

NACOLE CANDIDATE ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidates are encouraged to fill out the following questionnaire, to give NACOLE members relevant information when voting for Board members.

Name: **Gianina Irlando**

- 1) Position Sought: **President**
- 2) Geographic Location: **Denver, Colorado/Bay Area, California**
- 3) Current Oversight Position and Organization: **Principal, Irlando Consulting, LLC**
- 4) Number of Years as a NACOLE Member: **8.5**
- 5) Please list Annual Conferences or training opportunities in which you have attended:

19th Annual NACOLE Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah
21st Annual NACOLE Conference, Riverside, California, Panelist
22nd Annual NACOLE Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Panelist
23rd Annual NACOLE Conference, Spokane, Washington, Panelist
24th Annual NACOLE Conference, St. Petersburg, Florida, Panelist
25th Annual NACOLE Conference, Detroit, Michigan, Panelist
26th Annual NACOLE Conference, Virtual, Panelist
27th Annual NACOLE Conference, Virtual, Conference Co-Chair

Oakland Regional Conference, 2016
Denver Regional Conference, 2017
Oakland Regional Conference, 2019
Nashville Regional Conference, 2019, Panelist
Washington DC Regional Conference 2019
Austin Academic Symposium, 2020

Various Webinars, including as a panelist

- 6) Are you currently a member of the NACOLE Board? **Yes**
If so, in what capacity:

President
 Vice President
 Board Member At-Large

For the following questions, please respond in no more than 200 words.

1) Why do you want to serve on the NACOLE Board?

NACOLE has been a daily part of my life for almost 7 years. I served on many committees, most recently Co-Chairing the 2021 Annual Conference Committee, and working on the new Organizational Development Committee which is building capacity to increase NACOLE's staff for the increased work we have seen in the last several years. This capacity building was a vision many of us had several years ago and could not negate once 2020 underscored the critical need for law enforcement accountability in many more jurisdictions.

I have also worked on the Membership Advocacy and Support Committee as we developed the Peer-to-Peer program, updated our mission, and created NACOLE's new vision, values, and goals. The committee felt that it was time to update and reaffirm our values and commitment to effective oversight after twenty-five years.

Most importantly, I want to be NACOLE's President and use my experience and skills to help grow the organization and thoughtfully guide oversight work as a passionate member and an impacted community member. I have years of successful career milestones and plenty of choices of where and how to be impactful in this chaotic world and independent civilian oversight is where I call home.

2) What skills/experience/qualities do you bring to the NACOLE Board?

I have over 30 years of experience working on equity and justice issues. Along with an extensive understanding of the political and legislative arena, I have managed many electoral campaigns and worked for many local and state legislators. I have been a trusted and strategic advisor in stakeholder engagement for social impact in the legal, educational, and criminal justice reform fields.

In 2013, I began work in policing and corrections oversight and developed rich and rewarding skills with the Office of the Independent Monitor (OIM). As the Community Relations Ombudsman, I collaborated with community partners and elected officials to support three legislative enhancements to the OIM's authority in Denver. I also managed the mediation program and spearheaded the creation of evidence-based programming seeking to improve relations between youth and officers. Over thirty-five community organizations and academic institutions helped to develop a curriculum addressing racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system. I was responsible for raising over \$500K for this programming, hosting over 50 forums, training over 400 officers, 220 facilitators, and thousands of youth.

I bring passion, political strategy, and executive management skills, with decades of civil rights knowledge and work to NACOLE.

- 3) What challenges does NACOLE face as a rapidly growing membership organization?

Today, I see NACOLE's old challenges as having created opportunities. Before 2020, the Board regularly discussed building capacity to lessen the immense burden on our small staff. We also talked about eventually diversifying our funding sources to grow and better support our membership. The murder of George Floyd last spring catapulted NACOLE from strong and steady growth to being the national go-to organization for oversight inquiries and expertise.

