



Montana Rural Impact Forum

Federal programs, partnerships, and pathways for thriving rural communities.

September 9-10, 2026
University of Providence, University Center
1301 20th St South, Great Falls, Montana

WELCOME TO GREAT FALLS

Thank you for joining us today in Great Falls. We appreciate the presence of leaders from state, county, municipal, and community organizations, along with our hosts from the Great Falls Development Alliance and USDA Rural Development.

The purpose of this forum is to bring key partners together to discuss actionable strategies and reinforce the efforts that support Montana's communities. Today's discussions provide an opportunity to align priorities, share insights, and identify pathways to advance the projects shaping your communities. We look forward to a productive day that helps drive meaningful impact across rural Montana.

Sincerely,

Tash Wisemiller

USDA Rural Development | Montana State Office

Tash.Wisemiller@usda.gov



Day 1

Presentations, resource fair, success stories, reception, and Station District tour.

Day 2

Local project tours focused on housing, downtown redevelopment, and meat processing.

Use this booklet: Mark program fit, capture contacts, and convert conversations into follow-up actions.



LOR

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DAY 1 - WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

8:30 AM

Registration

9:00-9:15 AM

Masters of Ceremonies

Bill Warden, Montana State Director, USDA Rural Development
Jolene Schalper, Executive Vice President, Great Falls Development Alliance

Presenting the Colors: Malmstrom Color Guard
National Anthem: Jolene Schalper, GFDA

9:15-9:30 AM

Welcome & Acknowledgements

Bill Warden, USDA Rural Development
Joe Briggs, Cascade County Commissioner, District 1

9:30-11:45 AM

Morning Presentations

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Robert Hosford, Director of State Operations, USDA Rural Development

Gayle Barry, State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Mike Foster, Executive Director, USDA Farm Service Agency

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Clay Ward, Office of Rural Engagement

U.S. Economic Development Administration

Aaron Pratt, Economic Development Representative

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

Tim Geitner, Regional Administrator

U.S. Small Business Administration

Brent Donnelly, Montana District Director

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Victoria Seaman, Regional Director

Working with Rural Philanthropy

Dr. Jim Barham, Acting Chief Innovation Officer, USDA

Montana Department of Agriculture

Jillien Streit, Director

Montana Department of Commerce

Cheryl Cohen, Housing Division Administrator,
MBOH Executive Director

11:45 AM-Noon

Questions & Answers

An opportunity for clarification or elaboration from our morning speakers.

Noon-1:00 PM

Networking Lunch

Enjoy lunch and connect with funding partners from across agencies.

1:00-4:00 PM

Resource Fair

Continued conversations and connections with funding partners at resource fair booths.



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1:00-1:30 PM

Local Leadership and Capacity in the Rural Mountain West

Gary Wilmot, Executive Director, LOR Foundation

Bill Jaeger, Strategic Initiatives Officer, LOR Foundation

People in rural communities have ideas about how to improve quality of life, but too often face barriers to turning those ideas into projects. The LOR Foundation will share insights from our work throughout the rural Mountain West and from recent research with Gallup about how communities can unlock local leadership and increase the capacity to take on community projects.

1:30-2:00 PM

Rural Health Transformation Program

Victoria Seaman, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Ed Buttrey, Montana Hospital Association

Kailyn Mock, MT Area Health Ed Center & Office of Rural Health

2:00-2:15 PM

Kody Brinton, Daniels Memorial Healthcare Center

BREAK

With federal rural health care services and infrastructure funding having the potential to exceed \$1 billion in Montana over the next five years, how can the funding best be utilized to address needs in communities across the state?

2:15-2:45 PM

Meat Processing

Reece Lodder, Friesla

Lad R. Barney, USDA Rural Development

Chris Roper, Flower Hill Institute

Drew Hicks, Central Avenue Meats

Joel McCafferty, Missouri River Meats

Innovative local meat processing that supports producers, farm-to-table initiatives, and mobile processing.

