



The Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor's  
**SMALL BUSINESS ACADEMY**

## Speaker Biographies

MAY 6-9, 2025



### **Eugene Manzanet, PhD**

#### **Sessions: Welcome and Opening Remarks; State Resources**

Since completing eight years of service in the U.S. Marine Corps, Eugene Manzanet has dedicated his time and energy to serving the Milwaukee area as a resource of information for financial education, community, and economic development. A current resident and homeowner of the near northwest side of Milwaukee, Manzanet was born in New York City and raised in the heart of the South Bronx. In his current role as the senior director of diverse business development for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, he is responsible for providing strategic leadership to the diverse business development team that supports diverse businesses and communities statewide. His last position was vice president of community lending at U.S. Bank Home Mortgage Wisconsin. Before rejoining U.S. Bank for 14 years, he served as the vice president of community development banking for PNC Bank.



### **Missy Hughes**

#### **Session: Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Missy Hughes is the secretary and CEO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the state's lead economic development organization. She was appointed to the post by Governor Tony Evers in September 2019. Prior to joining WEDC, she was chief counsel and chief mission officer for Organic Valley, a Wisconsin-based, nationwide cooperative of organic dairy farmers. In her role at WEDC, Secretary Hughes oversees efforts to attract businesses to Wisconsin and help existing businesses expand, meet current and future workforce needs, promote global trade and investment, support thriving communities and small businesses, encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, address the unique needs of rural residents, and advance the economic well-being of every resident.



## **Sara Rodriguez**

### **Session: Welcome and Opening Remarks**

---

Lt. Governor Sara Rodriguez, MSN, MPH, RN, was sworn in as Wisconsin's 46th lieutenant governor on Jan. 3, 2023. Before her election on Nov. 8, 2022, Lt. Governor Rodriguez—a working mom, wife, and proud Wisconsinite—served in the Wisconsin state Legislature representing a portion of Waukesha and Milwaukee counties in Assembly District 13. While serving as a state representative, she worked on the Committees on Health, Insurance, Energy, and Utilities and Science, Technology, and Broadband. Lt. Governor Rodriguez is an experienced health care executive who has worked in various leadership roles for more than 20 years, including founding her own small business. Prior to serving in the state Legislature, she was the vice president of population health and integrated care management at one of the largest health care systems in the Midwest. Before running for office, Lt. Governor Rodriguez built a career in public health and population health management. She held positions with public health departments at the local, state, and federal levels, including serving as an epidemic intelligence service officer with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as the chronic disease director for the State of Colorado, as a health care systems consultant, and as a vice president at a Fortune 100 Company. She graduated from Brookfield East High School and earned master's degrees in public health and nursing from Johns Hopkins University. As a returned Peace Corps volunteer and Girl Scout Troop leader, she is passionate about community service.



## **Eric Ness**

### **Session: Welcome and Opening Remarks; Start and Grow to Win with SBA (U.S. Small Business Administration): 2025 Award Winners Panel**

---

Eric Ness is the director for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Wisconsin District Office, one of 68 SBA field offices nationally. He is responsible for the delivery of SBA programs and services throughout the Badger State, helping small businesses start, grow, expand, and recover from adversity. Ness began his SBA career in 1990 as a commercial loan officer, working on both processing and servicing of loans. He has served as finance chief and assistant district director for economic development. He was selected for his current position in December 2001. In spring 2014, he served as acting regional administrator for the SBA's six-state Great Lakes region for several months. Ness worked in Northwestern Wisconsin before joining the SBA, first for Impact Seven as a business analyst and then as general manager of Western Wisconsin Development Corporation. He graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor of science in agricultural engineering and later obtained a master of business administration degree from Southern Methodist University in Dallas.





### **Mark Bula**

#### **Session: Start and Grow to Win with SBA (U.S. Small Business Administration): 2025 Award Winners Panel**

---

Along with Shawn Bula, Mark Bula of Signature Farms II LLC in Grand Marsh is the SBA Wisconsin 2025 Small Business Person of the Year. After 40 years of partnership and expansion of their chip potato farming operation with another family, the Bulas—father and son--purchased the other share in 2021 with the help of an SBA 504 loan and their community banker. Their farming expertise has since helped them grow their harvest, acreage, workforce, and profits while contributing to their industry and their rural community.



