SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES
(in alphabetical order)

Anthony Anton, President & CEO, Washington Hospitality Association

Lisa Alisha Benson is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Greater Spokane Incorporated (GSI). Alisha has been with GSI for 12 years. During her time at GSI, she has held roles as Chief Strategy & Business Development Officer, COO, VP of Education & Workforce, Executive Director of Spokane STEM, and Membership Director.

GSI is the regional business development organization in the Spokane region whose mission is to lead transformative business and community initiatives to build a robust regional economy. As CEO, Alisha provides organization wide leadership, strategy, and management.

Benson serves on the Board of the Washington Economic Development Association, and as co-chair of the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives Education & Talent Development Division. She also serves on the WSU Health Spokane Advisory Council, UW Business Advisory Council, Multicare Community Partnership Fund, Spokane County United Way, and Associated Industries. She graduated with a BA from Washington State University. She is married and a mother to 9-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son. She loves sports, hiking, camping and anything that involves the outdoors.

Richard Berndt serves as EDA’s Economic Development Representative for Washington. Richard has 25 years of economic development experience. He joined EDA’s Seattle Regional Office in 2007 and has served in a variety of roles prior to becoming Washington’s EDR.

Richard started as a Project Officer focused on Public Works, and then also managed Recovery Act grants for the region. In 2010, Richard became SRO’s Regional EDR, working on a variety of regional initiatives, while continuing to serve as a Project Officer for Public Works, Economic Adjustment, and Planning projects. More recently, Richard served as Interim EDR for Idaho, as well as EDR for Arizona.

Prior to joining EDA, Richard was with the Central Puget Sound Economic Development District for over ten years, working on the Prosperity Partnership CEDS strategy; Public Works, Technical Assistance, and Planning projects; and managing the District’s Board. After leaving the District, Richard served as the Director of Business Services for Snohomish County Workforce Development Council.

A Washington native, Richard has a Master of Public Administration degree, as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications, both from the University of Washington.

Lisa Brown, Ph.D, Director of the Department of Commerce

Lisa Brown was appointed Director of the Department of Commerce by Governor Jay Inslee in January 2019. Before joining Commerce, she served as chancellor of the Spokane campus of Washington State University where she worked primarily in health sciences and played a major role in the creation of the new Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine. Prior to her work at WSU, she served in the Washington State Legislature as a senator for 16 years, serving as Senate majority leader, chair of the Ways and Means Committee, chair of the Rules Committee and chair of the Energy, Technology and Telecommunications Committee. Lisa served in the state House of Representatives for four years where she held the positions of minority whip and minority floor leader and served as an associate professor at both Gonzaga University and Eastern Washington University. Lisa earned her Ph.D. and master’s degree in economics from the University of Colorado and her bachelor’s degree from the University of Illinois. She has served on the boards
of Ignite Northwest and YWCA Spokane. Her prior community service ranges from Greater Spokane Incorporated and the Empire Health Foundation to the Washington State Investment Board, among many others. Lisa has been honored by Catalyst Magazine with the “Power 50 Celebrating Influence” and “Women in Business Leadership” awards. She was also named Woman of the Year by Washington State University in 2013 and received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Early Learning Action Alliance that same year.

Bryant Campbell, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager, Business Oregon

is a native Oregonian who has served in Oregon state government for the past twenty years. The bulk of Bryant’s state service has been in workforce development. Bryant spent several years working for the Oregon Youth Authority Managing in the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations, where he managed an equity and inclusion staff with a system wide focus within the Youth Authority to create policies, build and analyze data sets and sustainable operational practices that support the juvenile justice system in providing culturally responsive care to adjudicated youth.

In addition to state service, Bryant consults around the country speaking to and teaching healthcare organizations on the inclusionary value of collaboration with diverse patient communities in utilizing diverse experiences in transforming traditional healthcare systems into Patient Centered Medical Home models. Bryant is currently the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager for Business Oregon, the State of Oregon’s Business Development Department where he is leading the department’s DEI work focusing on internal education, policy reform and building external awareness of the department and business partnerships with historically underserved, underrepresented and communities of color. Currently Bryant serves on a taskforce to assist with identifying Covid-19’s impacts on communities of color and the needs of these communities in recovery efforts.
Tory Campbell, Economic Development Director, Prosper Portland

Tory Campbell is the Director of Economic Development at Prosper Portland in Portland, OR. He grew up in Portland, attended John Marshall High School, picked up a love for entrepreneurship working at his family’s barbecue restaurant Campbell’s BBQ in SE, and went on to attend Oregon State University. Driven by the knowledge that small businesses are the engines of the city’s economy, from tech startups to neighborhood retail to trade sector companies, Tory collaborates with his department on strategies to achieve equitable economic outcomes that create access to livable wage jobs and small business vitality. Tory founded Prosper Portland’s Mercatus Collective (www.mercatuspdx.com), an online platform elevating and connecting entrepreneurs of color in the city of Portland. As a business owner himself Tory saw the need for a network of entrepreneurs of color and a focus on their achievements that could tell a deeper story about running a business in Portland.

