



Renee Okafor: Brand Kit

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Sample. Renee Okafor and everyone named here are fictional.

LANGUAGE FOR MY NEXT ROLE

This is my brand kit from a Career Wayfinder I completed through Elevate Labs. The language comes from how six people who've worked with me describe my work. It's here so I can describe myself as plainly as they do, in applications, on LinkedIn, and in interviews. Anything in [brackets] is a detail for me to fill in.

How I Describe Myself

I lead teams through change in complicated, rule-heavy programs. For 14 years I've run federal grant programs, most recently leading the team that supported a program funding about 300 community organizations in 12 states. People who've worked with me describe someone steady under pressure, the person they go to when something breaks, and a manager who gets her team through hard stretches without losing the work. I'm bringing that to nonprofits and health care, where the work reaches people more directly.

What I'm Known For

Getting people through change. When our contract was being recompeted and morale dropped, I met with each person on my team, and we didn't miss a deliverable in the program's last six months. When our federal client switched grants systems with four months' notice, I built the plan that got more than 300 grantees reporting on time.

Fixing what's broken, without blame. When an audit flagged reporting gaps, I owned it, built a quarterly check, and the next audit came back clean. When two grantees were fighting over a shared subaward, I got them on one call and off it with a plan they both signed off on.

Making complicated things usable. I turned a 60-page grantee manual into a 12-page guide and a one-page checklist, and other teams adopted the format. I'm the person colleagues come to for what the regulations actually require, in plain language.

Where I Do My Best Work

Three things I'm looking for in my next role:

- **A team to lead.** I do my best work with people to lead, not just a process to run.
- **Something to fix.** A program, system, or process that isn't working yet.
- **Hands on the work.** A role where I still touch the work, not one where I only manage it from a distance.

Words I Can Use

The words people reached for about my work: steady, trusted, unflappable, calm, dependable, responsive, organized, thorough, precise, fair, generous, kind, supportive, clear, practical, and warm.

Ready-to-Use Lines

LinkedIn headline (two options)

Operations and program leader | Leading teams through change in complex, rule-heavy programs | 14 years in federal grants, moving into nonprofits and health care

Program and operations leader | Grants management, implementation, and teams that deliver under pressure

LinkedIn About section

For 14 years I've run grant programs where the rules are complicated and the stakes are real. Most recently, I led the team supporting a federal program that funds about 300 community organizations in 12 states.

What I'm known for is getting people through change. When our federal client switched grants systems with four months' notice, I built the training plan, ran weekly office hours, and paired grantees who were struggling with ones who'd figured it out. Every grantee reported on time, and the agency used the plan for two other programs. When our contract was being recompeted and morale dropped, my team didn't miss a deliverable.

I also make complicated things usable. I turned a 60-page grantee manual into a 12-page guide and a checklist that other teams adopted, and I'm the person colleagues call when they need to know what the regulations actually require.

Outside work, I serve on the board of a community food pantry, where I wrote our first full grant application. It brought in \$85,000, the largest grant the pantry has received.

I'm looking for a role leading operations, programs, or implementation at a nonprofit or health care organization, somewhere the work reaches people directly.

Elevator pitch: 15 seconds

I lead teams through change in complicated programs. For 14 years that's been federal grants. Now I'm bringing it to nonprofits and health care.

Elevator pitch: 30 seconds

I've spent 14 years running federal grant programs, most recently leading a team that supported about 300 community organizations in 12 states. What I'm known for is getting people through change: when our funder switched systems on four months' notice, I built the plan that got every grantee reporting on time. I'm looking to lead operations or programs at a nonprofit or health organization, where the work reaches people more directly.

Elevator pitch: for the move into a new industry

Federal grants taught me how money, rules, and people fit together under pressure. Nonprofits and health systems run on the same three things. What changes is that I'd be closer to the people the money is for.

Résumé Lines

Fill in the brackets with real numbers, or cut them.

- Led a team of 9 grants specialists supporting a federal grant program of about \$40 million a year across 300 grantees in 12 states.
- Led the program's move to a new grants management system on four months' notice: built the training plan, ran weekly office hours, and set up peer support between grantees. Every grantee reported on time, and the agency adopted the plan for two other programs.
- Kept the team on every deliverable through a contract recompetes, meeting one-on-one with each staff member. [Add team retention through that period, if you know it.]
- Answered an audit finding by designing a quarterly reporting check; the next audit came back clean.
- Rewrote 60-page grantee guidance as a 12-page guide and one-page checklist; help desk questions dropped [by about how much?], and other program teams adopted the format.
- Board member, community food pantry: wrote the organization's first full grant application, winning \$85,000, its largest grant to date.

Cover Letter Lines

Opening: I've spent 14 years making complicated grant programs work for the organizations they fund, and I'm applying for [title] because I want to do that work closer to the people it serves.

Proof: When our federal client switched grants systems on four months' notice, I built the plan that got more than 300 grantees reporting on time, and the agency adopted it for two other programs.

Proof: I lead teams through change. During a contract recompetes, my team didn't miss a deliverable, and when the contract ended, I spent my last weeks helping each of them with their résumés and making calls on their behalf.

Interview Examples

1. The grants system switch. What was going on: the agency moved to a new grants system with four months' notice, and the old system was shutting off regardless. What I did: built the training plan, ran weekly office hours, paired grantees who were struggling with ones who'd figured it out, and kept the grantees and our federal client on the same page. What changed: every grantee reported on time, our client never had to escalate an issue, and the agency used the plan for two other programs. [Add: how many grantees were behind at the start, if you know.] Use it for: leading a change, working under a deadline, managing stakeholders.

2. The recompetes and the layoffs. What was going on: our contract was being recompeted and morale dropped; later, the contract ended and the whole team was let go. What I did: met one-on-one with each person and kept the work focused; when the layoffs came, helped each person with their résumé and made calls for them before starting my own search. What changed: no missed deliverables in the program's last six months. [Add: what happened for your team afterward, if you know.] Use it for: leading through uncertainty, supporting your team, and "why are you looking?"

3. The audit fix. What was going on: an audit flagged gaps in our reporting. What I did: owned it without blaming grantees, and built a quarterly check to catch problems early. What changed: the next audit came back clean. Use it for: a mistake or failure, accountability, a process you improved.

Also ready: the feuding grantees (conflict), the 60-page manual (communication), and the pantry grant (community or fundraising).

People Who'll Vouch for Me

Daniel Reyes and Imani Brooks signed their messages to me (they're in my report). I'll ask them for a LinkedIn recommendation.

Hi [Daniel], thank you for what you wrote in my Career Wayfinder. It meant a lot. Would you be willing to turn a few lines of it into a LinkedIn recommendation? I'm looking at operations and program roles at nonprofits and health organizations, so anything about how I led the team would help most.

How I Talk About What's Next

When someone asks why I'm looking

The federal contract I led ended in April, and the whole program team was let go. I'm proud of how we finished: we didn't miss a deliverable, and I made sure my team had what they needed for their next step. Now I want to bring what I've learned to an organization where the work reaches people more directly.

If "contractor" comes up: I led the team that ran the program's grants support for six years, with the federal agency as our client.