



Career Highlights

Laurie Peterka, Principal Consultant

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Inspired by what is happening in the community, Ms. Peterka is delighted to use her skills as an innovator and connector to contribute!

After moving to Saipan in 1993 for a working-vacation, and employed in a few different tourism jobs, she founded Practical Solutions LLC in 1998. Her goal being to offer out of the box, innovative thinking for projects, agencies and incubating ideas and/or helping to grow small businesses. Laurie has engaged with a variety of different industries and projects through the years. She and her consultancy services associates focus on project management, communications, logistics, resource efficiency and incubating concepts and ideas as well as grant writing and grants management.

To integrate and submerge herself in the community, Laurie spends nearly equal time working and volunteering. She admits that this is hard on her, but she really believes that giving and sharing are essential for success. Laurie shifted her focus from for profit projects to non-profit projects about 12-years ago. Through her journey, she narrowed her focus to her primary passions - community sports and ocean conservation - but she is also mentoring or helping create social entrepreneur-oriented projects. Laurie often works with some of the students and young professional in our community encouraging them to take good risks that will help them learn and grow and give back. She shares with them some of the ways that she has done this - she believes strongly in leading by example.



- Laurie is currently a member of the MVA and previously served as an active committee member from 2005 to 2009. In this role, she worked closely with board members from the Japanese business sector to help create sporting activities for our tourist and our community. Most notable would be the Marianas Cup Beach Volleyball Festival, the Xterra Triathlon, and the Saipan Marathon. Today, she is hoping to pursue more on developing the CNMI sports tourism economy with this agency.
- During the same period, Laurie was an active member of the Rotary Club of Saipan (RCS) from 2005 to 2014. Her most notable project with the RCS was building the Garapan Skate Park where she worked with our disenfranchised youth to help them believe that they could do anything they put their minds to through the creation their own non-profit called Island Sk8 Society. Later Laurie helped to kickstart a Rotary Club in the Republic of Kiribati. The RCS bestowed her with Rotarian of the Year in 2005 and the Service Above Self award in 2006.
- In 2004, Laurie helped co-found the Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association and has served as its president since 2007 where she is committed to finding ways to provide a solid platform for the community to build volleyball programs. She is implementing strategies with the CNMI public and private school systems (PSS and the COPSSA respectively) and hopes to see some similar projects with NMC soon.
- An active member and leader with Beautify CNMI! from 2008 to 2013, Laurie helped organize trash clean-ups, plant trees and conducted a study to help re-direct graffiti artists in our community. Coordinating with NMC Americorp students and a student leader from Marianas Baptist Academy, every village was documented, and artists identified. Steps were taken to encourage artists to redirect their work at the skatepark.
- In 2008, at the request of community elders, Laurie helped community members organize themselves and organize a campaign to petition then President Bush for the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument and subsequently helped co-found the Friends of the Mariana Trench in 2009. This effort was lauded by the Beautify CNMI! 2009 Environmental Champion Award.



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- Laurie was recruited by the CNMI Department of Commerce in 2009 to write grants for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) with then Governor Fitial's grant writing team where she wrote grants for CNMI government agencies (DLNR, CUC and CPA).
- From 2009-2016, Laurie focused her ocean conservation work by assisting with outreach, education and policy development supporting the creation shark protection laws in the CNMI and Guam. She expanded regionally working closely with former Senator Carlotta DeLeon Guerrero and the Association of Pacific Islands Legislatures (APIL) accomplishing full shark sanctuaries in the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Kiribati and the Micronesian Regional Shark Sanctuary Network.
- During 2010, Laurie helped organize and facilitate the DOI's Forum on Economic and Labor Development and helped the Saipan Chamber of Commerce write a grant to the Office of Insular Affairs securing funding for the CNMI's first prevailing wage study. These activities were significant early steps in the eventual shift of the CNMI's wage and labor landscape.
- From 2010-2016, Laurie served as a council member for the Marianas Resource Conservation and Development Council. During this time, she collaborated with eight local businesses to create, and then launched and completed, one of the original on the job training programs via the CNMI Department of Commerce and the US Department of the Interior. The goal was to help local businesses experiment with their individual capacity for implementing the training they needed to hire our local workforce.
- Laurie was elected a board member for the Northern Mariana Sports Association in 2011 and subsequently won the Sports Administrator of the Year Awards for 2012 and 2018. While she has not had a lot of active history with the NMSA, her 2018-2019 goals include improving stakeholder relations and facilitating organizational growth.
- In 2013, Laurie helped co-found the Pacific Ombudsman for Humanitarian Law focused on how to help the community deal with inter and intra island human-trafficking in the CNMI and the Pacific.
- In 2014, Laurie was part of grant writing team that secured the funding for the Kagman Community Health Center.
- In 2015, Laurie facilitated the creation of the Alternative Zero Coalition helping several groups to refine their common united purpose and goal - no to excessive military training in our islands.
- In 2018, Laurie revived the Friends of the Mariana Trench (FOMT) with capacity building efforts and developing community partnerships with the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA), the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands (HANMI) and the Northern Marianas Trades Institute (NMTI). Laurie coordinated with FOMT, MVA and HANMI to create a traveling photo exhibit using the NOAA photos from the 2016 deep water research expedition of the Trench. She also worked closely with the NMTI and several science community members to host the first underwater robotics building workshop for teachers and students.

Throughout Ms. Peterka's project highlights, she helped several government agencies with grant writing and grants management, organizational adjustments and technology improvements. Much of the work we do is funded by grants and/or philanthropic organizations focused on best-practices policy development and implementation. For more than 20-years, Laurie also maintained her professional trainer certification and taught circuit training and yoga classes at the Hyatt Club Elan in Saipan. In addition to being a beach volleyball player, Laurie is certified in training programs and coaching for indoor and beach volleyball.

Today, Laurie is focused on helping CNMI sports recover from the devastating damages caused by two super-typhoons back-to-back in three years - most notably the Oleai Sports Complex - but she is also eager to see a community alliance



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aimed at expanding the vision of sports tourism in the CNMI by uniting all stakeholders to an achievable vision. Laurie is also pursuing a concept where she can see an altogether different kind of community collaboration where culture and science meet to help guide natural resource management policy and decision-making through an inter-generational program guided by STEM principles. Laurie also continues to pursue her work with colleagues regionally to establish a technical service for lawmakers aimed at helping digest and track science and policy best-practices to help them implement executive-level policy commitments.