

Entrepreneur-Led Economic Development

Meeting of the Minds Bios



Mark Bannister

Dean, Robbins College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Fort Hayes State University

Mark Bannister is the Dean of the Robbins College of Business and Entrepreneurship at Fort Hays State University. The college offers significant business, information technology, and media programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels on-campus, through domestic distance learning, and international partnerships. He is a senior policy fellow of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs and a principal in Bannister Capital Advisors.

Mark teaches on legal issues and management of information technologies. He has published academic articles in publications including The Federal Communications Law Journal, Economic Development Review, Economic Development Journal, Kansas Policy Review, Kansas Journal of Law and Public Policy, the proceedings of the Colloquium on Information Systems Security, Journal of Business and Leadership, and the Kansas Business Review.

Mark previously served as director of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs and Executive Assistant/General Counsel to the President of Fort Hays State University. He also served as chief of staff for the Kansas Senate President and as associate general counsel to the Kansas Board of Regents. Mark earned a juris doctorate in law and a master's of communication studies from the University of Kansas. His bachelor's degree is from Fort Hays State University.



Pam Bishop

Vice President of Economic Development, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

Pamela K. Bishop is the vice president of economic development at the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation. Her responsibilities include strategy implementation and program management of The Foundation's regional business and economic development goals.

She is a former director of regional business development services at North Iowa Area Community College/John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center in Mason City, IA. She was the executive vice president of the Albert Lea Economic Development Agency in Albert Lea, MN, where she was instrumental in the creation and operation of a 41,000 square foot mixed use business incubator.

Pam received her bachelor's degree from the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls. Her background includes over 10 years in economic development in southern Minnesota. She also has 10 years of experience in the field of journalism, including radio and newspaper.

Patricia (Trish) Brasted
President and CEO, Wichita Technology Corporation



Trish Brasted, entrepreneur, active angel investor and CEO/president of Wichita Technology Corporation, is the managing member of Wichita Technology Ventures, (WTV), an early-stage technology fund, and the managing member of the Midwest Venture Alliance, a Kansas based angel group all of which serve high-growth entrepreneurs in the region.

Trish has a long history in finance and entrepreneurship and understands the risks entrepreneurs face, the courage it takes to start a new venture and the process of growing a successful organization. Under her leadership, the WTC team has assisted hundreds of entrepreneurs, invested seed capital dollars in more than 75 technology companies, representing 100 patented technologies in diverse technology areas such as advanced materials, manufacturing technology, biotech, broadband and telecommunications, proprietary engineering services, consumer products, information technology, and software solutions.

Trish is a CPA, earned her bachelor's degree from Wichita State University, and her master's from Baker University. She is a frequent speaker on accessing venture capital and angel investing and serves on the boards of several private technology companies.



Peter Creticos
Institute for Work and the Economy

In addition to being the president and executive director of the Institute, Peter Creticos is a research fellow at the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University in Chicago. He recently finished a four-year appointment as visiting fellow at the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He is an adjunct faculty member at the Illinois Institute of Technology Stuart School of Business, and in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Roosevelt University.

Prior to establishing the Institute in 2000, Peter served as the vice president for the Midwest Regional Office in Chicago, Illinois, of the National Alliance of Business. Previously he served as assistant to the president at the Illinois State Chamber of Commerce and president of the for-profit subsidiary, Center for Business Management. He also has served as lead staff on economic and workforce development for the Illinois State Senate President, as an independent consultant and researcher on economic and workforce development issues, and as a field representative at the Council of State Governments.

Peter earned his Ph.D. at the Graduate School at Northwestern University. He also has a master of management at Northwestern's Kellogg Graduate School of Management, a master of arts in political science from the University of Missouri at St. Louis and a bachelor of arts in philosophy from Washington University in St. Louis.



