

# Quire Consulting Company Overview

---

Prepared by Quire Consulting, 2022



# Quire is...

a collection of pages in a book's binding  
an archaic spelling of choir  
a human-centered design firm

# **Quire is a human-centered design practice founded on the simple idea that people are the heart of any organization.**

---

Through qualitative research and design strategy, we connect with stakeholders early in the planning process. We help our clients understand the behaviors, values, interests and needs that shape the ways people engage with their organizations. Using that knowledge, we collaborate with our clients to design a future that can accomplish their goals.

# From input to impact

---

We use the tools of human-centered design to unlock new approaches to challenges big and small.

## **Customer Discovery**

Leaders at the beginning of a new venture often struggle to see the world beyond the lens of their idea. They spend valuable time and resources designing what they want to make only to discover their audience wants something else entirely. We help individuals and teams identify their audience and get to know the values, beliefs and behaviors that inform everything they do. This knowledge helps our clients replace stereotype and assumption with actionable insights.

## **Strategic Planning**

We approach strategic planning as a collaborative partnership that is grounded in internal and external qualitative research. We help organizations move beyond assumptions, identify their core challenges and work together to develop the best way forward.

- Internal stakeholder analysis
- Product-market fit
- Metric definition

## **Program Evaluation & Testing**

We work with clients to understand the viability of their programs and services across implementation stages from concept to implementation. We engage with current and/or potential audiences through the tools and theoretical framing of applied anthropology. Our research helps clients define success and how to achieve it.

## **Workshop Facilitation**

We support leaders and teams by leading short term workshops and retreats. We work with our clients to determine the topic area and create a content approach that works with a variety of communication and participation styles. Topics include:

- Board governance
- Strategies for growth
- Understanding your impact

**At Quire, we have built an exceptional team of researchers and strategists. We use our deep knowledge to design projects that fit the needs of our clients.**

---

We believe in both education and life experience as pathways to expertise. While Quire's team is intentionally diverse in race, culture and personal narrative, we see ourselves as research partners, not proxies. We are most interested in the stories of people beyond ourselves. Our role is to bring those experiences into our clients' processes and make them count.

# Autumn Sanders

Founder, CEO



Since 2010, Autumn Sanders has worked with Fortune 500 companies, start-ups, and nonprofits, helping them grow their businesses by understanding their customers. She launched Quire in 2017 to bring ethnographic research and design thinking to organizational leaders that are looking for a way forward but don't know how to get there. Throughout her career, Autumn has worked with social innovators and change makers including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Chicago Public Education Fund and many others.

Autumn serves on the City of Birmingham (AL) Small Business Council. She teaches tennis with Better Basics and coaches entrepreneurs with Create Birmingham and EGK Starters. She has served on a number of non-profit boards focusing on the arts and design. Autumn holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Ohio University (Athens, OH) and a master's degree in design management from the Savannah College of Art and Design (Savannah, GA).

Quire: Leadership

# Autumn Sanders

Founder, CEO

## Industry Leadership and Recognition

2022- present: EPIC Conference, Amsterdam, Netherlands - case study reviewer

2020: EPIC Conference, Virtual - panel convener *Design & White Supremacy Culture: A Call and Response*

2019: Ethnographic Praxis in Industry (EPIC) Conference, Providence, RI - panelist, *Representation and Representativeness*

## Community Involvement

2022-present: Birmingham Area Tennis Association - Board member

2021-present: City of Birmingham, Small Business Council - member

2019-present: Co.Starters, Chattanooga, TN - Facilitator trainer for entrepreneurship coaching curriculum taught in more than 300 communities

2020: Conservation X Labs, Artisanal Mining Grand Challenge - application reviewer for global innovation competition

## Quire: Our Team

# Katelyn Foote

Design Research Associate



Katelyn has spent much of her life in the Southern United States, growing up in central Florida and moving to Birmingham, Alabama for college. In undergraduate school she focused her studies on business administration, social entrepreneurship, and sociology, earning her Bachelor's Degree in 2013. Afterward graduation, she worked with non-profit organizations in urban neighborhoods and rural communities in Alabama. Driven by her fascination with cities, she pursued a masters degree in Urban Strategies and Design from the University of Edinburgh. She has since returned to Birmingham where she helps operate a coworking business and continues to research people's use of urban spaces.