Carmen Castro, Executive Director, Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber

Carmen G. Castro is the new Executive Director at the Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. She is originally from Peru and a University of Oregon Lindquist School of Business graduate. Prior to her current position, she was a board member at the Hispanic Chamber for two years while she led AAA Oregon/Idaho’s Latino Initiative for five years. At AAA her responsibilities included community education & outreach, communications in both English and Spanish and program management. She also supported their Human Resources department in recruitment and retention of Hispanic employees and created a Latino Resource Group to help further their diversity, equity and inclusion goals. Other experience includes over 20 years in various roles in Sales, Marketing, Event Planning and Product Development in Travel & Tourism with local, regional and international companies. Carmen is tri-cultural and tri-lingual thanks to growing up in a handful of countries in both Central and South America.
Chris Chmura, Founder & CEO, Chmura Economics

**Dr. Chris Chmura** is the founder and CEO of Chmura Economics and Analytics, an economic consulting and software firm that provides high-quality labor market data and analysis, so you can grow your region's economy. She is a Blue-Chip forecaster and a thought leader on labor economics. She has served as a keynote speaker for national, and international conferences, and is a quoted source on regional and national economic trends in the media throughout the nation. She is a former board member of the National Association of Business Economists.

Ben Danielson, Clinic Chief and Senior Medical Director, Odessa Brown Medical Clinic, Seattle Children’s Hospital

**Dr. Benjamin Danielson** is the Senior Medical Director for the Odessa Brown Children’s Clinic (OBCC). He has worked there for 20 years, combining patient care, clinic leadership and community advocacy.

Dr. Danielson is a clinical professor of pediatrics at the University of Washington, where he received his medical degree in 1992, after completing undergraduate studies at Harvard University. He did his pediatric residency at Seattle Children’s Hospital and continues to see patients there.

In early life he was rescued from the foster care system by a single mom who instilled in him and his sisters the value of education and community service. Dr. Danielson also serves on various boards of health-related organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community groups dedicated to health issues.

The unifying thread in Dr. Danielson’s activities relates to promoting well-being and dignity, especially for communities who have been pushed aside. He has found opportunities within and outside of systems to advocate in partnership with groups and individuals who are dedicated and passionate about creating a better world. He realizes he is the least useful member of the circles he joins, and he is inspired - every day - by the children, families, communities and organizations with whom he interacts.
Janea Delk, Executive Director & Tribal Liaison, Community Economic Revitalization Board

Janea Delk is the Executive Director & Tribal Liaison for the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) and has staffed the Board since 2004. CERB is a 20-member volunteer board; the Board is comprised of stakeholder members, business members and Legislators. CERB invests in public infrastructure to support private job creation and investment. Janea works with potential clients to develop projects to bring to the Board for approval. CERB’s construction projects have a public and private component, which is a very unique aspect of the program. With this, she has first-hand knowledge of the challenges that many of our local jurisdictions are facing when trying to fund community & economic development in their area. She works with the Board’s Policy Committee to develop Board policy and potential legislation. Janea is dedicated to working with the Legislature on the needs of economic development and rural broadband infrastructure across the state. Janea is also the Co-Chair of the Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council (IACC). Janea is also working towards her Professional Community and Economic Development (PCeD) certification through the Northwest Community Development Institute (NWCDI).

Atul Deshmane, Commissioner, Whatcom County Public Utility District

Atul Deshmane was elected to serve on Whatcom County Public Utility District commission beginning in January 2019. Deshmane was appointed to the Energy Northwest Board of Directors in April 2019.

Katie Drucker, Head of Business Development & Partnerships, Madrona Venture Partners

A Seattle-native, Katie is a seasoned technology executive whose twenty-five-year career has spanned a broad set of technology innovation – from telecom to security, from large enterprise, to start ups, to venture capital. Her keen, strategic insight has built new business opportunities, identified highly profitable investments, and
forged high-value partnerships resulting in well over a billion dollars of value creation. As Head of Business Development and Partnerships, Katie brings a global and Seattle based approach to building meaningful relationships with both corporate and governmental organizations looking to be on the cutting edge of technology innovation. Her work to nurture and expand Madrona’s network of senior execs, advise companies on partnership strategies and building deep customer relationships will enhance the programs that Madrona has put in place over recent years.