### **Thomas J. Muldoon**

#### **Session: Start and Grow to Win with SBA (U.S. Small Business Administration): 2025 Award Winners Panel**

---

Thomas J. Muldoon is president of Hartford-based American Exchanger Services, a manufacturer of large-scale heat exchangers for industry and power plants that has used SBA export financing several times to expand sales and service globally, often partnering with local businesses.



### **Courtney Skinkis**

#### **Session: Start and Grow to Win with SBA (U.S. Small Business Administration): 2025 Award Winners Panel**

---

Courtney Skinkis, owner of Milwaukee-based Confluence Graphics, used SBA financing to purchase the company in 2021. She has expanded the firm's capabilities and profitability while continuing to educate herself via SBA's THRIVE program and courses with SBA resource partners.



### **Mark McCleary**

#### **Session: Unlock Your Business's Potential by Learning to Use the Business Model Canvas Framework**

---

Mark McCleary has led a career in executive management, strategic planning, marketing, product management, and sales. His diverse experience spans family business, private equity, consumer and commercial products, retail, health care, and professional services. As a marketing executive, Mark has managed iconic global brands including Perlick, Beko, Brunswick Bowling & Billiards, Life Fitness, Hammer Strength, Planters Nuts, LifeSavers Candy, Windex Glass Cleaner, and Glade Air Fresheners. He currently splits his time between consulting and being a volunteer mentor with several Midwest nonprofit organizations, including SCORE, Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corp., BizStarts, gener8tor gBETA, Racine County Economic Development Corp., and Robert Ellsworth Correctional Center.



## **Christopher Cote**

### **Session: Panel discussion with Lenders**

---

Christopher Cote is a first-generation Anishinaabe descendant of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. He holds a degree in business administration and has 10 years of managerial experience in the Native community development financial institution Industry working within Native communities, both with indigenous business owners and Tribal enterprises. In his role as business microloan program manager at First American Capital Corp., he focuses on providing access to financial products and business management technical assistance to Native-owned, diverse, and otherwise underrepresented small businesses throughout the state of Wisconsin.



## **Vanessa Sancha**

### **Sessions: Panel Discussion with Lenders; Marketing Strategies**

---

Vanessa Sancha, assistant vice president, is the bilingual business access advisor for the Chicago and Milwaukee areas at U.S. Bank, offering in-language support in Spanish and English. Through her role, Sancha addresses the three most prominent gaps that limit business growth and employment opportunities: information, connections, and capital. She works alongside various business units at U.S. Bank to support small businesses, connecting them to available resources, advising them on how to raise capital, and helping them network with other businesses, providers, and customers.

Sancha is a seasoned financial professional and community leader. Her financial services experience spans more than 15 years and includes a notable career at PNC Bank, where she advanced through leadership roles in business banking and branch management. She also served as a relationship manager at local community development financial institution, Milwaukee Economic Development Corp., managing and underwriting a commercial portfolio.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Sancha is deeply committed to giving back. She serves on the board of the Wisconsin Veteran Business Alliance and on WWBIC loan committee. Vanessa has developed and led financial education programs for youth and adults through organizations like Journey House and Running Rebels, inspiring participants to achieve their goals.



## **Tobi LeMahieu**

### **Session: Panel Discussion with Lenders**

---

Tobi LeMahieu is the fund manager for the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC), working primarily with the Regional Business Fund Inc. She has been in this position since October 2016. Prior to becoming the fund manager, she was an associate planner at WCWRPC focusing on community and economic development projects. LeMahieu has a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a bachelor's degree in geography from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Tobi currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Red Letter Grant and Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council.



## **Maysee Herr**

### **Session: Panel Discussion with Lenders**

---

Maysee Herr, Ph.D., is CEO of Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce (HWCC), a community development financial institution that provides technical assistance, financial resources, and networking opportunities to primarily small business owners and entrepreneurs from low- and moderate-income communities in Wisconsin. Since joining HWCC five and half years ago, Herr has worked with the HWCC team with the support of ARPA funding to nearly triple the amount of loans the chamber deploys each year. Under Herr's leadership, HWCC moved with urgency to create one of the first emergency loan funds in the state to help provide relief to small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Being the daughter of a Hmong entrepreneur herself, Herr has seen firsthand the struggles that many entrepreneurs and small business owners of color face and uses that experience to advocate for the clients and community members she works with every day.

