

Heartland 2024: Faculty Bios

Tracy Brantner, CEEdC, EDFP, MOCED

Financing



Tracy Brantner is the Executive Director of the [Johnson County Economic Development Corporation \(JCEDC\)](#) in Missouri. Tracy has nearly 20 years of experience in all areas of economic development from entrepreneurship, talent, placemaking, regionalism and business retention, expansion and recruitment. The JCEDC office serves as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for Johnson County and is responsible for delivering small business one-on-one technical assistance. Currently, Tracy is one of a regional team of co-counselors with a specialty in finance. Tracy has served as the President of the Missouri Economic Development Council and Co-Chair of the Conference Planning Committee. Currently, Tracy is the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee Chairman and a Commissioner on the Pioneer Trails Regional Planning Commission, and President of the Central Missouri Economic Development Alliance.

Drew Conrad, CEEdC, CERP, EGc(MR)

Professional Development



Drew Conrad is the Director of the [Institute for Decision Making](#) at the University of Northern Iowa. Drew has over 30 years of experience in statewide economic development planning and research. Drew facilitates strategic planning and regional economic research for communities and economic development organizations. Applied research projects he has undertaken include the development of the laborshed methodology now used by Iowa Workforce Development (IWD). Drew has worked on collaborative projects with Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Economic Development Authority, the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, the Council for Community and Economic Research and the Labor Market Information Institute. Drew is currently on the faculty and board for Oklahoma University Economic Development Institute (OU-EDI).

Mark Dawson, CEEdC

Managing an EDO & Ethics



Mark Dawson is the Economic Development Director for the [Greater Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce](#) in Missouri. In this consultant position, Mark provides the attraction, retention, expansion functions as well as serves as advisor to city staff and Henry County governments on various development related needs. Mark has over 36 years of experience in economic development and has served rural communities as well as fast growth suburban communities. Mark was instrumental in the creation of the Missouri Certified Sites Program and serves on the statewide advisory board. He also has served on the Missouri Economic Development Council Board of Directors (MEDC). Mark is also a past Board of Director for Heartland Basic Economic Development.

Courtney Dunbar, CEEdC, EDFP, AICP

Real Estate



Courtney Dunbar currently serves as the Director of Site Selection for [Burns & McDonnell](#) based in Kansas City. Courtney brings 27 years of combined career experiences in site selection, economic development, community planning, and project funding. She has written many community plans focused on developing vital, innovative communities that entice economic growth. Her career has centered on industrial and allied primary development. She is a member of the Site Selectors Guild and serves as a contributing writer and speaker for Area Development, with articles centered on site selection and site preparedness for economic development opportunities. Courtney serves as the Assistant Dean of the University of Oklahoma's Economic Development Institute.

Danielle DuPree

Business Retention and Expansion



Danielle DuPree is the Executive Director of the [Ennovation Center](#) in Independence Missouri. With over ten years of experience as a technology business consultant, Danielle specializes in digital transformation, business start-ups, and business retention and expansion. Danielle's expertise includes developing IT strategies, implementing virtual reality and XR solutions, leveraging artificial intelligence, enhancing workflows, improving security, and utilizing ECM solutions. Danielle's passion for helping entrepreneurs grow their businesses comes from her deep roots in the Independence community, where she was born and raised.

Lisa Franklin, CEcD, EDFP

Site Selection



Lisa Franklin is an Advisor for [Global Location Strategies \(GLS\)](#), a site selection and software firm headquartered in Greenville, SC. She has more than 35 years of experience providing value to economic development organizations and communities as a practitioner and consultant. In her previous position at Evergy, Lisa's primary responsibility was managing their economic development local partner investment program and LocationOne Information System (LOIS), an economic development site selection application. Lisa is an active member of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), the Utility Economic Development Association (UEDA), the Missouri Economic Development Council, and the National Rural economic Development Association (NREDA)

Nick Glew

Business Retention and Expansion



Nick Glew is Vice President of Lending for [Community Savings Bank](#) in Cedar Rapids, IA. His primary focus is commercial and multi-family real estate financing. Prior to CSB, Nick spent a decade as President of the Marion Economic Development Corporation in Marion, IA. There he led the organization's workforce, business development, and business retention activities. Nick has also served as marketing director for Anderson Bogert Engineers and spent five years as a news anchor for KCRG-TV9 in Cedar Rapids. He is Vice-President for Professional Developers of Iowa and is co-chair of the organization's Legislative Committee. Nick also serves on boards for Iowa Workforce Development, the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, and Marion Cares. He has been recognized for the past three years as one of the top 250 most influential leaders in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City Corridor. Nick has been part of the Heartland Faculty since 2021.

