



Leadership North Carolina Class 33  
Duke Energy Economic Development Session  
February 10-12, 2026

Speaker Directory

**Jennifer (J.J.) Blandford**

Talent Management Manager  
BSH Home Appliance Corporation

J.J. has been with BSH since 2016, holding roles in Human Resources including Senior HR Business Partner and currently as the Talent Management Manager (TMM). The TMM role is primarily focused on pipelining talent through local colleges/universities which include Craven Community College, East Carolina University, NC State University, and University of California-Irvine. Additional talent is sourced through the Cooperative Education (Co-op) Program, Internships, Apprenticeship Programs, Work-Study Programs, and sourcing of Veterans through hiring events. In addition to sourcing, J.J. will be actively involved in the Global Talent Development Program and Global Leadership Development Program. J.J. is a Clemson graduate (with orange blood) and has a Master's in Business with a concentration in Human Resources.

Prior to BSH, J.J.'s career in Human Resources started in 1999, including as an HR Manager (HRM) for a Fortune 50 Company and also as a HRM in a luxury department store. After 13 years of HR management in retail she moved to the Manufacturing world, holding various HR roles in industries including Carbon Fiber, Electric Buses, and Fluid Transfer Systems.

**David Dysinger**

Vice President – R&D US  
BSH Home Appliance Corporation

David has been with BSH since 2000 and currently serves as Vice President of R&D for BSH U.S., where he leads a multidisciplinary team of engineers and designers to develop next-generation appliances across all product categories. Early in his career he spent seven years building the Cooking Product Portfolio and establishing the Development Center in New Bern, followed by leadership in launching the Professional Products development center in Tennessee. As part of a two-year assignment in Munich, Germany, David took on roles in Product Management, Product Marketing, and Corporate Strategy before assuming responsibility for Product Management, Product Development, as well as the U.S. Cooking Products factory. He also served as product division head for the Dishwasher and Laundry

business, and now focuses on accelerating innovation and bringing high-quality, consumer-focused products to market across the U.S.

### **Ryan Lowery**

Vice President – Purchasing North America  
BSH Home Appliance Corporation

Ryan joined BSH in 2024 as Head of Direct Materials and, in October 2025, assumed the role of Vice President Purchasing North America. In this position, he is responsible for direct and indirect purchasing as well as supplier quality, supporting manufacturing operations in New Bern, NC; LaFollette, TN; and Monterrey, Mexico, along with commercial teams in Irvine, CA, and Mississauga, Canada.

Prior to joining BSH, Ryan built a 15-year career in the consumer products industry, holding roles across planning, purchasing, and manufacturing, developing a strong end-to-end understanding of supply chain and operations.

He later spent 11 years in the Flavor & Fragrance industry with a family-owned company headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, where his work focused on strategic sourcing and partnerships, including subcontracting, toll manufacturing, and joint ventures.

### **Alicia (Ali) Cafferty**

Head of Government Relations  
BSH Home Appliance Corporation

Ali has been with BSH since 2007, spending her first twelve years in Product Marketing, where she led key categories including cooking, refrigeration, and laundry care. In this role, she developed deep expertise in consumer insights, stakeholder engagement, and end-to-end product development processes. Drawing on more than a decade of hands-on experience in consumer products and home appliances, Ali now serves as Head of Government Relations, where she translates business and consumer perspectives into effective advocacy. She represents BSH at the state, provincial, and federal levels across the United States and Canada.

### **Mr. Jeff Wood**

Director  
Craven County Economic Development  
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Jeff Wood has more than 25 years of economic development experience and currently serves as Director of Economic Development for Craven County, North Carolina. His work has helped secure major wins that support long-term job creation, private investment, and industrial growth, including in 2025 a \$15 million Chatsworth Products expansion adding 150 jobs over five years and BSH's relocation from Tennessee to Craven County with over \$11 million in capital investment and 199–240 new jobs. Under

his leadership, the County has also advanced major airport and industrial park initiatives, including a lease agreement supporting new industrial development at Coastal Carolina Regional Airport. Wood earned a B.S. in Public Service Administration with a minor in Business and Economics from West Virginia University Institute of Technology and completed IEDC's University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute program of study.

