

# Sara Moran, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Free Library of Philadelphia

Gina Ciralli & Emily Stankaitis 26 March 2019



Sara Moran received a B.A. in Public Policy from Duke University, an experience that largely informs her nonprofit work today. In 1990 she became Executive Director of the Community Education Fund where she led the organization for nearly five years. From there, Moran ventured into larger nonprofits at a gradual pace. She served as Deputy Director of the Delaware Valley Community Reinvestment Fund for three years before earning her M.S. from the London School of Economics.

Armed with a graduate degree, Moran moved into an executive directorship position with the Delaware Valley Habitat for Humanity. In 2006, Moran shifted to the educational sector when she joined the Free Library of Philadelphia as Chief of Staff. Today, Moran is Vice President of Strategic Initiatives for the organization, focusing on ways to maximize impact across

Philadelphia's more than 50 libraries. Her office generates innovative programming, works with local and state officials, and facilitates key strategy on creating sustainable and impactful measures across the organization.

Libraries are no longer just for reading. Moran and her team have led the charge in expanding the programs and services that the Free Library of Philadelphia has to offer from simply traditional services to programs that the community wouldn't have initially imagined for a library space. They offer a range of services from maker courses to culinary literacy programs -- and even beer gardens. The concept of what a library is has grown tremendously through the thought and care of this strategic initiative team. Their guiding star has been to generate spaces that can anchor the communities of Philadelphia and to encourage connection between all users.

Structuring a new department is no easy task, but Moran has managed to create something special and incredibly valuable for Philadelphian communities. As a leader, Moran has fostered a space where employees feel comfortable to share inventive concepts. It's these ideas that have the potential to change the face of the communities in Philadelphia. The major strength of this team is their ability to embrace creativity and to genuinely listen to the people that they are serving. It's this combination that makes the Free Library of Philadelphia a library that is moving towards the future rather than a

place that is stuck in the past. Having a leader such as Moran who has this vision and can bring out the best in others is crucial to the future success of the Free Library of Philadelphia if they are to continue changing with the times.

One way in which they might be able to gain more ground is through sourcing additional funding. As the majority of their funding comes from the City of Philadelphia, the Free Library has their hands tied with what they are able to do based on their monetary resources. If they could find a way to raise additional funds outside of what they are receiving from their primary funding source, even more innovation could be brought into the community. They are currently exploring potential partnerships and relationships with donors, hoping that these efforts will secure their place in Philadelphia for years to come and spark philanthropic efforts from others around the city.