## Quire: Our Team

# Chaitanya Ahuja

## Design Research Assistant



Chaitanya is a design researcher and a sustainability strategist. He believes curiosity is his strongest emotion and he loves to explore the mechanisms and dynamics behind natural, technological, and social systems. With a background in technology and design, he wishes to use his skills and knowledge towards addressing complex challenges in society. He received his Bachelor's degree in Technology from the NMIMS University, Mumbai and has worked as a full-stack software developer in Bangalore, India. He also holds two Master's degrees in Design Management and Design for Sustainability from the Savannah College of Art and Design. Chaitanya regularly facilitates educational workshops on Systems Thinking, with an ambition to make this mindset more accessible and practical for practitioners.

# Our clients are...

purpose-driven organizations  
thoughtful, engaged leaders  
ready to get to work

## **Quire: Case Study - Alabama African American Civil Rights Heritage Sites Consortium (2017 - present)**

### **Partnership Goal - Support sites dedicated to preserving civil rights history**

The Alabama African American Civil Rights Heritage Sites Consortium (AAACRHSC) came to life as a program within the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, one of the nation's oldest centers for telling the story of the Civil Rights Movement. The BCRI nominated a group of 20 sites in Birmingham, Montgomery, Selma and the Black Belt to the World Monuments Fund's annual watch for 2018 which recognized seminal buildings in danger of being lost to history without necessary historic preservation efforts. The sites included churches, family homes, and places of business that were still independently owned and in a range of physical conditions. Once the award was given, organizers understood that this acknowledgement was a galvanizing first step. Sites would need ongoing support to achieve physical preservation, long term financial stability and to have the economic impact on the communities that they desired. The team formed the AAACRHSC as a capacity building project for the sites and as a front door for funders, donors and visitors who wanted to support sites' efforts.

We've worked closely with the AAACRHSC as a consulting partner since its inception. They were our very first client. We facilitated early visioning sessions with sites to help the AAACRHSC understand what member sites wanted from this new entity. Many of the site leaders were of retirement age and had been story keepers for decades. They were cautious in their faith that this effort would provide lasting support given years of unfulfilled promises. The AAACRHSC leaders repeatedly told funders, allies and partners that they would need to "move at the speed of the sites" and created an advisory council of site members as a way to safeguard their vision and goals within the complex landscape of competing desires around tourism and marketability.

Our work has included program evaluation, coaching, business plan development, toolkit design, RFP management and board retreat facilitation.

### **Outcomes**

In May 2020, just months into the pandemic, the AAACRHSC became its own 501c3, independent of the Institute. The AAACRHSC went on to raise \$1.8M in its first year of operation. Our partnership through their strategic planning process created the framework for this idea. We led initial discussions between the AAACRHSC and BCRI leadership which paved the way for a potentially fraught transition to ultimately benefit both organizations.

# Quire: Case Study - Selma Redevelopment Authority (2020)

## Project Goal - Strategic Plan Development

The Selma Redevelopment Authority (SRA), with funding support from the Educational Foundation of America, hired Quire Consulting to help the SRA develop a strategic plan. The agency is an independent non-profit focused on downtown redevelopment whose board members are approved by the Selma City Council. Quire's goal was to create space for the board to consider how it can ensure the success of the organization. Our work focused on four objectives:

- Identify long-term organizational goals and strategy
- Define what successful board and staff leadership looks like in this context
- Create a plan for an infrastructure that supports programming and funding goals
- Outline a roadmap for the SRA's next steps

## Research Approach

To support our work with the board, Quire conducted three stages of primary research. In stage one, we visited Selma on two occasions. Our first visit occurred during Jubilee weekend (February 28 – March 1, 2020). We were able to experience the city at its busiest and talk to business owners, entrepreneurs and residents. On our second visit (March 12-13, 2020), we held one-on-one interviews with board members and a city councilor who has been instrumental in advocating for the SRA.

In stage two, we studied three cities—Laurel, MS; Kinston, NC; and Sumter, SC—that have seen some success in revitalizing their downtowns. These cities are similar to Selma in size, geography and demographics. We purposely selected southern cities that had their own history with racism, segregation and social unrest. In each city, we interviewed elected officials, city staff members, investors, agency leaders and others who were instrumental in transforming these downtowns.

In stage three, we interviewed downtown redevelopment experts in Alabama who could speak to trends, challenges and opportunities they were seeing. Our insights and recommendations come from these 25 interviews, countless community interactions as well as supplementary secondary research that gave context to our conversations.