Katie was most recently a startup entrepreneur. She co-founded two companies, PolyVerse, cutting-edge, cyber security solution aimed at preventing large-scale data breaches, and Protromo (Formerly Sigby) where she executed a massive pivot in company strategy. At both companies she ran operations, sales, and touched all aspects of starting a technology-based startup which included raising millions of dollars from both venture and Seattle-Area angel investors. Prior to working as an early stage entrepreneur, she was a partner at Trilogy Equity, where she sourced investments, served on boards, and developed the team over her six-year tenure.

Katie began her career in wireless at McCaw Cellular and at Nextel, where she was responsible for M&A activity in excess of $700M as well as international license expansion. In addition, Katie served on the board of the National Association of Corporate Directors (Seattle Chapter) and she is also a member of Women Corporate Directors.

Katie holds a BA in History and Asian Studies from Connecticut College in New London, CT.

Jeremy Field, Regional Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

Jeremy Field leads the economic development, small business initiatives and program operations for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Region X Office – also known as the SBA Pacific Northwest Region – which serves Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington state.

As SBA regional administrator and a political appointee, Field also supervises SBA district offices in the region and promotes the President’s and SBA Administrator’s policies, messages and priorities throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Prior to joining the SBA in January 2018, Field spent nine years in Pocatello, Idaho as the regional director and state grant coordinator for U.S. Senator James E. Risch (R-Idaho), the chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. The position allowed him to work with a congressional team, collaborate with local leaders on federal issues and evaluate policy impacts on Idahoans.
Prior to working for Senator Risch, Field was a staff assistant for former U.S. Senator Larry Craig (R-Idaho) on the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging in Washington, D.C.

An Idaho native, Field has a master’s degree in public administration from Idaho State University, a juris doctor degree from University of Idaho, a bachelor’s degree in political science from Brigham Young University and an associate’s degree in mathematics and physical science from Brigham Young University-Idaho.

Jeff Finkle, CEcD, President & CEO, International Economic Development Council

As President and CEO of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), Jeff Finkle is a recognized leader in the field of 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 with over 5000 members and is a $6 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 over the years for his commitment to making sustainable economic development a priority in communities of all sizes. Significantly, in 2011, he was lauded by the U.S. Department of Commerce for his 25 years of stewardship over CUED and IEDC. Moreover, as a longtime leader in community service and philanthropy, in 2005 Jeff organized 250 economic development volunteers to work in Gulf Coast communities endeavoring to recover from Hurricane Katrina and today IEDC is deploying volunteers in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, Hawaii and Texas after various hurricanes, floods, and volcano incidents. 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. It has given out over a million dollars in scholarships.

He has served on the Arlington Virginia Economic Development Commission, the Alexandria Virginia Economic Development Corporation board, ACT’s advisory body for work ready communities, and as the president of the Bollinger Foundation, among other engagements.
Often, Jeff has been the voice on economic development issues. He has traveled extensively to speak on economic development both internationally and domestically and has been quoted in newspapers throughout North America. Jeff has appeared on CBS Sunday Morning, Fox Television and the Journal Report on PBS when the Supreme Court deliberated on issues surrounding eminent domain. Jeff was most recently quoted several times in the Wall Street Journal on the Amazon HQ 2 decision. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in communications from Ohio University in Athens and continued his education at Ohio State in Business Administration (no degree).

He maintains a strong connection with Ohio University’s Voinovich School for Leadership and Public Affairs and has a fellowship relationship with the school.

Richard Florida, Professor & Author, Creative Class

Richard Florida is one of the world’s leading urbanists.

He is a researcher and professor, serving as University Professor at University of Toronto’s School of Cities and Rotman School of Management, and a Distinguished Fellow at NYU’s Schack School of Real Estate.

He is a writer and journalist, having penned several global best sellers, including the award winning The Rise of the Creative Class and his most recent book, The New Urban Crisis. He is co-founder of CityLab, the leading publication devoted to cities and urbanism.

He is an entrepreneur, as founder of the Creative Class Group which works closely with companies and governments worldwide.

Stephen Green, Backstage Capital; Creator, PitchblackPDX

Stephen Green is a recovering banker and venture capitalist in Portland, Oregon. He’s worked tirelessly to support, connect, and grow underrepresented founders on the west coast for nearly two decades. By day, he’s a Community Manager at SF-based startup Townsquared. He spends his time supporting PDX area startups through events like “PitchBlack” and serving on a number of boards,
including the Oregon Growth Board and the Oregon Small Business Advisory Cabinet. Stephen is the father of 3 and, more than likely, has more shoes than you do.