2:45-3:15 PM

Opportunity Zones 2.0

Tim Geitner, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Big Sky Select Properties

As states certify a second round of Opportunity Zone census tracts in 2026, recent changes make these tax incentives permanent and more workable to supporting rural projects. Hear high level details about OZ 2.0 before learning from an on-the-ground expert who used opportunity zone funding to support The Station District and Lofts success story right here in Great Falls.

3:15-3:30 PM

BREAK

3:30-4:30 PM

Success Stories

Self Help Housing Program: USDA

Cheyenne Osmundsen, USDA Rural Development

Jenel Figarelle, Neighborworks Great Falls

Baatz Block Apartments: Neighborworks Great Falls, Homeward,

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Montana

Department of Commerce, Great Falls Development Alliance

Jenel Figarelle, Neighborworks Great Falls

Casey Pecina, Neighborworks Great Falls

Montana Department of Agriculture

The Station District and Lofts: Big Sky Select Properties

5:00-6:30 PM

Networking Reception & The Station District and Lofts Tour

Join presenters and attendees at The Station District for hors d'oeuvres, a beverage of your choice and continued conversations about the projects and possibilities in your communities. Hear about how The Station District and Lofts development utilized Opportunity Zone tax incentives to invest \$16.4 million in downtown Great Falls, restore the historic Milwaukee Railway Depot, create a vibrant retail and dining complex, and 121 luxury residential units overlooking the Missouri River.



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DAY 2 - THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Local Project Tours

8:45-9:30 AM **Tour 1: USDA Rural Development** Self Help Housing Program

Location: 2303 Discovery Court, Great Falls
Key partners: USDA Rural Development, NeighborWorks Great Falls

9:45-10:30 AM **Tour 2: Baatz Block Apartments** Permanent Supportive Housing

Location: 400 2nd Ave S, Great Falls.
Key partners: NeighborWorks Great Falls, Homeword, Montana Department of Commerce, HUD, Great Falls Development Authority.

10:45-11:45 AM **Tour 3: Central Avenue Meats and Missouri River Meats** Downtown Butcher Shop & Meat Processing Facility

Location 1: 422 Central Ave, Great Falls.
Location 2: 2400 9th Ave N, Great Falls.





USDA Montana Rural Development

USDA Rural Development invests in rural America with loan, grant, and loan guarantee programs because we understand a strong community is rooted in its people. The commitment and resources we bring to rural communities helps drive economic security and prosperity. Our programs expand access to high-speed internet, electric, and transportation infrastructure, and support business growth, healthcare, education, housing, and other community essentials.

THE STATISTICS:

Since 2016, USDA Rural Development has invested

**\$2.1
billion**

to support Montana's rural businesses, agricultural producers, infrastructure, disaster recovery and resiliency, homeowners, utilities, and more.

We've funded

**9,400
projects**

in Montana.

Connect with the USDA Rural Development team
serving rural Montana at www.rd.usda.gov/mt



USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Solving a water crisis in rural Montana

In 2019, the rural Montana communities of Worden and Ballantine faced a sudden water crisis when elevated nitrate and nitrite levels forced residents, schools, and businesses to rely entirely on bottled water for daily needs.

With USDA Rural Development funding, the local water district undertook major system upgrades, including four new wells, treatment equipment, and distribution improvements, to restore safe drinking water. Throughout the multi year effort, community members worked together to protect residents while strengthening local connections in the process. With the new system completed in 2026, the communities can look forward to clean, reliable water for generations to come.



Supporting Montana's potato farmers

Bausch Potato Inc., a century old family farm in Whitehall, Montana, is sustained by Mark and Megan Bausch's commitment to continuing their agricultural legacy.

With help from a 2024 USDA Value Added Producer Grant, the small operation injected new support into its distribution and operations. The family continues to provide locally loved potato products, especially their on site processed hashbrowns and fries, and continue to contribute to the character and health of the local community.