**Mr. Dan Gerlach**

Owner

Dan Gerlach LLC

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Dan Gerlach is an experienced leader in the government, nonprofit, philanthropic, and education sectors, including 25 years in North Carolina serving as senior fiscal advisor to the NC governor, president of a \$1 billion foundation, founding director of a public policy research organization, and interim leader of a research university.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and English from the University of Notre Dame and a Master's of Public Administration from Syracuse University.

Through Dan Gerlach LLC, he now strives to provide strategic counsel on finance, public policy, and other issues.

**Mr. Christopher Chung**

Chief Executive Officer

Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

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In 2015, Christopher Chung joined the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) as Chief Executive Officer. He brings more than 28 years of state-level economic development experience to the role, including positions with Missouri Partnership and Ohio Department of Development (now "JobsOhio"). He received his bachelor's degree and did graduate work in public policy at The Ohio State University.

Chris is the recipient of many awards and recognitions, including Business North Carolina Economic Development Executive of the Year (2024), Raleigh News & Observer Tar Heel of the Month (2022), and Triangle Business Journal CEOs of the Year (2018). His professional affiliations include US Department of Commerce – National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship, US Department of Commerce – United States Investment Advisory Council, Carolina Public Press – Board of Directors, North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation – Board of Directors, and University of North Carolina at Charlotte – Board of Visitors.

Chris resides in Raleigh, NC, with his wife Emily and daughters Elizabeth and Caroline.

### **The Honorable Elaine Marshall**

Secretary of State  
State of North Carolina  
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In 1996, Secretary of State Elaine F. Marshall became the first woman ever elected to a statewide, executive branch office in North Carolina and has served as President of the National Association of Secretaries of State. Voters re-elected her to an eighth term in 2024, and Governor Cooper presented her with the NC Order of the Long Leaf Pine award in 2022, the Governor's highest award for service to the State. A former teacher, small business owner, and private practice attorney, Secretary Marshall was elected to the NC Senate before rising to statewide office.

Under Secretary Marshall's administration, more than 2.2 million businesses have been formed, she has pioneered e-commerce in government, protected investors and intellectual property owners, and promoted financial capital formation in North Carolina.

Secretary Marshall has been very active in many civic groups in the areas of child welfare, women's issues, and agriculture and small-town economic development. She credits 4-H as an important part of her youth and received Lifetime Achievement Awards from North Carolina 4-H and in 2014 was inducted into the National 4-H Hall of Fame.

She holds a B.S. in Home Economics from the University of Maryland and a law degree from Campbell University. She has received Honorary Doctorate Degrees from Campbell University, Lees-McRae College, Meredith College, and the Republic of Moldova State University of Medicine. In 2024, she was also bestowed with the Order of the Republic, the government of Moldova's highest honor, by Moldova President Maia Sandu.

Since becoming Secretary of State, she has received numerous state and national awards for leadership in technology, government innovation, and women's leadership.

### **Mr. Esteban Guzmán**

Director, Small Business Center  
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**LNC Class 32**

Esteban Guzmán is the Director at the Small Business Center at Wayne Community College. Prior to stepping into his current role, Esteban Guzmán spent decades helping others find creative, yet simple solutions to entrepreneurial challenges and cross-border legal complexities. As a business owner and

professional, in both Mexico and the USA, Esteban Guzmán has helped his clients plan, start and grow successful enterprises in the USA and Mexico.

Esteban Guzmán earned his Legum Baccalaureate (LLB) from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC), a Master's degree in International Corporate Law from la Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara (UAG), and a Master of Law in Comparative Laws from the California Western School of Law. He is a member of the North Carolina State bar holding one of only two licenses as a Foreign Legal Consultant, and he is currently enrolled in the North Carolina Certified Economic Developer Program at East Carolina University.

Esteban Guzmán has taught as an adjunct law professor at several universities in Mexico for over a decade, teaching several courses from Law Philosophy to International Legal Systems. Esteban Guzmán combines his passion for business, law, and teaching by working with his clients as a mentor to help them achieve their dreams and thrive as successful entrepreneurs. He is a member of the Governor's Advisory Council on Latino Affairs and also serves as Vice President at RedGlobal MX, Capítulo Raleigh, Vice President at The Wayne County Latino Board, Board Member for the Wayne County Public Library, member of the Economic Vitality Committee at the Downtown Goldsboro Development Corporation, member of the minority business Committee of the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce, member of GoGlobal NC, Hispanic League PyMEs Committee member and served as board member of the Goldsboro Strike Eagles Football Club.

