

Heather M. Wilson, MBA

Professional Summary

I build initiatives that move communities forward. With over a decade of experience across philanthropy, public-private partnerships, and place-based investment, I've led efforts that blend strategy, storytelling, and systems thinking to drive inclusive growth. My work spans managing multimillion-dollar revitalization funds, launching equity-centered programs, and contributing to long-range downtown planning efforts. I bring a clear, steady approach to complex projects, translating broad visions into actionable plans, aligning cross-sector partners, and helping cities and communities take their next steps with purpose.

I am open to roles across industries where strategy, execution, and communication intersect to drive organizational success — including **Communications & Stakeholder Engagement, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Strategic Partnerships & Business Development.**

Key Skills & Competencies

Philanthropy & Grantmaking: Strategic Community Giving, RFP Development, Due Diligence, Impact Measurement

Partnerships & Engagement: Corporate & Nonprofit Relations, Sponsorships, Stakeholder Engagement, Volunteer Program Design

Strategy & Project Leadership: Program Development, Strategic Planning, Budget Oversight, Cross-Sector Collaboration, Data-Driven Evaluation

Communications & Reputation Management: Multi-Channel Strategies, Storytelling, Executive & Board Communications, Crisis Response

Professional Experience

Downtown Durham, Inc.

Downtown Durham Choice Neighborhood Program Manager | Durham, NC | July 2023 – Present

- Oversaw program portfolio of direct funding across four major projects and tracked \$1.4B in adjacent neighborhood investments. Coordinated across a highly-matrixed network of city/county departments, private developers, small business owners, and nonprofit partners to ensure alignment with HUD compliance, community priorities, and long-term economic impact goals
- Designed and launched the \$4.5M Business Retention & Recruitment Fund, establishing grant and loan structures (up to \$25K in grants, \$500K in loans) and technical assistance models projected to support 60+ priority small businesses by 2028
- Served as a trusted spokesperson and reputation steward for the Durham Choice initiative, strengthening public confidence by streamlining cross-sector communication and aligning messaging with shared community outcomes
- Developed and executed a multi-channel communications and engagement strategy (surveys, town halls, text campaigns, web updates), increasing transparency and inclusive participation. Produced branded collateral for high-visibility community events, grant programs, and partner initiatives
- Directed community trust-building events that grew stakeholder recognition and participation. Secured corporate sponsorships, local government and nonprofit participation, and volunteers, expanding partnerships and delivering measurable post-event recognition to sustain engagement

Aya Birth & Community Wellness (Nonprofit Startup)

Project Manager & Founding Board Member | Durham, NC | September 2022 – December 2024

- Directed launch planning and stakeholder engagement across the Triangle region for Aya Birth & Community Wellness. Crafted a storytelling-driven communications strategy that elevated visibility, secured \$355K in foundation and government grants, and deepened partnerships with regional and national funders, as well as community leaders

Family Office

Executive & Operations Assistant | Durham, NC | July 2021 – September 2022

- Designed and launched a philanthropic giving program for a high-net-worth family, deploying \$50K in mission-aligned grants and impact investments. Identified and vetted nonprofit and individual grantees, developed the grantmaking and renewal evaluation framework, and established an annual review structure to drive strategic, values-based contributions

Chapman Partnership for the Homeless

Miami, FL | September 2014 – July 2021

Project Manager, Office of the President & CEO | Miami, FL | Oct 2019 – July 2021

- Led three new strategic initiatives — Social Enterprise Academy, CHAP App, and Workforce Trades Program — overseeing project planning, cross-functional coordination, and stakeholder communications
- Developed and executed comprehensive communication strategies for high-profile initiatives, coordinating resident outreach, staff training, and executive briefings. Integrated outcome-driven storytelling into grant proposals, resulting in stronger alignment with board goals, increased program participation, and the successful renewal of funding
- Served as the spokesperson and external representative of the Social Enterprise Academy, cultivating relationships with corporate sponsors, board members, and philanthropic partners. Positioned the initiative as a corporate responsibility investment opportunity, resulting in \$240K in new funding commitments to expand workforce development programming

Executive Assistant to the President & CEO | Miami, FL | Feb 2019 – Oct 2019

- Served as the liaison between the President & CEO and internal stakeholders, drafting high-level reports and communications for the Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, and staff to align leadership messaging and decision-making

Development Specialist | Miami, FL | Nov 2017 – Feb 2019

- Managed a donor portfolio of corporate and individual contributors (\$25K–\$100K), developing customized engagement strategies and launching a new end-of-year campaign, increasing fundraising revenue by 30% YoY and strengthening donor retention
- Trained teams in Raiser's Edge NXT, improving donor tracking and recognition efforts

Volunteer Specialist | Miami, FL | Sep 2014 – Nov 2017

- Led the design and execution of a high-impact volunteer engagement program, coordinating 20,000+ annual volunteers and spearheading CSR-aligned employee volunteerism service days for corporate and university partners. Identified the need for a centralized platform and led the migration to VolunteerHub, streamlining volunteer registration, communication, and reporting processes
- Fostered long-term relationships with 50+ community organizations resulting in a 20% increase in volunteer placements and a 10% increase in volunteer hours served
- Produced and scripted the annual Volunteer Appreciation Awards & Luncheon, creating storytelling-driven messaging and multimedia presentations that boosted volunteer retention

and recognition

Education

Master of Business Administration

Florida International University – Miami, FL | 2017

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science & Criminal Justice

Rutgers University – New Brunswick, NJ | 2013