

SONIA G. CHESSEN

(b)(6)

EXPERIENCE

CHESSON CONSULTING, LLC

Washington, DC

Principal

January 2017– present

Provide strategic and operational support to non-profits to advance organizational priorities. Areas of expertise and consulting focus: strategic planning, operations, performance management, cross-functional and executive leadership, conflict resolution, and budget planning. Clients include direct service agencies such as Safe Passage Project which provides legal representation to minors facing deportation proceedings and think tanks such as the Economic Policy Institute and the Urban Institute.

- Director of the Urban Institute's Next50 Initiative – Led the Urban Institute's partnership with today's leading thinkers and doers to explore what knowledge is needed to fast-track promising solutions to achieve equity, upward mobility, and racial justice. (January 2018-July 2019)
- Executive Director of the March on Washington Film Festival – Manage a film festival which tells, celebrates, and increases awareness of the untold events and heroes, known and unsung, of the Civil Rights Movement. (December 2019-August 2020)

THE CLINTON-KAINE TRANSITION TEAM

Washington, DC

Chief of Staff, Agency Review

August – November 2016

Responsible for identifying and recruiting a large team of policy experts to facilitate the transfer of power between the Obama and Clinton Administrations in the event that Secretary Clinton won the election. Worked with a group that consulted with content and outreach experts to ensure diversity across a team of 350. This involved sourcing candidates with deep knowledge of thirty major government agencies as well as numerous smaller ones and recruiting them to serve.

By the day of the election, the team had assembled and on-boarded staff of 350 from across the country ready to hit the ground running the next day.

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS (2007-2016)

Washington, DC

Senior Director, Chief of Staff, Government Performance

2012–2016

Provided leadership and operational oversight of 250-person division and \$75,000,000 budget. Oversaw short- and long-term planning as well as all departmental operations. Managed operations, research review, and emerging issues teams. Led working groups aimed at diagnosing and proposing solutions for cross-institutional challenges. Represented department on various institutional task forces.

- Emerging Issues – Identified policy areas for Pew investment, which resulted in campaigns such as one to facilitate the prevention and treatment of substance abuse and another to increase the use of big data as strategic asset in state policy decision making.
- Cross-Functional Institutional Projects – Led a team to develop policies and practices to ensure methodological rigor and accuracy of Pew research and to ensure proper handling of sensitive data. Reduced the number of significant errors published in Pew reports to 0 and mitigated institutional risk associated with potential mishandling of sensitive data.
- Contracting – Performed extensive analysis of contracting process to identify sticking points, working with finance and legal departments to build new approach that reduced the processing time by 50%.

Deputy Director

2009–2012

Oversaw department's day-to-day operations, including strategic planning and annual budgets. Conducted extensive research over six months to develop five-year strategy to improve Americans' health and wellbeing in areas of financial security, drug and food safety, and consumer product safety, entitled "Protecting Americans from Hidden Risks."

- Submitted "Hidden Risks" strategy to board of directors, gaining approval and investment of \$40,000,000.
- "Hidden Risks" strategy contributed to passage of CARD Act, which established fair and transparent credit card practices; Food Safety Modernization Act; and FDA Safety and Innovation Act, which provided incentives to develop potentially lifesaving antibiotics and safety improvements of global pharmaceutical manufacturing system.

Senior Officer

2007–2009

Oversaw diverse grantee portfolio, with work in genetics policy, nanotechnology, and substance abuse treatment. Monitored grants, and developed a new initiative in area of end-of-life care. Met with academics, practitioners, and policymakers to learn about potential policies to support treatment at end of life.

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

NATIONAL BOARD FOR EDUCATION SCIENCES (NBES), INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Washington, DC

Executive Director

2005–2006

Oversaw management and operation of NBES. Represented NBES in discussions with Secretary of Education, members of Congress, and other senior government officials. Recommended annual budgets. Served as liaison between NBES and director of Institute. Informed and advised NBES on substantive policy issues.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Washington, DC

Chief of Staff to the Assistant Secretary

2004–2005

Advised on policy and administrative matters. Implemented Assistant Secretary's decisions in areas of policy coordination, legislation development, strategic planning, policy research and evaluation, and economic analysis.

DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL, THE WHITE HOUSE

Washington, DC

Senior Policy Advisor, White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth

2002–2003

Managed work of White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth, developing comprehensive federal response to problems of youth failure, with focus on enhanced agency accountability and program effectiveness. Helped lead First Lady Laura Bush's Helping America's Youth initiative, such as planning White House events, which included four regional conferences with First Lady in attendance.

Director, White House Council on Youth Violence Prevention

2000–2001

Led White House Council on Youth Violence Prevention established by President Clinton to develop more effective policies as well as coordinate strategy across all federal agencies. Managed staff responsible for coordinating federal youth violence programmatic and research efforts.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

Washington, DC

Senior Policy Analyst, Children and Youth Policy Division

1998–2003 (Concurrent)

Oversaw HHS youth portfolio, acting as liaison to other cabinet departments, foundations, and non-profit organizations. Analyzed policy, monitoring research in areas of youth development and prevention of risk-taking behaviors. Managed the implementation of the National Strategy to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

THE NATIONAL FUNDING COLLABORATIVE ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Washington, DC

Deputy Director

1995–1998

Managed national program to prevent violence created by leading education and youth-oriented foundations, including Ford, Annie E. Casey, and Charles Stewart Mott foundations. Designed strategic plan as well as provided staff support to governing board. Funded and supported violence prevention strategies in 11 local communities.

JAMES BELL ASSOCIATES

Arlington, Virginia

Research Associate

1993–1995

Designed and conducted evaluations of social service programs, including Head Start and family preservation and support services.

DEMICCO YOUTH SERVICES, INC.

Chicago, Illinois

Director of Social Services

1990–1992

Managed six social service programs for family service agency located in Cabrini-Green housing development.

EDUCATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, Chicago, Illinois
A.M., Social Service Administration, 1990

WELLESLEY COLLEGE, Wellesley, Massachusetts

B.A., Political Science; Minor, Spanish, 1984