## **Board Retreat**

In response to COVID-19, we hosted a two-day virtual board retreat over two Fridays in June 2020. In the retreat we shared our key findings from our research. We saw that successful downtowns were led by engaged, dedicated residents, few of whom had prior experience in downtown redevelopment. They demonstrated a mastery of policy, partnership and practice. These cities investigated the tools that were available to them to create change, developed healthy, active relationships with partners and developed a way of working that tapped into the skills of the community.

We led the SRA board members in a series of steps that helped them articulate the purpose and mission of the organization, define projects that were in keeping with that vision and plan next steps to carry out those projects using the Objectives and Key Results (OKR) framework.

## **Outcomes**

We saw the SRA board transform. They evolved from a collection of leaders with individual perspectives on the purpose of the organization and their roles as members into a team of talented, thoughtful colleagues who share a vision, clear action steps and the will to carry that vision out. Selma's municipal elections for mayor, council and school board were held in August 2020. With new partners in leadership, the SRA is well positioned to work with new leadership in implementing plans for downtown.

# Quire: Case Study - Nest - Makers United (2019)

## Project Goal - Program Pilot

Since its founding, Nest ([buildanest.org](http://buildanest.org)) has been an international advocate for artisans and handmakers. It has helped build a global economy that allows often marginalized people to support themselves and their families through traditional work in safe, equitable environments. Nest has strengthened the relationship between handworkers and retailers by providing training and transparency while earning accolades all over the world.

The Artisan Incubator Program, which was later renamed Makers United, represented a renewed focus on creating opportunities for makers at home. By understanding the context and experience of Birmingham artisans, Nest was able to provide a singular learning opportunity that helped participants gain new audiences for their work. This pilot program would also create a model for use in other cities to help makers with similar needs and challenges.

## Research Approach

As Nest's Birmingham partner on this project, Quire approached this project over four phases:

- Landscape Analysis and Local Partnerships
- Capacity Building Workshops
- Artisan Recruitment
- Market Showcase

### ***Landscape Analysis and Local Partnerships:***

We conducted contextual, one-on-one interviews and held one community conversation with a mix of community leadership, small business advocates and maker entrepreneurs. These conversations helped us understand the challenges across the sector and develop ongoing relationships essential to the success of the Artisan Incubator.

We surveyed more than 100 local creatives to gather data on the status of their creative businesses, their experience with the entrepreneurship ecosystem and ways they wanted to be supported through a Nest offering.

### ***Capacity Building Workshops:***

We developed a series of workshops using local and national speakers to respond to the insights gathered through

our workshops. The workshops were designed to foster community among participants, many of whom were used to working in isolation as solo-entrepreneurs. We drew on local knowledge experts so that participants could create connections with people who would continue to provide resources and training at the end of Nest's commitment. Nest also tapped its network of national and international brand partners which broadened participants' visions for their brands, and helped broaden an understanding of "Southern" craftwork.

***Artisan Recruitment:***

We used the survey responses as a foundation for reaching out to both early stage and established businesses. We also used print, digital and social media to drive participation. We focused on Nest's primary business categories - home goods, textiles, accessories, etc. Because of the response, we expanded our initial target from 15 participants to up to 75 participants and saw 66 people attend at least one day of training across the series.

***Market Showcase:***

Workshop participants were eligible to sell their products in a one-day market. Most markets and local retail events include local farmers, food trucks or live music. These elements create an entertaining atmosphere for families looking for a pet-friendly Saturday outing, but send a mixed message about the value of non-perishable, handmade goods. Our market focused on creating a shopping destination that would attract audiences who would delight in spending money on one-of-a-kind, locally made products while supporting early-stage small businesses.

**Outcomes**

Our work was the foundation for the subsequent expansion into 6 cities/territories, including Austin, San Antonio, Detroit, St. Louis, Puerto Rico and New York City's Garment District. Nest also built an online platform rooted in the same principles to support makers nationally with 815 makers in 35 states.

Our research helped Nest clarify its audience and more clearly articulate its desire to serve BIPOC and underserved artisan entrepreneurs. It continues its direct support and coaching of entrepreneurs identified through this process and has deepened its relationship with Alabama through work with quilters in Gee's Bend.

In the years since our first sessions, participants in Birmingham have gone on to show their work in Magic City Fashion Week, attend workshops hosted by luxury brand Hermes, win the state-wide pitch competition Alabama Launchpad, which is held by a private coalition of corporations working to spur economic growth.

