



The 16th Annual  
**Rural Policy Forum**

MOVING STRATEGY  
into  
**ACTION**

**August 2-4, 2023**  
Globe-Miami, AZ



Proudly presented by the  
**Local First Arizona**  
Rural Development Council



It's always exciting to build our Rural Policy Forum program, and an honor to welcome you to this annual convening. This year marks the 16th annual forum, brought to you by the Arizona Rural Development Council. It is Local First Arizona's 10th year in that federally designated role for the state, as well as our 20th anniversary as an organization. This makes 2023 a particularly special year for us. THANK YOU for spending it with us at this annual gathering we all look forward to each year.

**MOVING STRATEGY INTO ACTION**

Every year we ask for your feedback on this important convening to ensure it continues to provide one-of-a-kind value for your time and budget. Last year, we heard that many of you are feeling that key issues for rural and tribal communities are over-talked and under-actioned. You are ready to move beyond ideation and conversation and into faster progress toward meaningful outcomes. We listened.

This year's forum theme is "Moving Strategy into Action" where we'll be guided by the Agile Strategy Lab in the practice of Strategic Doing™. From transforming rural economic development approaches to creating global water hubs, from reducing teen violence and improving workforce development and performance, Strategic Doing™ is in practice worldwide to build a prosperous, sustainable future for generations to come.

We'll learn it and practice it together on real Arizona issues and opportunities during our time together.

**THE SUPPORT THAT MAKES IT ALL POSSIBLE**

An extensive network of rural and tribal supporters makes our gathering happen through their time, ideas, energy and funding. We sincerely thank the many organizations, elected officials, professionals, businesses, rural stakeholders, business owners, and others who helped organize the 2023 forum. We give special thanks to Growth Partners Arizona, our title sponsor. Please review the sponsor page in this program and visit sponsors' tables to explore their programs and resources.

Be sure to take in all you can of Miami and Globe while you're in this beautiful, historic and industrious part of our state. The energy and momentum of this area are inspiring! We're grateful for these communities' hospitality during our time here.



**Kimber Lanning**  
**CEO**  
Local First Arizona  
Arizona Rural Development Council



**Jenna Rowell**  
**Director of Rural Development**  
Local First Arizona  
Arizona Rural Development Council



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# THANK YOU to Our 2023 Sponsors!

All of our sponsors are invested in rural Arizona in different ways.

We give special thanks to our title sponsor, Growth Partners Arizona, for their ongoing commitment and support of Arizona's rural communities. As a local Community Development Financial Institution, Growth Partners Arizona is committed to creating an inclusive economy by closing the wealth gap and delivering critical resources to underserved communities across the state.

All of our sponsors support rural Arizona in different ways. Some of them have information and experts available at tables in the main gym throughout the forum. Please visit them during the event to learn more about their work and services in rural communities.





**Liz Nilsen**  
Agile Strategy Lab

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Liz is the Associate Director of the Agile Strategy Lab at the University of Northern Arkansas, following four years at the Agile Strategy Lab at Purdue. Her passion is for creating programs that nurture the next generation of thinkers and doers. A Strategic Doing Fellow, Liz teaches (online and in-person), shepherds the expansion of the Lab's programming, and oversees partnerships with other organizations interested in deploying Strategic Doing. She was previously the Director for Outreach and the New Economy at the Institute for Advanced Learning & Research in rural south-central Virginia.

Liz is a coauthor of *Strategic Doing: Ten Skills for Agile Leadership* (Wiley, 2019). *Strategic Doing* enables leaders to design and guide new networks that generate innovative solutions. It is a new strategy discipline that is lean, agile and fast—just what organizations, communities and regions need to survive and thrive. Today there are 1,500 Strategic Doing practitioners worldwide, and the book's online reviews include endorsements like “a gem of a book and a must read” and “if you want to make any group you manage more productive, more engaged, and more empowered, get this book.”



**Maren Mahoney**  
Director Office of Resiliency, *Office of the Governor Katie Hobbs*

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Maren Mahoney is an experienced attorney passionate about building an equitable, resilient future for all Arizonans. Trained in systems-level analysis, her expertise is in energy regulation, law, and policy development, analysis, and advocacy. Prior to joining the Hobbs Administration, she advocated for state-level energy efficiency and decarbonization policies around the country, served as a Policy Advisor at the Arizona Corporation Commission, and managed an energy policy think tank at Arizona State University. She holds a J.D. from New York Law School, where she was a John Marshall Harlan Scholar and earned a Certificate for Public Service. Maren earned her M.A. in Sustainability from ASU, where she is a Senior Sustainability Scholar. Maren lives in Phoenix with her husband, two children, and their dog, Mr. Bunny.