He believes that ability is forged as an alloy of knowledge, wisdom, understanding, perseverance, and imagination tempered by experience.

### **Mr. Steve Yost**

**LNC Class 5**

President

North Carolina's Southeast

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Steve Yost is President of North Carolina's Southeast, a 20-county regional public-private economic development partnership. With more than 35 years of experience, he has led collaborative programs and strategies at the local, state, and regional levels, consistently advancing economic growth and investment across the Southeast region.

His career includes service as Executive Director of the Columbus County Economic Development Commission, Senior Developer and Regional Manager for the NC Department of Commerce, and Marketing Manager for North Carolina's Southeast. In each role, he has spearheaded initiatives in marketing, strategic planning, product development, fundraising, advocacy, and the creation of impactful public-private partnerships.

Steve holds a B.A. in Political Science from Appalachian State University and a Master of Public Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a Certified Economic and Community Developer and has been named five times to Business North Carolina magazine's list of the state's most influential economic development leaders.

In 2017–2018, he served as President of the North Carolina Economic Development Association, where he received the President’s Award for outstanding leadership. He was also inducted into the Southern Business Development Hall of Fame, recognized among the most influential economic development leaders in the South over the past 50 years.

Steve lives in Whiteville, NC, with his wife, Deborah Albritton.

**Ms. Stacy Sereno**

**LNC Class 32**

State Legislative Director and Legislative Counsel  
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Stacy Sereno is the State Legislative Director & Legislative Counsel for the North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation. She focuses primarily on NCFB’s advocacy efforts at the North Carolina General Assembly.

Stacy received her BS in Agricultural Education from the University of Florida and her law degree from the University of Alabama School of Law. Her experience includes working as Policy Advisor for the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, Special Assistant to the Administrator at USDA’s Risk Management Agency, and Professional Staff at the US House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, where she was responsible for the Agricultural Research and Horticulture titles of the 2018 Farm Bill.

Stacy grew up on a family farm in central Florida and was active in showing dairy and beef cattle. She also served as the 2002-2003 Florida FFA State President. She currently lives in Raleigh with her husband, Alex, and their twins, Maisie and Michael.

**Mr. Stephen Malik**

Chairman/Owner, North Carolina Courage  
Founder, Greenlight Health Data Systems  
801 Corporate Center Drive, Suite 320  
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Steve Malik is a Welsh American entrepreneur and sports executive renowned for his leadership in both healthcare technology and the soccer industry. Born in Swansea, Wales, he moved to Kinston, NC, at the age of four when his father joined DuPont as a chemical engineer. Malik cultivated a passion for sports early on—helping establish the Kinston High School soccer team in 1978—and later earned a business degree from UNC Kenan–Flagler Business School in 1985.

In 1996, Malik founded Medfusion, a Cary-based healthcare-technology firm, which he sold to Intuit in 2010 for \$91 million. He reacquired the company in 2013, resumed his role as executive chairman, and ultimately sold it again in December 2019. He then launched Greenlight Health Data Solutions to further promote patient-centered health data access.

Parallel to his entrepreneurship, Malik has had a significant impact on soccer in North Carolina. In 2015, he acquired the Carolina RailHawks—now North Carolina FC—and later brought the Western New York Flash to the state, rebranding them as the North Carolina Courage, a powerhouse in the National Women’s Soccer League. Under his direction, the Courage secured back-to-back NWSL championships in 2018 and 2019. He also served on the U.S. Soccer Federation board and chaired the NWSL Executive Committee.

**Mr. Randall Johnson**

**LNC Class 15**

Executive Director, Southeastern Office  
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Randall Johnson serves as the NC Biotechnology Center Southeastern Office Executive Director to strengthen the regional economy and to improve the quality of life across North Carolina through economic development action targeting Life Sciences innovation and commercialization in marine biotech, agricultural biotech, renewable bioproducts/energy, clinical research, and industrial biotech.