# Quire: Case Study - YMCA Youth Center (2019)

## Project Goal - Downtown Youth Center Visioning

The Downtown Youth Center was developed in 2006 as a hub for Metro Birmingham youth to meet across neighborhood, cultural and economic boundaries in a space just for them. Prior to the launch of the center, kids and adults collided at the downtown branch, challenging their attempt to appeal to an executive audience. The new center would give both audiences a reprieve from one another. In the years since, technology and other factors have transformed children's daily lives. Apple launched the iPhone. Facebook catalyzed the social media era. The center's model relied on the use of buses which was increasingly seen as time consuming and cost prohibitive.

Quire was asked to guide the Youth Center board in establishing a new vision for the center to help it better serve the needs of contemporary youth. This vision would evolve from understanding the impact and role of the center, identifying opportunity areas and working with community partners to understand how the center fits into the broader landscape of youth service providers. This project also served as a pathway for knowledge transfer between the leaders who established the center and current board members who had little primary insight into the center's history and original mission.

## Research Approach

We interviewed current and former board members to understand the Center's original purpose. These interviews gave us a window into the values, beliefs and assumptions that led to the center's creation. This included how the center was actually a remodel of an existing structure that dictated the center's configuration. The original team had hoped to create a multicultural hub for youth throughout the city in the downtown corridor because it was seen as a neutral ground. That desire suffered from competition from better equipped facilities, especially those with a covered pool and water features.

We held conversation groups with parents, students and staff members to gain insight into their needs and challenges. Parents commended strong relationships with staff and being able to trust that the center provided a safe, fun environment for their children at the end of their school day. They also spoke of wanting a facility within the City of Birmingham that served the needs of the whole family, not just its children.

Students spoke of growing up in the Y and taking on new challenges because of their involvement. Many had



grown up playing recreational sports and now had a built in audience when they joined their school teams. Others found their first jobs at the Y and wanted more opportunities for work.

Through two days of in-person observation, we identified usage patterns across age groups at various times of day. The space was dominated by the open gym at its center which created a challenge in providing quiet spaces for homework while practices and games took place. The desire for multi-use classroom spaces conflicted with fixed structures and materials. For example, the center had a dedicated computer lab and room for arts and crafts. Those rooms were also used as after-school spaces dedicated to specific grade levels. In reality, all students needed access to art materials and technology regardless of grade level.

We also conducted interviews with community partners and leaders to understand how they used the space, which was intended to be a facility that served the community at large. We heard where a general openness could be translated into specific communication so that the community partners could take advantage of the relationship.

## **Outcomes**

We identified four opportunity areas that responded to the insights we gathered through our research. Our work culminated in a half-day workshop where internal stakeholders and external partners worked together to brainstorm potential solutions within those four areas. The final report has become a basis for advocacy and planning within the organization and with external partners.

Like so many organizations, the center 2020 and 2021 responding to the pandemic. They also faced the untimely death of a young employee in a flash flooding accident at the end of 2021. Despite these challenges, the center is well positioned to serve Birmingham's next generation.

## **Quire: References**

### **Create Birmingham**

*Jessica Moody, Director of Programs*

310 18th St N, Birmingham, AL 35203  
205-616-8505

### **Alabama African American Civil Rights Heritage Sites Consortium**

*Priscilla Hancock Cooper, Executive Director*

209 20th Street North #148, Birmingham, AL, 35203  
205-687-0568

### **Studio By the Tracks**

*Cilie Cowan, Board President*

301 20th St S, Irondale, AL 35210  
205-332-0070

### **YMCA of Greater Birmingham**

*Terri Harvill, VP, Social Equity Initiatives and Regional Executive Director*

2400 7th Ave N, Birmingham, AL 35203  
205-324-4563

Quire Consulting  
[www.quireconsulting.com](http://www.quireconsulting.com)

[info@quireconsulting.com](mailto:info@quireconsulting.com)  
(205) 994-8602

---

**Company Snapshot**

**DUNS No.:** 037588762

**Founded:** 2017

**MWBE No.:** 0622175-81

**Primary NAICS Codes:**

**541611:** Business Management and Strategic Planning

**541613:** Marketing Consulting Services

**541720:** Research and Development in the Social Sciences and Humanities

**611430:** Professional Management and Development Training

