

Path to Prosperity Missouri panelist biographies



Speaker biographies are in order of appearance

Jacqueline Davis-Slay

Senior Advisor, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)



Mrs. Jacqueline A. Davis-Slay serves as Senior Advisor for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). The OSDBU provide maximum opportunities for small businesses to participate in USDA's contracting process. The office's major goals are to provide oversight and accountability to the contracting authorities within USDA and outreach and small business assistance. As the Senior Advisor, she coordinates with Departments and Agencies and interface with private sector entities to organize, direct, and develop contracting and procurement policies, procedures, and regulations for business growth.

Mrs. Davis-Slay previously served as Deputy Director, Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), which she assumed in 2019. In 2014, Mrs. Jacqueline Davis-Slay served as the Director for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Office of Public and Private Partnerships. The office provides vision, expertise, and leadership to build NRCS' public-private partnership program to advance conservation activities through strategic coordination and planning with other USDA agencies, customers, stakeholders and agricultural industries.

Mrs. Davis-Slay has over 30 years of Federal service with experience in legislative and policy development, statistical analysis, fiscal and program management, service delivery and marketing with a particular interest in developing innovative partnerships and opportunities to assist vulnerable populations, socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource producers.

Anna Maria Lucas

Director, Office of Rural Affairs
U.S. Small Business Administration
Annamaria.lucas@sba.gov



Anna's role includes working with SBA's District Offices, Resource Partners, and other federal agencies across the country to help rural small businesses increase access to capital, export products around the world, improve opportunities for public and private investments, and increase economic growth and prosperity to increase the resiliency of rural communities through small business development. Prior to this role she worked in conservation and land use management in the Mountain West with grassroots community organizations and Tribal communities. She served in the U.S. Peace Corps in Kenya and is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park.

David Ramos

Senior Community Affairs Advisor, Strategic Partnerships & Program Development
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)
daramos@fdic.gov



David oversees the development of national strategies and partnerships aimed to advance financial inclusion for economically underserved communities.

David's direct responsibilities include oversight of key initiatives that promote greater access to credit for consumers and small businesses. He leads collaborations with national partners to reduce economic inclusion barriers through financial and technical education programs. Additionally, he manages engagement with financial institutions and intermediaries to increase investment, services and financing opportunities for the small business sector.

David holds experience in affordable housing programs, banking regulation, commercial lending, credit underwriting, economic development, consumer finance and public relations. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance from George Mason University's School of Business and is a graduate of the BB&T Banking School Program at Wake Forest University. Prior to joining the FDIC, David served in various consumer, commercial and corporate roles in the banking industry.

Dr. Lance Tatum

President

Northwest Missouri State University



Dr. Lance Tatum began his tenure as Northwest’s 11th president on June 1, 2023.

He previously had served as senior vice chancellor for academic affairs and chief academic officer at Troy University in Troy, Alabama, since January 2019 while holding the rank of professor in its Sorrell College of Business—School of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management.

Tatum joined Troy University as a faculty member in 1998 and went on to serve as vice chancellor for its campus in Montgomery, Alabama; vice chancellor for its Global Campus; dean of the College of Education; and chairperson of the Department of Kinesiology and Health Promotion as well as a Faculty Athletics Representative. Throughout his career, he held faculty positions in sport and fitness management at Troy University, and he began his academic career as an assistant professor of physical education at Gordon College in Barnesville, Georgia.

He earned a Ph.D. in sport management at Florida State University. He has a Master of Science in Education degree in foundations of education and a Bachelor of Science degree in physical education, both from Troy University.

Tatum and his wife, Jill, have two children, Thad and Zoe, who attend Auburn University in Alabama.

