

# Susan Fitter Harris

Owner & Principal Consultant  
Susan Fitter Harris Consulting, LLC  
A Metris Arts Consulting Affiliate



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## PROFILE

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- Founded and lead consulting business that provides strategic planning, fund development, project management, program analysis, and content creation to nonprofits in the community development, arts and culture, and education sectors
- Twenty-four years of experience in community development, completing projects with both national and local focus
- Skills clients value include analysis, meaning making, strong writing, clarity of expression, and insightful interview questions

## EDUCATION

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University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA  
M.A. Urban and Environmental Planning, May 2002  
Concentration: Housing and Community Development

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA  
B.A. May 1994  
Major: Anthropology, Minor: History

## EXPERIENCE

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Susan Fitter Harris Consulting, LLC, Alexandria, VA (July 2014-present)

*Founder and Principal Consultant* Provide services to nonprofit clients including strategic planning, program assessment, content creation, and fund development. Assist nonprofit organizations to think strategically and focus their efforts into coherent, executable plans that serve their missions. Plan and facilitate convenings for the purpose of idea generation, knowledge *transfer*, and relationship building. Develop compelling grant proposals that expertly connect organizations' missions and capacities to individual funders' requirements. Interview stakeholders and perform comparative research to analyze the reach and effectiveness of nonprofit programs, as well as the communication about those programs. Design and execute competitive RFP processes for grantmakers. Create relevant and meaningful content for clients' publications and websites based on original research and interviews.

Client list includes: Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), NeighborWorks America, National Alliance of State Arts Agencies, City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, The Prosperity Agenda, Elevate, Higher Achievement, the Education Trust, the Center for Community Progress, the Urban Alliance, the Jessie Ball DuPont Fund, Aeon.

Recent and relevant projects include:

- Synthesized findings from a year-long public engagement process and created a final report including recommendations for the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) on its handling of controversial public monuments and memorials
- Performed research and drafted strategies to enhance DCASE's support of the Chicago music ecosystem
- Conducted team building and planning retreats for a cross-organizational group of community development leaders interested in collaborating on mutual goals
- Facilitated planning and created a strategic framework for LISC's Safety & Justice Program including: mission, vision, and values; strategic priorities; logic model; and comprehensive deck communicating the program's story
- Led the staff of LISC SchoolPrint, a new venture supporting educational facilities development, in an exercise to create a strategic plan to guide its first year
- Guided Rural LISC leadership to renew its strategic plan and priorities and articulate an ambitious and complex set of programs. This included facilitating strategic planning sessions with the staff and advisory committee, stakeholder interviews, drafting strategies and goals, and completing a written plan narrative
- Facilitated focus groups and led report writing for a comprehensive investigation into how the NeighborWorks America network of locally based affordable housing and community development organizations uses arts- and culture-based strategies to accomplish community development goals
- Researched and wrote the "Creative Placemaking Public Resources Guide" for the National Alliance of State Arts Agencies, a comprehensive guide to federal funding sources for creative placemaking projects

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Washington, DC and New York, NY (June 2000 – July 2014)

*Senior Program Officer and Administrator, Field Resources* – Wrote proposals that secured more than \$50 million in grant funds for core work; managed \$10.5 million in federal grant funds, including internal allocations, funder reporting and compliance; assessed potential expansion geographies; synthesizing team research and interviews into final assessment report and recommendations; identified programmatic growth areas and strategized with management around potential funding opportunities and proposals; designed "learning forums" for 200+ employees; coordinated annual program planning process for thirty local programs; coordinated knowledge transfer between LISC headquarters/senior management and field programs, as well as between field staff in different locations.

The Hawthorn Group, LC, Alexandria, VA (September 1998 – March 2000)

*Account Executive* – Researched and wrote briefs on issues in the energy and environmental fields; produced nationwide seminar series on energy and environmental issues

Patton Boggs LLP, Washington, DC (1996 – 1998)

*Legal Secretary* – Managed operations for partners including legal research, memos and client relations

ESPN, Bristol, CT (1995 – 1996)

*Production Assistant* – Produced video highlights and wrote accompanying scripts for SportsCenter

## PUBLICATIONS

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### REPORTS

*Improving Storefronts: Guidance on developing a storefront improvement program for place-based economic development.* With Teresa Garcia. New York, NY: Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2022.

