

EXPERTS DIRECTORY



Need a quick quote on a national, state or regional economic trend? Looking for someone who can provide perspective on the key economic issues facing Wisconsin businesses? These experts from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) are available for interviews on WEDC programs and policies as well as ongoing developments and trends in their areas of expertise.

To arrange an interview, contact David Callender, Director of Communications, at 608.210.6706 or david.callender@wedc.org.



Melissa Hughes

Secretary and CEO

Quick Bio: Appointed secretary and CEO in October 2019. Previous positions include general counsel and chief mission officer at Organic Valley, as well as service on government and nonprofit boards on agriculture and environmental issues.

Areas of expertise:

- Economic development
- Rural economic development
- Forward-looking economic development strategies
- WEDC overview



Sam Ridders

Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer

Quick Bio: Joined WEDC in November 2019. Has an extensive background in rural development, both in the U.S. and internationally. Served in the White House Presidential Personnel Office from 2013-2014. Created and led the Rural Opportunity Initiative of the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business.

Areas of expertise:

- Rural and urban economic development
- Business attraction
- Business retention and expansion
- WEDC programs and operations
- Sustainability and resiliency



Mary Gage

Vice President - Business and Community Development

Quick Bio: More than 20 years of economic development experience in Wisconsin. Previous roles include director of business finance and compliance and senior economic development director.

Areas of expertise:

- Statewide economic partnerships
- Available financial resources
- Business retention and expansion
- 12 state Midwest economic development collaboration
- Promoting downtown development
- Supporting minority and small business development



Aaron Hagar

Vice President – Entrepreneurship and Innovation and Sector Strategy Development

Quick Bio: Joined the Department of Commerce in 2010, prior to the transition to WEDC. Previously served as technology investment manager, helping technology-based Wisconsin companies achieve their growth potential. Prior work experience as an economic development consultant in Minneapolis.

Areas of expertise:

Entrepreneurship and Innovation

- Government and community networks' roles in supporting the startup community
- WEDC entrepreneurship and innovation strategy
- Wisconsin early-stage investment
- Wisconsin startup ecosystem
- R&D to commercialization; analysis and summary of Wisconsin activities

Areas of expertise:

Sector Strategy Development

- Key economic driver sectors
- Advanced industry technology strategy
- Small and midsize enterprise competitiveness and talent strategies



Katy Sinnott

Vice President - International Business Development

Quick Bio: Joined WEDC in October 2014. Two decades of business management and financial services experience, working in more than 40 countries, with an emphasis on China.

Areas of expertise:

- Global trade
- Wisconsin export data and trends
- Country-specific export trends and opportunities
- Cross-cultural communication
- Barriers/opportunities facing companies that export
- Foreign direct investment
- Doing business in China
- Export financing
- Eximbank



Joshua Robbins

Vice President – Technology and Information Systems

Quick Bio: Joined WEDC in December 2011. Previously served as IT systems analyst, responsible for testing, building, maintaining and implementing WEDC's IT systems.

Areas of expertise:

- Implementation of SaaS systems, risks vs. rewards
- Customer service as an IT professional
- BYOD implementation



Brian Nowicki

Chief Financial Officer

Quick Bio: Joined WEDC in December 2015. Previously served as controller at Madison College, and worked for the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority from 1999 until 2014 in positions including financial officer, controller and senior manager of economic development.

Areas of expertise:

- Financial compliance with WEDC award contracts
- Accounting and financial reporting for governments
- Establishing financial internal controls
- Long-range financial planning and budgeting