Bill Greene, Dun & Bradstreet

Mr. Greene has over 30 years of D&B expertise in data management, business risk assessment and analysis, database intelligence solutions, and government solutions. Bill’s experience includes past D&B positions in Data & Operations, Information Resources, Commercial Sales, Strategic Accounts management, and Financial Services, where he managed solution relationships with some of D&B’s largest finance, risk and lending customers including Deere & Company, CNA Insurance, ABN Amro/LaSalle Bank, Comerica Bank and Principal Financial.

Since moving into D&B’s Government division in 2008, Bill critical to the success of D&B’s State and Local business unit and has been instrumental in developing unique data and analytical solutions for several government verticals including workforce development, economic development, regulatory & compliance, and procurement process reorganization. Has developed custom solutions for many state agencies including the California Employment Development Department, Illinois Office of Comptroller (Local Debt Offset Program), Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

Bill has had speaking engagements with many organizational events including conferences for the California Workforce Association, California Labor Federation, National Association of State Workforce Association, and National Association of Workforce Boards.

Bill is a graduate of James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Latisha Hill, Vice President Community & Economic Vitality, Avista

Latisha Hill is Vice President, Community & Economic Vitality. She assumed these responsibilities on Jan. 1, 2020. Hill is a Spokane native and has a Bachelors in Communications from Washington State University and a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from Eastern Washington University. She has worked in a number of roles since joining Avista in 2005, including operational and business policy support for multiple areas of the Avista service territory.
Most recently, Hill has led the redevelopment of the University District South Landing development that resulted in the Catalyst building that is currently under construction. Hill completed the Willamette Executive Utility Management Program and the Finance for Non-Finance Executives Program at Wharton Business School.

Over the past decade, Hill has served on several community boards and committees, including the Group Health Foundation, Visit Spokane, University District Public Development Authority, Northeast Public Development Authority, the Washington State Transportation Commission and Greater Spokane Incorporated, to participate in efforts to move the community and region forward and foster economic development and vitality.

Josh Hinerfeld, CEO, Firestone Pacific Foods

Josh joined Firestone Pacific Foods as CEO in early January 2020. The company engages in two primary activities: flash freezing of fresh berries and packaging of frozen fruit into ready-to-eat packages that are sold through club, mass merchant, grocery retail and food service accounts.

Josh is a seasoned business executive who has been working on the front lines of emerging food, agriculture and renewable energy sectors. Prior to joining Firestone Pacific Foods, he served in successive interim executive roles including. As COO of SeQuential, a vertically-integrated manufacturer of biodiesel and co-products, he organized and led a network of 10 reverse logistics operations located through the Pacific Northwest and northern California that collected used cooking oil from over 17,000 locations and handle grease trap cleaning services for approximately 5,000 restaurants. He also provided oversight of a multi-phase expansion of the company’s biodiesel facility in Salem, OR, and supported the strategic sale of the business to Crimson Renewable Energy.

Josh previously served as CEO of Organically Grown Company (OGC), a regional distributor of organic fruits and vegetables for over eight years. Under his leadership, OGC grew into the largest, independently owned organic produce distributor in the United States and garnered multiple awards – including a two-time winner of Fred Meyer’s (Kroger) “Vendor of the Year” - as well as national and regional recognition for the company’s commitment to driving pursuing more sustainable and just business and agronomic practices. Josh established an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP), completed multiple system upgrades and supervised construction of a state-of-the-art 119,000 square foot distribution center in Portland, OR. During his tenure as CEO, company revenues grew nearly 4X and shareholder value increased by 8-fold.
Josh previously ran the Pacific Northwest division for AmeriServe Food Distribution, managed supply chain management for Yum Canada, led PepsiCo Food Systems’ Canada operations and progressed through line operations, finance and strategic planning roles at PepsiCo and Continental Grain Company. He earned his MBA from Harvard Business School and a B.A. with General Honors and Departmental Honors in History from Vassar College.

Josh is a Senior Fellow of the American Leadership Forum of Oregon and a member of the City of Portland Neighborhood Emergency Team (NET) program. He previously served as chair of the Oregon Food Bank board of directors, chair of the Audit and Investor Responsibility Committees on the Vassar College Board of Trustees, and in numerous other leadership and volunteer roles in numerous civic and not-for-profit organizations.

Josh is married to Andrea Binder, a teacher at Fir Ridge High School in the David Douglas School District. They have two grown children, Olivia and Sam.

Jay Inslee, Governor, Washington State

Jay Inslee is a fifth-generation Washingtonian who has lived and worked in urban and rural communities on both sides of the state. He grew up in the Seattle area where his father, Frank, was a high school teacher and coach. His mother, Adele, worked as a sales clerk at Sears & Roebuck. Jay worked his way through college and graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in economics before earning his law degree at Willamette University. He and his wife, Trudi, then moved to Selah, a small town near Yakima where they raised their three sons. Jay worked as an attorney and prosecutor.