Mindy Brissey

Regional Administrator, Region 7
U.S. Small Business Administration
mindy.brissey@sba.gov



Mindy Brissey, a seasoned business leader with more than 20 years of experience was appointed as the Regional Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) in the Great Plains (Region 7), serving Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska in April 2023. Driven by her passion to assist fellow entrepreneurs and small business owners, Ms. Brissey, a Hispanic small business owner, has an establish track record of leadership and a profound comprehension of the challenges faced by small business owners. She is devoted to ensuring that the SBA provides the necessary resources and support for small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive. Regional Administrator Brissey began her career in community engagement, and later expanded to serving as a campaign consultant for a range of clients, including Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, II and numerous local municipal elected officials. Her work has been the recipient of esteemed national awards for accomplishments in this field. Mindy has gained an in-depth understanding of the public policy process and has built strong relationships across multiple sectors. She has previously served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for Missouri's largest consumer health advocacy organization, and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the American Heart Association. Brissey holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas with a Major in Political Science and a Minor in Communication Studies.

Arthur Plews

Chief of Staff

U.S. Small Business Administration



Mr. Plews has been selected to serve as Chief of Staff in the Office of the Administrator, at the U.S. Small Business Administration. In this role, Mr. Plews is responsible for providing advice, guidance, and assistance to the Administrator and other key agency officials in multiple program areas to ensure strategic execution, analysis, and coordination. He will actively participate in both internal and external coordination of programs and policy development for existing, evolving, and new agency-wide programs.

Prior to this role, Mr. Plews worked at Stripe, a financial technology company and payment provider, from 2017 to 2021 where he helped direct a series of strategic business initiatives across different pillars of the company. Mr. Plews previously served at SBA from 2014 to 2017, first as a Policy Advisor and then as Chief Innovation Officer.

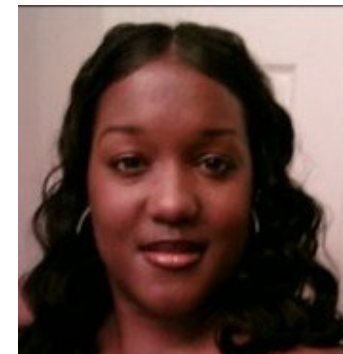
In addition to his experience, Mr. Plews has earned a Bachelor of Arts in Public and International Affairs from Princeton University and a Juris Doctor from Yale Law School.

Panel I: Access to Capital from Public & Private Sources



Teresa Green (Moderator)

Community Affairs Specialist
Federal Deposit Insurance Commission (FDIC)
tegreen@fdic.gov



Teresa Green serves as the Senior Community Affairs Specialist in the Kansas City Region for the FDIC. She leads the FDIC's Alliance for Economic Inclusion (AEI) coalition in Kansas City, MO. Her background includes working as Senior Compliance Examiner for the FDIC. With a decade of examination experience, Ms. Green has provided guidance to bankers on community and economic development opportunities responsive to community needs that meet the criteria of the CRA. Her experience includes examining large banks in numerous states throughout the country. Ms. Green has a BA Degree in Management Information Systems from The University of Memphis and a Master's Degree in Accounting from The University of Phoenix.

Jason Azdell

Farm Loan Chief
Farm Service Agency, USDA
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Jason Azdell is the Farm Loan Chief for the Missouri Farm Service Agency. Jason grew up on a diversified farming operation in Northern Audrain County where his family row cropped, raised cattle and hogs. He attended Northwest Missouri State University for 2 ½ years before transferring to the University of Missouri-Columbia. Jason graduated with a bachelor's degree in general agriculture. After college, he went to work as an Ag Loan Officer for Martinsburg Bank and Trust in Martinsburg, MO. Jason left the banking industry and started a construction company. In 2006, Azdell went to work in the transportation industry until deciding to return to agriculture lending in 2015. Jason started with Farm Service Agency as a Farm Loan Officer and then earned a Farm Loan Specialist role in the Missouri State Office. In February 2022, Jason became the Farm Loan Chief, where he began his current role overseeing the delivery of Farm Loan Programs for the state of Missouri. He is married to his wife, Nicole; they have four children ranging from 11 to 23 years old. In his free time, Jason enjoys cooking, especially BBQ, playing golf, and hunting. He is also an avid St. Louis Cardinals baseball, Kansas City Chiefs, and Missouri Tigers football fan.

