



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT and EDUCATION SUMMIT

Wednesday, August 25, 2021

Speakers

Ted Abernathy Managing Partner, Economic Leadership



Ted has 40 years of experience in directing local and regional economic development and workforce development programs and later as CEO of a leading economic policy thinktank.

Economic Leadership LLC, based in Shallotte North Carolina, is a small group of data, strategy and policy experts working with private and public clients to analyze competitiveness, develop strategy, identify best practices, and reimagine the future. Over the past seven years Ted and the team has worked on over 120 projects in over twenty states and internationally, including designing an innovation ecosystem for a new science city in Kenya, producing an annual Home of Future Thinking conference, and creating a new company that assesses and improves group leadership. Ted is the principal author of the dozens of reports on future trends, workforce, and technology and speaks on the economy almost every week. He currently serves as the economic advisor to the Council of State Chambers.

Born in Dallas, NC, Ted received his bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; his master's from Johns Hopkins University, is a graduate of the Economic Development Institute and is an Eisenhower Fellow for global economics.

Kristen Brighton, HirePaths



Kristin is one of the principals and founders of New Boston Creative Group LLC, an integrated marketing communications firm based in Manhattan.

She was elected in 2019 to the USD 383 Manhattan-Ogden School Board, and was the 2016 chair of the board for the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce. In 2017, she conducted a national research study exploring why Generation X and Millennials volunteer with their chambers of commerce and the greater community. She's also currently spearheading a workforce campaign called HirePaths to excite and inspire parents to support their children going into skilled trades and other in-demand careers.



Jordan Buxton, The Butler County ACT – A Workforce Enhancement Project

Jordan is passionate about developing opportunities through community engagement. With nearly 10 years' experience in marketing and business development in both for and non-profit organizations, Jordan can gather diverse perspectives, while focusing on a shared purpose. A former Chamber of Commerce Director, Jordan is now the Marketing and Business Development Director for Gravity::Works Architecture and is leading the Work Ready Community initiative in Butler County by facilitating relationship cultivation between business and education. Jordan is a skilled facilitator with a desire to develop leaders and improve community participation and pride.



Jay Byers, City of Pittsburg

Jay is currently the Deputy City Manager for the City of Pittsburg, Kansas. He has a master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He has worked in a variety of public and private industries.

He has spent the last twenty years focused on public and private sector technology development and policy. He is actively engaged in strategic planning, citywide technical issues, and the wide range of initiatives necessary to encourage economic development. He is a member of the Leadership Kansas Class of 2015.



Alan Cobb, Kansas Chamber

Alan is president and CEO of the Kansas Chamber of Commerce. A native Kansan, Alan has been involved in politics and public policy at the local, state and federal level for more than 25 years.

Alan managed a number of statewide political and issue campaigns and served on the staff of U.S. Senators Bob Dole and Sheila Frahm and as a campaign advisor to the 2014 campaigns of Congressman Mike Pompeo and Senator Pat Roberts. Most recently, he served as Senior Advisor and National Director of Coalitions for the Trump for President Campaign.

At Cobb & Associates, Alan worked with clients in aviation component parts manufacturing, health systems and hospitals, small businesses, technical colleges, and financial concerns. He previously served as Kansas State Director and then Vice-President for Americans for Prosperity.

Alan received his undergraduate degree from Wichita State University and a Master's in Government Administration from the University of Pennsylvania. He earned his law degree from Washburn University School of Law.

Carrie Cox, Allen, Gibbs & Houlik, L.C.



Carrie is a senior consultant with AGH and assists employers with their HR and organizational development needs, providing services including business coaching, human resource audits and compliance assistance, compensation studies, assisting with hiring and retention strategies, policy and procedure review and development, team building, training and employee development, and implementing and transitioning the human resource function.

Carrie is a Wichita native, graduate of the University of Kansas, and a member of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), currently serving as the Wichita Chapter's VP of Communications. Her certifications include PHR from HRCI and SHRM-CP designated by the SHRM.

Anne Marie Coughlin, Greater Wichita Partnership



As the executive vice president of talent for the Greater Wichita Partnership, Anne-Marie's focus is to facilitate and lead the Partnership's strategic priority of Talent by working alongside employers and community partners to develop, retain and attract talent to the region.

Anne-Marie is driven by her passion to attract and keep talented individuals who will continuously elevate the independent and entrepreneurial spirit of the Wichita region. The Partnership focuses on three strategies under the Talent priority – build the workforce of the future for in-demand jobs, cultivate a talent-focused culture to retain and attract talent, and position Greater Wichita as a top place to live, work and play.

