

My AADO Story

My journey into fundraising didn't begin with a title. It began with a deep belief that communities deserve access to opportunity, and that the right resources, when directed thoughtfully, can transform lives.

Throughout my career, I've worked at the intersection of arts, education, and community impact. I've always been drawn to organizations that serve young people and creative communities, because I believe storytelling, expression, and access to opportunity are powerful tools for change. Early on, I realized that fundraising was more than asking for money. It was about building relationships, aligning people around a shared vision, and creating the conditions for organizations to thrive.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of helping organizations grow their fundraising capacity, strengthen partnerships, and develop strategies that connect mission with meaningful investment. My approach to development is deeply relational. I believe fundraising is strongest when it is rooted in authenticity, transparency, and a genuine commitment to the communities we serve.

Today, as Chief Development Officer at Reel Works, I lead fundraising and strategic partnership efforts that support young storytellers and emerging media creators. Our work focuses on expanding access to creative careers and building pathways into industries that have historically lacked representation. Through initiatives like the MediaMKRS Summit, we bring together industry leaders, educators, and young creatives to imagine a more inclusive future for the media and entertainment fields.

One of the things I love most about fundraising is the opportunity to connect people who care with work that matters. When donors, partners, and communities come together around a shared purpose, incredible things become possible. I've seen firsthand how the right support can open doors for young people, amplify their voices, and create lasting change.

As a fundraiser, I also see my role as helping reshape how philanthropy

works. It's not just about raising funds. It's about ensuring that philanthropy is responsive, equitable, and rooted in trust. I'm proud to be part of a growing community of development professionals who are pushing the field forward and expanding what fundraising leadership can look like.

Being part of the AADO community reminds me that representation and support within our profession matters. When we share our stories, celebrate our impact, and uplift one another, we strengthen the entire sector.

For me, fundraising is ultimately about possibility. It's about creating the connections, resources, and momentum that allow organizations and communities to build the future they deserve.

---Monica Daniels

Monica Daniels is Chief Development Officer at Reel Works, where she leads fundraising, partnerships, and strategic initiatives that expand access to careers in media and storytelling. She is passionate about building equitable pathways for young creatives and strengthening the nonprofit sector through relationship-driven, community-centered fundraising.