Jeff Finkle
President/CEO, International Economic Development Council

As president and CEO of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), Jeff Finkle is a recognized leader and authority on economic development. With the formation of IEDC in 2001 following the merger of the Council for Urban Economic Development (CUED) - where he was president for 15 years - and the American Economic Development Council (AEDC), Jeff set the course for a more effective and influential organization. Today IEDC is the world's largest economic development membership organization and is a \$5 million annual operation that is renowned for its leadership in professionalizing and diversifying the field of economic development.

Jeff previously served as deputy assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and has received numerous awards for his commitment to making sustainable economic development a priority in communities of all sizes. In 2005, Jeff organized 250 economic development volunteers to work in Gulf Coast communities endeavoring to recover from Hurricane Katrina. In 1989, he also founded the Bollinger Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides financial assistance to children who have lost a parent who worked in the field of economic development.

A frequent lecturer and prolific author, Jeff has appeared on CBS Sunday Morning, Fox television and the Journal Report on PBS. He earned a bachelor of science degree in communications in 1976 from Ohio University in Athens and pursued graduate studies in business administration at Ohio State University.



Chris Gibbons
Economic Gardening

Christian Gibbons is the founder of the National Center for Economic Gardening. For 25 years, he served as the director of business/industry affairs in Littleton, Colorado and is co-inventor (along with city manager Jim Woods) of "Economic Gardening," an entrepreneurial approach to economic development. From the period 1990 to 2010 the number of jobs in Littleton doubled from 15,000 to 30,000 and sales tax revenues more than tripled from \$6 to \$21 million. The City did not recruit one industry during this period, nor did it offer one cent in incentives or tax rebates.

Chris received a master's degree in regional and city planning from the University of Oklahoma in 1973 and worked for the City of Oklahoma City and San Bernardino County, California before establishing his own consulting firm in 1977. From 1977 to 1987 he consulted on a variety of community and economic development projects in Colorado, Wyoming and California.



Dell Gines
Senior Community Development Advisor – Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

Dell has a deep passion for helping leaders in disadvantaged and economically challenged communities understand how they can grow and thrive through innovative economic development strategies. His primary responsibility is to support the Federal Reserve Bank's small business and economic development initiatives across the seven states within the Federal Reserve Bank's region. Dell is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) who focuses on entrepreneurship-led economic development in urban and rural communities.

Through his work at the Federal Reserve Bank, Dell has created numerous programs including: the creation of the Grow Your Own Guide to Entrepreneurship Based Development, the regional micro-finance alternative lender database and Small Biz Day programs across the region, which has connected more than 600 entrepreneurs to local small business resource providers.



Kate Pope Hodel
Special Projects, KCSOURCELINK

Kate Hodel works on projects for a variety of clients at SourceLink, including research projects around job creation and capital access. Kate also coordinates investor/entrepreneur connection events and education for KCSOURCELINK.

Kate has had a front row seat for the entrepreneurial revolution, joining the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in 1991 when it was just beginning its involvement in entrepreneurship. She directed the Kauffman Foundation's efforts to develop a national reputation around entrepreneurship, working with organizations such as National Public Radio, the national Entrepreneur of the Year awards and the international board for Young Entrepreneurs Organization.

Pursuing her passion for community entrepreneurship, Kate was the original program officer for the KCSOURCELINK founding grant. She went on to work for KCSOURCELINK and SourceLink as a consultant and staff, helping build networks across the state of Missouri and in select communities nationwide. Kate chairs the board for NetWork Kansas, a SourceLink affiliate, and serves on the Startup Kansas Loan and Capital Multiplier Venture Fund committees. She holds a bachelor of journalism degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia and an MBA from Rockhurst University.



Victor Hwang
Vice President of Entrepreneurship, Kauffman Foundation

Victor W. Hwang is vice president of entrepreneurship at the Kauffman Foundation, the world's leading foundation for entrepreneurs. The Foundation supports entrepreneurs starting and building businesses, leaders seeking guidance in the innovation economy, and cities and communities growing competitive jobs through sustained business creation.