Connor Cross, Syndeo



Connor joined Syndeo in February 2009 and is Director of Human Resources, managing the HR function as well as client service. Connor is a Society for Human Resource Management Senior Certified Professional. She has a bachelor's degree in business management from Park University and a Master of Business Administration degree, with a concentration in HR, from Baker University.

Connor is originally from New York and served six years in the U.S. Air Force, where she worked in public affairs. A station assignment at McConnell Air Force Base brought her to Wichita.

Connor enjoys solving complex problems for clients and the employment law aspects of HR. She also enjoys heading culture improvement and employer branding initiatives internally at Syndeo.



Ivan Crossland, Crossland Construction Company

Ivan is the CEO at Crossland Construction Company, Inc.. He began working for his father pouring concrete and building metal buildings before learning how to manage construction projects and business operations.

Ranked in the top 100 contractors and top five metal builders in the country, Crossland Construction now has more than 1,500 employees across nine regional offices in six states. Operations have expanded to include three subsidiaries: Crossland Heavy Contractors (roads and bridges), an in-house precast plant called Crossland Prefab, and a development and holding company named Crossland Realty Group.

Ivan is a Pittsburg State University graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology in Construction Management.



Ervin Dimeny, Institute for Workplace Skills and Innovation America

Ervin is Vice President of Projects at IWSI America and a leading United States advocate for the expansion of apprenticeship programs. He was an editor and contributor to 'Skilling Up: The Scope of Modern Apprenticeship', a major anthology published in partnership with the Urban Institute (Washington DC) in 2019.

As a Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Kentucky's Labor Cabinet, Ervin conceived and led multiple initiatives to expand the scope and scale of civil service apprenticeships and traineeships. Ervin manages world leading apprenticeship models that play a central role in resolving future workforce acquisition and retention challenges.



Jim Echols, Renaissance Management and Training Solutions, LLC

James serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Renaissance Management and Training Solutions, LLP, a public relations firm specializing in business and human relations staff development and consulting and training. Previously, he served as a manager and program director for the Kansas Department for Children and Families. Leading up to his career in business, James served nearly twenty-five years with the U.S. Army, Army National

Guard and Army Reserve.

Other notable accomplishments include: Chair, Wyandotte County Boys and Girls Club, First Vice-Chair, Wyandotte County Unified Government Advisory Commission on Human Relations and Disability Issues, Board Member, Historic Northeast-Midtown Association, Executive

Director, Reaching Out From Within, Inc. (ROFW), Chair, Workforce Development Committee, Kansas City Kansas Community College Downtown Advisory Council, President, Future Leaders Outreach Network (FLON) and Member, Council of Advocates, Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, GA.

Echols has B.A. Degree in Public Service from the University of Central Oklahoma and pursued graduate studies in Human Relations/Organizational Development at the University of Oklahoma.



Dr. Blake Flanders, Kansas Board of Regents

Dr. Flanders serves as President and CEO for the Kansas Board of Regents, the governing board of the state's six universities and the statewide coordinating board for the state's 32 public higher education institutions (seven public universities, nineteen community colleges, and six technical colleges).

He oversees the implementation of the Board's strategy goals and manages the day-to-day operations of the Board Office. Prior to serving as President and CEO, Blake served as the Vice President for Workforce Development for the Board of Regents and as the liaison between the Board and the Kansas Department of Commerce.

Blake is a graduate of Colby Community College and Kansas State University where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science, Master of Science in Animal Science, and Doctorate of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction. Before joining the Board office, he served as Vice President of Instructional Services at Manhattan Area Technical College, and as a member of the faculty at Butler Community College.



Michele Gifford, Textron Aviation

Michele is the director of Workforce Planning and Talent Acquisition Textron. She guides the sustainment and continued development of strategic partnerships that enable Textron Aviation to effectively recruit and retain talent. Her team oversees kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) engagement, university relations, internship programs, contingent work, as well as hiring professional and direct team members

Prior to her current role, Michele helped design and launch the new Kansas Career and Technical Education Aviation Pathway in conjunction with the Kansas Department of Education, Wichita Public Schools, and WSU Tech.

Michele's 20-year tenure with Textron Aviation has included roles of increasing responsibility in the Finance, Continuous Improvement and Human Resources functions. She earned a bachelor's degree in Accounting at Fort Hays State University and MBA at Webster University.

Lana Gordon, Workforce Development Consultant



Most recently, Lana served as the Workforce Investment Commissioner for the State of Kentucky.

Previously, she was the Secretary for the Kansas Department of Labor, and before that she served in the Kansas House of Representatives, serving as chair of Joint Committee on Labor and Economic Development, chair of the Education Budget, and member of Education Health and Human Services, among other committees. Lana has also been a small business owner and a

teacher.