Entrepreneurship GROWS HERE



TALK TO OUR TEAM ABOUT
BRINGING YOUR VISION TO LIFE
IN GREAT FALLS, MONTANA



Great Falls
DEVELOPMENT
ALLIANCE
MONTANA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CDFI

Start your business in Great Falls

- ✓ RESOURCES FOR ENTREPRENEURS
- ✓ ACCESS TO CAPITAL & FINANCING TOOLS
- ✓ SITE SELECTION SUPPORT
- ✓ 1:1 BUSINESS ADVISING
- ✓ MARKET DATA



Jolene Schalper, CECd,
EDFP, EDP

Executive Vice President

JSchalper@GrowGreatFalls.org
[+1 406-750-4481](tel:14067504481)

Proud to Host our Regional Centers:



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We Help Montana Businesses Grow.

High Plains
FINANCIAL
MONTANA
SBA 504 LENDER

THE PLAY 'N' LEARN SUCCESS STORY

What began as an in-home daycare for 12 children has grown into one of Northcentral Montana's premier childcare facilities, serving more than 170 children and employing nearly 30 people.

With support from Great Falls Development Alliance (GFDA), owner Raegan Breeden expanded Play 'N' Learn into a state-of-the-art Level 4 childcare center.



GFDA PROVIDED THE TOOLS TO GROW:



SBA 504
Financing



Small Business
Development Center
Coaching



Brownfields
Redevelopment
Assistance

“

Great Falls Development Alliance has been and continues to be a valuable partner. From business coaching and business loans to cleanup and redevelopment, I turn to GFDA at every step of the way.”

”

— Raegan Breeden
Owner, Play 'N' Learn



GFDA and our lending partner, High Plains Financial, provided SBA 504 financing with a low, fixed interest rate and only 10% down to fund a \$2.2 million expansion.



The Small Business Development Center helped with financial feasibility, business planning and loan packaging to secure the financing.



When environmental challenges threatened delays, GFDA's Brownfields Program helped secure approximately \$30,000 in grant funding for environmental assessments, keeping the project moving forward.



Today, Play 'N' Learn is recognized by Montana DPHHS' STARS Program as one of only two Level 4 childcare facilities in Northcentral Montana.



**LET'S GROW
YOUR BUSINESS.**
Contact Jill Today!

JILL KOHLES
Vice President of Lending
JKohles@GrowGreatFalls.org
(406) 590-1056

WHY PARTNER WITH GFDA & HIGH PLAINS FINANCIAL?

- ✓ Montana-based SBA 504 lender
- ✓ Experienced business financing team
- ✓ Flexible, long-term fixed-rate financing
- ✓ Business advising and project support
- ✓ Proven track record helping Montana businesses grow

Great Falls Development Authority, Inc.
High Plains Financial, Inc.

Equal Opportunity Employer, Lender &
Provider

Great Falls
DEVELOPMENT
ALLIANCE
MONTANA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP



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Forum Speakers



Bill Warden

Montana State Director, USDA Rural Development

Bill Warden is a Director with USDA Rural Development in Montana, leading efforts to strengthen housing, infrastructure, and business in communities across the state. A Livingston native, Bill served in the U.S. Army, graduated from Montana State University, operated a multi-state audio/video retail chain, and served in the Montana House of Representatives.

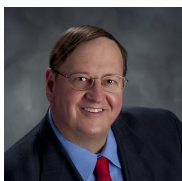
He is known for his practical leadership and strong commitment to rural Montana.



Jolene Schalper

Executive Vice President, Great Falls Development Alliance

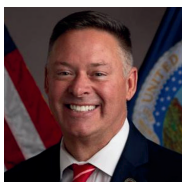
When the opportunity arose to step up from direct service individual and family wealth and asset building to community and regional economic development, Schalper took it and has been with Great Falls Development Authority for nine years. She has previously served on the IEDC Membership Committee and currently serves on the IEDC Accredited Economic Development Organization (AEDO) Committee. She was elected to the IEDC Board of Directors in 2024 for a term to begin January 2025. Schalper also served on the State of Montana on the State Workforce Innovation Board (SWIB).



