



i.c.stars announces Karin Norington-Reaves as new CEO

Workforce development expert to lead i.c.stars' national expansion

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, July 9, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- i.c.stars announces the appointment of Karin M. Norington-Reaves as the new Chief Executive Officer, effective immediately. A dedicated executive with a deep commitment to community development and workforce innovation, Norington-Reaves brings a wealth of experience, values, and a passion for mission-driven leadership.

Following an extensive nationwide search, the Board of Directors selected Norington-Reaves for her alignment with i.c.stars' mission of creating economic opportunity through technology education and leadership training for underserved adults. Her background in workforce development, public service, and community advocacy made her an ideal choice to lead the organization into its next phase of growth.

Richard Linden, vice chairman of the board of i.c.stars and chair of the search committee of alums, staff, and board members, commented, "Karin's extensive experience and commitment to workforce development were critical factors in our decision. We are excited to see her advance our mission as we expand nationally and enhance our impact on the lives of our participants and the communities we serve."

David Edelstein, chairman of the board, also expressed his enthusiasm about the appointment, stating, "Karin Norington-Reaves embodies the qualities and leadership we sought in our next CEO. We are confident she will guide our national growth with vision and dedication, and we look forward to the positive change she will bring to i.c.stars."

Norington-Reaves, a recognized national thought leader, has a distinguished career marked by significant contributions to workforce development and community advocacy, along with deep ties to Chicago's business, government, and community leaders. Her professional experience includes serving for over a decade as the founding Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership), a position appointed by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. Under Norington-Reaves' leadership, The Partnership helped more than 100,000 people gain employment, collaborated with 2,000+ employers, managed over \$500 million in federal funds, and raised more than \$150 million in philanthropic funds, including a \$10.9 million grant awarded by the Walmart Foundation — the

largest gift in the history of the foundation.

Reflecting on her new role, Norington-Reaves said, "I fell in love with i.c.stars nearly ten years ago when I had a chance to witness its power and impact as a guest at one of its ubiquitous high teas. I have sung its praises since then, so this is a full-circle moment for me. I'm honored to lead this phenomenal organization into its next chapter and to continue the work I'm passionate about — economic empowerment through workforce development. I'm excited to see how we expand i.c.stars across the country, elevating untapped talent from often overlooked communities and connecting our participants to transformative careers in information technology within the private and public sectors."

Outgoing CEO Sandee Kastrul, who co-founded i.c.stars in 1998, has been a driving force behind the organization's success, transforming it from a modest initiative into a nationally recognized model for workforce development and social impact. Commenting on the transition, Kastrul said, "We are delighted to have Karin join us as our new leader. Her extensive experience and dedication to workforce development will be invaluable as we continue to empower underserved communities through technology and leadership training. I am confident she will inspire and lead us to new heights." Kastrul will become Chief Innovation Officer and continue serving on the i.c.stars board.

About Karin M. Norington-Reaves

Karin M. Norington-Reaves is a lifelong public servant with over 30 years of experience spanning education, law, advocacy, community, and workforce development. In 2012, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle appointed her the founding chief executive officer of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership), a position she held for over a decade. She is a recognized thought leader on the national stage, serving as a keynote speaker, panelist, and presenter at numerous conferences and educational institutions. Karin's civic engagement extends to numerous organizations, including the Cook County Economic Development Advisory Committee, the Cook County Commission on Social Innovation, the Board of Trustees for the Workforce Development Council of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and many others. Her contributions have earned her multiple awards, such as the Excellence in Public Service award by the Civic Federation of Chicago and the Woman of Excellence award from the Chicago Defender.

Before The Partnership, Karin served as Director of Cook County Works, Deputy Director of the Office of Urban Assistance for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and Chief of Staff for the City of Chicago's 20th Ward. Karin spent eight years as a litigator for the U.S. Department of Justice, the Maryland Office of the Attorney General, and the Citizens Utility Board in the fields of mental health law, education, contracts, and public utility consumer protection. She is a former adjunct law professor at Loyola University's Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy. Karin began her career as a Teach for America Corps member and first-grade bilingual teacher in Compton, California.

In March 2022, Karin resigned from the helm of The Partnership to run for Congress in Illinois' 1st District. Over the past two years, she has consulted with universities and community-based organizations on economic development, education, and workforce development matters in Chicagoland. A Chicago native, Karin holds a J.D. from Southern Methodist University School of Law in Dallas, Texas, and a B.A. in Spanish Language and Literature from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She is also the proud mother of a blended family of four. Of all her titles, she likes "Mama" best.

About i.c.stars:

i.c.stars is a transformative initiative that empowers underserved adults through a comprehensive two-year tech and leadership program. Combining four months of intensive training with a 24-month residency, the program supports participants with stipends and essential services to ensure their success. Through strategic collaborations with leading corporations and a robust social enterprise arm, i.c.stars not only breaks the cycle of poverty but also drives significant economic growth within communities. For the full release and more information, visit icstars.org.

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