Jay and Trudi are now proud grandparents to three active little Inslees. Besides writing and illustrating books for his grandchildren and sketching scenes from around Washington, Jay is an avid cyclist and charter member of Hoopaholics, a youth basketball academy.

Jay first became involved in public service in 1985 when he and Trudi helped lead the effort to build a new public high school in Selah. Motivated to fight against proposed funding cuts for rural schools, Jay went on to represent the 14th Legislative District in the state House of Representatives. He continued serving communities in the Yakima Valley when he was elected to Congress in 1992. The Inslees later moved back to the Puget Sound area where Jay was elected to Congress in 1998, serving until 2012 when he was elected governor. He was re-elected in 2016.
Jeff Koffel Executive Director, Tri County Economic Development District

Jeff Koffel is the Executive Director of the Tri County Economic Development District (TEDD) and the Northeast Washington Regional Transportation and Planning Organization, which includes Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties in Northeast Washington. The mission of TEDD is to promote economic resiliency, job creation, and business retention through maintaining and developing business, tourism, community, and area development while preserving the culture and environment of the region. As the Executive Director, he leads a dedicated staff responsible for business and community development, planning, and marketing for the region. With a broad range of government, economic and community development experience at federal, state and local levels, Jeff brings a unique perspective and energy to the role. Prior to working with TEDD, he served 24 years in the United States Marine Corps as a naval aviator, and operational and strategic planner. He has also worked as the Chief Appraiser for Ferry County and in the private business sector as the Operations Manager for Northwest Applied Marine. Jeff holds a BA in economics from the University of Washington and a MA in education from Pepperdine University.

Melissa LaFayette, Field Director, National Development Council

Melissa LaFayette is a Field Director with the National Development Council. She provides technical assistance to communities across the Pacific Northwest in the areas of economic development finance, small business development, and affordable housing. She is currently working with the Washington State Department of Commerce on statewide Opportunity Zone activities. Prior to joining NDC, LaFayette served as a Community Economic Development volunteer in the Peace Corps and worked for various community development organizations. LaFayette has a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from Gonzaga University and a Master’s degree in Public Administration from the University of Washington.
Bobby Lee, Director, Office of Economic Development City of Seattle

Bobby Lee was nominated by Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan to serve as Director of the Seattle Office of Economic Development in March 2019. Mr. Lee previously served as the Director of Economic Development for the City of Portland. Prior to his service with the City of Portland, Bobby served in the Office of Governor Kate Brown as the Regional Solutions Coordinator, where he led an integrated team focused on solving the state’s economic and community development challenges. In addition to working in the private sector and for advocacy organizations, including Oregon’s largest workforce development agency, Mr. Lee also previously served on the City Council in Eugene, Oregon.

Anne McEnery-Ogle, Mayor, City of Vancouver

Anne McEnery-Ogle was originally elected to Vancouver City Council in November 2013 and took her first oath of office on January 1, 2014. She became the first woman to serve as Mayor of Vancouver on January 1, 2018, where she has helped to lead efforts in economic development, regional community relations, and transportation.

Anne attended Southern Oregon State College in Ashland, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in education in 1974. Two years later, she received her master’s degree in education from Lewis and Clark College in Portland. Mayor Anne taught for 30 years for Lake Oswego Public Schools, where she also served as chair of the mathematics department. During her career, she served as editor and author for Oregon’s State Math Journal, was a lecturer and instructor at colleges and universities, consulted for school districts in Washington and Oregon, and co-authored a book about reforming middle school mathematics.

Anne made improving the city she and her family call home a priority. She served for five years on the Vancouver’s Planning Commission and chaired both the Shumway Neighborhood Association Board and the Vancouver Neighborhood Alliance. She also served as board member and vice president of the Clark County Historical Society, chair and board member of Daybreak Youth Services’ Advisory Board, treasurer for the Uptown Village Association and president of the League of Women Voters, just to name a few.

Mayor Anne’s current assignments include serving as the vice-chair for the C-TRAN Board of Directors, chair of the Southwest Regional Transportation Council, member of Metro’s Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation, and member of the Regional Disaster
Preparedness Organization Policy Committee. The Mayor also serves on the board for Greater Portland Inc. (GPI), is a member of the Metropolitan Mayors Ad-Hoc Consortium and the Association of Washington Cities and has active memberships in numerous business associations.

She continues to volunteer with the Vancouver Police Department’s Neighbors on Watch (NOW) program, the Rotarians, and the Community Military Appreciation Committee. Anne’s heart for Armed Forces is evidenced by her faithful presence and participation in local events honoring their bravery and sacrifice. The wife of a Vietnam veteran, Anne is personally grateful to celebrate those who have served, continue to serve and will serve in the future. Mayor Anne and her husband, Terry, have one grown son, and have been Vancouver residents since 1980.