Hundreds of jurisdictions were starting oversight or looking for stronger authority. People were looking for existing legislation, the media were looking for support to document the movement. The need for training and technical assistance exploded and the staff and Board stepped up and took on all this work, but it was not and is not sustainable.

We suddenly had to think seriously about what this level of work looked like in the long run. This year we received a grant for research, and we hired a fundraising firm with the goal of hiring an executive director by 2023. We are also clear about the need for a development director very soon. The new challenges will be to stay on course and meet all these needs with a steady heart and mind.

- 4) How have you contributed to NACOLE's work? Please include all committees you have served on or led, as well as any other NACOLE volunteer efforts.

I served on the Annual Conference Committee for two years, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 2018, was Chair of the Scholarship Committee, Co-Chair of the Member Support and Advocacy Committee for two years and am the Co-Chair of the Annual Conference Committee in 2021.

Denver's Office of the Independent Monitor was chosen to host a regional conference in 2017 and I assisted the Director of Training and Education with all aspects of that regional training. This included developing panels, inviting panelists, soliciting sponsorships and doing outreach and logistics.

I also spearheaded the Nashville Regional Training in Nashville in May of 2019. I assisted with engagement of the Nashville community and government liaisons, helped create the panels, secured panelists and helped with funding and outreach.

Finally, I have submitted panel proposals, presented, and shepherded for dozens of panels for annual conferences, regional conferences, and webinars.

- 5) Please share highlights of your background/experience in law enforcement oversight.

My background and experience with law enforcement misconduct began as an impacted family member from the time I was six. At that time there was no oversight, and a lawsuit and settlement were the only remedy to the harsh treatment my mother received after being arrested on a picket line. While this was not the only encounter with police misconduct that has touched my life, it was clear to all of us then, that police should not police themselves without being accountable to the public.

As the Community Relations Ombudsman at Denver's OIM, I had the opportunity to utilize my knowledge, experience, and strong relationships with community members to help strengthen the authority of the office on three different occasions, including a charter amendment which passed with 72% of voter support. I also spearheaded the creation of the Bridging the Gap: Kids and Cops program. The program was intended to teach law enforcement community impact while keeping our youth safe during contacts. Partnerships with stakeholders allowed for the creation, testing and evaluation of a model that was proven effective to keep youth safer in Denver.

- 6) If elected/re-elected, what would you most like to accomplish as a Board member?

I will continue to bring a community lens to the work of the Board. Understanding the trauma, resilience, power, and strength of the communities represented by NACOLE's member agencies is so very important and a necessary perspective for every vote and discussion.

I would like to see NACOLE help more newer agencies and advance effectiveness and authority for existing member agencies. While we clearly are the experts in oversight, NACOLE could foster so many more professionals to feed the growth of oversight with more resources. This could be done with much more training than we have the capacity to accomplish with current staff.

I would like to see NACOLE in talks with state and federal legislators regularly to help with policy recommendations and legislation that allows us to improve law enforcement and public safety in our communities.

NACOLE needs an Executive Director and a Development Director to guide the growth and develop the resources for all the above work. What we are doing now is not sustainable and it will take big decisions and resources to make this leap.

7) Additional information for voters to consider:

I believe I can provide strategic leadership to the NACOLE Board of Directors, members, and staff. My endorsers will tell you I am a trusted advisor and have demonstrated servant leadership and that my strong background and experience has prepared me for this opportunity. My supporters encouraged me to step up to run for President and wondered how I could put so many people into elected office and not want to run myself. I made a lot of excuses, but I was not ready, and I was a little scared.

I am now ready to run and lead with courage and compassion. I will collaborate with the Board, with all of you and with the communities who need us and are facing tragic incidents daily. I want NACOLE to stand strong in the history books as THE leader in law enforcement accountability. I want us to say we have data that demonstrates that we are effective at making public safety equitable. I want to be able to say that our communities served by sworn officers on the streets and in our jails were part of the solutions we found to the current criminal justice system.