Diane Bradley-Redden

Area Conservationist

Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

diane.bradley-redden@usda.gov



Diane was born and raised in a rural town in West Central Missouri. Her family has been involved in agriculture production, on both sides of her parents' families from her great grandfather farming and raising livestock, to her Mom and Dad. Diane worked throughout grade school, high school, and college on the family farm near Harrisonville, Missouri where they raised cattle, hogs, and enough hay and corn to put back into the livestock operation. She was very involved in 4-H and FFA holding numerous leadership positions, participating in contest teams, and competing in public speaking. After graduating from University of Central Missouri State University with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Business, she began her career with the Soil Conservation Service in 1990.

Diane Bradley-Redden is currently the Area Conservationist in Northwest Missouri for the USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service. Diane has a broad background in federal service with 36 years starting her career as a Soil Conservation Technician in Butler, Missouri. In 1997, she was promoted to a Soil Conservationist and then Resource Conservationist working with the Miami Creek/Drexel Laker 319 Watershed Project in Bates County. Starting in 2001, she served in 3 District Conservationist positions in Missouri- Cass & Bates County through 2008, with a reorganization of FOSAs she served as the DC in Cass & Johnson Counties through 2015, and then with a statewide FOSA reorganization served in Benton, Cass, Henry, & Johnson Counties through March 2021.

Diane is married to Ronnie Redden and has 2 sons. Daniel is currently working as a Journeyman Lineman in Texas and Dustin is serving in the United States Army. She enjoys traveling, fishing, and morel mushroom hunting in the spring.

Kyle Wilkens

State Director

Rural Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

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Kyle Wilkens is a native of rural west-central Missouri and a committed public servant. Since 2012, he has served on the congressional staff for Congressman Emanuel Cleaver of Missouri as his Rural Policy Director, and from 2002 to 2011, he served on the staff of Congressman Ike Skelton, also of Missouri. Both Congressmen represented his home district, keeping with Kyle's lifelong commitment to Missouri. He has extensive experience working with elected officials, community leaders, USDA and agencies at all levels of government on local economic development and rural development programs. Wilkens holds a Master of Arts degree from Missouri State University.



Michael McWhorter

Lead Lending Relations Specialist
Kansas City District Office, US Small Business Administration
michael.mcwhorter@sba.gov

Michael McWhorter brings over 19 years of experience with the Small Business Administration (SBA) to his role as Lead Lender Relations Specialist (LRS) for Missouri and Kansas at the Kansas City District Office (KCDO). Since joining on March 3, 2018, he has played a pivotal role in facilitating access to capital and support for small businesses in the region. With extensive expertise in the SBA's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) guidelines for the 7(a) and 504 loan programs, Mr. McWhorter is well-equipped to provide guidance and assistance to lenders and small business owners alike. His previous roles within the SBA, including positions in the Office of Disaster Assistance, National Guaranty Purchasing Center, Loan Guaranty Processing Center, and OIG, have honed his understanding of the agency's operations and protocols. In his current capacity, Mr. McWhorter oversees a vast network of preferred lending partners and resource partners across 89 counties in Kansas and Missouri. These resource partners, which include Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), Women's Business Centers, Veterans Business Resource Centers, and SCORE Mentor chapters, offer crucial counseling, training, and mentoring services to small businesses in the district. Mr. McWhorter is deeply committed to supporting small business owners and entrepreneurs, regularly conducting training and development classes tailored to the needs of current businesses, startups, and bankers. Additionally, he plays a key role in assisting small businesses in federal contracting opportunities and administering the 8(a) federal contracting programs. Through his leadership and dedication, Michael McWhorter continues to drive economic growth and empowerment within the Kansas City District, helping small businesses thrive and succeed in today's competitive landscape.

Tom Shelton

Vice President and Loan Officer
Nodaway Valley Bank
tshelton@nvb.com



Tom Shelton has served as Vice President/Loan Officer at Nodaway Valley Bank in Maryville since 2016, where he serves clients with a diversified agricultural and small business loan portfolio. Nodaway Valley Bank was founded in Maryville, MO in 1868, and is currently the largest independently owned and managed bank in Northwest Missouri. Prior to joining the lending team at Nodaway Valley Bank, Tom worked for the United States Department of Agriculture for 10 years as an Agricultural Credit Specialist for the Farm Service Agency delivering agricultural credit products to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Tom has the pleasure of serving his community with volunteer and leadership positions: Maryville Downtown Improvement Organization President; Nodaway County Economic Development Vice-chairman; Greater Maryville Chamber of Commerce Board member and Finance Committee chairman; and as a volunteer fireman for the Maryville Fire Department.

