



Cyndy Ortiz Gustafson, MA

Bio

Cyndy Ortiz Gustafson is the Founder and Director of Strategic Progress and a native Nevadan who has worked in public service, public policy and community development since 1998. She founded Strategic Progress in January of 2002, and has been leading the company since then, managing large-scale policy and systems change projects across the state with a team of highly qualified strategists, researchers, facilitators and analysts.

As principal of Strategic Progress, Ms. Ortiz Gustafson provides strategic organizational, fund development, public finance consulting as well as public policy, public affairs, and regional planning consulting to a variety of non-profit and governmental agencies and programs. Ms. Ortiz Gustafson's work is focused on coordinating and advancing regional public policy. She specializes in large-scale project management and the strategic positioning of systems change initiatives.

For the last four years, she was also the lead strategist for the Governor's Green Zone Initiative, a statewide planning initiative under the State of Nevada Veterans Services Department, which established a statewide comprehensive policy framework for change across the state to better integrate veterans and they return to the state, and to improve their health, education and employment outcomes.

In July 2015, Ms. Ortiz Gustafson and partner Caleb Cage opened the doors to the Veterans Policy Leadership Institute at UNR and UNLV, with physical locations at UNR. The VPLI is a research and policy institute working to advance veteran outcomes through a focus on state and local systems change, data driven public policy investments, and leveraging of public and private assets to address complex health, employment and wellness challenges facing our veterans. Ms. Ortiz and Mr. Cage recently published an article in the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco's *Community Investments* magazine on veterans systems change, and she has published numerous public documents on veterans policy, program and practice change.

In May of 2009, she led a regional effort to safely reduce the number of children in foster care, by advocating for increased front-end support of children and families. This project was funded by Casey Family Programs, the nation's largest foundation working to improve foster care, and the

business case written for the initiative was used by Casey Family Programs as an innovative model across the country. Ms. Gustafson was invited to speak to the Council of Southwest Foundations about this model of business case, community action plan, and funding alignment.

In 2007, Ms. Ortiz Gustafson researched and wrote Southern Nevada's Plan to End Homelessness which lays out the philosophical, logistical, and tactical parameters of a regional, best practice, coordinated plan to address the complex problem of homelessness in our community. In the 3 years since the plan was published, southern Nevada has realized a 20 percent reduction in the number of homeless on the streets.

Over the last 12 years, Ms. Ortiz Gustafson has raised more than \$68 million in grant and program funding for her clients. Ms. Ortiz Gustafson has worked with a variety of local and national clients and organizations including Casey Family Programs, the Nevada System of Higher Education, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, the Lincy Institute, Workforce Connections, St. Jude's Ranch for Children, Nevada Public Radio, the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition, the Nevada State Health Division, Nevada State Department of Training and Rehabilitation, Nevada State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Clark County Department of Juvenile Justice, St. Rose Dominican Hospitals, Boulder City Hospital, Easter Seals Southern Nevada, YMCA Southern Nevada, Western Nevada College, HELP of Southern Nevada, Catholic Charities Southern Nevada, Building Hope Nevada, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Waterkeeper Alliance.

Ms. Ortiz Gustafson has presented her research to large and small groups and has testified in front of the Nevada State Legislature as well as presented policy positions to members of the United States Senate. She provides government affairs and public affairs consulting to her clients, and works with them to track legislation, develop policy positions, develop legislation, connect and collaborate with elected officials, prepare issue briefs and statements, prepare for testimony and negotiate legislative issues.

Her particular areas of interest are in social innovation, developing public private partnerships and alliances, systems change projects, and federal funding competitiveness at the state and local level. She is also a trained facilitator and has facilitated large and small groups, and managed large-scale policy initiatives across the state.

As a graduate student at Washington State University, Ms. Ortiz Gustafson was awarded a full academic scholarship and earned her MA in Political Science with an emphasis in Public Law. Ms. Ortiz Gustafson was also awarded a graduate fellowship with the Women's Research and Education Institute to spend a year in Washington, D.C., working in the United States Senate and writing her masters thesis on policy and public institutions.