

DR. SARALYN GRASS



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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Executive leader, consultant, and expert witness with more than two decades of experience leading complex organizations across government, nonprofit, and for-profit sectors. President and Co-Founder of Verdant Synergies LLC, a consulting firm providing legal case analysis, leadership consulting, executive coaching, strategic planning, nonprofit development, and research and analysis. Proven record managing multi-million-dollar budgets, building high performing teams, and strengthening systems of accountability and operational performance. Recognized for expertise in institutional responsibility, K-12 and early childhood systems, and expert witness testimony related to negligence, mandated reporting, and standard of care.

EDUCATION

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| <p>2014 </p> <p>2006 </p> <p>2004 </p> | <p>Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Policy & Program Evaluation
Graduate Certificates:
Global Pathways with a specialization in Global Issues
Center for Global Engagement
Emergency Management and Homeland Security
Emergency Management and Homeland Security Program</p> <p>Master of Science (M.S.) in Human Development
Concentration:
Special Needs Across Child and Adolescent Development and Community Agencies</p> <p>Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Psychology
Focus: Early Childhood Development and Learning Systems</p> |
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TRAINING



CONSULTING & ENTREPRENEURSHIP EXPERIENCE

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| <p>2025 - Present </p> <p>2014-2019 </p> | <p>President & Co-Founder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead a cross-sector consulting firm providing executive advisory, organizational strategy, legal case analysis, and systems design for public agencies, nonprofits, and private organizations• Advise boards and senior leaders on governance, accountability structures, compliance frameworks, and performance improvement• Design and implement strategic plans, funding models, and operational systems to strengthen organizational effectiveness and impact• Provide expert witness services and case consultation related to institutional responsibility, negligence, mandated reporting, and standard of care• Support business development, partnerships, and growth strategy for emerging and established mission-driven enterprises <p>Vice President & Co-Founder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-founded and scaled a for-profit hospitality and manufacturing business from start-up to established community brand• Led company operations including finance, human resources, marketing, event programming, and community engagement• Positioned the company as a recognized regional gathering and cultural venue through strategic partnerships and brand development• Oversaw multi-million-dollar operating budgets, investor relations, and fiscal performance |
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EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

2023–2025



Chief Executive Officer, Kids Hope Alliance

- Directed a \$50+ million public agency supporting youth development, afterschool, and prevention programs.
- Developed and maintained long-range strategic plan reflecting departmental mission and vision.
- Responsible for raising the public visibility of the organization within the community, overseeing marketing of organizational activities, programs, and goals.
- Oversaw fiscal operations, strategic direction, and data-driven program evaluation.
- Served as public spokesperson and liaison to City Council, advocating for policies benefiting children and families.

2021–2023

Chief Administrative Officer, Kids Hope Alliance

- Facilitated operations in accordance with City Ordinances, City Charter, and all state & federal laws – including the planning, development, implementation, and delivery of an annual \$40 million RFP program for area nonprofits.
- Supervised department heads and administrative staff; directly overseeing employee hiring, training, and performance evaluations.
- Responsible for financial and managerial analyses as required by the City pertaining to organizational operations and programs; evaluating data and making recommendations based on findings; and supervising the preparation of financial reports and projections for presentations to City departments including the Office of the Mayor and City Council.

2023

Chief of Grants Contract Compliance

- Served as the high-level liaison to City Procurement and the Office of General Counsel ensuring department's engagement in cost-effective purchasing procedures and compliance with City laws governing public procurement.
- Oversaw the development of bids, requests for proposals and requests for quotations including the review of specifications, draft contract terms, and supplemental conditions.
- Liaised with Mayor's Office, City Council, other City executives and officials, and public and private partners in the planning and management of grant-funded community development programs.

2019–2021

Chief Programs Officer, Kids Hope Alliance

- Coordination with Chief Executive Officer and executive team in overall development, strategic planning, service delivery, and management of the organization across multiple sites and departments.
- Direct oversight of RFP program for awarding over \$40 million in grant funds to area nonprofits every year.
- Direct supervision of program directors, working with each department to improve cross-agency collaboration and coordination

2019–2021

Executive Director



- Represented all 30 Early Learning Coalitions in state policy and legislative advocacy.
- Led organizational strategy and communications on behalf of early childhood stakeholders statewide.