She has received many accolades for her leadership over the years, among them CEO of the Year at MARKETPLACE: The Governor's Conference on Diverse Business Development, sponsored by WEDC, in December 2022. Most recently, she was spotlighted as a Milwaukee Magazine 2024 Woman of Distinction and as one of Milwaukee Business Journal's 2025 Women of Influence. Of all the things that Herr has been blessed with, she is most proud of being mom to her 11-year-old son, Elijah.



## **Bella Sgriccia**

### **Session: Panel Discussion with Lenders**

---

Bella Sgriccia is an economic development professional committed to advancing financial inclusion and small business growth. As Kiva Capital Access Manager at WWBIC, she supports entrepreneurs across Wisconsin by providing access to 0% interest microloans, financial education, and mentorship. Her work focuses on building sustainable financial pathways for small businesses and promoting equitable economic opportunity.



## **Ashley Quinto Powell**

### **Session: Small Business Story – Overcoming Challenges of Launching and Growing**

---

Ashley Quinto Powell is a serial entrepreneur and national speaker. She is the author of *Executive Motherhood: The Art of Having It All Without Doing It All* and the founder of the virtual assistant agency myVA Rocks. She's spoken about sales, productivity, and motherhood for TEDx, Anita B.org, the University of Chicago's Polsky Center, and many others. She lives in Madison with her husband and two children.





### **Alex Ysquierdo**

#### **Sessions: Small Business Story – Overcoming Challenges of Launching and Growing; Could Your Business Benefit from Government Small Business Certifications?**

---

Alex Ysquierdo is the director of the Wisconsin Supplier Diversity Program within the Wisconsin Department of Administration, a role he assumed in earlier this year. With more than two decades of experience in the financial industry and a passion for community building, he brings a unique blend of expertise to his current position. With sheer will and determination to succeed, Ysquierdo demonstrated unwavering strength and commitment. He earned his bachelor's degree from UW-Stevens Point, laying the foundation for his future endeavors. Additionally, he enriched his knowledge by obtaining a master's degree in organizational leadership and changed from Edgewood College. His journey has uniquely prepared him for a purposeful life in Madison. Alongside his wife and daughters, he continues to make a significant impact on the community, leading initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion through his role as the Wisconsin Supplier Diversity Program director.



### **Angie Whelan**

#### **Session: Small Business Story – Overcoming Challenges of Launching and Growing**

---

Angie Esler-Whelan, owner of YB Urban? Aroma Bar, has spent more than 12 years creating safe, chemical-free personal care products. With expertise in essential oils and plant-based ingredients, she founded her company in 2013 from her home in Baldwin. Through arts festivals, wholesale partnerships, and online sales, her brand grew across the Midwest. After finding her dream homestead property in Ellsworth, she joined the Ellsworth Chamber of Commerce's "Pop Up Ellsworth" program in 2019 and later purchased a historic bank building to open her first brick-and-mortar store. In 2020, she launched the area's first eco-friendly refill center, supported by the Red Letter Grant. In 2023, she won the Wisconsin Main Street Makeover Contest, bringing her vision of a combined retail space and yoga studio to life. Her efforts have played a key role in spurring revitalization efforts in Ellsworth's East End commercial district. As a dedicated community leader, creative business owner, and wellness advocate, Angie continues to make a lasting impact on her community.



### **Jason Rae**

#### **Session: AI as an Ally: Practical Tools for Small Businesses**

---

Jason Rae is the founder, president and CEO of the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce, an organization of more than 750 LGBTQ-owned and -allied businesses from around the state working to advance economic inclusion for all. Rae founded the organization in 2012 and has seen it grow to record numbers and achievements, including winning the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce's Chamber of the Year award in 2015. He has held a number of positions and volunteers actively on numerous community boards and organizations, such as VISIT Milwaukee. He has a bachelor's degree from Marquette University and a master's degree in business administration from Drexel University.



## Jen Adamski

### Sessions: AI as an Ally: Practical Tools for Small Businesses; Advice from Successful Small Business Owners

---

Jen Adamski is the founder of Klario, a strategic marketing consultancy that helps small business advocates and mission-driven organizations turn complexity into clarity. With 15-plus years of experience across health care, education, technology, and government, Adamski combines creative insight with operational knowhow to help organizations communicate with confidence and move their missions forward.