Johnson has extensive experience in local and regional economic development, with a focus on entrepreneurship and knowledge sector development. He graduated cum laude from Wake Forest University with an undergraduate concentration in psychology, and he holds an MBA from the Babcock Graduate School of Management at Wake Forest University.

He serves on boards in the region and state, including the North Carolina Community Colleges Foundation Board as Chair, and is the Past President of the NC Economic Development Association (NCEDA), Founding Chair of the NCEDA Foundation, Past Chairman of the Southeastern Economic Development Commission, and former executive committee board member for the NC Sustainable Energy Association, Wilmington Rotary Club, and the Advisory Committee for Biotechnology in Southeastern North Carolina, which he helped found.

Johnson is a graduate of Leadership North Carolina Class 15 and was awarded the U.S. President’s Volunteer Service Award, a national honor award recognizing individuals who have answered the call to make a lifelong commitment to volunteer service.

He and his wife Leigh live with their son in Wilmington, NC.

**Mr. Trey Cash**

**LNC Class 31**

Chief Operating Officer  
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Trey Cash, a native of Greene County, serves as Chief Operating Officer for the North Carolina Global TransPark Economic Development Region, helping lead regional economic development efforts for Greene, Lenoir, and Wayne Counties and the NC Global TransPark. In this role, he supports industrial recruitment, assists existing employers, oversees regional operations, and works with partners at the local, state, and national level to bring jobs and investment to Eastern North Carolina.

Trey has more than 13 years of experience in local and state government and previously served as Director of Economic Development for Greene and Lenoir Counties. He is a North Carolina Certified Economic Developer and a Certified Workforce Developer. He holds a Master of Business Administration from Fayetteville State University, a Master of Science in Leadership from Grand Canyon University, and a Bachelor of Science in Emergency and Disaster Management from Western Carolina University. He is also completing advanced training through the University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute.

Trey serves on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Economic Development Association.

### **The Honorable Machelles Sanders**

CEO and Founder, Aspire Leadership & Consulting, LLC

Former Secretary, North Carolina Department of Commerce and Department of Administration

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Machelle Baker Sanders brings a distinguished track record of leadership across the biopharmaceutical industry and state government, marked by strategic acumen and transformative impact. She has deep expertise in Quality, Compliance, Operations, and organizational transformation. She serves as a public board member of BioCryst Pharmaceuticals and Fortrea, Inc., and was formerly a board member of Radius Health Inc. and Novan Inc. Her board involvement includes committees such as the Science Committee, Compensation Committee Chairperson, and Nominating & Governance Committee Chairperson showcasing her expertise in governance, fiduciary oversight, and organizational success. Machelle is the President and Founder of Aspire Leadership & Consulting, LLC (ALC), a firm dedicated to transformative speaking engagements, professional coaching, and strategic workforce development. Driven by a commitment to empowering and elevating leadership, Aspire's mission is to expand influence, foster growth, and create lasting impact across organizations and industries.

Machelle served as Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Commerce January 2021 - January 2025. Her tenure as Cabinet Secretary was characterized by a robust, inclusive leadership style that propelled North Carolina to the forefront of economic development in the United States. Under her guidance, the state secured consecutive titles of 'Best Business Climate' by Business Facilities magazine and was recognized as CNBC's top place to do business, generating over 70,000 jobs and attracting \$45 billion in capital investment. Her strategic initiatives, including the "First in Talent Plan," catalyzed growth and recovery post-pandemic, establishing a national benchmark in workforce development and economic resilience. Machelle has represented NC on a global stage through advocacy, policy, and partnership on emerging economic trends and collaborations that have shaped North Carolina's economy.

Machelle served as Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Administration January 2017 - January 2021. In this role, Machelle managed state government operations, including facilities, property, construction, and procurement. As Chair of the Andrea Harris Taskforce, she advocated for digital equity, supported growth for small, women, and minority-owned businesses, and developed telemedicine proposals for rural communities. Her leadership streamlined processes, eliminated waste, and enhanced efficiency in state operations.