Prior to joining the Kauffman Foundation, Hwang was co-founder and CEO of Liquidity, a Silicon Valley venture-backed nanotech firm that makes filters for safe drinking water. He was CEO and co-founder of T2 Venture Creation and was executive director of the Global Innovation Summit, a conference focused on building innovative ecosystems with delegates from over 50 nations. He is past president of Larta Institute, an organization that commercializes technology from key government agencies, such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. He was chief strategy officer of Veatros, a video startup where he led the company's acquisition by DivX. He practiced corporate and technology law with the firms of Mayer, Brown & Platt and Irell & Manella.

Hwang is an alum of the Kauffman Fellows, a leadership society for venture investors. He is co-author of the book *The Rainforest: The Secret to Building the Next Silicon Valley*, which explains how companies, communities and countries can foster systemic innovation at large scale. He has been a contributing columnist to Forbes, The Wall Street Journal, TechCrunch, and Entrepreneur.

Hwang serves on the board of Silicon Valley Forum, the largest and oldest not-for-profit organization in Silicon Valley. He was appointed to the California Blue Ribbon Task Force on Nanotechnology, and was awarded a Marshall Memorial Fellowship, a program for emerging trans-Atlantic leaders. Hwang is a graduate of Harvard University and the University of Chicago Law School.



Norris Krueger
Founder, Entrepreneurship Northwest

Norris Krueger is a recovering tech entrepreneur, research PhD in entrepreneurship ("how do expert entrepreneurs think?" and with growing interest in ecosystems) turned impoverished economic developer/entrepreneurial champion. Norris is often cited in the entrepreneurship research field, and is deeply engaged in his own local ecosystem.

Norris speaks all over the world but enjoys most the opportunities to work collaboratively with on-the-ground entrepreneurs in places like Cairo, Auckland... and Boise. Norris has both participated and been heavily involved with a number of ecosystem initiatives spanning from the 2013 OECD conclave, to other major, well-received workshops and symposia.



Mark Lange
Executive Director, Business and Entrepreneurship Division, University of Wisconsin-Madison, YourEconomy

Mark Lange has been the executive director of the Division for Business & Entrepreneurship since 2013. He provides vision and leadership for five program units that collaborate on customer-driven approaches to enhance the value of Wisconsin- one business at a time. The division serves aspiring, new and established small businesses by connecting them to resources, information and services that improve performance and increase capabilities for success.

Mark came to UW-Extension after serving 14 years as executive director for the Edward Lowe Foundation, a nonprofit organization seeking to accelerate entrepreneurship and its impact on community and economic development. He was responsible for day-to day operations and overseeing the foundation's national advocacy for second-stage entrepreneurs, economic gardening and the development of WWW.YOURECONOMY.ORG.

Mark's other previous roles include: director, Lundquist Center for Entrepreneurship at the University of Oregon; co-founder, CVT Productions, a video-production and software-distribution company; and adjunct faculty member in entrepreneurship, Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame. Mark earned a bachelor of science in finance and a bachelor of arts in sales and marketing at University of Northern Colorado.



Penny Lewandowski
Senior Advisor, External Relations, Edward Lowe Foundation

Recruited to the foundation in 2005, Penny Lewandowski is responsible for developing a strong national presence for the foundation and for cultivating and managing relationships with the foundation's external partners in entrepreneurship and economic development. She leads efforts to set and drive the vision for the organization's future. In addition, she is a frequent speaker and nationally recognized champion of the importance of building a strong entrepreneurial culture.

Previously, Penny led the foundation's entrepreneurship team in developing and delivering programs that help second-stage entrepreneurs. Prior to joining the foundation, she was executive director of the Greater Baltimore Technology Council and served as director of entrepreneurship and education for the Morino Institute, a nationally recognized entrepreneurship program in Reston, Va. She also directed George Mason University's Century Club, a group formed to build alliances between the university and business community.