She leads messaging strategy, brand positioning, and AI-focused workshops that make emerging tools accessible and actionable. She was recognized on a national stage at CMSWire's DX Summit, where she earned the People's Choice Award for her presentation on digital experience innovation.

A graduate of BizStarts and Emerge Wisconsin, Adamski serves in a volunteer leadership role as vice chair of the Racine Community Development Authority. A lifelong artist, she applies her creative roots to use a design-minded approach to systems, storytelling, and strategy.

She lives by Wisconsin's motto—Forward—and helps others do the same.



## Genia Stevens

### Session: Marketing Strategies

---

For more than 20 years, Genia Stevens has supported businesses with strategic planning, business plan development, and community engagement. She has extensive experience with nonprofits, with a specific focus on organizational development, community outreach, community engagement and fundraising. For three years, she served as the first entrepreneur in residence for Madison College's Goodman South Campus. She has served on numerous nonprofit boards and committees, including the City of Beloit Equal Opportunities Commission, the Beloit NAACP Economic Development Committee, the Beloit NAACP Political Action Committee, Concerned Black Citizens, the Beloit Memorial High School's Master Planning Committee, and the Beloit School District Strategic Planning Committee. She was named a YWCA Rock County Woman of Distinction and one of Wisconsin's Most Influential Black Leaders, and she's received the Beloit NAACP's Community Service Award. She's currently serving as a Rock County Board Supervisor representing District 13, and she's a member of the Board of Directors of Madison Region Economic Partnership.



## Ziming Wu

### Session: E-Commerce

---

Ziming Wu is the CEO of the Wisconsin Chinese Chamber of Commerce, a longtime IT professional with more than 20 years of industry experience, and a small business owner himself. He leads efforts to empower Asian and minority-owned businesses across Wisconsin, helping them grow through digital marketing, e-commerce, and innovation. With his unique blend of technical expertise and entrepreneurial insight, he brings practical, real-world strategies to support small business success in the digital economy.



## **Shane Fell**

### **Session: E-Commerce**

---

Shane Fell is the founder of LimeGlow Design, a Milwaukee-area agency specializing in creative, affordable website design and branding solutions for small businesses and nonprofits. With more than two decades of experience in digital marketing, Fell has guided a wide range of organizations in building effective online strategies. His expertise spans website design and user experience, content development, search engine marketing, and conversion optimization. Beyond his client work, Shane is a sought-after speaker for business groups and seminar events. He's also an active volunteer, sharing his knowledge with local small business communities and helping entrepreneurs navigate the world of online marketing with confidence.



## **Kristen Harper**

### **Session: E-Commerce**

---

Kristen Harper is the owner of Cabin Creations, a gift, furniture, and home and cabin décor store located in her hometown of Phillips. Since purchasing the business in 2012, Harper has grown Cabin Creations into a must-visit destination for local residents, seasonal homeowners, and travelers exploring the Northwoods.

With a hands-on approach to marketing, Harper has successfully utilized a mix of advertising and social media to grow the business. She has built her marketing knowledge through books, webinars, professional development courses, and real-world experience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kristen adapted quickly by implementing a point-of-sale system and launching an e-commerce website, allowing Cabin Creations to maintain momentum and expand its customer base both locally and beyond.

Raised on a family dairy farm—now operated by her husband and brother—Kristen learned the values of hard work and adaptability early on. She was a practicing teacher for eight years and holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics education and a master's degree in educational technology. In addition to running Cabin Creations, she supports her family's hardware store with marketing efforts. Kristen has a passion for continuous learning, creativity, and community connection, and demonstrates how small businesses can thrive through innovation, flexibility, and a strong commitment to unique offerings, customer service, and community.



## **Eric Vallee**

### **Session: Harnessing AI for Business Growth: Strategic AI Implementation for Businesses**

---

Eric Vallee is owner of Silver Fox MKE, a consulting firm specializing in search engine optimization (SEO) and website management and hosting. He has more than 16 years of experience working in digital marketing and has managed SEO for numerous companies from small startups to large, established corporations. Vallee uses AI on a regular basis to help improve his marketing and communication as well as streamline processes for his clients.