Over her 32-year tenure in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical sectors, Machelle held increasing levels of responsibility. At Biogen, she served as Vice President of Multiple Sclerosis Franchise Product Operations and Vice President of Manufacturing and General Manager of the RTP facility. As Vice President of Multiple Sclerosis Franchise Product Operations, she provided strategic oversight and led the successful commercialization of MS treatments, including Pelegridy and Tecfidera, significantly improving patient outcomes and franchise revenue. Her expertise in product lifecycle management and regulatory compliance enabled the launch of multiple therapies, and her ability to foster cross-functional collaboration expanded the product portfolio and achieved regulatory milestones. In her role as Vice President of Manufacturing & General Manager, Machelle oversaw 1,200 employees and directed biologic and small molecule manufacturing operations. She spearheaded the development of a new disposable manufacturing suite and office building, supporting the launch of five new commercial products while diversifying production capabilities. She also facilitated global regulatory approvals for concurrent manufacturing, enhancing the site's flexibility and capacity across Biogen's operations.

Machelle earned a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry from North Carolina State University and a Master of Health Administration from Pfeiffer University. She has pursued continued executive development through Stanford University's Directors' Consortium. In addition to her professional endeavors, Machelle contributes to philanthropy through the Machelle Sanders Science Endowment at NCSU and serves on the boards of MyFuture NC and the UNC-Chapel Hill Health Foundation. Machelle volunteers at the Raleigh Rescue Mission as a job readiness coach. She is passionate about STEM education for youth, especially inspiring young girls and minorities to enter the STEM space. Machelle's career exemplifies her capability to navigate and lead complex organizations through significant challenges and opportunities, making substantial contributions in both the private and public sectors. She has a proven record of creating high-performing teams and delivering exceptional results. Machelle has demonstrated superior ability to manage transitions and adapt to changes in dynamic, diverse environments. As a strong advocate for underserved and rural communities, she champions diversity, equity, inclusion, and innovation, leaving a profound impact across various spheres of influence. Machelle brings unique perspective with business acumen and experience in public and private sectors. She is visionary, compassionate, and principled public servant.

### Class 33 Economic Development Session Planning Committee

The following members of LNC Class 32 make up the planning committee for the Class 33 Duke Energy Economic Development session.

**Robin Bennett Moore**

Partner

DMJPS PLLC

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Robin is a Partner in DMJPS' Sanford, North Carolina office. Throughout her career, she has worked with closely held S-corporations and partnerships, sole proprietorships, high net-worth individuals, trusts, and estates. Robin also has significant experience with individual income tax planning, estate planning, and IRS correspondence. Before joining DMJPS, Robin worked for a large nationally recognized accounting firm in Pinehurst, NC, as a Tax Manager.

Robin, her husband and son reside in Carthage, NC. In her free time, she enjoys being outdoors and spending time with family and friends. She is an active member of Cameron Baptist Church in Cameron, NC where she also serves as Treasurer.

**Rosalie Calarco New Hanover**

Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach of Coastal Region

AARP North Carolina

[rcalarco@aarp.org](mailto:rcalarco@aarp.org)

Rosalie Calarco is a Wilmington, NC, native and currently resides in Wilmington with her husband John, two children, and their two dogs. She received her Bachelor of Social Work from University of North Carolina at Wilmington and her Master of Social Work from the University of Georgia. She has practiced macro level social work for her entire career. Seventeen years of her career were spent working for a U.S. Congressman and U.S. Senator handling congressional casework in the areas of Education, Medicare, Military and Veterans Affairs. During her years of federal service, she became passionate about veterans' issues.

Currently, Rosalie is working for AARP NC as the Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for the Coastal Region. Her primary role is developing and implementing AARP Community Presence work in the region. Additionally, her role includes engaging and recruiting AARP members, volunteers, targeting audiences, stakeholders, partners, and policy makers to advance AARP priorities. She serves as the state lead on Veteran, Military and Families work as well as AARP Emergency Preparedness/Response/Recovery.

She has sat on the NC Institute of Medicine's Nursing Task Force and Veteran Health Task Force, is the Co-Chair of the NC Coalition on Aging Health Equity Committee, and currently serves on the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Advisory Board of Region 4 and the NC Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network.

**Mike Carson** *Wake*

Executive Director, Head of Consumer & Business Credit  
First Citizens Bank  
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Michael Carson is a banking executive who joined First Citizens Bank in Raleigh, NC, in October 2023 as the head of Consumer and Business Credit, leading an organization of approximately 125 team members. Prior to joining First Citizens, Michael spent ten years at Bank of America in various leadership roles, most recently serving as a Commercial Credit Executive within the bank's Business Banking and Middle Market Credit organization. His tenure at Bank of America also included leadership roles in Small Business Credit and Business Controls.