Jim Gossett, CEcD, CKAE

Managing an EDO



Jim Gossett is CEO of [Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative \(RVEC\)](#), serving 2,750 member-owners in nine Western Iowa counties. Jim has twenty-five years of community and economic development experience, leading volunteer boards and counseling paid staff and volunteers throughout Iowa. He has been executive director of Storm Lake Area Development Corporation, Carroll Chamber of Commerce and Carroll Area Development Corporation. He is past-president of the Mid America Economic Development Council (2014) and past-president of the Professional Developers of Iowa (2004).

Rebecca Gubbels

Entrepreneurship



Rebecca Gubbels is the Managing Director of the Growth Mentoring Service (GMS) at the [Enterprise Center in Johnson County](#). Rebecca brings her banking, entrepreneurial, coaching, and training background to her current role creating mentorship opportunities for established business owners. As mentorship and access to capital are some of the most frequent requests from small businesses, Rebecca has also launched [Vault Consulting](#). Her work with Vault builds transferable lending knowledge for entire communities.

James Hoelscher, CEcD

Professional Ethics



James Hoelscher is a Senior Program Manager with the [Institute for Decision Making \(IDM\)](#) at the [University of Northern Iowa \(UNI\)](#). In this role, James provides consultation to rural/urban community and economic development organizations undertaking strategic planning related to entrepreneurship, business retention, industry recruitment, community-wide planning, marketing, tourism, and organizational structure. James is past president of the Professional Developers of Iowa, a member of the Iowa Rural Development Council, a taskforce member of the Iowa Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative, and is Director of Heartland EDC.

Samantha Jefferson

Preparing the Perfect Proposal



Originally from rural Nebraska, Samantha graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Construction Management from Pittsburg, Kansas. She spent a decade working in the Phoenix office of The Weitz Company, a national general contractor in business development and strategy roles. Samantha joined the City of Surprise Economic Development Department, leading attraction efforts in the enterprise commercial and industrial sectors. Ready to make an even bigger impact, she joined Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) as Vice President of Business Development in June 2021. In early 2024, Samantha joined Kansas City Area Development Council as Vice President of Business Attraction focused on corporate attraction in emerging industries.

Beth Johnson, CEcD

Site Selection



Beth Johnson is a Business Recruitment Project Manager - East Coast Region for the [Kansas Department of Commerce](#). Prior to putting her business attraction skills to work at the state level, Beth served over ten years as the Senior Vice President of Economic Development for the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce. Beth brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in site selection from the developer's point of view to Heartland.

Shannon Landauer, CEcD

Site Selection



Shannon Landauer is the Executive Director of the [Hastings Economic Development Corporation](#) and [Hastings Chamber of Commerce](#) in Hastings, Nebraska. Throughout her professional experience, she has administered business retention and expansion programs, carried out business recruitment efforts, and implemented strategies to support entrepreneurship, workforce and housing development programs. Additionally, Shannon has served on various state and national economic development committees and boards. Shannon prioritizes giving back to the profession by volunteering in mentorship roles and providing guidance to new economic developers and communities looking to expand their economic development efforts.

Carol Lilly

Neighborhood and Community Development



Carol Lilly is a Downtown Development Specialist with [Iowa Downtown Resource Center's Main Street Iowa](#) program. In this role, she provides technical assistance services to Main Street Iowa communities. She has earned Development Finance Professional Certification from NDC. Prior to joining Main Street Iowa, Carol was the Executive Director of Community Main Street in Cedar Falls Iowa. She is a graduate of the University of Northern Iowa and has worked in the fields of non-profit management, property management, retail management, and marketing throughout the Midwest. Carol has presented at state, regional, and national workshops on topics related to economic development of downtown districts.

Jonathan Long

Equity, Inclusion & Welcoming



Jonathan Long is the Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the [Tulsa Regional Chamber](#). In this role, he uses his skills and perspective to influence the organization's impact on economic development, government affairs, and tourism. Additionally, Long facilitates progress in areas of diversity, equity and inclusion, community leadership, economic equity, and attracting and retaining talent. His ability to effectively communicate the complexities of equity and inclusion helps individuals and teams gain a better understanding of the two values for improving authentic practice. Long received his Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Jennings A. Jones College of Business at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro and has earned a Mini MPA Certificate from the Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs from Wichita State University. Long has been recognized locally and nationally, some of his accolades include 2017 Leadership Wichita Participant, Leadership and Mentor of the Year (Wichita Visionary Awards), Distinguished Young Professional (Young Professionals of Wichita), and many more.

Kiley Miller, CEcD

Managing an EDO



Kiley Miller has more than 13 years in economic development and even longer in organizational leadership. Currently, Kiley is Senior Communications and Economic Development Manager for [Alliant Energy](#), an investor-owned utility in Iowa and Wisconsin. In this role, he conducts business attraction and business retention and expansion efforts to increase electric load with Alliant's service territory. Kiley's economic development career began in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, where he was Executive Vice President of the Mount Pleasant Area Chamber Alliance, a combined economic development, chamber, tourism and Main Street organization in Northwest Iowa. Kiley also served as President & CEO of Trees Forever, a multistate environmental nonprofit. Going way back, Kiley was a noncommissioned officer in the United States Army and enjoyed seven years as a newspaper reporter and editor.