Joe Briggs

Cascade County Commissioner, District 1 Cascade County

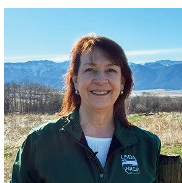
County Commissioner Joe Briggs is a native of Cascade County and has served as a County Commissioner since January of 2005. Prior to his election he had a varied professional management career that included positions such as Assistant Fleet Maintenance Supervisor for a multinational Trucking Company, Director of Information services for a company that operated a range of business including vehicle dealerships, alcohol and food distribution, travel agencies and trucking companies. In his role as a County Commissioner, he has focused his efforts on economic development and the preservation of Malmstrom AFB. He has remained active on the Military Affairs Committee and is a Past Chairman; he is a founding member and Director of the Central Montana Defense Coalition, Past President of the regional multi county Economic development organization, Past Chairman of Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce Board and an Executive Committee member of Great Falls Development.



Robert Hosford

Director of State Operations, USDA Rural Development

Robert Hosford serves as Director of State Operations for Rural Development. Hosford most recently served as USDA Rural Development State Director for North Carolina, a position he also held during President Trump's first term. He previously served as Chief of Staff for the USDA Farm Service Agency from 2003 through 2009 and worked for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Hosford earned a B.S. from Mississippi State University in 1996.



Gayle Barry

Acting State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Gayle brings a lifelong passion for conservation and the farmers, ranchers, foresters, and tribal nations that care for the land, rooted in her family's small grain and cattle ranch in Belgrade, Montana. She has successfully worked with local and state level stakeholders on some of the agency's toughest conservation challenges including Pacific Northwest Salmon Habitat recovery with the Governor's office in Oregon, Chesapeake Bay Water Quality improvements, grassland conservation, strengthening and co-authoring the agency's Tribal Relations Strategy, and creating an NRCS of the Future to incubate innovation in conservation.



Mike Foster

State Executive Director, USDA Farm Service Agency, Montana

Mike Foster was appointed by the Trump Administration to serve as the State Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Montana in May 2025. This is his second time to hold this position as Foster was appointed in 2018 to serve as the SED of the FSA in Montana during the first Trump Administration. His leadership has ensured that agriculture producers have had access to the many FSA programs. He has worked diligently to ensure those programs have been delivered efficiently across the state.



David "Clay" Ward

Rural Desk Officer, VA Office of Rural Engagement

David "Clay" Ward serves as the Rural Desk Officer for VA's Office of Rural Engagement (ORE), an office within the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. As the Rural Desk Officer, Clay leads the VA in collaboration with the White House Domestic Policy Council, Rural Partners Network (RPN) and the Rural Prosperity Inter-Agency Policy Council. Through the RPN, Federal agencies are renewing their commitment to rural communities by providing targeted staffing, tools, and resources. For VA, the ORE engages with internal and external stakeholders to deliver outreach, communications, and coordination with rural communities so that Veterans can more easily access the health care, benefits, and other resources they have earned.



Aaron Pratt

Economic Development Rep., U.S. Economic Development Administration

Aaron Pratt serves as the Economic Development Representative for the US Economic Development Administration (EDA). He has worked in economic development as the Business Development Manager at the Governor's Office of Economic Development, and at the Montana Department of Commerce for the Office of Trade & International Relations and Montana Coal Board. Prior to moving to Helena, Aaron worked in Portland, Oregon and in London for commercial real estate and sustainable building organizations. Aaron grew up in Helena, and attended UM for his Finance degree and MBA.



Tim Geitner

Regional Administrator, Region VIII, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Tim Geitner is the Regional Administrator for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for Region VIII, overseeing operations in Colorado, Utah, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. A U.S. Army veteran and current Army Reservist, Tim previously served in the Colorado House of Representatives, including as Assistant Minority Leader, before working in the nonprofit sector in various roles including Daniels Fund. He is committed to streamlining HUD programs, reducing regulatory barriers, and delivering results that promote dignity and self-sufficiency. Having overcome being homeless himself as a 10-year-old, Tim brings personal perspective and passion to his work. He lives in Colorado with his wife, Carrie, and their two sons.



Brent Donnelly

Montana District Director, U.S. Small Business Administration

Brent Donnelly accepted the role of SBA Montana District Director in March 2020 after joining the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) in August 2018 as the Deputy in Montana. Mr. Donnelly brings an extensive background in economic development and small business ownership, which adds valuable perspective when considering and understanding the needs of small businesses in Big Sky Country. Developing well-established relationships with state, local and federal economic development organizations, lending institutions, partners and stakeholders are Donnelly's cornerstones to excel in delivering assistance within program guidelines and create thriving programs that maximize the benefits to the communities they serve.