Before his career at Bank of America, Michael served as a Wholesale Credit Risk Specialist and Large Bank Examiner at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond (Charlotte branch) and as a leader in the Consumer and Small Business Special Assets group at BB&T.

Michael received his Bachelor of Arts in Economics, an MBA, and a Juris Doctor from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Michael is dedicated to continuous learning and professional development and has been selected to participate in prestigious leadership programs such as First Citizens Bank's Elevate Leadership Development Program, Bank of America's Diversity Leadership Program, and BB&T's Leadership Development Program. As a U.S. Navy veteran, Michael's diverse experiences and leadership skills have made significant contributions to both his professional roles and the broader community.

Michael resides in Raleigh, NC, but spends a good amount of time in Tampa, FL. He is married, has two children (a son and a daughter), and a cockapoo named Zeus. Outside of work, Michael enjoys spending time with family, traveling, and watching his Tar Heels compete in a wide range of sports.

**George Collier** *Harnett*

Deputy Director, Broadband Infrastructure Office  
North Carolina Department of Information Technology  
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George Collier earned his BS in Political Science and MPA from East Carolina University. He has dedicated his career to serving the residents of North Carolina. Throughout his public service career, George has created and managed numerous community and economic development programs within state government. He is currently serving as the Deputy Director for the Broadband Infrastructure Office and his main responsibilities include infrastructure policy and funding, compliance, and program development.

George bleeds purple and gold as an avid ECU Pirate. His Pirate roots run deep as his father, aunt, wife, and mother-in-law are all alumni of this esteemed university. He is a dedicated husband and father. He loves spending time with his family. He also enjoys volunteering at his daughter's school in Harnett County. More importantly, George values his faith and enjoys serving at Piney Grove Baptist Church in whatever capacity is needed by the church.

**Kevin Dick**, Co-Chair *Wake*  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Carolina Small Business Development Fund  
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Kevin Dick began as President & CEO with Carolina Small Business Development Fund (CSBDF) in February 2020 after decades of professional experience working in economic, community, and workforce development at the local government level. He leads a team of approximately 37 full-time employees and has accountability for a \$20m loan portfolio with \$35m in assets under management. Since joining CSBDF, Kevin has helped to bring about a resurgence of the organization as a community and economic development entity with a statewide focus. During his tenure, CSBDF has deployed over \$40m in capital and provided loans, grants, and technical assistance to over 2000 North Carolina-based small businesses from primarily underserved communities.

Prior to joining CSBDF, Kevin held high-level community, economic, and workforce development roles with the City of Charlotte, City of Durham, the Broward (FL) Workforce Development Board, and the City of Dania Beach, FL. Initiatives under Kevin's leadership have been nationally recognized by the International Economic Development Council, the NC Sustainable Business Council, National League of Cities, US Conference of Mayors, Walmart Foundation, the US Department of Labor, and the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Kevin holds or has held board and committee positions with the International Economic Development Council, United Minority Contractors of NC, the NC Economic Development Association, NC Task Force on Offshore Wind Economic Resource Strategies (NCTOWERS), and the Garner (NC) Chamber of Commerce. He holds a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning from Florida Atlantic University and a Bachelor of Science in International Business from Georgetown University. He has also been designated as a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) by the International Economic Development Council. Kevin was named a 2024 Triangle Business Journal Diversity Leader of the Year and was also named to the 2025 Business North Carolina Power 100 List as one of the 100 most influential business leaders in NC.

**Andrea Freile Wayne**  
Strategic Communications and Engagement Coordinator  
Wayne County Public Schools  
[andreafreile@wcps.org](mailto:andreafreile@wcps.org)

Andrea Freile leads family engagement and communication for Wayne County Public Schools and is the founder of *Viva Cultura Consulting*, a firm that helps leaders navigate cultural dynamics within their workforce and communities. Her focus is on equipping organizations with practical tools to better understand and connect with the people they serve—whether clients, employees, or stakeholders.