The Kauffman Foundation, in conjunction with the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year awards, named Penny as the recipient of its prestigious "National Supporter of Entrepreneurship" award in 2003.



Don Macke
Co-Founder and Director of Entrepreneurial Communities, Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

Don Macke is co-founder and director of the Entrepreneurial Communities solution area at the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, a national non-profit organization that helps communities leverage assets – primarily their business, social and civic entrepreneurs – for a more prosperous future. The Center’s E Communities work provides community and regional leaders with the framework and tools needed to grow more effective and efficient systems of support for entrepreneurs as a way to strengthen local economies and achieve meaningful and broadly shared development impacts. The E Communities framework has been applied with success in diverse communities and regions.

Don is also active in the Center’s Community Development Philanthropy solution area, and conducted the first statewide Transfer of Wealth™ (TOW) study in Nebraska in 2002. The Center’s TOW team has completed over 40 studies, covering over one-half of the counties and communities across the nation.

Don was a co-founder of the Nebraska Community Foundation and served as its first Executive Director. Don has over 40 years of experience in the field of community economic development, serving on the staff of the Nebraska Legislature, the Cabinet of the Nelson Administration in Nebraska, and working as a consultant in 45 states, Canada and the Caribbean. Don has a master of arts in regional economics and a bachelor’s degree in environmental science from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.



Deborah Markley
Co-Founder and Managing Director, Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

Deb is co-founder and managing director of the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, a national non-profit organization that helps communities leverage assets – primarily their business, social and civic entrepreneurs – for a more prosperous future.

Deb’s role within the Center is helping communities – and the Center – measure the impact of their work and tell the story of their success. She leads the Center’s empowering research efforts including practice-driven assessment of best models for entrepreneurship development. Her research includes case studies of entrepreneurial support organizations and assessment of rural ecosystems, including capital markets. She has extensive experience conducting field-based survey research, particularly with focus groups and interviews with rural bankers, entrepreneurs, service providers, investors, small manufacturers, and others. In addition to her research efforts, Deb works as part of the Center’s Community Development Philanthropy and New Generation Partnerships solution area teams.

Deb brings more than 30 years of experience in community economic development to her position. Before founding the Center, she held academic positions and operated her own consulting practice. Deb has a B.A. and M.S. in Agricultural Economies from Cornell University and a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from Virginia Tech.



Maria Meyers
Vice Provost for Economic Development, University of Missouri – Kansas City,
Executive Director UMKC Innovation Center and Founder, SourceLink and
KCSOURCELINK

Maria Meyers, like the organization she leads, is entrepreneurial about supporting entrepreneurs. She has more than 20 years of experience in creating successful companies in the high technology, biotechnology, manufacturing and museum industries—and, as founder of KCSOURCELINK and SourceLink, has 15 years of experience in building infrastructures that support and sustain entrepreneurial ecosystems.

As founder of KCSOURCELINK, Maria created a network that connects entrepreneurs with hundreds of business-building organizations throughout the Kansas City region. She later scaled that network model nationally as founder of SourceLink®, creating America’s first R&D platform for economic developers and e-community champions.

Maria is frequently requested to keynote and lead discussions on topics like entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship economic development, and entrepreneurial infrastructure and ecosystem building for leading international organizations, including the Kauffman Foundation, International Economic Development Council, the International Business Innovation Association as well as regional economic development organizations, including the Federal Reserve Bank. She holds a bachelor of science in physics from Iowa State University.



Mark Muro
Senior Fellow and Policy Director, Brookings Institution

Mark Muro, a senior fellow and the director of policy at the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, leads the program’s advanced and inclusive economy activities. Mark is an expert on regional technology ecosystems and economic development and has published extensively on manufacturing, digital trends, energy issues, and regional industry clusters.

In recent years, Mark has led the development of state advanced industries strategies for Rhode Island, Tennessee’s automotive industry, and Colorado’s space / aerospace sector and wrote the report “Powering Advanced Industries, State by State.”