Victoria Seaman

Regional Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

As Regional Director, Victoria serves as the Secretary's primary representative in Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, as well as the region's federally recognized tribes. She brings a strong commitment to public service and aims to streamline processes for state, local, tribal, and private-sector partners. Prior to being Regional Director, Victoria served as a Councilwoman in Las Vegas, recognized for her leadership in public service and business, particularly in policy development and fiscal responsibility.



Dr. Jim Barham

Acting CIO & CDO, USDA Rural Development Innovation Center

Dr. Jim Barham has been part of the USDA family since 2007 and currently serves as the Acting Chief Innovation Officer in USDA Rural Development's Innovation Center – an office devoted to developing innovative products, policies and practices to empower rural community transformation. Jim also serves as the Chief Data Officer for USDA Rural Development (RD). In this capacity, he leads a team of data scientists committed to harnessing the power of data to enhance evidence-based decision-making, as well as implementing RD's data governance strategy.



Jillien Streit

Director, Montana Department of Agriculture

A native of Chester, Jillien and her husband operate a 5th generation family farm. She understands the challenges and opportunities producers face as she advocates for valuable markets and promotes Montana's high-quality ag products domestically and abroad. In 2014, Jillien and partners founded Stricks Ag, a merchandiser of high-quality, high-demand grains that went public in 2024. Prior to joining the department, she worked as the financial controller for Flat Acres Farm in Chester while being involved in the daily operations where her family rotates up to 18 different crops along with the recent integration of cattle and sheep. She has been a long-time advocate of agriculture while raising three children on the family farm with her husband.



Cheryl Cohen

Housing Division Administrator, MBOH Executive Director

Cheryl Cohen, Montana Department of Commerce Housing Division Administrator and Executive Director of the administratively attached Montana Board of Housing, joined Commerce and the Board in October 2018 as Operations Manager before moving into her current roles in May 2020. Ms. Cohen previously served over 8 years as Community Development Specialist and Senior Community Development Specialist with the City of Seattle Office of Housing. She has over 18 years of affordable housing compliance, property/asset management, and operations experience in the public and non-profit sectors. Ms. Cohen is certified in low-income housing tax credit compliance and is a Certified Specialist in HUD Occupancy. She has a B.A. In Political Science from the University of Washington.



Gary Wilmot

Executive Director, LOR Foundation

Equal parts adventurer and seasoned business leader, Gary Wilmot brings direct experience and a true affinity for rural communities to his role as executive director at the LOR Foundation. Gary aims to accelerate promising solutions from the region and ensure the rural voices from the Mountain West influence a national dialogue. LOR occupies a unique place in the philanthropic space, both because of its focus on improving quality of life in rural places and because of its belief that local people can—and should—be the engines behind solutions in their towns. LOR believes strongly that philanthropy should be accessible to everyday people and that the foundation's role in the communities where it works is simply to provide the support people need to bring their ideas to life. Gary was drawn to this listen-first approach and LOR's commitment to authentic, community-driven work.



Bill Jaeger

Strategic Initiatives Officer, LOR Foundation

From the classroom to state capitol buildings, Bill has spent his career connecting communities with opportunities for growth and supporting their success. As a former high school social studies teacher and administrator, a researcher, and a public policy advocate, Bill knows the value of listening when it comes to making change. At the foundation, Bill works to connect rural communities in the Mountain West with funding and other resources that can help improve quality of life throughout the region. Bill has been fortunate to spend time in communities throughout the Mountain West and work with local leaders on many initiatives to improve community well-being. LOR's commitment to listening and thinking broadly about how to support quality of life drew Bill to join the foundation.

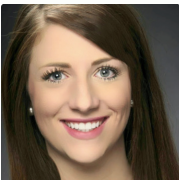


Ed Buttrey

President & CEO, Montana Hospital Association

Ed Buttrey is the President and CEO of the Montana Hospital Association and a longtime Montana legislator. A fourth-generation Montanan from Great Falls, he has served in both the Montana Senate and Montana House of Representatives since first being elected to the Legislature in 2010.