Tom earned his Bachelor of Science in Animal Sciences from the University of Missouri-Columbia, with a minor in Agricultural Economics.

Tom and his wife, Melissa, have two children: a daughter, Taylor, who enjoys competing in rodeo and barrel racing events; and a son, Wyatt, who enjoys all things related to the outdoors. Melissa is a self-employed homemaker who, in addition to caring for their children, provides horsemanship lessons for children and adults on their farm southeast of Maryville.

Joseph Penning, Sr.

Senior Loan Officer
Mo-Kan
joseph@mo-kan.org



Joe is an Experienced Lender in all stages of lending. He was a bank lender for nine years before joining Mo-Kan in 2022. Joe has experience with consumer, commercial, agricultural, and SBA 504 products. He is involved with Northeastern Kansas and Northwestern Missouri Small Business Facilitation and is a member of the St. Joseph Diplomats, the City of Atchison Economic Development Advisory Board, and member of the Atchison Elks Lodge.

Brian Savoy

Director of Business Development

AltCap

bsavoy@altcap.org

With a diverse background in finance, business, and leadership, Brian Savoy has built a reputation as a trusted advisor and strategic partner for organizations seeking to navigate the complexities of the financial landscape. With extensive travels both domestically and abroad, helping to enrich his understanding of global markets and cultural dynamics, Brian now pursues equitable access to capital for small business owners as the Director of Business Development for AltCap, a Kansas City based CDFI.

Lisa Dargis

Outreach Manager, State Small Business Credit Initiative

US Department of the Treasury

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Lisa is an Outreach Manager for the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) at the U.S. Department of the Treasury. She serves as the liaison to a portfolio of jurisdictions to support their successful deployment of SSBCI funds. Prior to joining the Treasury in August of 2022, she managed the SSBCI Unit for the Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development. During her ten years at the State of Minnesota, she created and administered a variety of finance programs to assist businesses throughout their lifecycle. She is a graduate of St. Mary's University.

Panel II: Certification and Contracting with the State and Federal Government



Sheryl Welch (Moderator)

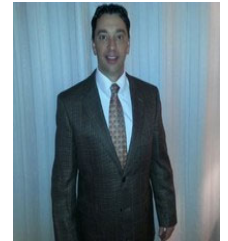
Small Business Coordinator

Food Production and Conservation Business Center, USDA

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Garrett Pride

Customer Service Director, Federal Acquisition Service
General Service Administration (GSA)



Garrett assists federal, state and local procurement offices with utilizing GSA acquisition programs through development of business relationships, customer outreach and program training.

Carolina Vargas

Small Business Technical Advisor, Region 6

General Service Administration (GSA)

carolina.vargas@gsa.gov

Carolina Vargas joined the U.S. General Service Administration (GSA) in September 2023, where she was appointed as a GSA Region 6 Small Business Technical Advisor (SBTA). (GSA Region 6 covers Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, and Nebraska.) Mrs. Vargas supports Region 6 Acquisitor Workforce and serves as a Small Business Advocate for all small, small disadvantaged, small woman owned, HUBZone, small veteran and small service-disabled veteran owned businesses. Mrs. Vargas provides small business advocacy through supporting outreach and counseling, prime contracting programs, subcontracting programs, program and organizational support and training. Prior to her tenure with GSA Mrs. Vargas served as the Business Opportunity Specialist for the Small Business Administration (SBA) Region 7, where she supported the contracting and certification program to include 8(a) certification program for small, small disadvantaged, small woman owned, HUBZone, small veteran and small service-disabled veteran owned businesses. Mrs. Vargas spent twelve years as a Budget Analyst with NORAD and US Northern Command, Peterson AFB, Colorado. She also served in the United States Army as an Administrative Specialist. Mrs. Vargas deployed to Bosnia, Korea, and Afghanistan. Mrs. Vargas holds a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in Human Resources Management from Colorado Technical University and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Public Administration from Regis University. She is married and has two kids.