Mark is an advisor to the American Lightweight Materials Manufacturing Innovation Institute and the author of numerous publications on regional technology ecosystems and economic development strategies, including “The New ‘Cluster Moment’: How Regional Innovation Clusters Can Foster the Next Economy.” He holds a bachelor’s degree from Harvard College and a master’s degree in American studies from the University of California, Berkeley.



Erik Pages
President, EntreWorks

Erik R. Pages is the president of EntreWorks Consulting, an economic development consulting and policy development firm focused on helping communities and organizations achieve their entrepreneurial potential. EntreWorks works with a diverse base of clients including state and local governments, Chambers of Commerce, business leaders, educational institutions, and non-profits.

Previously, Erik served as policy director for the National Commission on Entrepreneurship, and vice president for policy and programs at Business Executives for National Security. Erik held several positions in government, most recently as the first director of the Office of Economic Conversion Information at the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. He has served as an official advisor to the White House Conference on Small Business. In 1998, the Rockefeller Foundation selected him as one of 24 national "Next Generation Leaders." He is a senior fellow at the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, and on the Board of Directors for the International Economic Development Council and Global Entrepreneurship Week.

He received his Ph.D. from Georgetown University, where he has served as an adjunct professor. He is a graduate of Dickinson College (Phi Beta Kappa) and the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs.



Angela Pate
Co-founder, Startup Quest

Startup Quest® was launched in 2011 based on a simple observation: the recession was reducing jobs, the economy was changing, and Americans weren't ready for it. Co-founders Angela Pate and Jane Muir noticed rapidly growing businesses were struggling to find talent with the skills they needed to expand. Meanwhile, unemployment was stubbornly stuck at all-time highs at the time, and underemployment continued to challenge their college town community. This mismatch led them to pioneer a new path, one that would better align the region's workforce with the changing business economy.

Angela is also a principal and president of Focused Management Solutions, a labor market research and workforce development consulting and management firm. She is a frequent speaker on workforce development for self-employment, entrepreneurship and the gig economy at venues such as the National Governors Association, the Federal Reserve, the World Bank, various workforce development and educational conferences. She serves on boards of various organizations, including an advisory board for the Secretary of Labor.

Angela created OwnForce.com, an online worker-centric marketplace for workers to pay and be paid online for services, further their education, access benefits and learn how to grow their consultancy or new business. She holds a degree in material science and engineering from the University of Florida.



Erik Pedersen
Vice President of Entrepreneurship, NetWork Kansas

As the vice president of entrepreneurship for NetWork Kansas, Erik is responsible for all aspects of the Entrepreneurship (E-) Community Partnership. E-Communities use local leadership teams to direct activities designed to cultivate an entrepreneurial environment through: a) overseeing a locally controlled loan fund to assist entrepreneurs with capital, b) identifying and engaging with resources to help entrepreneurs start or grow, and c) implementing programs and initiatives to accelerate startups, facilitate transitions and assist or accelerate existing businesses. To date, the 48 E-Communities under Erik's purview have provided over \$6.9M in matching loans and grants to over 260 businesses, creating or retaining over 630 full time and 750 part time jobs.

Erik began his career in marketing and business development for a Wichita-based technology startup company, Brite Voice Systems. He left Brite Voice to start a manufactured housing dealership with Steve Radley, president of NetWork Kansas, culminating in a successful exit to the largest manufacturer in the country, Champion Enterprises. Erik graduated from Friends University in 1988 earning his bachelor's in business administration.



Nick Poels
President, western Kansas Rural Economic Development Alliance (wKREDA)

Nick Poels is the executive director of Phillips County Economic Development and the current president of the western Kansas Rural Economic Development Alliance, a network of economic development professionals and resource partners across the 55 counties of western Kansas.

Nick's primary goal is to enhance the economic well-being and the quality of life across western Kansas, with emphasis in Phillips County. His approach combines aspects from his formal education in agricultural engineering, and his professional experience in both logistics and as the owner of an international design and manufacturing company based in the United Kingdom.

