

Rural Policy SUMMIT



Economic Transition Summit Speakers



Rick Vilelo

Rick first joined the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) in March of 2015 as the Executive Director of the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services. He was appointed as Deputy Secretary for Community Affairs and Development in February 2017. As Deputy Secretary, Rick oversees the work of the entire deputation including: the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services; the Center for Community Enhancement; the Center for Community and Housing Development; and the Center for Community Services. Before he joined DCED, Rick served four terms as Mayor of Lock Haven and was previously President of the Pennsylvania Municipal League.



Dr. Kyle Kopko

Kyle is the director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. Before he joined the Center, Kyle served as Associate Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, and Planning, and Associate Professor of Political Science at Elizabethtown College. He earned his Ph.D. in political science from The Ohio State University in 2010, with a concentration in public law and judicial politics.



Nathaniel Borek

Nathaniel is an Outreach and Administrative Associate with the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia in the Community Development and Regional Outreach Department. In this role, he leads engagement with rural stakeholders and has developed programming highlighting revitalization resources for workforce transitions, capital and investments, and tourism and small businesses. Prior to joining the Bank, Nathaniel was a communications and development analyst at the Indianapolis Art Center, a community-based arts nonprofit. He has a master’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania, for which his capstone studies focused on the role of trauma-informed services for community engagement and revitalization. He also has a bachelor’s degree in Economics with a minor in Philosophy from Butler University and an associate degree in Photography from Antonelli Institute.



Ta Enos

Ta Enos is Founder and CEO of the PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, a regional nonprofit dedicated to marrying conservation and economic development to strengthen and inspire communities in the PA Wilds. Ta has a rural entrepreneurship background and 20 years of experience in journalism and public communications in Alaska and Pennsylvania. As CEO of the PA Wilds Center, Ta has scaled the nonprofit to \$1M in operations in less than five years and built a team that is developing models for asset-based rural development that are recognized nationally. Prior to founding the nonprofit in 2013, Ta served as the PA Wilds Small Business Ombudsman for five years, working with entrepreneurs across the 13-county PA Wilds region. Prior to moving home to rural PA, Ta spent 10 years as a news reporter and editor in Alaska. Ta has a bachelor's degree in Journalism and Public Communications from the University of Alaska Anchorage.



Jen Giovannitti

Jen Giovannitti is the President and a Trustee of the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, a private family foundation founded in 1944. The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation is a regional philanthropy organization focusing on West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania. Prior to joining the foundation, Jen led community-based initiatives for seven years at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, working regionally and nationally on issues facing low-income communities and advancing strategies for community investment. She formed the West Virginia Loan Fund Collaborative in 2012 to better understand the impact of small business lending in underserved communities. She has authored a variety of reports, publications, and opinion essays, and has applied her expertise broadly in rural development strategies. Jen has an M.A. in Community and Regional Planning from the University of British Columbia, and a B.A. in Planning and Urban Studies from the University of Pittsburgh.



Rachel Hauser

Rachel is the Director of Regulatory Affairs and Economic Development for Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative. Rachel began her career in the U.S. House of Representatives as an aide to Congressman Thaddeus McCotter (MI) and Congressman Glenn Thompson (PA). Following her time in Washington, DC, Hauser began managing and overseeing economic development projects in the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania for Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC). At Tri-County REC, Rachel manages the regulatory reporting needs for both the Cooperative and Tri-Co Connections, the broadband subsidiary that the Cooperative created to deploy a fiber optic network. Rachel has a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Cedarville University and is an internationally Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) through the International Economic Development Council (IEDC).



David Kahley

David is the Co-founder and President & CEO of The Progress Fund, a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) with assets of \$55 Million. The Progress Fund was incorporated in 1997 and serves western and northern Pennsylvania, northern West Virginia, and western Maryland. It is headquartered in Greensburg, PA. In 2007, The Progress Fund helped develop the concept of Trail Towns and then launched the Trail Town Program®, which was the first economic development program in the nation to capture the potential of rail-trail based recreation. In 2010, The Progress Fund established a Real Estate Development initiative that purchases and rehabilitates key commercial and residential properties to spur neighboring development in Trail Towns. The strategy and investments made in West Newton, PA were recognized by a “Placemaking Award for Excellence” from the Urban Land Institute in Pittsburgh in 2015.



Theresa Y. Singleton

Theresa Y. Singleton is senior vice president of the Community Development and Regional Outreach Department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia and the Bank’s community affairs officer. Theresa is responsible for overseeing research and outreach initiatives that promote community development and fair and impartial access to credit. She has guided the creation and implementation of the Economic Growth & Mobility Project. Theresa also oversees the Bank’s Financial Institutions Relations efforts that serve to connect the Reserve Bank with lending institutions across the Third District. Before joining the bank, Theresa was the director of research and information at the Housing Assistance Council in Washington, D.C., and taught undergraduate courses on the American political system at Temple University and Widener University. She has a Ph.D., an M.A., and a B.A. in political science from Temple University.