# Thursday August 3

Topics of Discussion

Insights & Resources

Rural Funding Models

Revitalizing Rural Economies

7:30 a.m.	<b>CHECK-IN &amp; BREAKFAST</b>		
8:00 - 9:45 a.m.	<b>FORUM OPENING</b> Kimber Lanning, <i>Local First Arizona</i>	<b>MORNING WELCOME</b> Mayor Medina, <i>Town of Miami</i>	<b>VISION SESSIONS</b> Travis Barnum & Todd Pryor Andre T. Whittington Christian Sawyer & Ash Dahlke Thea Wilshire Eddie Browning
	<b>LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT</b> Chairman Johnson, <i>Tonto Apache Tribe</i>		
	<b>LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT WELCOME</b> Arizona Rep. Ed Cook, <i>District 8</i>		
9:45 - 10 a.m. BREAK			
10 - 11:15 a.m.	<b>BREAKOUT SESSIONS</b>		
11:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.	The Voice of Rural Arizona on Needs & Priorities <b>ROSE MOFFORD</b>	Decoding Infrastructure Funding <b>MAIN GYM</b>	Incubate & Accelerate Business Prosperity <b>INSPIRATION ROOM</b>
	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>		
	<b>LUNCHTIME WELCOME</b> Mayor Al Gameros, <i>City of Globe</i>		
1:15 - 1:30 p.m. BREAK	<b>KEYNOTE PRESENTATION</b> Liz Nilsen, <i>Strategic Doing: Moving Ideas Into Impact</i>		
	<b>WORKSHOP</b>		
	<b>STRATEGIC DOING</b> <b>MAIN GYM</b>		
2:45 - 3 p.m. BREAK			
3 - 4:15 p.m.	<b>WORKSHOP</b> Continued		
	<b>STRATEGIC DOING</b> <b>MAIN GYM</b>		

# Friday August 4

Topics of Discussion

Insights & Resources

Rural Funding Models

Revitalizing Rural Economies

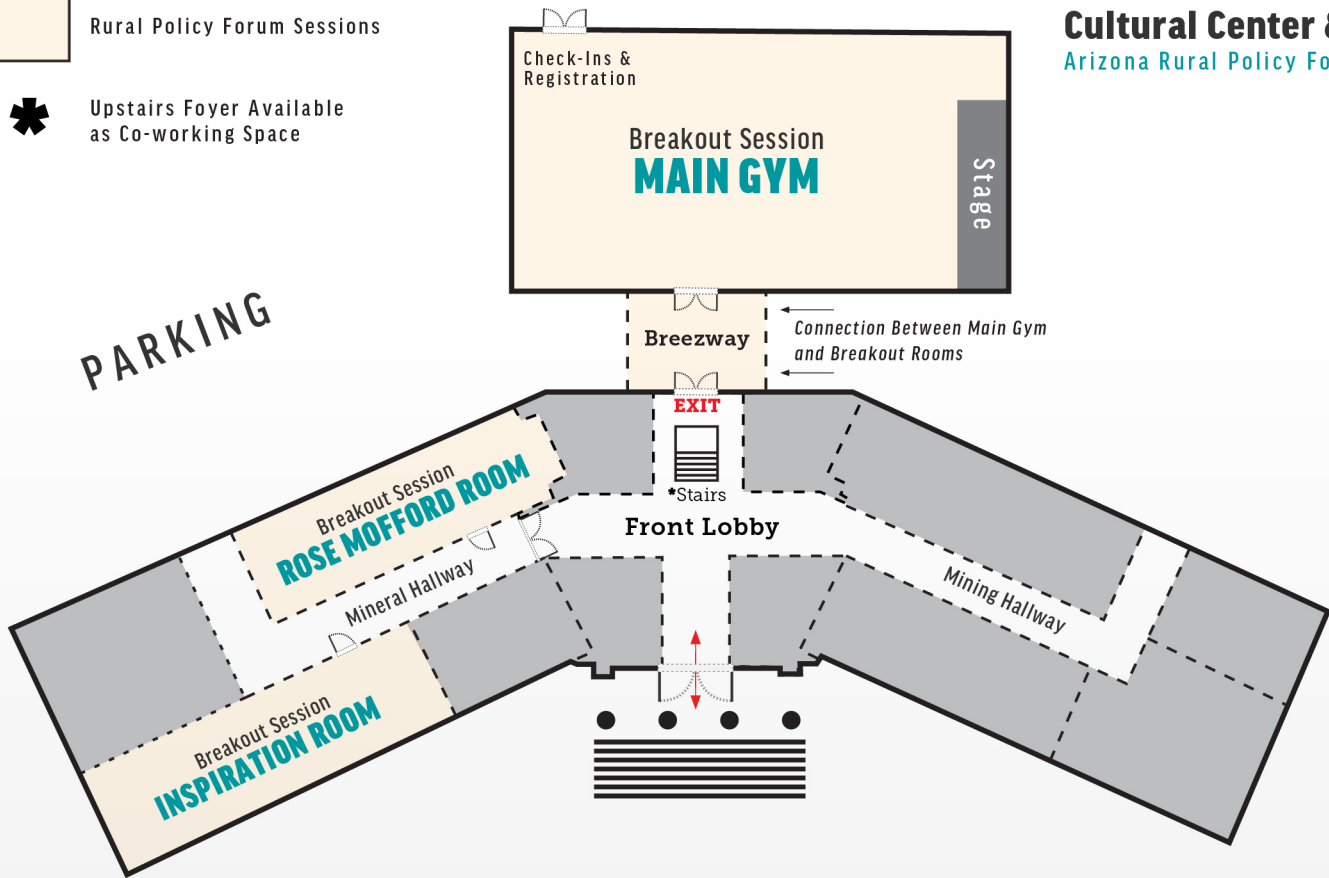
7:30 a.m.	<b>BREAKFAST</b>		
8 - 9:30 a.m.	<b>MORNING WELCOME</b> Jenna Rowell, <i>Local First Arizona</i>		
	<b>STRATEGIC DOING VISION SESSIONS</b>		
	<b>KEYNOTE PRESENTATION</b> Maren Mahoney, Director Office of Resiliency, <i>Office of the Governor Katie Hobbs</i>		
9:30 - 9:45 a.m. BREAK			
9:45 - 11 a.m.	<b>BREAKOUT SESSIONS</b>		
11:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	<b>WORKSHOP</b> Rural Resource Round-up <b>MAIN GYM</b>	Rural Development, Reimagined <b>INSPIRATION ROOM</b>	Grassroots Food Systems for Stronger Communities <b>ROSE MOFFORD</b>
	<b>ROUNDTABLES &amp; WORKSHOPS</b>		
	The Rural Workforce of the Future <b>ROSE MOFFORD</b>	<b>WORKSHOP</b> Rural Funders Roundtable <b>MAIN GYM</b>	Build an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem <b>INSPIRATION ROOM</b>
12:30 p.m.	<b>LUNCH</b>		
	Grab-and-Go Lunch   Opportunity for Networking		