Andrea leads the *Global Leadership Development Program* for the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce and partners with organizations including UNC Health Wayne, Habitat for Humanity, the YMCA, Worrell Contracting, Mount Olive Pickle, and UNC Wilmington. She serves as co-chair of the Governor's Advisory Council for Latino Affairs and collaborates with Small Business Centers across the state.

She serves on the boards of the United Way of Wayne County and the Goldsboro Arts District. Originally from Quito, Ecuador, Andrea is the mother of Bella (21), who works for the City of Greenville, and Jack

(11), a proud theater kid. She enjoys kayaking, yoga, and spending time in the mountains, and sets a daily intention to grow trust across lines of difference.

Andrea is honored to be part of Leadership North Carolina—joining others who are building a stronger, more unified state.

**Joe Hungerford** *Buncombe*

Director of Engineering

Curtiss-Wright

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Civic and community involvement is like cheating in the game of work-life balance! Rather than perpetually struggling to balance the teeter-totter of work v. life, why not add a third leg (community service) to create a more stable platform, a stool, to operate from in our daily lives? Joe Hungerford had to contemplate this provocative concept on day 1 of Leadership Asheville over a decade ago. Embracing this paradigm shift would prove to be transformational both personally and professionally.

Joe, a former race car driver and automotive engineer, is today leading a team of aerospace engineers at North Carolina based Curtiss-Wright. His career has allowed him to pursue his passion for the mobility industry, spurred on by a fascination with speed and innovation. However, while working to develop engines, vehicles, and aircraft systems his passion expanded into economic impact, environmental sustainability, STEAM education, and coaching leaders. As such, Joe has had the privilege of working with UNC-Asheville, SAE International, and Engineering for Kids among others. These associations created opportunities to teach and collaborate with students, automotive professionals, educators, and even leaders within City of Asheville fire services on the topics of technology and leadership.

As a proud husband and father of five, Joe has found purpose in connecting public and private, non-profit and for-profit entities to enrich the communities in which he lives and works. Exploring opportunities to do this at the state level, via Leadership North Carolina, is a privilege and challenge he is excited about.

**David Lee**, Co-Chair *Cleveland*

Industry Recruitment Coordinator, Division of Workforce Solutions

North Carolina Department of Commerce

[david.lee@commerce.nc.gov](mailto:david.lee@commerce.nc.gov)

David Lee is an industry recruitment coordinator for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions. In this role, he coordinates a diverse team managing Business Recruitment and Expansion (BRE) projects that create over 250 jobs. He focuses on strategic alignment, execution, and evaluation to enhance workforce programs and services. He also fosters strong relationships with regional and local workforce leaders, Community Colleges, economic developers, and partner agencies, ensuring the successful implementation of recruitment and hiring goals in line with US Department of Labor regulations.

He served in two additional workforce development roles. As a workforce director for the Foothills Regional Commission and as a career advisor at the Rutherford County NC Works Career Center, he demonstrated his deep understanding of the complex structure of the state's workforce development system.

Speaking to his adaptability and versatility, David successfully transitioned into workforce development after serving in the United States Army for over 21 years, holding numerous leadership positions, and receiving numerous accolades and awards for his leadership and management efforts. His last assignment was as a Recruiting Company First Sergeant, where he managed six recruitment centers and over 35 personnel and was responsible for over 200 delayed entry Soldiers at any given time.

David is a Liberty University student working on a Doctorate in Strategic Leadership. Expected completion is late 2025 or early 2026. David resides in Cleveland County with his wife, Linda, and three children. In his free time, he enjoys camping, working out, and riding his Harley.

**Chris Rivera** *Mecklenburg*

EMD Division Director, Department of Community Resources  
Mecklenburg County  
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Chris Rivera serves as the Economic Mobility Division Director for Mecklenburg County's Department of Community Resources. In this role, he leads workforce development and upward mobility strategies that align talent, training, and supportive services to expand economic opportunity for residents across the county.

