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LEADING WOMEN IN BUSINESS DETROIT



Co-creating a New World with Nonprofits

Co.act Detroit accelerates transformative impact in southeast Michigan's nonprofit community through innovative programs, equitable access to resources, and a core belief in the power of possibility.

“**T**he real wealth of Detroit's nonprofit community is the thousands of people committed to challenging what's possible,” says Allandra Bulger, executive director of Co.act Detroit. “At Co.act Detroit, it's our job—and our privilege—to support and connect nonprofits and help harness their collective energy for social change.”

Growing up in Detroit, Bulger learned early on the importance of building community. “Service and activism were important to my family,” she recalls. After earning a master's degree in public administration—with a focus in nonprofit organization and management—from Oakland University, Bulger stepped into a dynamic career working with a variety of nonprofit organizations.

“Two patterns emerged: First, I saw people in leadership who were far removed from those most affected by their decisions. I also saw nonprofits in constant cycles of starvation. That motivated me to grow in my own leadership and to deepen my focus on supporting the sector.” In 2018, she was named the inaugural executive director of Co.act.

“We are working to shift the culture in southeast Michigan by building more

resilient and connected nonprofit communities,” says Bulger. “Nonprofits in our area do such important work, but they're often siloed from each other—there might be another organization across town working to address the same needs and often competing for the same resources. Our job is to bring them together and help them access the resources and training they need.”

Space for Transformation

The simplicity of that mission belies the complexity of the work the Co.act team is doing: on any given day, they can be found iterating, learning, and scaling a wide range of programming to meet emergent nonprofit needs. It's a complexity best captured by the Activate Fund, a grant program comprised of pilot programs in areas including direct funding, collaborative support, capacity building, and Co.act's most recent program, an Earned Revenue Accelerator.

That means its state-of-the-art space is only one part of where the magic happens: classes, seminars, meetings, and more. “A core value is accessibility,” says Bulger. “Everyone is welcome.” That value came front and center with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the

Co.act team's quick pivot to virtual resources.

Offerings include Co.act's signature program, Co.Lab Connect, which invites nonprofit leaders to meet one-on-one with top minds in accounting, data, finance, and more. Other programs help leaders embrace the power of digital fundraising, learn how to prevent burnout, locate funding, and more. Co.act also plays a critical role in convening nonprofit and foundation leaders to have difficult yet critical conversations.

Now, Co.act is in growth mode as it continues to foster relationships locally and nationally. The organization is deepening its convening roles as the team continues to challenge ideas of scarcity by infusing an abundance mindset into everything they do. “Regardless of what comes next, I'm confident that the team we've built and the partnerships we've strengthened will help us evolve to meet the needs of the sector,” says Bulger.



PHOTOS BY J. LINDSEY PHOTOGRAPHY

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