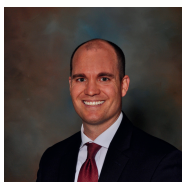
Buttrey's legislative work has had a major impact on Montana healthcare. He sponsored the 2015 HELP Act that created Medicaid expansion for low-income adults in Montana, helped reform and extend the program in 2019, and carried the 2025 bill that removed the sunset from the legislation. Buttrey's work in the program has been credited with helping stabilize hospitals, reducing uncompensated care, and supporting the viability of rural facilities across the state.



Kailyn Mock

Director, Montana Area Health Education Center and Office of Rural Health

Ms. Kailyn Mock serves as the Director of the Montana Office of Rural Health and Area Health Education Center (MORH/AHEC) at Montana State University, where she is dedicated to advancing rural health and healthcare workforce development across Montana. In her role, Ms. Mock leads and collaborates on initiatives to expand access to healthcare, develops academic and practice partnerships to strengthen interprofessional education and care teams, and oversees the delivery of education through various modalities, including online training. An MSU Alumna and National Rural Health Association Fellow, Kailyn brings local roots and national perspective to overseeing major state and federal grants to support Montana communities.

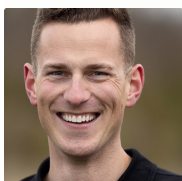


Kody Brinton

CEO, Daniels Memorial Healthcare Center

Kody Brinton is the Chief Executive Officer of Daniels Memorial Healthcare Center, a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital and Rural Health Clinic serving northeast Montana. With nearly two decades of healthcare experience, he is passionate about strengthening rural healthcare and ensuring sustainable access to high-quality care in underserved communities.

Since becoming CEO in 2021, Kody has led the hospital through significant organizational transformation, restoring financial stability, expanding local healthcare services, strengthening quality performance, and reducing reliance on contract labor. He partnered with USDA Rural Development, community leaders, architects, and the hospital board to secure financing and advance a \$35.3 million replacement hospital project that will help ensure long-term healthcare access for the region. Under his leadership, the hospital has earned multiple Montana Hospital Association quality awards and the 2025 Chartis Performance Leadership Award for Excellence in Quality and Outcomes.



Reece Lodder

Head of Sales & Marketing, Friesla

After serving in the Marine Corps, Reece Lodder teamed with his Dad, Bob Lodder, to launch Friesla. Founded on the conviction that independent operators needed more flexible, efficient, and easily expandable processing plant options, Friesla developed two platforms: USDA-compliant Mobile Harvest Units and Modular Meat Processing Systems. But equipment alone wasn't enough. Another challenge new processors faced was navigating the path from idea to operations. Friesla addressed this by pairing each System with an ecosystem of services: from plant design through installation, USDA regulatory compliance, startup support, training, and expansion. Friesla's team is proud to steward a mission as American as independence: restoring local meat processing.



Lad R. Barney

Montana Business & Cooperative Programs Director, USDA Rural Development

Lad Barney currently serves as the Montana Business & Cooperative Programs Director for USDA Rural Development. Prior, he served as Area Director for RD Missoula & Kalispell offices since August 2008. Lad has also worked as the Director of the SBDC at the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce for five years.

Firmly believing that not a single dollar of USDA's Business programs cannot be delivered successfully without a partner's assistance or advocacy, Lad prioritizes USDA resources to growing that capacity, with existing partners and new. Lad is committed to continuing the good momentum of program delivery positioning staff, financial and other resources to being flexible to respond to changes that exist within federal programs, state resources and the business community on a daily basis.



Chris Roper

**Regional Director of Regional Technical Assistance Coordination
Flower Hill Institute**

Chris Roper is a Regional Director of Regional Technical Assistance Coordination for the Flower Hill Institute, an indigenous-led nonprofit organization coordinating the technical assistance network USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service established in 2022 to support producers seeking to create a more resilient, diversified, and equitable meat and poultry processing system in the United States. Prior to joining the Flowerhill Team, Chris had spent over 15 years working with Native American Tribes developing projects and leading teams in economic development, construction management, agricultural development, and food security.