Tim Mahedy, Chief of Staff, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco

Tim Mahedy is the Chief of Staff at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. In this role, he works with District, System, and other national partners to advance the President’s and First Vice President’s priorities in areas that include policy, operations, and outreach.

Prior to assuming this role, Mr. Mahedy served as an economist specializing in U.S. fiscal and monetary policy at Bloomberg, and was a regular guest on Bloomberg TV and Radio. He worked on economic forecasting and other research for three years in the Economic Research Department at the San Francisco Fed. He has also held positions at the International Monetary Fund, Citibank, and Competitive Power Ventures.

Mr. Mahedy’s research focuses on fiscal policy, particularly taxation, forecasting, and alternative measures of inflation. His work has been featured in various publications, including Bloomberg Businessweek and the SF Fed’s Economic Letter series.

Mr. Mahedy holds a master’s degree in economics from San Diego State University, and bachelor’s degrees in economics and international affairs from The George Washington University. He is fluent in Spanish and Portuguese.
Matt Miller, Interim President & CEO, Greater Portland, Inc., Board Chair, Oregon Economic Development Association

Matt Miller, CEcD, is Greater Portland Inc’s Interim President and CEO. In his role, he oversees the development and execution of the organization’s strategic plan and business development efforts. Since 2015, Miller and team have facilitated 42 international and domestic corporate expansions in the Greater Portland region leading to the creation of over 3,000 jobs. He spearheads the organization’s Community Assistance Program, which provides community investors customized research, marketing, and planning support to advance local community and economic development efforts. To date, the program has completed over 300 engagements. In 2020, he will lead the effort to update the region’s next five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Miller is President of the Oregon Economic Development Association and serves on the Clackamas County Economic Development Commission and the City of Portland’s Council of Economic Advisors.

In 2019, he was named among a national group of “40 Under 40” by Development Counsellors International, a New York-based firm recognizing rising talent in economic development. Also in 2019, he achieved the designation of “Certified Economic Developer” from the International Economic Development Council.

Miller is a graduate of the Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma. He has graduate degrees in public policy from Arizona State University and economics from the University of Oregon. He received his undergraduate degree in economics and statistics from Florida State University. In 2013, he was invited as a guest lecturer on economic development at Arizona State’s School of Public Affairs.

He and his wife Piper live in Southwest Portland and are proud parents of Ezra and Emma.
Emile "Mel" Netzhammer, Chancellor, WSU Vancouver

Mel Netzhammer has served as chancellor of Washington State University Vancouver since July 2012. Previously provost and vice president for academic affairs at Keene State College in New Hampshire, he is the second chancellor in WSU Vancouver’s 26-year history, advancing the university’s mission to provide access to baccalaureate-level education in Southwest Washington. Netzhammer serves on the boards of the Columbia River Economic Development Council and Greater Portland Inc., Career Connect Southwest Executive Board, and the Vancouver Public Schools’ Management Advisory Task Force. Nationally, he serves on the American Democracy Project Steering Committee and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities Presidents’ Trust. A native of New Orleans, he studied communication, earning a bachelor’s degree from Loyola University and master’s and doctoral degrees from the University of Utah.

Rob Nichols, President & CEO, American Bankers Association

Rob Nichols is the president and CEO of the American Bankers Association, which represents banks of all sizes and charters and is the voice for the nation’s $18 trillion banking industry.

Rob joined ABA in August 2015 following ten years at the helm of the Financial Services Forum, a non-partisan financial and economic policy organization. Before joining the Forum, Rob served in the George W. Bush administration as the assistant secretary for public affairs at the Treasury Department, a position requiring confirmation by the United States Senate. In this role, he acted as chief spokesperson and head of the office of public liaison, serving as Treasury’s lead representative with the media, business, professional trade organizations, consumer groups and the public.

Rob’s earlier career highlights include working as communications director to U.S. Senator Slade Gorton and Press Secretary to the late Rep Jennifer Dunn, a former member of the House leadership, and in the West Wing as an aide in the Office of the Chief of Staff in the George H.W. Bush administration.

Rob is a recipient of the Alexander Hamilton Award, the highest honor of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. He also is consistently ranked as one of Washington’s Top Lobbyists by The Hill and was described as one of the “new generation of trade group CEOs” by The Washington Post.
In 2020, Rob was elected to serve a two-year term as chairman of the International Banking Federation, whose members include the national banking trade associations representing every major financial center. As chairman, Rob works with IBFed members to develop international consensus on critical issues, actively engaging with international standard setters and global supervisory bodies on issues that affect banks across borders and around the world.

Rob serves on the Board of Governors of FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education) and is a Corporate Advisory Council member at the Children’s National Hospital. Rob is a graduate of the George Washington University.