Nick has a passion for impactful projects that create local opportunity, leverage local talent and develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem within the area. He is also actively engaged as vice president of Phillipsburg Rotary Club; chairman of the Community Child Care development project; the USD 325 Site Council; Phillips County Encore Living committee; and the National Rural Economic Developers Association.



Matt Raker
Director of Community Investments and Impact, Mountain BizWorks

As director of community investments and impact, Matt Rakeer and his team at Mountain BizWorks help local small businesses start, grow and create jobs through loans, classes and coaching.

Previously, Matt served as the vice president of entrepreneurship at AdvantageWest, a regional economic development partnership in western North Carolina. He worked closely with regional partners to ensure WNC was home to a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem. Matt also headed their AdvantageGreen program, an initiative to capitalize on WNC's exceptional natural assets and the opportunity to be a leader in sustainable industries. Through AdvantageGreen, Matt worked with startups, existing industry and regional partners to advance WNC economic clusters in clean energy, green building technologies, natural products, sustainable agriculture, outdoor sports and climate science.

Matt holds degrees in economics and natural resources management from UNC Asheville.



Steve Radley
President and CEO, NetWork Kansas

Steve Radley is the president and CEO of the Kansas Center for Entrepreneurship DBA NetWork Kansas. Since its launch in March of 2006, NetWork Kansas has created a network of more than 500 partners that has assisted over 11,000 entrepreneurs. NetWork Kansas also launched multiple loan programs and a venture fund resulting in investments of more than \$22 million to 500+ businesses with total capital deployed exceeding \$274 million.

In 2007, NetWork Kansas launched the nationally recognized Entrepreneurship (E-) Community Partnership, with 48 E-Communities across Kansas. E-Communities have provided matching loans to more than 200 businesses and launched programs like the Ice House Entrepreneurship Program, Wichita State's Growing Rural Business program and the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge. Most recently, NetWork Kansas partnered with the National Center for Economic Gardening to deliver economic gardening assistance to more than 50 growth firms across Kansas.

Steve began his career in the private sector as the 28th employee of a technology startup, Brite Voice Systems, that grew from \$6 million to more than \$175 million. Steve has co-owned two businesses including a manufactured housing dealership that sold to the largest manufacturer in the country. Steve holds a bachelor of arts in journalism and filmmaking from the University of Oklahoma, a master's in Christian ministry from Friends University and an MBA from Wichita State University.



Rodney Sampson
Partner, Inclusion + Equity, TechSquare Labs

Rodney Sampson is a veteran technology entrepreneur (with four startups and two exits), angel investor, venture partner, and author of four books. Sampson is passionate about reducing our nation's racial wealth gap by advancing the cause of innovation, entrepreneurship and investment as a way of life for all. To advance this definitive cause, Sampson cofounded Kingonomics in 2013.

Through a series of large scale conferences, Kingonomics has quickly become the nation's leading advocacy and learning platform for innovative capital formation and wealth creation for people of color.

That same year, Sampson launched Opportunity Hub, an entrepreneurial center and pre-accelerator dedicated to increasing diversity and inclusion in the innovation, entrepreneurship and investment ecosystem. In 2015, Opportunity Hub merged with TechSquare Labs, a Google for Entrepreneurs Technology Hub that includes a technology incubator and seed fund near Georgia Tech. To date, OHUB and TechSquare Labs portfolio companies have raised over \$250 million in venture capital and created over 500 high growth jobs.

Sampson also launched CodeStart, Atlanta TechHire with They City of Atlanta; and #YesWeCode Fund, a \$100 million coding scholarship fund. Sampson holds a bachelor of science in psychology from Tulane University and an MBA from Keller Graduate School of Management.