 Rural Policy Forum Sessions

 Upstairs Foyer Available as Co-working Space

# Bullion Plaza Cultural Center & Museum

Arizona Rural Policy Forum 2023



# DAY 1

Thursday, August 3, 2023

## 7:30 AM BREAKFAST

### MAIN GYM

Breakfast provided by *Vida e Caffé*

## 8 AM

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Chairman *Johnson*, *Tonto Apache Tribe*

## 8:10 AM

### FORUM OPENING

#### MAIN GYM

Kimber *Lanning*, *Local First Arizona*

### HOST COMMUNITY WELCOME

Mayor *Medina*, *Town of Miami*

### LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT WELCOME

Rep. *David L. Cook*, *District 8*

## VISION SESSIONS

#### Travis Barnum & Todd Pryor

ADEQ & Town of Superior  
*Brownfields Redevelopment*

#### Christian Sawyer & Ash Dahlke

*New Douglas Active Management Area*

#### Eddie Browning

Willcox Theater & Arts  
*Willcox Historic Theater*

#### Thea Wilshire

I ART Globe  
*Stairizona Trail*

#### Andre T. Whittington

Growth Partners Arizona  
*Partnering to Achieve Rural Goals*

## 9:45 AM BREAK

## 10 AM

### BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### DECODING INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

#### MAIN GYM

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides billions of dollars for much-needed infrastructure projects. These grants, together with other government programs and additional financing opportunities, are significant resources for rural and tribal communities, but also take a lot to navigate and compete for effectively. To help make sense of the funding landscape for transportation, water, housing and energy infrastructure, this panel will explore various grants and other programs, how to stay aware of current and emerging opportunities, and provide tips and discussion around pursuing these dollars.

#### PANELISTS

Kevin Adam | Rural Transportation Advisory Council

Diane Brown | Public Interest Research Group

Chelsea McGuire | Water Infrastructure Finance Authority

Keon Montgomery | Arizona Department of Housing

Facilitated by

*Katie McCown*, *Local First's Arizona Economic Recovery Center*

This session is presented by forum sponsor **Vitalyst Health Foundation**



## 10 AM BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### THE VOICE OF RURAL ARIZONA ON NEEDS & PRIORITIES

#### ROSE MOFFORD GALLERY

Knowing the wants, needs and concerns of rural residents isn't a complete mystery thanks to recent research products conducted across the state. The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension completed a statewide needs assessment in 2022, with findings reported by county. The Center for the Future of Arizona's Gallup Arizona Project, first conducted in 2009 and then a little more than a decade later, set out to learn about Arizonans' values, beliefs and what they most want for their future. And Northern Arizona University conducted a survey last year to better understand residents' priorities, with 70% of responses coming from outside of Maricopa County. Learn more on the methods and findings from this research and how you can use it to inform your work.

#### PANELISTS

**Amanda Burke** | Center for the Future of Arizona  
**Madeleine DeBlois** | University of Arizona Cooperative Extension  
**Dr. Lillian Smith** | Northern Arizona University College of Health & Human Services

Facilitated by  
**Jay Johnson**, Local First Arizona

This session is presented by forum sponsor **Arizona Complete Health**

## 10 AM BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### INCUBATE & ACCELERATE BUSINESS PROSPERITY

#### INSPIRATION ROOM

Rural Arizona and tribes have made major strides in developing both brick-and-mortar facilities and programs for entrepreneurs and business start-ups choosing to grow their dreams in these communities. And educators are flexing their training programs to the needs of employers to accelerate talent into the workforce. This panel will include how the St. John Innovation Center in Apache County attracted major funding to become a significant business resource, adult learners are completing the Pima FastTrack program in as little as 3-6 months, and the Pascua Yaqui Development Corporation is creating jobs and supporting entrepreneurs to diversify the tribe's economy.

#### PANELISTS

**Daune Cardenas** | Pascua Yaqui Development Corporation  
**Dr. Ian Roark** | Pima Community College Office of Workforce Development & Innovation  
**Russ Yelton** | White Mountain Economic Development

Facilitated by  
**Rafael Tapia**, Local First Arizona

This session is presented by forum sponsor **Freeport-McMoRan**

**11:30 AM LUNCH SERVICE**  
**MAIN GYM**  
Lunch provided by Gibson's Smokehouse

**LUNCHTIME WELCOME**  
**Mayor Al Gameros** | City of Globe

**LUNCH KEYNOTE PRESENTATION**  
**Strategic Doing: Moving Ideas Into Impact**  
**Liz Nilsen** | Associate Director | Agile Strategy Lab

*The Strategic Doing keynote and afternoon workshop are presented by Growth Partners Arizona, this year's title sponsor of the forum.*

**1:15 PM BREAK**

**1:30 PM WORKSHOP**  
**PUTTING STRATEGIC DOING™ INTO PRACTICE**  
**MAIN GYM**

We'll spend the afternoon in a hands-on Strategic Doing workshop in which small groups will surface the assets present around the table, identify potential opportunities created by combining them in new ways, design a pilot project, and set next steps, including a 30-day action plan. Table Guides for the session are forum attendees who received special training to help support groups through the process.