Jason Cole

APEX Business Consultant
APEX Accelerator

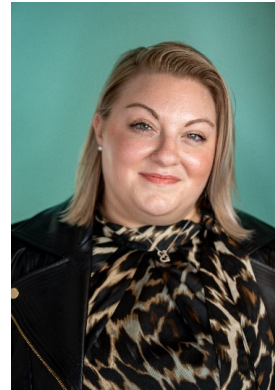
Rebecca Lobina

Northwest Missouri State University Center Director
Missouri Small Business Development Center
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Danielle Lowery

Director of Program and Operations
Veteran Business Outreach Center
lowery@vetbiz.com



Danielle Lowery is a growth-oriented non-profit leader with a unique mission: supporting veteran and military spouse entrepreneurs in small business success.

With a wealth of experience in fostering impactful connections for entrepreneurs, regional non-profit organization management, client relations, team leadership, communications, marketing, and event planning, Danielle is proud to play a pivotal role in the success of veteran entrepreneurs.

As Director of Programs and Operations of the Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) @ VetBiz, Danielle is at the forefront of empowering these businesses in Missouri, Kansas, and Southern Illinois, offering support and connections for their development and growth. As member of the VBOC team, in collaboration with the Small Business Administration, Danielle and her VBOC @ VetBiz colleagues offer no-cost resources to veterans, service members, and military family members who are interested in starting or growing a small business through group trainings, resource referral, impactful connections, and one-on-one consultation.

Danielle brings a unique blend of experience, knowledge, and dedication, poised to offer creative solutions and invaluable connections for small businesses, particularly those led by veterans, in today's dynamic business landscape and is excited to participate and share in the Path to Prosperity.

Shelton Watson

Regional Procurement Center Representative
US Small Business Administration
shelton.watson@sba.gov



Shelton Watson joined the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) in 2021 as the Area IV Procurement Center Representative for Kansas and Missouri. In this role, he is responsible for aiding, counselling, assisting, and protecting the interests of small concerns by ensuring a fair proportion of purchases, contracts, and subcontracts are placed with small businesses. Prior to joining the SBA, he worked at several agencies across Kansas and Missouri in the roles of Contract Specialist, Contracting Officer, Contingency Contracting Officer, Government Purchase Card Agency/Organization Program Coordinator, and as a contractor.

Darcella Craven

Regional Advocate- Region 7
US Small Business Administration
Darcella.Craven@sba.gov



Darcella Craven is the Regional Advocate for the Office of Advocacy and is the voice of small business in the government working diligently to bring small businesses' voices into the regulatory process. She covers Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas (MINK). She has over 25 years of experience in corporate, government, nonprofit and military organizations. She was most recently the President and Chief Fear Conqueror of the Veterans Business Resource Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting transitioning military and their families with starting and expanding businesses. Under her leadership the agency received national and regional recognition, including a trip to the White House to be recognized. She has won numerous awards for her championship of the small business community.

Panel III: Value-Added Agriculture



**PATH TO
PROSPERITY**



Rebecca TenHulzen (Moderator)

Business Services Specialist
Green Hills Regional Planning Commission
rebecca@ghrpc.org



A graduate from the University of South Carolina with a bachelor's in business, Rebecca grew up in Charleston, SC. She joined Green Hills Regional Planning Commission in September of 2023 as the Business Services Specialist. Rebecca has a background in sales, marketing, customer service, and business management which makes her a great asset to the Green Hills Regional Planning Commission team. In her downtime you can find her spending time with her family, working hard on her homestead, and spending time outdoors. She looks forward to building relationships and helping our community thrive!