Evan Schmidt
Director of Strategy and Evaluation, Valley Vision

Evan Schmidt joined Valley Vision in 2014. As the director of strategy and evaluation, Evan works with the CEO and board of directors to determine organizational strategy and direction. This work is directly informed by performance measures and data, which Evan manages through organizational evaluation practices. She has also managed projects in the Clean Economy,

21st Century Workforce, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and Leadership and Civic Engagement strategy areas.

Before coming to Valley Vision, she was an independent consultant and program evaluator, working on evaluation projects for nonprofits and the government across the United States. Evan specializes in qualitative evaluation methods, process management, research, and community engagement. Evan's broad professional background includes environmental sustainability, public health, youth engagement, education, community development, women's advocacy, and workforce development.

She is active in a number of organizations: Natural Resources Commission, City of Davis; California Stewardship Network; Capital Public Radio Affordable Housing Advisory Committee; Biomass Technical Advisory Committee; Davis Area Cooperative Housing Association; City of Davis Community Mediation Services; and Yolo Conflict Resolution Center. Evan holds dual master's degrees in community development and geography.



Bruce Seifer
Adjunct Faculty, Sustainable Entrepreneurship MBA at University of Vermont

Bruce Seifer was the longest serving economic development public official in the state of Vermont. He began working for the City of Burlington's Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) at the office's inception in 1983 when it was created by Mayor Bernie Sanders. He led the City of Burlington's Economic Development efforts since 1985.

Bruce has provided direct technical assistance to more than 4,000 businesses, ranging from home-based businesses to companies with 500 employees; managed a revolving loan fund; and assisted in the start up of more than 20 nonprofit organizations in Vermont. He has served on dozens of boards and commissions at the national, regional, state and local levels including banks, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, colleges and business trade groups. Bruce is co-author of *Sustainable Communities – Creating a Durable Local Economy*.



Scott Sproul
Northwest Economic Innovation Center

Scott Sproul is president and CEO of the Northwest Kansas Economic Innovation Center, based in Norton, Kansas. The Northwest Kansas Innovation Center has a goal of reversing population drain, increasing economic opportunities and strengthening critical community services in northwest Kansas.

Prior to joining the innovation center, Scott was the executive director of Norton City/County Economic Development where he spent five years specializing in business expansion and recruitment, investor development and succession planning for existing businesses. Before that, he spent 10 years with Nex-Tech as the Community Development Representative focusing on community relations, city government negotiations and youth programs.

He is a member of the Kansas Economic Development Alliance and the western Kansas Rural Economic Development Alliance.



Tammie Sweet
Director, GrowFL, the Florida Economic Gardening Institute

Tammie Sweet leads program development for GrowFL throughout Florida, helping local communities build entrepreneurial efforts centered on the Economic Gardening philosophy and techniques.

GrowFL was established in 2009 as a statewide economic development organization to serve second-stage growth companies. The program focuses its efforts on initiatives that strengthen the service offerings of entrepreneurial support organizations throughout Florida and delivering critical research and strategy support to help second-stage growth entrepreneurs prosper. GrowFL has assisted more than 800 companies through its Strategic Research, Peer-to-Peer Learning and Leadership Development programs and is certified by the National Center for Economic Gardening.

Tammie has been in economic development for more than 20 years, serving with the Economic Development Council of Collier County from 1994 through 2011, leading the organization as president and CEO from 2002 to 2011. She is a former chair of the Florida Economic Development Council and currently serves on its executive committee. Tammie is a certified program administrator by the National Center for Economic Gardening. She is a graduate of Leadership Collier and Leadership Florida Class XXV.



Brian Vadakin
Social Enterprise Coordinator, Rural Action

Brian Vadakin is the social enterprise coordinator at Rural Action. Brian is responsible for providing business development assistance to Rural Action's two social enterprises, evaluating and developing new ventures, and connecting Southeast Ohio's social entrepreneurs with technical assistance and investment to grow the social enterprise ecosystem.

