



## Lieutenant Governor's Conference on Small Business Development October 26-27, 2021

### WI Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes:



Mandela Barnes serves as Wisconsin's 45th Lieutenant Governor. He was elected on November 8, 2018. He is the first African-American to serve as a Lieutenant Governor in Wisconsin, and the second African-American to ever hold statewide office.

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Lt. Gov. Barnes is the son of a public-school teacher and a United Auto Workers member, to whom he credits much of his success. He grew up attending Milwaukee Public Schools and graduated from John Marshall High School in 2003.

Lt. Gov. Barnes is an alumnus of Alabama A&M University. After his time there, he worked for various political campaigns and in the city of Milwaukee mayor's office, eventually becoming an organizer for Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope, a Milwaukee-based interfaith coalition that advocates social justice. He also worked for the State Innovation Exchange, a national progressive public policy organization.

In 2012, at the age of 25, Lt. Gov. Barnes was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly, where he served two terms. His tenure in the State Assembly included serving as Chair of the Legislature's Black and Latino Caucus and becoming a recognized leader on progressive economic policies and gun violence prevention legislation.

Within his current role, Lt. Gov. Barnes uses a platform of sustainability and equity to fight for solutions that invest in opportunities and fairness for every child, person, and family in Wisconsin, regardless of ZIP code.

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### WEDC Secretary and CEO Melissa Hughes:



Melissa 'Missy' Hughes is a secretary and CEO of WEDC, Wisconsin's lead economic development organizations. Before joining WEDC in October 2019, she was a general counsel and chief mission officer and Organic Valley.

Her previous positions include associate attorney at the firm of Holland & Hart, where she practiced in the area of natural resources, constructions litigations and corporate business transaction. She

served on the boards of the Environmental Working Group and the Organic Trade Association, where she served three-term board president.

The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture appointed Hughes to the USDA Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Biotechnology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Hughes received her Bachelor of Arts in political science from Georgetown University and juris doctor degree from the University of Wyoming College of Law.

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### **WEDC Deputy Secretary and COO Sam Ridders:**



Sam Ridders is deputy secretary and chief operating officer for WEDC. Prior to joining WEDC in November 2019, he served as strategic economic initiatives directors at the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Sam has an extensive background in rural development, both in the U.S. and internationally. He served in the White House from 2013 to 2014 as director on the energy and environment team in the Presidential Personnel Office, then was administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Business-Cooperative Service. Before returning to Wisconsin in 2017, he launched and led the Rural Opportunity Initiative of the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business. In Wisconsin, he served as executive director of Tiny Earth, a global initiative based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, harnessing the research of undergraduate students to discover new antibiotics. A native of Stoughton, Ridders holds a juris doctor degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School, a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University, and a bachelor's degree in political science and philosophy from Macalester College. He also served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia.

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### **Vice President, Business & Community Development Mary Gage:**



Mary Gage is vice president of business and community development for WEDC. She assumed this role in July 2019. She worked with WEDC and previously with the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, since 1996, in roles including economic development consultant, senior loan officer, director of business finance and compliance, regional account manager and senior development director. Most recently, as senior development director with WEDC, Mary managed a team of seven regional economic development who are responsible for the delivery of WEDC programs to partners, businesses, and municipalities.

Mary holds a bachelor of science degree in economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a masters of business administration degree from DePaul University. She is a member of the Mid-America Economic Development Council and the Wisconsin Economic Development

Association. She holds certifications for the International Economic Development Council (Certified Economic Developer), the National Development Council (Economic Development Finance Professional), Oklahoma University Economic Development Institute (Certification of Completion) and the Wisconsin Enterprise Management Development Academy (Completed One-Year Leadership Program).