**WORKSHOP LEADS**  
Liz Nilsen | Agile Strategy Lab  
Laura Goldstein | New Mexico State University  
Assigned Table Guides | Trained Volunteers from Multiple Communities & Organizations

**2:45 PM BREAK**

**3 PM WORKSHOP**  
**PUTTING STRATEGIC DOING™ INTO PRACTICE** *continued*  
**MAIN GYM**

**4:15 PM END OF DAY 1**

5:30 PM

## FORUM CELEBRATION DINNER

### COBRE VALLEY CENTER FOR THE ARTS DOWNTOWN GLOBE

101 N Broad St, Globe, AZ 85501

Celebrate the first day of the 2023 Rural Policy Forum in downtown Globe! We'll enjoy an Italian dinner by DeMarco's, a family-owned business in Globe since 2006, in the beautiful historic building that is the Cobre Valley Center for the Arts. Plus small-group tours of the 1910 historic county jail and train depot museum will be available to ticket holders. We'll learn more about Globe's history straight from the "players" who lived it. A cast of characters from the local theater group will be on hand to share the stories of the people and adventures straight from this area's rich past.

#### PARKING

*Consider ride sharing with other forum-goers. Street parking throughout the downtown area, a free public parking lot at the corner of Sycamore & Broad, and parking in front of the train depot directly across from that lot will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.*



# DAY 2

Friday, August 4, 2023

**7:30 AM** **BREAKFAST**  
**MAIN GYM**  
Breakfast provided by **Vida e Caffé**

**8 AM** **MORNING GENERAL SESSION**  
**MAIN GYM**

**DAY 2 WELCOME**  
Jenna Rowell | Local First Arizona

**STRATEGIC DOING: LAUNCHING INTO ACTION ACROSS RURAL**  
Following our afternoon of putting Strategic Doing™ into practice, some bold volunteers from yesterday's table groups will share the projects their teams identified for near-term action. Hear how others plan to advance plans off the page and into action with the methods and tools learned at the forum.

**KEYNOTE PRESENTATION**  
**Maren Mahoney** | Director | Arizona Office of Resiliency Office of the Governor  
**Katie Hobbs**

**9:30 AM** **BREAK**

**9:45 AM** **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**RURAL RESOURCE ROUNDUP**  
**MAIN GYM**

A long-standing and popular session at the Rural Policy Forum has been the Rural Funders Roundtable, which returns again this year, but is now joined by this new session. Not all resources are monetary, and a wide range of programs and services are available across rural Arizona and tribal communities. Providers of featured resources will quickly present on either a specific program they're highlighting or give a peek into the range of their offerings. Then, session participants can choose the resources they want to learn more about and move between tables for deeper information-sharing and follow-up.

**PANELISTS**

- Ylenia Aguilar** | Arizona Renewable Drinking Water Program
- Julie Craig** | Arizona Youth Partnership
- Shelby Graves** | Solari
- Jessie Huff** | USDA Energy Programs
- Scott Koenig** | Project CENTRL
- Emily Litchfield** | Governor's Office of Youth, Faith & Family on AmeriCorps
- Dee Person** | Arizona Coalition for Military Families
- Christian Sawyer & Ash Dahlke** | Organizing Citizen-led Initiatives
- Adrienne Udarbe** | Pinnacle Prevention

*In addition, the Brownfields Redevelopment team from yesterday's Vision Session will be at a table to share more information with anyone interested in their insights on partnership and funding*

*Facilitated by*  
**Victoria Grijalva Ochoa**, Local First Arizona

## 9:45 AM BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT, REIMAGINED

#### INSPIRATION ROOM

“If you build it, they will come.” But if you can’t build it or revitalize it because you lack funding, then what? And on the housing front, if you build it, the ones who might come fastest and highest bidding are the short-term rental operators or seasonal homeowners, meaning no affordable housing gains for full-time residents and the local workforce. Are there any practical solutions to these challenges and conundrums? Yes, hope is out there! Outside-the-box thinkers are designing innovative approaches and bringing them to bear in rural Arizona. It’s time to reimagine rural development, and these panelists will share creative models that are bringing downtowns back to life and putting local workers into affordable housing.

#### PANELISTS

**Danielle Boochever** | Step Up Bisbee/Naco

**John Boone** | Orchestra Partners

**Melissa Hartman** | City of Bisbee

**Una Wirkebau** | City of Winslow

*Facilitated by*

**Stephen Pauken**, City of Bisbee

## 9:45 AM BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### GRASSROOTS FOOD SYSTEMS FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES

#### ROSE MOFFORD GALLERY

Food is often referred to as the universal language. It is a shared need for survival, but more than that it is a catalyst for community, culture and placemaking. Any healthy community needs a resilient, nourishing and accessible food supply, and these entrepreneurs are going beyond the business of food to using agriculture and its bounty to build and transform rural and tribal communities. Learn how and why they set out at a grassroots level, what they have accomplished to date, what food entrepreneurs and community builders like them need to be successful, and why including food systems work in rural and tribal development is a pathway to multiple forms of prosperity.