Kevin Perkey, CEO, SW Washington Workforce Development Council; Chair, Washington Workforce Association

Kevin Perkey is Chief Executive Officer of Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW). Workforce Southwest Washington leads the public workforce system for Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties, including oversight of WorkSource and job training programs for ages 16-24.

WSW contributes to regional economic growth by investing federal, state, local and private funds into programs and community-based organizations that improve the skills and education of our local workforce and provide companies with qualified talent. Since 2003, WSW has invested more than $100 million in helping job seekers secure employment and businesses find the talent they need in Southwest Washington.

Prior to joining WSW, Kevin was the CEO of South Central Pennsylvania Works (SCPa Works) a regional workforce development board investing more than $12 million of public workforce investment resources annually across an eight-county region of South Central, Pennsylvania.

Kevin currently serves on the Board of the Columbia River Economic Development Council, the Cowlitz Economic Development Council, the STEM Network Governance Committee, and the Mount St. Helen’s Institute and the U.S. Conference of Mayor’s Workforce Development Council (serving as Co-Chair of their Policy Committee).

Kevin has a BA in Environmental Studies and a Masters in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management, both from the University of Pittsburgh.
Alison Poulsen, Executive Director, Better Health Together, Spokane

In June 2014, Alison moved from Seattle to lead the Better Health Together team of tenacious problem solvers committed to radically improving our region’s health. Better Health Together is a community based nonprofit organization.

Alison brings a wealth of executive level nonprofit leadership, corporate social responsibility and community engagement experience as key tools for creating sustainable community impact. Prior to moving Spokane, she served as the Executive Director at WithinReach, positioning the organization for the “once in a generation” opportunity to implement the Affordable Care Act in Washington State. Over the past 20 years, Alison has also served as the Executive Director of four other Northwest nonprofit organizations—NPower NW, Seattle Works, VolunteerWorks and the Federal Way Chamber of Commerce. Alison currently serves as a board member of the Washington State School Employee Benefit Board.

When Alison isn’t building community, she is part of a great family that includes Erik, two amazing kids, Barrett (age 14) and Claire (age 12) plus Dodge, Penny June (Australian Shepherd pups) and Harry (Shih Tzu puppy), twelve chickens and on occasion a flock of lambs. A transplant to Spokane, she loves her country road running, the time she gets to spend being a “farmer” and watching tv.

Mark Riker, Executive Secretary, Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council

Mark L. Riker started his career in construction in November 1991 as a Union Sheet Metal Worker, serving an Apprenticeship from February 1992 to February 1997 working for Hermanson Corporation out of Kent, WA. Mark worked as a Journeyman, Foreman, and Project Superintendent for Hermanson until he was elected by his peers to the Office of Business Representative of Sheet Metal Workers Local 66 in June of 2002 where he served until being elected Executive Secretary of the Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council in February 2018. Mark currently serves as Chair of the Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council.
Peter Rogoff, CEO, Sound Transit

Peter Rogoff has served as Chief Executive Officer at Sound Transit, the regional transit provider in the Central Puget Sound region since January 2016. Since coming to Sound Transit, Rogoff has been overseeing the largest transit expansion program in North America, building a 116-mile regional rapid transit network by 2041.

As a 30-year transportation professional, Rogoff was appointed by President Barack H. Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate twice, first as Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration from 2009-2014, and then from 2014-2016, as the Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy at the U.S. Department of Transportation. Prior to serving in these distinguished positions, Rogoff spent 22 years on the staff of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, including 14 years as Democratic Staff Director on the Transportation Subcommittee.

Joel Sacks, Director, Washington Department of Labor & Industries

Joel Sacks was appointed Director of the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) in January, 2013 by Governor Jay Inslee. L&I’s mission is to “keep Washington safe and working.” The agency administers many vital programs including the state’s workers’ compensation system and its occupational safety and health program.

In Joel’s time as L&I director, long-term disability rates for injured workers have been reduced more than 20 percent. L&I is a national leader in creating innovative programs and incentives that help injured workers heal and return to work. The agency also helped workers recover millions of dollars owed to them in wages through wage complaint investigations. Fewer on-the-job injuries and improvements in helping injured workers heal and return to work led to a 5 percent reduction in workers’ compensation rates for 2019 — the biggest drop in a decade. The rate dropped again for 2020 — the third consecutive year that workers’ compensation rates of declined in Washington.

Joel’s position at L&I makes him one of three ex-officio members serving on the Washington State Investment Board (WSIB). He is currently the Chair of the WSIB and a member of the Private Markets, Audit, and Administrative Committees.
Previously he worked at the state Employment Security Department for nearly eight years, serving as Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner for the Budget, Policy and Communication Division.