RESEARCH & PROFESSORSHIP EXPERIENCE

2020–2023;

Adjunct Professor

2026–Present



- Graduate Level instruction in
 - Early Childhood Policy and Law
 - School Finance, Social and Emotional Learning
 - Community Resources
 - Curriculum & Instruction in Early Childhood
 - Program Planning in Early Childhood

2020-2022



Adjunct Professor

- Graduate Level instruction in
 - Evaluation of New Educational Programs and Practices

2010-2011

Graduate Teaching Assistant

- Assistance in large, multi-year research and reform project funded by the Institution of Education Sciences (National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools)

2007-2014

Graduate Teaching Assistant

- Instruction of Introduction to Education course for undergraduate students

2008-2010



Director of Programs and Research

- Management of 10+ staff members both locally and offsite regarding childcare policy initiatives including:
 - Professional development within a Quality Rating System
 - Professional Development Registry
 - Other strategic initiatives
- Development and oversight of grant proposals and awards including Head Start technical assistance, disaster relief and other global initiatives

2010-2011

Director of Research

- Acting coordinator of research for the Partners in Education and Research for Kindergarten Success (PERKS) project, funded by US Department of Education
- Liaison for requests for research analyses and technical assistance from Florida Early Learning Coalitions and state stakeholders
- Development & dissemination of valid & reliable Research and Data on early childhood issues including professional development, academic assessment and workforce initiatives

2008-2010



Research Project Coordinator

- Development and management of grant writing and fundraising strategies
- Design, building and implementation of substantial qualitative and quantitative research projects
- Oversight of agency and sponsored research programs, including synthesis of research findings and reporting to stakeholder groups regarding early childhood initiatives
- Management of grant budgets, acknowledgement and reporting processes

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Selected as a Community Hero to receive the Leadership Excellence Award by Step-by-Step 4 Help Foundation, Inc., May 2024
- Selected as member of Leadership Jacksonville Class of '24, May 2023
- Recognized as a Girl Scouts of Gateway Council Women of Distinction Honoree, April 2022
- Selected to receive a Trailblazer Award from the College of Education at Florida State University for Fall 2019
- Was one of the final four candidates for an open Tallahassee City Commission vacant seat
- Selected as member of Leadership Florida Education Class 4, August 2018
- Recipient of Jockey International Scholarship through the North American Council on Adoptive Children, February 2018
- Selected as member of Leadership Florida Connect Class 8, August 2017
- Recognized as one of the "25 Women to Know in Tallahassee" by Tallahassee Democrat, February 2017
- Winner of a Pinnacle Award from 850 Business Magazine, an honor for women who are a moving force in the business world and their communities, August 2016
- Selected as member of Leadership Tallahassee Class 34, May 2016
- Named "Golden A.C.E." (Authentic Community Engagement) in the Category of Entrepreneurship by the Tallahassee Network of Young Professionals for their "Top 20 under 40," May 2016
- Grasslands Brewing Company won Entrepreneurial Startup Business of the Year by Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce, May 2014

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS & COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Co-Chair, Project One Health Regional Advisory Council (2025)
- Committee Member, Florida Bar Citizens Advisory Committee (2025–Present)
- Co-Chair, Grants Decision Team, Women’s Giving Alliance (2024–Present)
- Board Member, The River Club (2022–Present)
- Volunteer, Guardian ad Litem (2015–Present)
- Board Member and Officer, Florida Afterschool Network (2020–Present)
- Board Member, Early Learning Coalition of Duval County (2019–2020, 2023–2025)
- Member, Rotary Club of Jacksonville (2023–2024)
- Planning Committee Member, Girl Scouts of Gateway Council (2022–2024)
- Advocacy Committee Chair and Steering Committee Member, Women’s Giving Alliance (2020–2024)
- Board Member and Officer, Florida Alliance of Children’s Councils and Trusts (2019–2025, Vice Chair '22-'24, Chair '24-'25)
- Fundraising Chair, Northeast Regional Council for Leadership Florida (2022–2024)
- Fundraising Chair, Northwest Regional Council for Leadership Florida (2018–2019)
- Regional Vice President, Florida Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (2017–2021)
- Board Member, The Children’s Campaign (2015–2020)
- Board Member and Chair, Keep Tallahassee Beautiful (2015–2019)
- Board Member, Guardian ad Litem Foundation (2016–2018)
- Council Member, appointed to the District Advisory Council by Leon County School Board Member (2016–2018)
- Commissioner, appointed to the Tallahassee/Leon County Commission on the Status of Women & Girls by Mayor (2017–2019)
- Commissioner, appointed to the Tallahassee Minority Women and Small Business Commission by Mayor (2016–2018)
- Board Member, Kids Incorporated, Inc., (2014–2018)

***Publications, Speaking Engagements & References available upon request**