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## **Planet Word Appoints Nikki Dejesus Sertsu as its Next Executive Director**

*Currently the museum's Senior Director of Exhibits and Special Projects, Sertsu brings more than 25 years of nonprofit leadership experience to the role*

**Washington, D.C. (October 20, 2023)** — **Planet Word**, the interactive museum of language, today announced that **Nikki Dejesus Sertsu** will serve as its next Executive Director, effective November 1. Currently the museum's Senior Director of Exhibits and Special Projects, Sertsu joined Planet Word in 2017 as one of its founding staff members and brings more than 25 years of nonprofit leadership experience to the role.

"When I first hired Nikki, Planet Word was only an idea—a bold idea, but an idea nonetheless. Nikki worked with me to shape my ideas for what Planet Word could be, and then she worked to turn my vision into meaningful exhibits and transformative visitor experiences that make Planet Word what it is today," said **Ann Friedman, founder and CEO of Planet Word**. "Nikki is a proven leader and a beloved colleague, and we are thrilled that she will continue to make her mark on Planet Word as its next Executive Director."

Prior to Planet Word's opening in 2020, Sertsu first consulted to Friedman and then joined Planet Word as full-time staff, leading the fabrication and installation of the museum's award-winning exhibits. In 2021 and 2022, she managed the creation of Lexicon Lane, the museum's popular word-puzzle-themed, escape-room-style experience. Sertsu currently heads the Exhibits and Special Projects team in optimizing Planet Word's mission-driven visitor experience, with priorities that include introducing Spanish-language experiences, delving into large-language models and the promises and pitfalls of artificial intelligence, and developing additional gallery content such as the museum's newest digital interactive station, *Inside Look: Dyslexia*, which opened in October 2023.

In her new role, Sertsu will lead the private, nonprofit museum's staff of 35 full- and part-time employees. She is chiefly responsible for implementing the organization's strategic framework, which includes cultivating world-class visitor experiences, developing new opportunities to extend the gallery experience beyond the physical walls of the museum and ensuring ongoing financial stability.

"Since our opening just two years ago, Planet Word has established itself as a thriving, dynamic hub for people from all over, of all ages and backgrounds. I am proud of all that Ann and our team have accomplished in such a short time, and I'm energized about the possibilities that lie ahead," said

Sertsu. "I'm honored to work with the Planet Word team to continue to bring language to life in fun, innovative, inclusive and unexpected ways."

Prior to Planet Word, Sertsu owned and managed a boutique consultancy, DeJesus and Associates, for fifteen years. Cultural clients and projects included the White House Visitors Center, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, the D.C. History Center, and the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience in Meridian, Miss. Earlier in her career, Sertsu served as Founding Executive Director/CEO of the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture.

Sertsu succeeds Patty Isacson Sabee, Planet Word's inaugural executive director and also a founding staff member, who is departing to become the next president of the Detroit Opera. Isacson Sabee and Sertsu are currently working collaboratively to ensure a seamless transition.

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