Karla Organist, CEcD

Strategic Planning



Karla Organist is Senior Project Manager for the [Institute for Decision Making \(IDM\)](#) at the [University of Northern Iowa](#). Karla assists communities, economic development organizations, and other nonprofits with strategic planning at varying levels of focus including community-wide planning, organizational planning, and workforce planning. Karla has previous work experience in economic development; comprehensive, housing, hazard mitigation and transportation planning; entrepreneurship; and as a business consultant and financial trainer for childcare businesses. Karla is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) and holds a master's in Community Development. Karla currently serves as 2nd Vice President for the National Rural Economic Development Association (NREDA) and as a member of the Northeast Iowa Workforce Development Board.

Rue Ramsey

Workforce Development



Rue Ramsey is the Vice President of Workforce and Talent Strategies in Economic Development at the [Tulsa Regional Chamber](#). In this role, she works with regional stakeholders to provide collaborative solutions and talent strategies for workforce development across industry. Rue founded Tulsa's NextGen Talent initiative which provides diverse high school and college students with clear pathways into careers. The program was recently recognized as one of the best in the world by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). Rue serves on the board of The Higher Education Consortium and Teach for America. She is also an instructor for economic developers with IEDC, graduated from the Associate of Chamber of Commerce Executive's Economic Recover fellowship, and was in the inaugural cohort of the African American leadership Academy.

Chuck Sexton

Site Location



Chuck Sexton currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at [Next Move Group](#). Sexton is a graduate of Oklahoma University's Economic Development Institute and was named a "Top-40 Under 40" Economic Developer by DCI in 2017. While serving as CEO since 2022, Sexton has also served on the Boards of Directors for the 17-state Southern Economic Development Council and the Kentucky Association for Economic Development. Prior to joining Next Move Group, he spent seven years running a nine-county regional economic development organization and has had private sector experience working in industrial sales, risk planning, and strategic planning.

Andrea Sitzes, EDFP

Financing



Andrea Sitzes currently serves as Christian County Market Executive and Vice President of [Arvest Bank](#), specializing in economic development and commercial lending. Prior to Arvest, Sitzes founded Show Me Christian County as President/CEO and Executive Director for the Ozark Chamber of Commerce. Sitzes started her own public relations business at the age of 16 and is a graduate of College of the Ozarks and Oklahoma University's Economic Development Institute. She is certified as an Economic Development Finance Professional and currently serves as Treasurer for the Missouri Economic Development Council. Sitzes focuses on customer service and sound business practices and aims to impact, inspire, ignite, and empower.

Mark Stombaugh, CEcD, EDFP

Financing



Mark Stombaugh is the Executive Director of the Missouri Development Finance Board. He previously led business development and outreach efforts for the Missouri Department of Economic Development as Regional Engagement Division Director. He has a strong background in economic development, stretching over 18 years, which has included program administration and project management throughout the state. He is a Certified Economic Developer through the International Economic Development Council and is recognized as an Economic Development Finance Professional by the National Development Council. Mark has held a variety of leadership positions in Missouri's economic development association, Missouri Economic Development Council (MEDC), including serving as the organization's president in 2016-2017.

Jim Thompson, CMSM, HREDFP

Neighborhood and Community Development



Jim Thompson is a Downtown Economic Development Specialist with the Iowa Economic Development Authority, covering all areas of development for downtowns & Main Street districts for the [Iowa Downtown Resource Center](#) and its [Main Street Iowa](#) program. He has over 25 years of experience in community development, retail management as well as having served on a City Council for 10 years. In his current role, he engages communities in market analysis including data analysis, business retention, recruitment, and implementation strategies. He has also led efforts in tax increment finance, urban revitalization, housing & real estate development, branding, and one-on-one business technical assistance for Iowa's communities. He is the grant administrator for Iowa's Community Catalyst Building Remediation grant program. Jim serves on the Iowa Rural Development Council Executive Board and was named by the Governor to lead the Empower Rural Iowa Invest Taskforce. He has also served as a consultant for the National Main Street Center, worked in several states and has presented multiple times at the National Main Streets Conference.

Debra Teufel, CEcD

Managing an EDO & Ethics



Debra Teufel is the President of the [Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce](#), where she leads membership, economic development and tourism. She previously served as Director of Public/Private Partnership in the Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma. She was Vice President of Greater Wichita Economic Development at the Wichita Metro Chamber of Commerce from 2008-2015 and has spent 25 years in the field of economic development. She is a graduate of Southwestern College, holds her Certification in Economic Development from the International Economic Development Council and is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma's Economic Development Institute.