## Dedria Hodges

### Session: Harnessing AI for Business Growth: Strategic AI Implementation for Businesses

---

Dedria Hodges is a change-maker and co-owner of Vibe Tribe Healing and Wellness. With a rich background as a professional social worker, educator, and growth mindset coach, Hodges brings a deep, trauma-informed approach to her work. Her passion lies in restoring vibrancy to the underserved by ensuring that people have the opportunity to thrive in empowerment.

Over the course of her career, Hodges has cultivated a wide range of skills and certifications that support her mission. She specializes in trauma-informed support, holistic wellness services, and creating collaborative partnerships. She guides others to leverage their unique talents and lived experiences for generational transformation.

As co-owner of Vibe Tribe Healing and Wellness, Hodges plays a vital role in shaping the organization's vision. Vibe Tribe offers services ranging from personal and spiritual coaching, trauma support, and mindset shifting to immersive wellness. The organization also provides a platform for practitioners through cooperative opportunities, event hosting, and retail offerings of wellness products. Hodges also provides strategic consulting for wellness businesses, leveraging AI technologies to optimize their success.

Hodges ensures Vibe Tribe serves as a bridge to upward mobility, offering individuals the tools and confidence to create change. Her commitment to community makes her a guiding light.



## Nikita Green

### Session: Harnessing AI for Business Growth: Strategic AI Implementation for Businesses

---

Nikita Green is the co-founder of Vibe Tribe Healing and Wellness, a culturally rooted wellness space she proudly built alongside her business partner. Together, they've created a sanctuary for holistic healing, spiritual coaching, trauma support, and community care—especially centering the needs and experiences of people of color.

With more than 25 years of experience in health and human services and a background in theology, trauma-informed education, and coaching, Green brings a grounded, compassionate presence to her work. At Vibe Tribe, she and her partner offer a range of services including sound healing, herbal apothecary, spiritual mentorship, and trauma support coaching. Their mission is to help people reconnect with themselves, their culture, and their sense of purpose in a safe, affirming space.

Green is also passionate about exploring how technology—particularly artificial intelligence—can support the growth of mission-driven wellness businesses. She sees AI as a tool that, when used intentionally, can help increase access, streamline operations, and expand the reach of healing-centered services.

Her work is rooted in compassion, culture, and the belief that true wellness is found through connection—to self, to spirit, and to community.



### **Lori Highby**

#### **Session: Harnessing AI for Business Growth: Strategic AI Implementation for Businesses**

---

Lori Highby is a nationally recognized speaker, podcast host, and educator and is the founder of Keystone Click, a strategic digital marketing agency specializing in B2B growth. With a background in both agency leadership and higher education, Highby brings tactical insight and transformative strategy to clients ranging from Fortune 500s like ABB and Syngenta to emerging businesses. She regularly teaches at workshops and conferences nationwide, empowering lifelong learners and fellow entrepreneurs. Off the mic and out of the boardroom, you'll find her playing hockey, hitting the golf course, or taking on epic bike rides just to see if she can.



### **Aina Vilumsons**

#### **Sessions: Could Your Business Benefit from Government Small Business Certifications?; How To Prepare for Your Next Buyer Meeting; Advice from Successful Small Business Owners**

---

Aina Vilumsons is president and executive director at the Wisconsin Procurement Institute (WPI), Wisconsin's APEX Accelerator. WPI is funded by the Department of Defense Office of Small Business Programs and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to provide no-cost technical assistance to Wisconsin businesses competing in the government marketplace.



### **Shane Mahaffy**

#### **Session: Could Your Business Benefit from Government Small Business Certifications?**

---

Shane Mahaffy is the lead business opportunity specialist (LBOS) for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Wisconsin District Office, with locations in Madison and Milwaukee. As the LBOS, he is responsible for the day-to-day management of SBA government contracting and business development programs throughout the state. Mahaffy joined the SBA in July 2015 and has a federal government contracting background. Prior to coming to the SBA, he worked for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as a warranted Level III contracting officer and as a contract administrator for the Defense Contract Management Agency. He also served in the U.S. Navy. Mahaffy graduated from the Milwaukee School of Engineering with a degree in business management.