#### PANELISTS

**Chandler Ballinger** | Nalwoodi Denzhone Community

**Chris Casillas** | Regenerating Sonora

**Rebecca Serratos** | Prescott Farmers Market

*Facilitated by*

**Patty Emmert**, Local First Arizona

This session is presented by forum sponsor **Arizona Community Foundation**

11 AM **BREAK**

11:15 AM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

## **RURAL FUNDERS ROUNDTABLE**

### **MAIN GYM**

In a lightning round, these funders will present what they are looking to support and what types of proposals they are open to and maybe hoping to see more of in the future. After you hear from each of them, there will be time to connect where you see a match to a need or idea from your community.

### **FUNDERS**

Arizona Community Foundation  
Arizona Economic Recovery Center  
Arizona Office of Tourism  
Arizona Public Service  
Arizona State Historic Preservation Office  
Freeport-McMoRan  
U.S. Economic Development Administration  
USDA - Rural Development  
Vitalyst Health Foundation

*Facilitated by*  
Jenna Rowell, Local First Arizona

11:15 AM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS WORKSHOP**

## **BUILDING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM**

### **INSPIRATION ROOM**

Rural and tribal economic development is missing a major strategy without an intentional approach to welcoming and supporting entrepreneurs into the mix. These local pioneers become the businesses you then strive to retain and expand as the local backbone of your economy. But what does creating and fostering an entire ecosystem of support around an entrepreneur really entail? This session will explore the foundational elements of a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem and help you to assess where your community is toward building one.

### **WORKSHOP LEADS**

Thomas Barr | Local First Arizona  
Elaman Rodriguez | Fuerza Local, a Local First Arizona Program  
Andre T. Whittington | Growth Partners Arizona

## 11:15 AM THE RURAL WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

### ROSE MOFFORD GALLERY

Retaining and attracting young people in and to rural Arizona requires offering quality jobs with advancement opportunities. Likewise, rural employers are in strong need of more local talent pipelines and striving to retain young workers they do manage to recruit. Local First Arizona went straight to the source to get young Arizonans' perspectives on their local educational and career opportunities in rural areas. With help from Partnership for Workforce Innovation, the findings from this just-completed research will be debuted during this session. The Arizona Department of Education will provide an overview of Juvenile Technical Education program indicators useful for gauging which skills and career pathways are of the most interest to rural youth and where the state may be facing gaps in meeting employer demand. And Grow Arizona, a Holbrook-based nonprofit and sole-source provider of a college and career center for the local high school district, will share its approaches for engaging rural young people in planning their success beyond high school.

### PANELISTS

Cindy Gutierrez | Arizona Department of Education

Kathleen Smith | Grow Arizona

Trevor Stokes | Partnership for Workforce Innovation

*Facilitated by*

**Kate Stuart**, Local First Arizona

This session is presented by forum sponsor **Arizona Public Service**

## 12:30 PM LUNCH

Boxed lunches will be provided by Copper Bistro so you have your choice of staying and networking or making it a "grab-and-go" meal.

**THANK YOU** for being part of another successful forum!

**Kevin Adam**

Rural Transportation Advocacy Council | [kadam@rtac.net](mailto:kadam@rtac.net) | *Decoding Infrastructure Funding*

As legislative liaison for the Rural Transportation Advocacy Council (RTAC), Kevin Adam works extensively with and on behalf of rural communities to represent their transportation needs and goals in the policy arena. RTAC was formed in 2001, and today its members include metropolitan planning organizations throughout the state.

**Ylenia Aguilar**

SOURCE Global | [ylenia.aguilar@source.com](mailto:ylenia.aguilar@source.com) | *Rural Resource Roundup*

Ylenia Aguilar is the Business Development Manager for Arizona communities with SOURCE Global, a Public Benefit Corporation based in Scottsdale. The company's innovative SOURCE Hydropanel technology, which creates clean drinking water from sunlight and air, makes safe drinking water possible in 52 countries. These systems are now funded for eligible Arizona rural and tribal communities via a state program for water-stressed areas.

**Chandler Ballinger**

Nalwoodi Denzhone Community | [cballinger@apachenc.org](mailto:cballinger@apachenc.org) | *Grassroots Food Systems for Stronger Communities*

From Fort Wayne, IN, Chandler moved to Globe in 2022 to volunteer at Nalwoodi Denzhone Community (NDC) to prepare the Regenerative Agriculture Pilot Plot. He developed expertise as a regenerative farmer, enjoys partnership with nature, and believes in producing sustainable, nutrient-dense foods in local communities.

**Travis Barnum**

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality | [barnum.travis@azdeq.gov](mailto:barnum.travis@azdeq.gov) | *Vision Session*

Travis Barnum has worked at the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality since 2007. He has been an inspector for hazardous waste and air quality NESHAP sites, project manager for CERCLA/Superfund sites, performed inspections/compliance and outreach for underground storage tanks, and is now serving as the Brownfields Coordinator.

**Danielle Boochever, RN**

Copper Queen Community Hospital; Step-Up Bisbee/Naco | [daniellebouchever@hotmail.com](mailto:daniellebouchever@hotmail.com) | *Rural Development, Reimagined*

Danielle Boochever's passion for rural development began in Haiti as president of Women and Children's Hope Foundation. She is an ER nurse and serves on boards of the Hospital Foundation and Step-Up Bisbee/Naco. Through Southeast Arizona Renovations, she and her husband provide a "missing piece" to an affordable and sustainable housing model.