Prior to joining Employment Security, he was Deputy Director of Field Services at L&I. He also served four years at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the U.S. Department of Labor.

Joel holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from Haverford College and a master’s degree in public administration from Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Public Affairs. He lives in Olympia with his wife and two daughters.

Fawn Sharp, President, Quinault Indian Nation

Fawn Sharp, a member of the Quinault Indian Nation, received her Juris Doctorate from the University of Washington, School of Law. She also holds an advanced certificate in International Human Rights Law from Oxford University. President Sharp attended Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice.

Fawn Sharp is serving her fifth term as President of the Quinault Indian Nation (2006-present); the President of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI), an organization established in 1953 that represents 57 Northwest Tribal Governments (2011-2017); and the President for the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), an organization established in 1944 representing 566 Tribal Nations (2016-2017); We are Still In Leaders Circle (WASI) member (2018-present). President Sharp was selected by United States Secretary of the Interior Kenneth Salazar to chair the Secretarial Commission on Trust Administration and Reform (2011-2013). She is also a member of the Board of Trustees for Grays Harbor College in Aberdeen, Washington.

Washington State Governor Jay Inslee appointed President Sharp to the Carbon Emissions Reduction Taskforce (CERT) in 2014 to consider measures to offset costs to consumers and businesses, and to design strategies to help energy-intensive industries transition from carbon-based energy sources.

Prior positions include Managing Attorney/Lead Counsel for the Quinault Indian Nation, Quinault Tribal Court Associate Judge; Administrative Law Judge for the Washington State Department of Revenue Tax Appeals Division, and practiced law with the law firm of Phillips, Krause & Brown.
Prior to becoming an attorney, Fawn held positions at the US Central Intelligence Agency and the Washington State Department of Corrections.

President Sharp resides on the Quinault Indian Reservation at Lake Quinault with her three sons, Daniel, Alijah, Jonas, and daughter, Chiara.

Lisa Smith, Executive Director, Washington Microenterprise

A longtime microenterprise advocate and co-founder of Enterprise for Equity, an Olympia-based MDO, Lisa Smith has been working to strengthen entrepreneurs with limited incomes since 1999. She has a wide spectrum of experience with business, academic, legislative, environmental, tribal and non-profit interests.

Her work and advocacy have helped hundreds of microenterprises launch and grow and many dozens scale up and blossom to become leaders in their communities and make significant contributions to their local business economies.

She has a special interest in the potential for microenterprise to boost Washington’s economy, especially through green enterprise, rural and tribal communities, and other marginalized populations.

Smith’s research and writing has appeared in Consumer Reports, Scholastic Magazine, and the American Journal of Public Health.

Nicole Sohn, Owner, Journey Discovery Center

Nicole’s passion for early learning began as a preschool teacher in Spokane, working with high risk children to instill a lifelong value around education. Nicole works with early learning providers, educators and the business community to address access and affordability for families and businesses to high quality early learning.

Nicole has worked in early learning for 20 years as a teacher and Executive Director/owner of a preschool in Spokane, focusing on the impact high quality early learning has on the future success of children in our communities. Nicole is currently serving on Spokane based Greater Spokane Incorporated’s board of trustees and
participates in coalitions and committees across the state to inform early learning policy. She has been an Association of Washington Business board member since 2019.

Nicole holds undergraduate degrees in both communication and children’s studies from Eastern Washington University, as well as an MBA from Gonzaga University. She and her husband live in Spokane with their two sons.

John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH, Secretary of Health, Washington State Department of Health

Secretary of Health, Washington State

John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH, was appointed secretary of health by Governor Jay Inslee and joined the Department of Health in April 2013. He’s an accomplished transformational leader with more than 22 years of local public health experience and focuses on whole systems approaches to improving health.

John has been passionate about public health since reading a 1983 Time magazine article about disease detectives tracking Legionnaires’ disease, toxic shock syndrome, and HIV. It was the impetus for him to enter the profession.

He has worked in four local public health departments in Washington and Connecticut and now serves as the Washington State Secretary of Health. He started his public health career in Connecticut in 1986 and was in its first group trained to provide HIV counseling and testing services.

Currently, John serves an adjunct assistant professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Gillings School of Global Public Health, Health Policy and Management. He also serves as a clinical professor at the University of Washington, School of Public Health, Department of Health Services, and has an adjunct faculty appointment at The Evergreen State College teaching public health policy.

He earned his doctor of public health (DrPH) in public health executive leadership in 2012 from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He received his master of public health (MPH) in chronic disease epidemiology from Yale University in 1987, and his bachelor of arts (BA) in biology from Lawrence University in Wisconsin in 1983. John was born and raised in Wisconsin. He and his husband have lived in Washington State since 1989.