*The Saving Power of Community Creativity.* Flint, MI: Center for Community Progress, 2021.

*Creating Opportunity for Diverse- and Women-Owned Small Businesses: Recommendations for the U.S. Small Business Association's SBIC Program.* Los Angeles, CA: Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2020.

*The Creative Placemaking Public Resources Guide (website: [creativeplacemakingresources.org](http://creativeplacemakingresources.org)).* National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2020.

*The "Zombie" and Vacant Properties Remediation and Prevention Initiative: Emerging Best Practices.* With Helene Caloir. New York, NY: Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2018.

*Creative Placemaking on Vacant Properties: Lessons Learned from Four Cities.* With Rachel Engh, Anne Gadwa Nicodemus, Danielle Lewinski and Chelsea A. Allinger. Flint, MI: Center for Community Progress, 2018.

*Creative Community Development: Final Report.* With Rachel Engh and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus. Washington, DC: NeighborWorks America, 2018.

### ARTICLES

"Demonstrating Economic Liberation: How Guaranteed Income Pilot Programs Point to New Solutions to Poverty." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, August 2022.

"With Climate Justice for All: Community Action to Mitigate Climate Change and Build Equitable Green Futures." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, April 2022.

"Social Housing Brings Stability and Self-Determination to Residents." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, October 2021.

"Safeguarding Communities by Reaching Out." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, October 2020.

"Building Small Business Resilience In Good Times and Bad." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, May 2020.

"The Online Opportunity Gap: How CDFIs are Helping Bring Broadband Access to Rural Communities." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, November 2019.

"Passive House Standards Bring Green Living to Affordable Multifamily Housing." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, July 2019.

"Joint Venturing for Nonprofits: the Benefits, the Common Pitfalls and How to Navigate Them." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, June 2019.

"Supporting Entrepreneurs of Color." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, May 2019.

"Navigating the Childcare Gap in Rhode Island." *LISC Institute for Community Power website.* Local Initiatives Support Corporation, April 2019.

“Q&A: Tim Ferguson and Fran Seegull Offer Insights Into the Future of CDFIs.” *LISC Institute for Community Power website*. Local Initiatives Support Corporation, January 2019.

“Creative Placemaking with an Economic Development Lens: Lessons Learned.” *LISC Institute for Community Power website*. Local Initiatives Support Corporation, December 2018.

“LISC Helps Local Governments Move Forward with Housing Plans.” *LISC Institute for Community Power website*. Local Initiatives Support Corporation, November 2018.

“Training Tomorrow's Leaders: Building the next generation of community development leadership.” *LISC Institute for Community Power website*. Local Initiatives Support Corporation, August 2018.

## BOOK CHAPTERS

“Chapter 32: Building Local Capacity in Rural People, Places and Systems” *Investing in Rural Prosperity*. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, November 2021.

## WEBSITES

*Alternatives to Incarceration*. [www.lisc.org/la-incubation-academy](http://www.lisc.org/la-incubation-academy). Local Initiatives Support Corporation and County of Los Angeles, 2021.

*Creative Placemaking Public Resources Guide*. <https://creativeplacemakingresources.org/>. National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. 2020.

## AFFILIATIONS

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Potomac Fiber Arts Gallery and Potomac Fiber Arts Guild, Alexandria, VA (October 2022 – present)  
*Juried member*

Del Ray Artisans, Alexandria, VA (April 2022 – present)  
*Member and exhibiting artist*

Mount Vernon Community School PTA, Alexandria, VA (September 2014 – October 2019)  
*Vice President and Chair of Playground Revitalization Capital Campaign* – Raised \$185,000 and led advocacy campaign in support of a new playground. Construction completed September 2019

Local Motion Project, Alexandria, VA (January 2017 – December 2018)  
*Founding Board member* – Created local dance nonprofit's first strategic plan; advised on organizational matters and fundraising strategy; assisted staff to write grant proposals

Student Achievement Advisory Committee, Alexandria City Public School Board (Fall 2012 – Spring 2016)  
*Appointed member* – Investigated and advised on causes of and solutions for achievement gaps in Alexandria public schools