**John Boone**

Orchestra Partners | [john@orchestra-partners.com](mailto:john@orchestra-partners.com) | *Rural Development, Reimagined*

John Boone specializes in thought leadership, organizational strategy, and business development, having followed a path beyond pursuing a doctorate in history into capital markets and real estate development. A carpenter, marksman, husband, and father, John is a member of Main Street America, Urban Land Institute, and various economic development associations.



**Diane E. Brown**

Public Interest Research Group | [diane.brown@publicinterestnetwork.org](mailto:diane.brown@publicinterestnetwork.org) | *Decoding Infrastructure Funding*

As Executive Director of Arizona Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) Education Fund, Diane Brown directs the organization's research and policy development, coalition and citizen engagement, advocacy, and media outreach. Her work on energy and transportation includes providing entities and individuals with information to take advantage of federal funding.

**Eddie Browning**

Willcox Theatre & Arts, Inc. | [eddie.whitehat@gmail.com](mailto:eddie.whitehat@gmail.com) | *Vision Session*

A native of Willcox, Ariz., Eddie Browning has worn many hats, including economic development director for Willcox and executive director of the Willcox Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture. Inducted into the Willcox Cowboy Hall of Fame in 2015, his legacy of leadership and service to this community is vast.

**Amanda Burke, Ed.D.**

Center for the Future of Arizona | [amanda.burke@arizonafuture.org](mailto:amanda.burke@arizonafuture.org) | *The Voice of Rural Arizona on Needs & Priorities*

As Executive Vice President of the Center for the Future of Arizona, Dr. Burke oversees the organization's strategy, operations, and program leadership, including statewide initiatives regarding education, workforce, and civic engagement. She focuses on innovation and systemic change to analyze the priorities of Arizonans and ensure Arizona's success.

**Daune Cardenas, J.D.**

Pascua Yaqui Development Corporation | [daune.cardenas@pydcorporation.com](mailto:daune.cardenas@pydcorporation.com) | *Incubate & Accelerate Business Prosperity*

Daune Cardenas, a member of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, is CEO of the Pascua Yaqui Development Corporation (PYDC), the Tribe's Section 17 Corporation. She oversees Sonoran Pueblo Contracting LLC, the only Tribal 8(a) in Arizona and a HubZone construction company. Daune helped launch a profitable property management division under PYDC.

**Christopher Casillas**

Regenerating Sonora | [chris@regeneratingsonora.org](mailto:chris@regeneratingsonora.org) | *Grassroots Food Systems for Stronger Communities*

Christopher is co-founder and executive director of Regenerating Sonora, a nonprofit in Superior focused on place-based community development. His family has multi-generational roots in the Superior area. Previously, he spent 12 years in SaaS and helped shape culture and business development at a tech startup, turned billion dollar company.

**Brittney Clark**

Solari Crisis & Human Services | [brittney.clark@solari-inc.org](mailto:brittney.clark@solari-inc.org) | *Rural Resource Roundup*

As the Engagement Coordinator for Solari, Brittney Clark manages community outreach. She is passionate about educating the community on mental health resources, and especially working with local schools to educate parents and teachers. She holds a bachelor's degree in public relations and is a certified instructor in adult Mental Health First Aid.

**David Cook**

Arizona State Legislature | [dcook@azleg.gov](mailto:dcook@azleg.gov) | *General Session*

Rep. David Cook (R-District 8) was elected to the legislature in 2017. He and his wife opened the DC Cattle Company in Globe, Ariz. almost 25 years ago. Previously, Rep. Cook served as a sergeant in the Department of Corrections. He is a Certified Public Manager who advocates for student success and other issues affecting rural Arizona.

**Ash Dahlke**

Artist, Educator, Activist | [Ash.Dahlke@gmail.com](mailto:Ash.Dahlke@gmail.com) | *Vision Session*

Ash Dahlke is an artist, educator, and activist living and working in Cochise County. She chaired the Arizona Water Defenders Political Action Committee, the PAC that put an Active Management Area on the 2022 ballot for the Willcox and Douglas Groundwater Basins for the first time in Arizona's history.

**Madeleine deBlois, Sc.D.**

University of Arizona Community Research, Evaluation, and Development Group | [mdeblois@arizona.edu](mailto:mdeblois@arizona.edu) |

*The Voice of Rural Arizona on Needs & Priorities*

Madeleine deBlois, Sc.D., is a research scientist with Community Research, Evaluation, and Development (CRED) group at the University of Arizona. She provides evaluation support for UA Cooperative Extension and other local partners, striving to help decision makers collect, understand, and use actionable information about their programs, practices, and policies.

**Lauren Goldstein**

Strategic System Services at New Mexico State University | [sss@nmsu.edu](mailto:sss@nmsu.edu) | *Strategic Doing™*

Lauren Goldstein serves as Strategic Engagement Specialist in the Office of the Chancellor at New Mexico State University (NMSU). She is currently working with community champions across New Mexico to utilize Strategic Doing for strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems through the Arrowhead Community Entrepreneurship Program and on a sustainable urban agriculture project in central New Mexico

**Cindy Gutierrez**

Arizona Department of Education | [Cindy.Gutierrez@azed.gov](mailto:Cindy.Gutierrez@azed.gov) | *The Rural Workforce of the Future*

Cindy Gutierrez began her career teaching high school. Now as director of CTE, she leads a team of seven specialists who oversee programs across Arizona including construction science technology, agriculture and welding, transportation, family and consumer sciences, health sciences, and business, marketing and communication technologies.

