



María Rodríguez
Arlington, VA

President and CEO
Vanguard Communications

María leads a talented staff of diverse individuals at Vanguard Communications — the PR agency she co-founded with a business partner at age 27 — to advance social change and champion causes to help protect the health and well-being of our planet and its people.

As the daughter of Spanish immigrants, María learned the importance of education and hard work early in life. Finding her true “calling” as a PR practitioner, she

has been honing her skills at social marketing, media relations, multicultural/multiethnic outreach and event production for the last three decades. At the time of its inception in 1987, Vanguard was one of only a few agencies in Washington, D.C., working exclusively on social issues led by nonprofit or government agencies. With a keen eye on cultural and linguistic competence and the needs of underserved populations, María and her colleagues carved out a unique market space for Vanguard to thrive.

María and her team have helped Willie Nelson raise awareness about the critical role of the family farmer in caring for our health, economy and environment by promoting the annual Farm Aid concert. She promoted Earth Day 1990, leading to the establishment of national recycling programs across the country. She has implemented communication strategies to reduce infant mortality, prevent substance abuse and rally communities to address underage drinking.

María also has brought attention to the mental health needs of children and helped educate minority women about the risk of heart disease. She demonstrated her commitment to mentoring young PR professionals through the Comunicadores for the Future, a joint program she conceptualized in partnership with The George Washington University’s Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute to expand diversity in the communications field. María has built a distinguished roster of longstanding clients in the areas of public health, behavioral health, diversity and inclusion, education and the environment. And all the while, staying true to the company’s mission of helping nonprofits, government agencies and foundations lift up the communities they serve. María received her bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from The George Washington University.

María is the Treasurer of Girl Scouts Nation’s Capital Board of Directors and a member of the Governance Advisory and Investment Committees. She served as a National Delegate for the 2020 National Council Session of GSUSA and is a Lifetime Girl Scout member.