

Heartland 2025: Faculty Bios

Tracy Brantner, CEcD, EDFP, MoCED

Economic Development Finance



Tracy Brantner is the Executive Director of the [Johnson County Economic Development Corporation](#) (JCEDC) in Missouri. Tracy has nearly 35 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 Nebraska Economic Development Association (NEDA) and Missouri Economic Development Council (MEDC). Currently, she oversees the MEDC Professional Development Committee and the Missouri Certified Economic Developer Program (MoCED).

Dr. Carolyn Chrisman, EdD, EDFP, MoCED

Business Retention & Expansion



Carolyn Chrisman, Owner/Operator of [Chrisman Consulting](#), has more than a decade of experience in economic development focusing on workforce development, business development strategies, innovation, emerging areas, and more to grow the local economy. As an economic development practitioner, Carolyn has worked projects of numerous sizes and industries. The largest was a \$250M business retention and expansion project of a food processor that expanded a facility by 260,000 square feet, retained 500 jobs and added 500 new jobs. New investment projects have included commercial/retail, call centers, and renewables. Additional efforts included workforce training and support, community education and communication, and state law policy changes. Carolyn serves as the current President of the Missouri Economic Development Council.

Mark Dawson, CEcD

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, and 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 Member for Heartland Basic Economic Development.

Courtney Dunbar, CEcD, 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 currently serves as the Dean of the University of Oklahoma's Economic Development Institute.

Rebecca Gubbels

Entrepreneurship



Rebecca Gubbels is the 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

Course Director and Emcee, Ethics



James Hoelscher Associate Director for 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.

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.

Christopher Lloyd

Site Selection



Chris Lloyd is Senior Vice President and Director for the infrastructure and economic development team at [McGuireWoods Consulting](#). Chris specializes in site selection and economic development incentives negotiations. Since 1998, he has worked on dozens of high profile, corporate expansions and relocations across the country. Chris has also worked closely with clients on numerous public-private partnership projects for transportation and other infrastructure, and played a leading role in the development and passage of Virginia's public-private partnership laws. Prior to joining McGuireWoods Consulting, Chris served for nearly five years in the Office of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade under Virginia Governors Allen and Wilder. In this position, he was responsible for legislative, budgetary, and regulatory coordination and development within that Secretariat which managed the state's economic development programs.

Jonathan Long

Welcoming Strategies



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 is Senior Data Center Services Specialist for [Alliant Energy](#), a position he has held since the start of the year. He previously was Senior Community and Economic Development Manager for Alliant, assisting large businesses with their location and expansion decisions and communities across Iowa with economic development.

Kiley's prior experience includes leading the Mount Pleasant Area Chamber Alliance in his hometown of Mount Pleasant, Iowa, and the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation, a regional economic development organization in northwest Iowa. He has also been President and CEO of the conservation nonprofit Trees Forever, spent several years as a newspaper reporter and editor, and served in the United States Army. He has been a frequent speaker at economic and community development conferences and events in Iowa and the Upper Midwest.

Andrew Nilges, CEcD

Ethics in Economic Development



Since 2017, Andrew Nilges has served as the Executive Director for [North Sioux City Economic Development Corporation](#) in South Dakota. Andrew graduated from the University of South Dakota with his Masters in Public Administration with a specialization in State and Local Government. Andrew is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD), earning his certification through the International Economic Development Council in 2022. He received Governor Kristi Noem's Excellence in Economic Development award in 2022. Andrew enjoys being active in the community, serving on boards of directors for the Dakota Valley School District, South Eastern Council of Governments, Leadership Siouxland, Explore Sioux City, and the Heartland Economic Development Course.

Karla Organist, CEcD, CNP

Strategic Planning & Managing an EDO



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), a Certified Nonprofit Professional (CNP), and holds a Master's Degree in Community Development. She is a member of Professional Developers of Iowa (PDI), the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and is a board member for the National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA), currently serving as 1st Vice President.

Rue Ramsey

Workforce & Talent Development and Retention



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.

Liesl Seabert, AICP

Neighborhood & Community Development



Liesl Seabert is Program Manager for the [Institute for Decision Making](#) (IDM) at the [University of Northern Iowa](#). Liesl assists communities, economic development organizations, and other nonprofits with strategic planning at varying levels of focus. These include community or region-wide planning, organizational planning, and workforce planning. Liesl is a certified planner through the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). She is a member of American Planning Association (APA), Iowa Center for Employee Ownership, Iowa Rural Development Council, Keep Iowa Beautiful, Main Street Iowa, and Professional Developers of Iowa (PDI). Liesl holds a Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning.

Chad Schreck

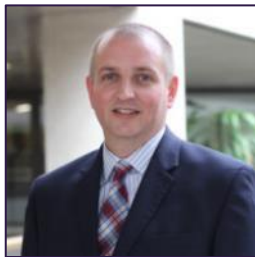
Ethics



Chad Schreck is President & CEO of the [North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation](#). He provides executive leadership, management and fiscal oversight for the organization. This includes the successful implementation of workforce development, business retention and recruitment projects, as well as playing a lead role in promoting the region locally and nationally. Prior to his role at the Corridor, Chad was Executive Director of the Midwest Partnership EDC in Stuart, Iowa overseeing a four-county region. Preceding his position there, he worked as the Regional Economic Development Planner at Region XII Council of Governments in Carroll, Iowa. Chad earned his Master's degree from Drake University in Public Administration with a concentration in Executive Leadership and his bachelors in Law, Politics and Society at Drake University.

Mark Stombaugh, CEcD, EDPF

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.

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.

Brien Thorstenberg, CEcD, MBA

Business Retention & Expansion



Brien Thorstenberg is Vice President of Economic Development at the [Tulsa Regional Chamber](#). Brien has extensive experience in the areas of economic and community development, including successful recruitment and retention of industry and knowledge-based companies. Brien has been involved in the development of industry associations, the implementation of manufacturing extension programs, workforce development programs, and the development of an affordable housing addition. Brien is involved in a number of statewide, regional and local economic development organizations including the Oklahoma Governors Economic Development Marketing Team, Select Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce Foreign Direct Investment Team, the Tulsa Futures Regional Partnership, the Southeast Oklahoma Regional Economic Development Partnership and many others.