**Melissa Hartman**

City of Bisbee | [mhartman@bisbeeaz.gov](mailto:mhartman@bisbeeaz.gov) | *Rural Development, Reimagined*

Melissa Hartman is senior planner/project director for the City of Bisbee. Affordable housing is a key focus for Melissa, who is deeply involved in several projects and initiatives. The city received a \$468,000 EPA Cleanup grant for a redevelopment site and is partnering on an innovative housing renovation and ownership model.

**Jeff Hays**

U.S. Economic Development Administration | [JHays@eda.gov](mailto:JHays@eda.gov) | *Rural Funders Roundtable*

With more than 35 years' experience in economic development and the improvement of rural life, Jeff is the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Arizona representative, and previously was director of Community Programs for USDA Rural Development. He connects rural communities and stakeholders to funding and other resources to advance their economic development and prosperity.

**Jessie Huff**

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Office | [jessie.huff@usda.gov](mailto:jessie.huff@usda.gov) | *Rural Resource Roundup*

Jessie Huff works as Arizona's USDA energy coordinator and contact for value-added producer grants. For the past 16 years, Jessie helped develop sustainability projects in rural and remote places mostly in Alaska and a little in Oregon. She moved to Arizona a year ago, and has a master's degree in applied resource economics.

**Clint Kaasa**

Arizona State Office of USDA Rural Development | [clinton.kaasa@usda.gov](mailto:clinton.kaasa@usda.gov) | *Rural Funders Roundtable*

Clint Kaasa is a Business & Cooperative Programs Specialist with the USDA. In this capacity, he works with rural businesses and stakeholders from across the state helping to promote and support their pursuit of available rural development programs and resources. He recently joined the advisory team to the Arizona Rural Development Council.

**Scott Koenig**

Project CENTRL | [scott@centrl.org](mailto:scott@centrl.org) | *Rural Resource Roundup*

As a relationship architect, Scott Koenig delivers Project CENTRL to participants, inspiring them to make a difference in their communities while connecting over 700 alumni at the Arizona Center for Rural Leadership. A Tucson 40 Under 40, he's raised \$14 million for University of Arizona and is treasurer at Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation.

**Kimber Lanning**

Local First Arizona | [kimber@localfirstaz.com](mailto:kimber@localfirstaz.com) | *Emcee*

Founder and CEO of Local First Arizona, now in its 20th year, Kimber Lanning is a champion for inclusive and resilient local economies. Under her leadership, Local First became the state's federally designated Rural Development Council, founded the Arizona Economic Recovery Center, and operates multiple programs focused on closing the wealth gap and the rural/urban divide.

**Emily Litchfield**

Governor's Office of Youth, Faith, and Family | [elitchfield@az.gov](mailto:elitchfield@az.gov) | *Rural Resource Roundup*

Emily Litchfield is AmeriCorps director at the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith, and Family. An experienced program director with a demonstrated history of working in higher education, nonprofit and government, Emily's background includes national service, mental health counseling, grant reviewing, senior services and community outreach.

**Katie McCown**

Arizona Economic Recovery Center | [katie@localfirstaz.com](mailto:katie@localfirstaz.com) | *Rural Funders Roundtable*

As senior manager of rural economic development at Local First Arizona, Katie McCown helped stand up and now runs the Arizona Economic Recovery Center, which has helped win more than \$30 million in competitive grants. Previously Katie worked for the Arizona Small Business Development Center Network and is a small business owner herself.

**Chelsea McGuire**

Water Infrastructure Finance Authority of Arizona (WIFA) | [cmcguire@azwifa.gov](mailto:cmcguire@azwifa.gov) | *Decoding Infrastructure Funding*

Chelsea McGuire oversees legislative relations, media, and other external communication, highlighting WIFA's financial investments in effective water augmentation, conservation, reuse, and quality actions. A native Arizonan raised on a farm in Pinal County, Chelsea also served as the director of government relations for the Arizona Farm Bureau.

**Jose "Angel" Medina**

Town of Miami | [jmedina@miamiaz.gov](mailto:jmedina@miamiaz.gov) | *Welcome Remarks*

Jose "Angel" Medina was sworn in as mayor of Miami in November 2022. A retiree of Freeport-McMoRan and a CTE instructor, Mayor Medina has deep roots in the Miami area. He is keeping an eye to the future that also will honor and preserve the rich history and heritage of the community and region.

**Keon Montgomery**

Arizona Department of Housing | [keon.montgomery@azhousing.gov](mailto:keon.montgomery@azhousing.gov) | *Decoding Infrastructure Funding*

Keon Montgomery is the Assistant Deputy Director of Housing and Community Development for the Arizona Department of Housing (ADOH). With over 15 years' experience, including adaptive reuse and affordable housing, he provides leadership to this division that administers funding for rental development, community revitalization, and special needs housing.

**Stephen J. Pauken**

City of Bisbee | [spauken@bisbeeaz.gov](mailto:spauken@bisbeeaz.gov) | *Rural Development, Reimagined*

Steve Pauken has extensive public administration experience, from service as an elected official to city management. In Arizona this includes serving as city manager for Winslow and Bisbee, where he returned from "retirement." This astronomer and photographer is helping to preserve historic Camp Naco, built in 1919.