### **John Franklin**

#### **Session: Could Your Business Benefit from Government Small Business Certifications?**

---

John Franklin has been with the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Office of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for nearly 25 years. During his time with the office, he has been involved in all aspects of DBE certification. He has reviewed applications, handled informal hearings, and overseen the office's responses to applicant appeals to the U.S. Department of Transportation. He is the office's subject matter expert regarding the DBE program federal statute set forth in 49 CFR Part 26.



### **Suzanne Ferris**

#### **Session: How To Prepare for Your Next Buyer Meeting**

---

As associate vice president of HGA, Suzanne Ferris works with firm-wide leadership nationwide to develop and implement strategies for engineering growth in the markets we serve. She has more than 15 years' experience in the architecture/engineering/contracting industry. By combining her passion for the built environment with her expertise in strategy, research, messaging, and coaching, she specializes in creating innovative approaches that elevate HGA's relationships.



### **Jack Laufenberg**

#### **Session: How To Prepare for Your Next Buyer Meeting**

---

Jack Laufenberg is small business advisor at the Wisconsin Procurement Institute (WPI), Wisconsin's APEX Accelerator. WPI is funded by the Department of Defense Office of Small Business Programs and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to provide no-cost technical assistance to Wisconsin businesses competing in the government marketplace.



### **José Galván**

#### **Session: How To Prepare for Your Next Buyer Meeting**

---

José Galván is an advocate for supplier and workforce development, bringing 30-plus years of experience to his role as supplier development specialist at the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD). He co-leads the Supplier Development Program, working to ensure a strong and diverse pool of vendors can successfully compete for MMSD contracts in goods, services, construction, and professional services.

Galván also manages key initiatives such as the Workforce Development Training and Placement Program, which includes pre-apprenticeship activities, business development efforts, and engineering and construction management programs like RISE internships—all designed to create opportunities for local businesses and workers to grow and succeed.

A lifelong resident of the greater Milwaukee area, Galván takes great pride in his roots as a first-generation Latino. He has been blessed to be married for 24 years and is a proud father of a daughter and a son. He holds a bachelor of science in community education from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.





### **Maria Perl**

#### **Session: Advice from Successful Small Business Owners**

---

Maria Perl is the owner of Spark Ops Metalworks, a woman- and minority-owned metal fabrication company in Fond du Lac that provides end-to-end manufacturing and other fabrication services to both local and global clients.

Before her tenure with Spark Ops starting in 2022, Maria graduated from Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina in Cuba as a medical doctor and worked as chief of medical area in rural communities in Mexico before moving to the U.S. in 2018. She has diversified her career into various sectors, including research, management, operations, and human resources.



### **Athena Agoudemos**

#### **Session: State Resources**

---

Athena Agoudemos is the associate state director for the Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC) network. With more than a decade of experience in economic development, she connects entrepreneurs to resources and strategies that deliver results. Her areas of expertise are business planning, strategy, management, human resources, and finance. Agoudemos helps business owners understand their financials, secure financing, and implement actionable plans. Her approach leads to clients feeling confident and clear on their next steps.

Under her leadership, the Wisconsin SBDC network plays a vital role in driving economic growth across the state. By equipping entrepreneurs with the resources and support they need, the network strengthens local communities and creates lasting impact.



### **Dave Maaske**

#### **Session: State Resources**

---

David W. Maaske has more than 40 years of marketing and strategic business planning experience in the financial services, consulting, and global construction and agricultural machinery industries. His strengths are in the areas of market development, strategic planning, marketing, communications, public relations, social media, business forecasting, customer engagement, and agriculture. His industry experience includes Allis-Chalmers, CNH Industrial, BMO Harris (formerly M&I), the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, and Charleston Orwig Inc., a leading business-to-business marketing agency in Hartland. He has a master's degree in economics from UW-Madison and completed studies in strategic branding at Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business. As a SCORE mentor, he has successfully counseled existing businesses to the next level and helped small business startups.

Maaske has been a SCORE volunteer since 2011, was chapter chair for Southeast Wisconsin, and currently serves as district director for Wisconsin and central region director for SCORE. He and his wife, Maurene, live in Sussex and have six children, 11 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.



## **Emily Schmitzer**

### **Session: State Resources**

---

Emily Schmitzer is the regional director for the WWBIC South Central Office located in Madison. She is dedicated to helping individuals on their entrepreneurship journey and providing resources as they start, run, and grow their businesses.