Keith Lawing, Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas



Keith Lawing is the President and CEO for the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas Inc., a locally operated not-for-profit corporation specializing in convening partnerships and implementing strategies to grow the regional economy. The Workforce Alliance administers the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in the Wichita metro area and manages a number of strategic employment and training initiatives.

Prior to his current position, Mr. Lawing was a Public Affairs Associate with the Hugo Wall School of Urban and Public Affairs at Wichita State University. From 1997 to 1999, he served as Assistant to the City Manager in Wichita, Kansas for special projects and citizen relations.

Lawing holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the University of Kansas and a Master of Arts degree in Public Administration from Wichita State University.

Heather Morgan, Kansas Community College Association



Heather is the Executive Director of the Kansas Community College Association. She is a native of Pratt, Kansas and holds a Master of Arts degree in Public Administration with an Emphasis in Athletic Administration from Kansas State University and a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary History Education from Kansas Wesleyan University. Professionally, she has held numerous leadership positions in state and local government. Most

recently before joining the Kansas Community College Association she served as the Executive Director of Project 17, a 17-county regional economic development project in Southeast Kansas.

Elizabeth Patton, Americans for Prosperity

Mika Pyyhkala, Envision

Danica Rome, Kansas Manufacturing Solutions



In her role as Vice President of Partnership Operations, Danica is responsible for developing, growing, and strengthening partnerships with organizations across the state that have a shared interest in helping create growth for Kansas manufacturing and the ecosystem that supports these companies.

For more than 15 years, Danica has consulted on federal, state and county workforce programming, concentrating on businesses affiliated with the manufacturing industry. In her previous role as Senior Director of Business Expansion/Retention and Workforce Solutions, she led efforts to retain and grow county economic development while nurturing partnerships with local business, investors, education providers and community organizations. Danica has been recognized by the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Dynamic Works Institute, and the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) for her commitment to creating and implementing innovative programming/solutions to address workforce initiatives.

Joseph Shepard, Lead For Kansas



As a transplant from California, Joseph is living proof of Kansas's unique ability to recruit and retain young talent. He is a first-generation college graduate, holding a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, a master's degree in Public Administration with a focus in nonprofit management and working on his doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Wichita State University.

For three years Joseph served as the first director of Multicultural Engagement and Campus Life at Newman University. Now, he is the first state director of Lead For Kansas, an affiliate of the national non-profit, Lead For America. The organization seeks to retain young and dynamic Kansans by showing them that obtaining success doesn't require them to leave home, but rather start where they live.

Scott Smathers, Kansas Board of Regents



Scott serves as the Vice President of Workforce Development for the Kansas Board of Regents and provides executive leadership for the Kansas Postsecondary Technical Education Authority. In this role, he is the state leader for issues involving the postsecondary education and training system in the development of an educated workforce that aligns with the needs of the Kansas economy. His scope of responsibility includes developing a policy agenda for postsecondary technical education, curriculum and program evaluation, system funding, benchmarks and accountability, management of federal initiatives, GED testing and administration and serving as the Kansas State Director for both the Carl D. Perkins program and Adult Education program.

Prior to serving in his current role, Scott worked as an economic developer and as a retail consultant, helping companies with their location and operational decisions around the world.

Curtis Sneden IOM, CCE, Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce



Curtis is President of the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce since 2019. He has also served as Senior Vice President of the Greater Topeka Partnership since its inception in 2018. He joined the Topeka Chamber in 2014 following a 20-year career as a corporate attorney and lobbyist with Payless ShoeSource, Inc.

Curtis serves as lead advocate for the Chamber at the federal, state and local levels of government. He guides the development of the Chamber's legislative agenda and manages the tactical execution of that agenda throughout the legislative year. This entails extensive collaboration with his colleagues across the state, including the professionals at the Kansas Chamber. Sneden was recognized as Advocate of the Year in 2012 by the Footwear Distributors and Retailers Association, a national industry organization.

Sneden received his designation as a Certified Chamber Executive from the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives this year, while simultaneously leading his organization through the lengthy process of achieving 5-Star Accreditation from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

A Topeka native, Curtis graduated from Kansas State University and then the Washburn University School of Law.

Jim Spencer, Hinkle Law



Jim offers practical insights that help his business clients better manage their workplaces with respect to employment law, executive compensation, and employee benefits matters. Jim advises business clients on federal and state laws affecting employers and executive compensation, including FMLA, ADA, FLSA, USERRA, GINA, ERISA and Sections 409A, 280G, and 457 of the Internal Revenue Code. He also

drafts and provides counsel regarding employee handbooks and policies, executive contracts of employment, nonqualified deferred compensation arrangements, long-term incentive plans, severance plans and agreements, retention plans and vendor agreements for employee benefit plans.

Chastity Troxel, Kansas Department of Commerce