Brian first worked with Rural Action as a development intern in 2015. He then completed a 10-month U.S. Fulbright research grant in economic development in Costa Rica, studying rural tourism and agricultural cooperatives. Brian holds a bachelor of arts in Spanish language from the Ohio University Honors Tutorial College, with minors in economics and environmental studies.



Dennis West
President, Northern Initiatives

Dennis West has spent more than 30 years in the Community Economic Development Movement, having worked on a broad range of community-based civic and professional activities. Since 1997, Dennis has served as president of Northern Initiatives, a private not for profit community development financial institution based in Marquette, Michigan.

Founded by Northern Michigan University, Northern Initiatives serves 46 counties of rural Michigan and five Wisconsin counties, providing financial and knowledge building services to start up and growing businesses in underserved rural markets. Northern Initiatives has made more than 860 loans totalling more than \$50,000,000 with 40 percent of its loans to women owned businesses, and around one third to startups. In 2015, it launched a loan customer portal to offer blended learning opportunities to its customers in working with their NI coach.

Dennis serves on the boards of the Michigan Magnet Fund; Community Economic Development Alliance of Michigan; UP Business Capital; the Prima Civitas Foundation; the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance and the Great Lakes Regional Training Initiative; the Advisory Boards of North Star Capital; the Region One Small Business Technology Development Center; and the Finance Committee of the Community Foundations of the Upper Peninsula. He is a coach mentor for the Kellogg Foundation, Fellowship Program and the recipient of the 2011 LandUse Excellence Leadership Award given by Michigan State University and the Michigan Land Use Funders. Dennis' undergraduate degree is from Hanover College.



Rob Williams
Director, SourceLink

Rob Williams serves as director of SourceLink, a nonprofit created in 2003 with combined support from the Kauffman Foundation, University of Missouri-Kansas City and the Small Business Administration. During his tenure, outcomes have included successful entrepreneurship building initiatives in five major cities in close partnership with JPMorgan Chase, as well as a number of state and local entrepreneurship ecosystem building projects based in Albuquerque, State of Minnesota, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Baltimore, Indianapolis, and Colorado Springs. He inspires a national network of SourceLink affiliated communities and regularly provides entrepreneurship-led economic development training for International Economic Development Council sanctioned programming.

Prior to joining SourceLink, Rob was at the University of Northern Iowa where he helped create, lead and expand several different entrepreneurship support programs. These included IASourceLink, the Iowa Business Concierge and the Dream Big Grow Here business grant. Rob also was with the Entrepreneurial Regions project, funded by the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce, where he trained and worked closely with local community leaders in consensus building and the formation of entrepreneurially-supportive communities in rural Iowa.

Rob holds a bachelor of public administration degree from the University of Northern Iowa.



Dan Wyant
President and Chief Operating Officer, Lowe Foundation

As president and COO of the Edward Lowe Foundation, Dan Wyant oversees daily operations and execution of strategy. This includes evaluation of the organization's current entrepreneurship and land stewardship initiatives and determining new programmatic direction. He also serves as vice chairman of the foundation's board of trustees, a role he has held since 1998, acting as an interface between the board and management team. Dan initially joined the foundation as president and COO in 2005. In 2011 he was appointed director of Michigan's Department of Environmental Quality and took a five-year hiatus from the foundation, returning in 2016.

Dan has a diverse background of public and private sector experience, allowing him to be successful under three different governors. He was director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture for nine years, a position he held under two administrations (Governor John Engler and Governor Jennifer Granholm). Prior to the MDA, Dan provided policy expertise for the Senate Majority Office and was associate director of Governor John Engler's Office of Legislative Affairs. In the private sector, Dan was a marketing manager for the Ralston Purina Co. and an export trade consultant for Lowe's International.

Within the philanthropic community, Dan has served on the board of directors of The Nature Conservancy in Michigan and been a board member of the Council of Michigan Foundations. He holds a bachelor's degree in food systems management from Michigan State University and a master's in business administration from American University in Washington, D.C.