## **Tim McMurtry II**

### **Session: State Resource**

---

Tim McMurtry II is an engaging and dynamic executive leader, personal development coach, business and government affairs consultant and trainer, campus pastor, speaker, communications and public relations expert, thought leader, and author whose influence spans multiple arenas. Drawing from a combined 25+ years of private sector, public sector, nonprofit, faith-based, workforce development, personal development and entrepreneurial experience, McMurtry is familiar with and effective at developing and implementing integrated public relations, outreach, and personal development strategies that lead to results-oriented outcomes. A true leader by many standards and a trusted advisor, he serves as executive director of infrastructure business development at National Association of Minority Contractors – Wisconsin. In this role, he manages the organization's expansion of capacity-building resources, workforce development, and strategic relationship-building opportunities to benefit Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs), Small Business Enterprises (SBEs), and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) in the horizontal, vertical, and utility construction spaces to achieve readiness to deliver substantial value: participation on major infrastructure projects. He is also the founder and president of Tim McMurtry International LLC, a communication business consultancy specializing in personal development coaching and training, government affairs, multicultural outreach, business-to-business marketing, and community and corporate relations. He received his bachelor's degree in communication from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and resides in Milwaukee with his wife, Cheryl, and his two children.



## **Tammie Clendenning**

### **Session: State Resources**

---

As the lead economic development specialist for the Wisconsin District of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Tammie Clendenning is responsible for providing training on SBA's programs and services, including capital access, procurement, and business advising. She enjoys talking to entrepreneurs about the many resources available to them at exhibits and networking events. She is the district office technical representative for the Women's Business Centers in the state. Prior to joining SBA, she held business development and leadership positions in commercial finance. She earned a bachelor's degree in business management and is a small business owner.



## **Dana Nielsen**

### **Session: State Resources**

---

Dana Nielsen is a project manager at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) within the Division of Business and Community Development. She started at WEDC in 2021 as an intern with the Office of Rural Prosperity. As a project manager, Dana works with the diverse business development team on the American Rescue Plan Act Training Program and helps plan annual events such as Small Business Academy and MARKETPLACE Wisconsin. She also manages WEDC's Small Business Development Grant with a senior economic development director. Nielsen graduated from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, where she majored in public administration and women's, gender, and sexuality studies. She received her master of public affairs degree in 2022 from the La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



## **Terese Caro**

### **Session: State Resources**

---

Terese Caro is a seasoned banking and finance professional with more than 25 years of experience spanning diverse financial institutions from credit unions to banks. Currently, she serves as the president and CEO of Legacy Redevelopment Corporation (LRC), a community development financial institution (CDFI), where she has been a key leader since 2016.

Throughout her career, Caro has expertly managed a portfolio valued at more than \$500 million in loans and assets, acquiring a wide array of skills in New Market Tax Credit transactions, risk management, mortgage lending, underwriting, financial analysis, loan restructuring, collections, and compliance.

Prior to joining LRC, Caro held leadership roles at Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC), Seaway Bank and Trust Co., and North Milwaukee State Bank. She is deeply committed to serving her community and holds several leadership positions on committees and boards, including being a committee member of the Capital Magnet Fund Loan Committee for the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA).

She is passionate about helping small businesses thrive, become self-sustaining, and achieve their organizational and financial goals. She holds a master of business administration degree from Cardinal Stritch University.



## **Jeff Glazer**

### **Session: State Resources**

---

Jeff Glazer was a software developer before he was a lawyer. He has started numerous companies. He has deep experience in food systems, including agriculture, on-farm production, alcohol, and cannabis. He has been a supervisor in the UW Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic since 2011.





## **Marjorie Rucker**

### **Session: State Resources**

---

Marjorie Rucker is executive director of the Business Council Inc., a 501(c)3 dedicated to helping ethnic and diverse businesses grow in Southeastern Wisconsin. She is also the chair of the Ethnic and Diverse Business Coalition, a statewide coalition of ethnic and diverse chambers of commerce and community development financial institutions that serve ethnic and diverse businesses throughout the state of Wisconsin. Prior to joining the Business Council, she was a program officer at Local Initiatives Support Corporation Milwaukee and has also worked as the Main Street manager for the King Drive Business Improvement District. She earned a bachelor's degree in history from Mount Mary University in 2000 and a law degree from Vermont Law School in 2003.