Drew Hicks

Owner, Central Avenue Meats

Born and raised in Geraldine, MT, Drew's professional career has taken him to Denver, Colorado Springs, and even New York City, before returning back to Central Montana to establish Central Avenue Meats, a craft butcher shop in downtown Great Falls. Having gathered experience within the meat industry with national organizations such as Whole Foods, Fleisher's, Cowboy Star, and Callicrate Beef, Drew is focused on providing Great Falls and the surrounding community with premium quality meat products, sourced from local ranchers.



Joel McCafferty

Missouri River Meats

Joel McCafferty is a third generation Montana rancher and owner of McCafferty Ranch near Belt, Montana, where his family has raised cattle since 1926. He is recognized for advancing innovative ranching practices through the use of hydroponic sprout feeding technology and a direct to consumer business model. Joel recently partnered with Drew Hicks of Central Ave Meats to launch Missouri River Meats, a USDA inspected processing facility and wholesale operation in Great Falls that connects Montana producers with restaurants, retailers, and consumers while strengthening the region's local food supply.



Big Sky Select Properties

Big Sky Select is a Qualified Opportunity Zone Business which owns and operations a diversified real estate portfolio including high-quality governmental, commercial, and residential properties. Big Sky Select is formed to acquire, develop, and manage high-quality real estate assets as a Qualified Opportunity Zone Business that will provide Qualified Opportunity Funds and investors a qualified, consistently-performing Opportunity Zone investment. Big Sky Select's Principals have over 60 years of combined experience in real estate development, operation, and management and currently operate and manage several hundred thousand square feet of commercial space and hundreds of residential units in multiple states. In addition, the Principals' past transactions and network of regional contacts have resulted in and will continue to produce a queue of high-quality and profitable expansive projects.



Cheyenne Osmundsen

Loan Assistant, USDA Rural Development

Cheyenne Osmundsen is a Loan Assistant with USDA Rural Development Single Family Housing in Great Falls, Montana. Since March of 2024 she has worked with low/very low income individuals in accessing capital for home purchases as well as grant and loan funds for home repairs. In addition to the home purchase and home repair programs, Cheyenne has assisted National Affordable Housing Network (NAHN), Helena Area Habitat for Humanity, and NeighborWorks Great Falls utilize federal funds for the construction of homes through the Mutual Self-Help Housing Program. Prior to working with Rural Development, she was a Program Technician with the USDA Farm Service Agency for four and a half years.



Jenel Figarelle

Deputy Director, Neighborworks Great Falls

Jenel Figarelle joined NeighborWorks Great Falls in 2011 and has held progressively expanding leadership roles in administration, event coordination, strategic planning, human resources, communications, and resource development. Early in her tenure, she played a key role in restructuring operations as NeighborWorks Great Falls and NeighborWorks Montana transitioned into two separate organizations. As Deputy Director, Jenel oversees the organization's marketing, fundraising, administration, human resources, board relations, and information technology functions. She also helps advance collaborative housing initiatives, including NeighborWorks Great Falls' Self-Help Housing Program and the Baatz Block Apartments. A Great Falls native, she has served on the United Way of Cascade County Board since 2020, including as personnel chair, and has been an active member of Rotary Electric since 2022.



Casey Pecina

Director of Real Estate Development, Neighborworks Great Falls

Casey joined NeighborWorks Great Falls in August 2022 as Director of Real Estate Development. Originally from Boston, MA, she has worked in the affordable housing industry for about 11 years. After moving to Montana in 2015, she worked for the Great Falls Housing Authority and a short 3 years in Wyoming working for the State Housing Finance Agency. She re-located back to Great Falls and brings experience in property management, compliance, housing development and grant administration.

Notes

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Great Falls Development Authority

Forum contact: Jolene Schalper | jschalper@growgreatfalls.org

USDA Rural Development

Forum contact: Tash Wisemiller | tash.wisemiller@usda.gov



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Montana Rural Impact Forum



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appreciated!

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