**Dee Person**

The Arizona Coalition for Military Families | [dee@arizonacoalition.org](mailto:dee@arizonacoalition.org) | *Rural Resource Roundup*

A veteran who served in Iraq, now assistant director of this Coalition, Dee Person collaborates with Arizona's government in support of service members, veterans, and their families to provide professional development, community education, resources and training and to build strong networks. Dee is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy.

**Todd Pryor**

Town of Superior | [manager@superioraz.gov](mailto:manager@superioraz.gov) | *Vision Session*

Todd Pryor has served as Town Manager for Superior since 2016. Previously he was Fire Operations Chief for the Superior Fire Department, performing a variety of duties as Fire Marshal, Arson Investigator, and Code Enforcement Officer. Before entering public service, he was an Assistant Project Manager for a junior mining company.

**Ian Roark, Ph.D.**

Vice Chancellor of Workforce Development & Innovation, Pima Community College | [iroark@pima.edu](mailto:iroark@pima.edu) |

*Incubate & Accelerate Business Prosperity*

As the college's single point of contact for workforce and economic development initiatives since 2015, Dr. Ian Roark works with internal and external stakeholders to respond to the workforce needs of businesses and industry and lead the college's alignment to the economic development priorities of the region and state.

**Jenna Rowell**

Local First Arizona Foundation | [jenna@localfirstaz.com](mailto:jenna@localfirstaz.com) | *Facilitator/Emcee*

Jenna joined Local First in May 2022 to lead Rural Development. An Arizona native, Cottonwood is her hometown. Her 25 years of business experience include managing community affairs for Arizona Public Service across 11 counties, in the Copper Corridor for BHP Copper, and in rural Central and Western Texas for the energy industry.

**Christian Sawyer**

Water and Energy Expert | [cjsawyer@gmail.com](mailto:cjsawyer@gmail.com) | *Vision Session*

Christian Sawyer is a resident of rural southeastern Arizona and is active in researching and advocating for sustainable groundwater policies that protect local economies and residents. He has worked on water/energy projects in Arizona as a techno-economic researcher. He is also an active rural community organizer.

**Rebecca Serratos**

Prescott Farmers Market | [rebecca@prescottfarmersmarket.org](mailto:rebecca@prescottfarmersmarket.org) | *Grassroots Food Systems for Stronger Communities*

Rebecca is passionate about systems work and sustaining local communities. Local food is a natural connector and community benefit that she is grateful to be a part of. You can find Rebecca all around Yavapai County at local farms, markets, gardens, and wrangling her two children!

**Kathleen Smith**

Grow Arizona | [growarizona2@gmail.com](mailto:growarizona2@gmail.com) | *The Rural Workforce of the Future*

Kathleen Smith and her business partner, Linda Kor, founded Grow Arizona, a workforce development non-profit focused on youth and young adults to create networking, job placement connections, and career exploration opportunities. A Holbrook native, Kathleen founded the Holbrook Foundation, is a licensed Realtor, and is currently mayor of Holbrook.

**Lillian Upton Smith, Ph.D.**

Dean, NAU College of Health and Human Services | [Lillian.Smith@nau.edu](mailto:Lillian.Smith@nau.edu) | *The Voice of Rural Arizona on Needs & Priorities*

In her role as dean, Dr. Smith builds programs and partnerships through engagement, authentic assessment, improvement planning, and workforce development. She has held a variety of leadership roles in the schools of public health at Boise State University, University of South Carolina, and West Virginia University.

**Eric Vondy**

State Historic Preservation Office, Arizona State Parks & Trails | *Rural Funders Roundtable*

Eric Vondy joined the State Historic Preservation Office in 2005 and runs the State Property Tax Program for Non-Income Producing Properties, State Property Tax Program for Income Producing Properties, Certified Local Government Program, and co-runs the Federal Historic Tax Credit program. He also is a national and international award-winning photographer.

**Andre T. Whittington**

Growth Partners Arizona | [andre@growthpartnersaz.org](mailto:andre@growthpartnersaz.org) | *Vision Session*

An award-winning executive, organizational strategist, and entrepreneur, Andre Whittington has assisted his clients in experiencing over \$3 million in revenue growth and supported small to mid-size companies in scaling their business. In 2022, he partnered with Isom Global Strategies to serve as Small Business Coach with the SBA in Phoenix and Albuquerque.

**Thea Wilshire, Ph.D.**

I ART Globe | [drtheaw@yahoo.com](mailto:drtheaw@yahoo.com) | *Vision Session*

Dr. Thea Wilshire is executive director of I ART Globe and chairs the City of Globe's Arts Advisory Commission. In addition to her community service and leadership, she works as an author, psychologist, consultant and trainer. Through her passion for social infrastructure, civic engagement and community development she has helped develop multiple public spaces.

**Una Wirkebau**

City of Winslow | [una@whynotwinslow.com](mailto:una@whynotwinslow.com) | *Rural Development, Reimagined*

Una Wirkebau is economic development director for the City of Winslow. The Arizona Association for Economic Development named Una the 2023 Economic Developer of the Year for a Small Community for her contributions to several major and successful initiatives, including the 2022 Rural Policy Forum that was held in Winslow.

**Russ Yelton**

White Mountain Economic Development | [russ@yeltonandassociates.com](mailto:russ@yeltonandassociates.com) | *Incubate & Accelerate Business Prosperity*

Russ Yelton is Executive Director of White Mountain Economic Development, a 501c3, and president/CEO of Yelton and Associates, LLC, which provides community development services to municipalities and businesses. His experience includes leading the Northern Arizona Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology (NACET) and scaling projects and companies to attract venture capital and other investments.

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