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## U.S. Bank Senior VP of Consumer and Business Banking Nina Johnson:



Nina V. A. Johnson joined the bank in April 2019 as the Senior Vice President of Consumer and Business Banking for the state of Wisconsin. As a new leader in the state, she has been charged with building centrality, maximizing a digital banking platform and building synergies whenever the opportunity arises. Though her primary focus is on the Milwaukee/Madison market, her team supports areas surrounding this footprint. Nina has worked in the banking industry for more than 35 years and has held several leadership roles in her tenure. She has an M.B.A. in Global Business Management and Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management.

Prior to joining US Bank, Nina served as the Community Affairs and Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Officer for a decade; where she was responsible for overseeing all aspects of the bank's CRA regulatory platform, including the development and support of low-and-moderate income (LMI) relationships within Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Georgia and Minnesota. The shift to a regulatory position was not on her radar in 2007; However, it was a timely decision because her consumer banking experience would prove to be a positive asset within CRA.

As a community-minded professional, she has served on more than a forty nonprofit boards, committees and consortiums, including Froedtert Hospital Board, SecureFutures Advisory Board, ACTS Housing Advisory Council, The Salvation Army, UWM Graduate School Cabinet, Children's Hospital Anti-Bullying Advisory Council, M.A.T.C. "Promise" Cabinet, Dominion Bible College Trustee, and the YWCA Southeast Wisconsin Board. Nina served on a handful of national committees that supported the growth and modernization of the CRA, which included an American Bankers Association (ABA) collaborative white paper on the "Modernization of the CRA", submitted to the United States Treasury on December 6, 2017. She is a member of Professional Dimensions and Milwaukee Women Inc.

Nina is a wife and mother of two sons, 19 and 13. She is the daughter of a phenomenal woman whom she calls "Mom"; the cornerstone of her family and a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Marian University class of 2016. Nina's favorite past-time is going to the movies, creating recipes and writing. Her guilty pleasure is eating a good slice of cake (cupcakes included). Nina admires servant leaders and those who lead by example. Her favorite slogan is "Don't Ever Give Up!"

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## Source Ten Creative Founder, Content Director and Producer Sandra Dempsey:



Sandra Dempsey is native of Mexico who has lived in the U.S. for over 19 years. Sandra has a background in broadcasting and marketing and has worked for ESPN Deportes and Telemundo. In 2018 Sandra co-founded Estamos Unidos US; a bilingual Spanish-English multi-platform production created to share activities and experiences in Milwaukee and surrounding areas as well as health and wellness advice to Latinos. With more than 30 published vlogs and 100 talk shows, she uses her expertise in the Hispanic market to connect communities and enrich people's lives. Sandra's latest project and venture is

SourceTEN, a company specializing in consulting in content creation, video production, and marketing strategy.

Sandra currently serves as a board member for La Casa de Esperanza, Catholic Financial Life, and Milwaukee Ballet. Sandra has a Bachelor's degree in Law at Universidad Autónoma de Queretaro, where she graduated with Honors. In 2021, she was selected by Milwaukee Business Journal to receive the "Diversity in Business Award" - Micro Company Category for her contributions to increasing the participation of the Hispanic Community in Milwaukee.

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## Ronald Spoerl:



Native American Ron Spoerl, owner of Hawk Construction, is a Federally-Registered Tribal member of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. Hawk Construction is represented in the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin and is involved in creating growth and job opportunities across the Midwest.

Through his organizations Ron has also served many charitable organizations, raising and matching thousands of dollars for the local communities and throughout the Midwest.

Along with his Leadership and Management capabilities his experience includes Sales and Marketing, Wholesale and Retail Distribution, Supplier/Vendor Initiatives, Strategic Planning, Public Speaking, Finance and Accounting, and Project management.

His experience has led him into major projects that would include customers such as Kinder Morgan, Trans Canada, We Energies, Alliant Energy, FPL – Nuclear Power Plant, many Municipalities, Federal and State work and so much more.

Ron carries many years of experience managing people. His Leadership and diversified business experience have created many opportunities not only for himself, but also for others.