Dr. Rodd Barr

Director, School of Agricultural Sciences
Northwest Missouri State University



Dr. Rod Barr (Northwest) is the Director of the School of Agricultural Sciences at Northwest Missouri State University. Dr. Barr earned his Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri – Columbia. Dr. Barr has been involved in multiple grants and a wide range of projects while serving in his current role. His research interests include experiential learning, student retention, and teaching effectiveness. Experiences prior to his current position include 11 years as the Program Coordinator and Senior Instructor for Agricultural Education and 16 years as a Secondary Agricultural Education Teacher teaching secondary high school agricultural education classes, serving as FFA advisor, and facilitating adult education programming. Dr. Barr serves on the Missouri Food Entrepreneur Network statewide advisory committee, Non-land grant Agricultural and Renewable Resource Universities board of directors and Missouri Joint Staff for Agricultural Education.

Amber Barnes

Business Program Specialist
Rural Development, USDA
amber.barnes@usda.gov



A 2015 Business Management Graduate from Northwest Missouri State University, Amber grew up in the small town of Maysville, Missouri. Interning as pathway student was just the beginning of Amber's 9-year career with USDA Rural Development. Amber has experience in our Single-Family Housing, Community and Business Programs. She currently resides in Saint Joseph, Missouri with her husband, Justin and their two daughters, Haley & Mya. Don't let her city life fool you, her rural roots and go getter attitude make her an ideal specialist to serve Rural Missouri.

Lisa Geiser

Owner, Tabletop Farm

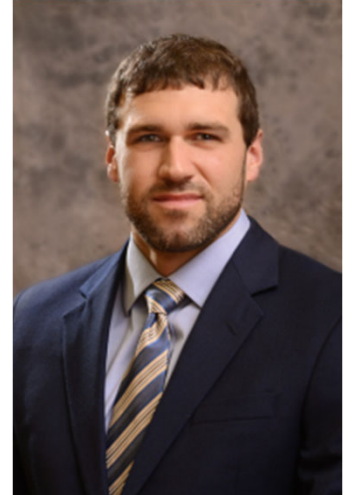


TableTop Farms located in the rolling hills of northwest Missouri on our family's century farm. We are a woman owned (Lisa), family operated (Andrew, Ellah, and David), seed to table 100% farmer grown operation. We pride ourselves on being Certified Naturally Grown in vegetables. Our passion is to grow the most flavorful, nutrient-dense foods that are safe for you and your family. We do this by not using any harmful herbicides, pesticides, or fungicides. We work with nature to produce the best food possible by encouraging healthy soils with abundant life. We use minimally mined fertilizers, and compost to build a habitat for beneficial earthworms, nematodes and other life in the soil.

Dylan Rosier

Owner, R/Farms

Dylan Rosier is a 4th generation row crop farmer from Mound City, Missouri. He farms with his father and 2 younger brothers. Dylan graduated from Northwest Missouri State University with a degree in Ag Business then returned to his family farm. Dylan is the co-founder of R/Farm Distilling Co. in Mound City with his brother Cole Rosier. Dylan is a proud girl dad! Dylan and his wife Lauren have 4 daughters, Brynlee, Bristol, Breckin, and Blakely.



Panel IV: Vendor/Corporate Connections



Melissa Miller (Moderator)

Director

World Trade Center- Kansas City



Melissa joined the World Trade Center – Kansas City (WTC-KC) team in 2016. Charged with assisting Kansas City regional businesses with their international trade needs, Melissa is responsible for overseeing the organization’s various events and programs designed to fulfill this mission.

Before joining WTC-KC, Melissa served as an International Trade Specialist for the Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA) specializing in the promotion of Livestock & Genetics. During her time at MDA she led numerous trade missions and represented the State of Missouri at various trade shows.

Prior to that she worked as a Data Analyst for Lincoln University of Jefferson City where she was charged with maintaining and reporting University data on the local, state, and national levels.

Melissa is originally from central Missouri and is an avid traveler. She attended Truman State University and Lincoln University of Jefferson City. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness and a Master of Business Administration in Business Management.

Michael Barrera

District Director, Kansas City District Office

US Small Business Administration

Michael.Barrera@sba.gov



Mr. Michael Barrera was selected to serve as the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) District Director for the Kansas City District Office in February 2021. As the District Director, Mr. Barrera is responsible for providing entrepreneur educational resources; the oversight of billions of dollars in federal contracting dollars; and billions of dollars in lending guarantees for small businesses in Greater Kansas City, Western Missouri, and Eastern Kansas.

