

ICA Staff Bios



Terry Dean Bergdall (*President and CEO of the Institute of Cultural Affairs in the United States*) became the chief executive of ICA-USA in September 2009 and has since initiated the creation of new programs built upon ICA's 50-year history. Under Bergdall's direction, ICA created "Accelerate 77", which works with local sustainability initiatives across all 77 communities of Chicago. As a part of the Accelerate 77 program, over 300 university students have been engaged in leadership development and service learning while working in the city's neighborhoods. The "ICA GreenRise Building", at 4750 N. Sheridan, is the largest nonprofit service center in the Midwest, addressing issues of homeless and marginalized populations, and has

become a recognized innovator for establishing a culture of sustainability within a vintage mix-use 166,000 square foot building. ICA has a nationwide training program in facilitation methods known as the "Technology of Participation (ToP) ®."

Bergdall earned his PhD in International Development at the University of Wales and is an adjunct faculty member of the ABCD Institute at Northwestern University ("Asset Based Community Development"). From 1969 to 1984, Bergdall worked for the Ecumenical Institute of Chicago (EI). Staff members of EI composed an experimental community concerned with creating practical ways that the church might become more theologically articulate and socially responsible within a secular context. During Bergdall's tenure with EI, he was involved in pioneering work with residents of distressed communities (e.g. East Garfield Park, Chicago) to foster social and economic development. He began work with EI's sister organization, the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), at its inception. Building upon participatory planning methodologies that arose from community organizing, Bergdall facilitated strategic planning processes with 28 municipalities and public agencies in the northwest suburbs of Chicago during the early 1980s.

Bergdall was co-director of ICA in Kenya from 1984-1989 where he was responsible for a large staff implementing a national program of self-reliant bottom-up village development. While in Nairobi, he initiated and guided a delicate process of ICA restructuring and "indigenization" by creating a long-term strategic plan, intensifying staff development, revamping internal operations, and facilitating the transition of expatriate responsibilities to Kenyan nationals.

In 1989, Terry joined the Swedish Cooperative Centre and became project coordinator of the "Methods for Active Participation Research and Development Project" (MAP) in Zambia,

(Terry Bergdall Bio cont.) Kenya, and Tanzania. The MAP project worked with hundreds of villages to enhance asset-based development within rural cooperatives.

Between 1992 and June 2009 Bergdall worked as a consultant both internationally and in the United States. For three years in Ethiopia, he was team leader of the “Community Empowerment Program” funded by the Swedish government’s agency for international assistance. He has worked with a large number of humanitarian organizations, like CARE and Habitat for Humanity, in 17 African nations. Civil society assignments have taken him to the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. He facilitated the creation of a large strategic plan for the Institute of Social Policy in Kosovo shortly after the NATO intervention. Funded by the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), he facilitated strategic planning processes for five large municipal governments in Swaziland and Zambia. He completed major program evaluations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republic of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Philippines. In North America, he has conducted educational programs on asset-based development with AmeriCorps host-organizations in several states.

Seva Gandhi (*Senior Programming Staff*) graduated with a BA from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She earned her Masters in Social Work from University of Michigan in 2009 with an emphasis on community organizing within the international context. Throughout her career Seva has worked on various rural community-led projects in other countries including Costa Rica, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Gandhi came to ICA in 2010 and is a primary organizer for the Accelerate 77 project as well as ICA’s Service Learning and International Programs. Gandhi serves as a Vice President for the ICA-International Board. Currently, Gandhi, a native Chicagoan, is currently exploring how to increase access to local, organic, and affordable food within an urban context.



Lesley Showers (*Facilities Manager*) has been the ICA GreenRise Property Manager since 2010 where she oversees the building's transformation into an energy efficient example of a mixed use landmark building. In June 2014, ICA GreenRise received Energy Star certification. Currently, Lesley is overseeing the installation of a 150kW photovoltaic solar array on the ICA GreenRise rooftops. Showers holds a BA in Broadcasting and Communications and a BA in Architecture and has extensive experience in energy outreach and education, as well as sustainable design. Showers was lead architect at Pataus Design, where she focused on commercial and residential renovations, with a specialty in sustainable design.

(Lesley Showers Bio cont.) In addition to her professional responsibilities, Showers is a resident of ICA's Intentional Community on the 7th floor of the GreenRise. The community consists of 30 members who live a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity through small private apartments organized around shared showers, bath, and a large "family style" kitchen and dining room.

Jennifer Hirsch, Ph.D. (*Fellow*) is an applied anthropologist specializing in sustainability, cultural diversity, collaborative governance, community development, coalition-building, and experiential education. She works as an independent consultant and partners with nonprofit organizations on community sustainability projects. Hirsch is recognized nationally for fostering grassroots participation in sustainability planning and implementation, using a unique combination of methodologies from anthropology, popular education, asset-based community development, participatory facilitation, and museum education. She holds Fellow appointments with The Institute of Cultural Affairs, The Field Museum's Division of Environment, Culture, and Conservation, and serves on the faculty of The Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University. From 2007 to 2012, Dr. Hirsch led The Field Museum's Chicago program on community-based sustainability and climate change action, during which time she consulted for the City of Chicago, co-leading their community engagement initiative for the Chicago Climate Action Plan. The process she developed at The Field Museum for engaging diverse communities in climate action is showcased as a best practice in community engagement on the U.S. Department of Energy's Better Buildings website. She regularly advises and presents on sustainability and community development. Previously, Dr. Hirsch worked at Northwestern University, as Associate Director of Study Abroad, Director of Chicago Field Studies, and Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology. Dr. Hirsch has a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from Duke and a B.A. in American Culture from Northwestern.



Caitlin Sarro (*Program Manager and Volunteer Coordinator*) began working with the Institute of Cultural Affairs in 2012 while attending the college of Urban Planning and Public Affairs at University of Illinois at Chicago. Sarro worked on asset mapping the 77 communities in Chicago (as part of the Accelerate 77 project) as well as served as the webmaster to the projects site and online mapping database. In addition, Sarro is an alumna of the Americorps Public Allies Chicago program which focuses on capacity building within nonprofit organizations. Currently, Sarro coordinates ICA volunteers and continues to work on the Accelerate 77 project.