- Established and maintained integrated employee and public HRO education awareness using appropriate taglines to maximize VHA exposure and foster a positive awareness of VHA in the minds of the target audiences.
- Developed appropriately edited and targeted content and messaging for campaign and associated communication platforms (e.g., videos, social media, print advertisement, one pagers), built upon identified top line messages.
- Created and coordinated dissemination of HRO outreach materials for key stakeholder groups, public, and policy makers.

- Led content management efforts including designing and implementing a more robust document control system (e.g., more comprehensive version control, update/audit cadence, cross-team document owner coordination).
- Managed Communications Audit to ensure that documents, products, and resources stay relevant with accurate and consistent messaging through product and resource inventory, file review, product update, client update approval and publication of updated materials.

POLICY STRATEGY CONSULTANT, ELIZABETH DOLE FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON, DC — 2022

- Researched new Veteran-centered policy, legislation, and regulations to determine organizational advocacy initiatives goals.
- Developed memos on community impact of existing and proposed Veteran-centered legislative initiatives.
- Drafted and published commentary for Federal Register.
- Drafted and published communications including website, social media, handouts, and briefs for military-affiliated community. Engaged with and deepened relationships with legislative offices, Veteran Service Officer (VSO) and Military Service Officer (MSO) partners, and governmental offices.
- Participated in meetings with VHA Central Office (VHACO), Caregiver Support Program (CSP), MSOs, and VSOs as a SME.
- Utilized understanding of regulations and caregiver needs to organize the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's stance on current Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)/Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) issues and outline needed improvements.
- Assembled, analyzed, and responded to inquiries from caregivers and Veterans on VHA and VBA initiative, programs, and policies.

FELLOW (VOLUNTEER), ELIZABETH DOLE FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON, DC — 2019-PRESENT

- Drafted, edited, and presented written and oral testimony to House Veteran Affairs Committee on proposed legislation in June 2024.
- Advocated for the passage of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veteran Healthcare and Benefits Modernization Act, including have high level conversations with key Senators and Representatives.
- Drafted, edited, and presented written and oral testimony to Senate Veteran Affairs Committee on PCAFC/PGCSS in March 2022.
- Advocated for military-affiliated caregivers of all eras on national and local platforms.
- Presented keynotes, seminars, national media interviews, and social media clips.
- Developed relationships with congressional and governmental offices, including VHACO.
- Connected Veterans and caregivers with needed resources from national and local organizations, including VHA and VBA.

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, LAKELAND UNIVERSITY, CHIPPEWA FALLS, WI — 2009-2017

- Developed course including course structure, syllabus, and covered lessons while establishing clear, achievable learning expectations.
- Planned and gave lectures for online and in-person courses.
- Graded written work.

ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR, VITERBO UNIVERSITY, EAU CLAIRE, WI — 2009-2015

- Developed course including course structure, syllabus, and covered lessons while establishing clear, achievable learning expectations in both lecture and studio.
- Planned and gave lectures for in-person courses.
- Graded studio and written work.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHIPPEWA FALLS MAIN STREET, CHIPPEWA FALLS, WI — 2009-2010

- Led development of organizational mission, vision, and strategic plan.
- Restructured programs, events, marketing, and organization to achieve redefined strategic plan and refined branding message, including new program and event implementation.
- Led development efforts to meet the annual budget.
- Managed day-to-day operations of non-profit including media relations, marketing, project management, community organization, customer and Board relations, event management, and budget approval/management.
- Supervised and oversaw three employees and 250 volunteers.
- Established partnerships between the local government, economic development organization, various non-profits, and downtown businesses.
- Researched buildings within the allocated district on National Register of Historic Places for Secretary of the Interior architectural reports and district listings.

ARCHIVIST, MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF RALEIGH, RALEIGH, NC — 2008-2009

- Established new library and lead policy development/implementation as well as strategic planning (5 year).
- Developed and maintained budget and helped in purchasing and asset control.
- Configured and administered library servers and provided technical support.

TECHNOLOGY ADMINISTRATOR, STIRLING MONTESSORI, RALEIGH, NC — 2007-2008

- Developed roles and responsibilities of new technology administrator position adhering to school policies and strategic vision.
- Developed and wrote a Technology Strategic Plan for the school (5 year).
- Developed and implemented needed budget and oversaw purchasing and asset control.
- Established and programmed new laptop lab.

- Maintained equipment, including servers and provided training to end users

ARCHIVES TECHNICIAN, BERRY COLLEGE, ROME, GA — 2004-2006

- Authored, designed, installed and maintained rotating exhibits.
- Performed collections management, including accessions and document preservation.
- Completed research for patrons and institution to include fact-checking for published materials.
- Managed, trained, and supervised student workers.

Education

M.F.A., Creative Writing, Southern New Hampshire University, 2022

Graduate Certificate in Professional Writing, Southern New Hampshire University, 2022

M.A., Historic Preservation, Savannah College of Art and Design, 2007

B.A., History, Kennesaw State University, 2001

Publications

“Leveraging the New Workplace: Higher Ed Are You Remote Ready?” 2022

“Why You Should List Caregiver Experience on Your Resume” 2022

“Why HR Shouldn’t Ignore the Resume Gap” 2022

“Why HR Should Hire and Support Caregivers” 2022

Salt Covered Lies 2022

“Coffee and Chaos” 2019

“Head, Heart, and Hands: Educating the Head” 2006

“Historic Survey of Lower Campus, Berry College” 2005

“On the Home Front: Berry During the Wars” 2005

“Berry Buildings: From Cabins to the Campus” 2004

“The lion & the dragon: English castle building under Edward I” 2001

Speeches and Seminars

“National Family Caregiver Summit: Navigating the Red Tape” 2023

“Campaign for Inclusive Care: Caregiver Inclusion” 2021

“KidsRank: Conversations Series” 2021

“Helping our Hidden Helpers: The Role of Military Children” 2021

“VA SF Caregiver Program: Caregiver Conversations” 2020

“We Are Never Alone - Recognizing Your Own Strength” 2020

“Veteran’s Wounds Extend to the Family” 2019

“This Caregiver Life: Ep8 Carrying on with Caira Benson” 2019