Mr. Barrera is an experienced attorney with over 30-years of business, government, legal, and non-profit experience, and has an extensive history with the small business community. He previously served as the SBA's third National Ombudsman from 2001 to 2005, where his office assisted small businesses who were subject to overburdensome federal regulations. He also served as the first director of the agency's Business Match Making program from 2003 to 2005. Mr. Barrera served as an internal Ombudsman for SBA's Office of Disaster Assistance employees, during the 2017 and 2018 hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico, Florida, and Texas. He was also past President and CEO of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Past President of the Hispanic Chamber of Greater Kansas City, past board member of Ellis Island/Statute of Liberty, co-founder and past President of the Hispanic Bar Association of Greater Kansas City, and he currently serves on the board of Guadalupe Center Inc. of Kansas City. He is also a past Centurion.

Mr. Barrera received his law degree from the University of Texas School of Law and a bachelor's degree from Kansas State University. He was also educated at Harvard Business School and the Marshall School of Business at USC. He is a native of Kansas City, Missouri.

Jill Hathaway

UMKC Director

Missouri Small Business Development Center



With an education in international economics and banking, followed by years of strong sales management roles, Jill Hathaway made the leap to entrepreneurship. Owning multiple retail shoe stores in the Kansas City area for more than 15 years, Jill served on the National Shoe Retailers Association, focusing on creating strong trade relationships with European and South American manufacturers. Her driven approach to business had led her to work with the Missouri Small Business Development Center at UMKC for the past 8 years as a Senior Business Development Consultant. Her certifications include small business strategic advising, business and financial planning, certified facilitation, transformational life coaching, and succession planning. She has served on several non-profit boards and committees, including the American Heart Association, NAWBO, Economic Development Corporation Loan Board and currently as a GrowthWheel Product Advisor. Jill has received great recognition, being awarded the 2019 Kansas City Influencer with the American Association of Women, 2019 Associated Industries of Missouri Educational Leadership, ASBDC 2022 Missouri State Star, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2023 Leadership Missouri, and multiple Business Development Professional awards from the SBDC statewide network. Recently, Jill Hathaway has taken over as Regional Director for the Missouri Small Business Development Center and Senior Director of Entrepreneurial Education Programs and Projects at the UMKC Innovation Center. As a connector, Jill is always looking for opportunities to meet new faces and bring her vast network together.

Katie Nixon

Food Systems Director and Co-Director
Heartland Regional Food Business Center

Katie Nixon is a farmer and local food systems champion who has been working with and for food producers for over 14 years in the KC region. Katie co-operates Green Gate Family Farm, a certified Organic diversified market farm where they produce vegetables, fruits, bedding plants, eggs and flowers. Katie is a founding member and current President of the KC Food Hub, a farmer-owned and farmer-run cooperative serving the wholesale market. For New Growth, Katie serves as the Food Systems Director and Co-Director of the Heartland Regional Food Business Center. In this role, she has brought in over \$5 million in USDA and other funding to improve the regional food system. Katie has served on the Administrative Council for North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education and participated in sustainable food and farming work in Washington, Ireland, South Africa, Mexico, and New Zealand. She is currently a Zhi-Xing China Eisenhower Fellow and will be traveling to China in June to study local food systems.

Nate Jaster

Store Director
Maryville Hy-Vee



Alicia Chestnut

Community Affairs Specialist, FDIC
achestnut@fdic.gov



With a Master's degree in Project Management and over 17 years of experience in the financial industry, I am a Community Affairs Specialist at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). In this role, I create and deliver financial education tools for various audiences specifically targeting LMI communities , including banks, teachers, parents, emerging small businesses, and nonprofit training organizations.

My goal is to increase financial literacy and access to financial services in the state of Missouri, especially for underserved and marginalized communities. I support pilot programs and alliances to expand financial capability and economic inclusion, leveraging my skills in customer service, banking regulation, government, business process improvement, and leadership development. I also foster effective partnerships and collaborations with local stakeholders and financial institutions, empowering individuals and businesses to achieve their financial goals and contribute to the economic growth and stability of their communities.