With more than 15 years of experience in workforce development, Chris has built a career centered on aligning education with labor market demand and advancing equitable access to opportunity. Prior to joining Mecklenburg County, he served as Vice President of Business & Workforce Solutions at South Piedmont Community College, where he led industry-aligned training initiatives, expanded apprenticeship partnerships, increased enrollment and completion outcomes, and strengthened cross-sector collaborations with employers, nonprofits, and public agencies. Chris is widely recognized for his systems-thinking approach, data-informed leadership, and ability to convene diverse stakeholders around shared goals. His work focuses on building integrated talent pipelines, removing structural barriers to employment, and designing workforce strategies that drive long-term economic mobility for historically underserved communities.

A proud graduate of Leadership North Carolina and current Program Chair, Chris remains deeply committed to cultivating cross-sector leadership and advancing policies and partnerships that strengthen North Carolina's economic future. He is passionate about ensuring that economic mobility is not aspirational, but attainable, measurable, and sustainable for all residents.

**Stacey Waddell** *Wake*

Deputy Chief Operations Officer  
State Employees' Credit Union (SECU)  
[stacey.waddell@ncsecu.org](mailto:stacey.waddell@ncsecu.org)

Stacey Waddell proudly serves as the Deputy Chief Operations Officer at State Employees' Credit Union of North Carolina, the nation's second-largest credit union. With over two decades of experience in the

financial services industry, she has held several leadership roles within SECU and its subsidiary companies and has had the opportunity to provide essential financial solutions to nearly 2.8 million members. In her current role, Stacey is dedicated to delivering exceptional member service while driving efficiency and innovation. At the heart of everything she does is a commitment to financial well-being for North Carolinians and she finds it incredibly rewarding to play a role in their financial journeys.

Stacey is originally from Greenville, NC, and graduated from the University of North Carolina at Asheville. She and her husband, Matt, have called the Triangle home since 2002. They live in North Raleigh with their two teenage daughters, Emma and Sydney. When she is not serving North Carolinians professionally, you can find her volunteering in the community, traveling, trying new local restaurants, or cheering on her kids at equestrian events, dance competitions, and lacrosse games.

**Thad Walton** *Mecklenburg*

SVP, Carolinas Commercial Banking Executive

Regions Bank

[thad.walton@regions.com](mailto:thad.walton@regions.com)

Thad Walton serves as the Charlotte Market Executive and Commercial Banking Leader for North & South Regions Bank. A native of Salisbury, Thad began his career with First Citizens in 2004 and joined Regions in late 2011, serving as a middle market banker for 7 years before assuming his current role in 2019. As market executive, he works with other bank leaders to identify opportunities for volunteer service, nonprofit support, and financial education. Thad earned his JD from the Charlotte School of Law and his BSBA from UNC Chapel Hill. He also completed Vanderbilt's Client Advisor Program and holds both CTP and CFP designations. Thad serves on the development committee for Classroom Central. He was named to Charlotte Business Journal's Forty Under 40 in 2021 and has been listed on Business NC's Power List for several years. Thad and his wife Megan have 4 children ages 20, 13, 11, and 7, and a spoiled golden retriever.

**Heather Wilson** *New Hanover*

Executive Director

Cameron Art Museum

[hwilson@cameronartmuseum.org](mailto:hwilson@cameronartmuseum.org)

Heather Wilson became Executive Director of the Cameron Art Museum in June 2023. Wilson had been serving as deputy director since 2019 and started at the museum in 2006, when she was hired as a development officer. With a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a master's of fine arts from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilson has brought a range of expertise and skills to Cameron Art Museum. She has worked in the publishing industry, including working as an editor at Houghton Mifflin Company in Boston. At UNCW, she co-founded the nationally known literary journal, *Ecotone*, and has continued to author numerous publications and articles.

In recent years, Wilson led a needs assessment for Cameron Art Museum's programming, was the project director for the PNC USCT Park and Stephen Hayes's sculpture *Boundless*, and oversaw its diversity and equity inclusion initiatives. Heather started CAM's Connections programs for those living with dementia and disability, as well as its Art Enhances Health program for those being treated for cancer at Zimmer Cancer Center. She has presented about the Cameron Art Museum's work at several national and regional conferences, including the American Alliance for Museums Conference and the Southeastern Museums Conference. Wilson served on the Public Arts Advisory Council for the Z. Smith

Reynolds Foundation. She is currently working on a history book of Cameron Art Museum. Heather is a recipient of the 2024 Museum Leadership Award from Southeastern Museums Conference and serves on their program committee for 2025.