



2025 BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

JUNE 11-13, 2025

CHEYENNE, WY



AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11TH

NOON — NETWORKING LUNCH

WELCOME

KATHY LENZ - *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY TO US SENATOR CYNTHIA LUMMIS*

1:00PM — WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?

PRESENTER: KENT NOBLE - *LARAMIE, WYOMING*

When we think about business retention and expansion, we often focus on strategies, data, and programs. And those are absolutely critical, but at the heart of every decision a business makes (whether to stay, grow, or leave) is a simple question: Do they trust us? This presentation will have attendees shift the focus inward to consider who we are as leaders and how our personal ethics shape the communities we serve and the relationships we build.

2:30PM — EVOLUTION OF BUSINESS IMMIGRATION WORKFORCE

PRESENTER: RENNY MACKAY - *CHEYENNE, WYOMING*

This discussion will elaborate on the changing workforce landscape and how a changing work landscape is affecting the modern business climate.

3:30PM — NETWORKING BREAK

4:00PM — FACILITATING CHANGE TO LOCAL ORDINANCES

PRESENTER: CHRIS DAVIDSON - *YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA*

This presentation will showcase successful efforts to update local ordinances related to home-based businesses (HBBs). It will focus on facilitating conversations and negotiations among stakeholders and elected officials. Lessons learned will demonstrate how to improve the environment for "gig economy" workers, 1099 contractors, and remote workers.

**5:00PM
TO
8:00PM**

RECEPTION AT THE OLD WEST MUSEUM *SPONSORED BY THE WYOMING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION*

THURSDAY, JUNE 12TH

8:45AM — LEVERAGING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO OPEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRE

PRESENTERS: DR. BRENDA KAYS & TIM SMITH - *LONGVIEW, TEXAS*

This session will discuss a workforce development project in Longview, Texas, that resulted from BRE activities. The Texas Association of Community Colleges Roundtable with Industry and Education, along with Kilgore College, brought together industry leaders to design a training platform tailored to local industries' needs.

9:45AM — BREAK

10:00AM — BR&E SURVEYING: A GUIDE TO QUICK AND EFFECTIVE BUSINESS CONSULTATION

PRESENTER: SIMON WEBB - *KINGSTON, ONTARIO*

This session will introduce best practices for conducting BR&E surveys efficiently and effectively. It will cover analytical techniques to aid decision-making and help identify businesses in need of support. The session will include case studies from Deloitte's clients who have successfully implemented their award-winning Triage BR&E survey.

11:00AM — MAINSTREET'S ROLE IN BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

PRESENTER: REP. TREY SHERWOOD, REP. PAM THAYER

This session will review the role of MainStreet in supporting BRE initiatives from the perspective of both business leaders and elected officials.

NOON — BREAK

12:15PM — LUNCH / AWARDS BANQUET AND BUSINESS MEETING

1:30PM — BREAK

2:00PM — AI AND CRMS: DRIVING CHANGE AND LEADING WITH CONFIDENCE

PRESENTER: ERIC CANADA, WHEATON, ILLINOIS

This extended session is hands-on and tailored for economic development leaders navigating the rapidly evolving world of AI, offering practical strategies for both personal mastery and team leadership. This session will be engaging, accessible, and grounded in real-world insights perfect for faculty looking to offer cutting-edge, high-impact content. In the session, the speaker will focus on practical uses for AI specific to economic development, and how AI is integrated into the various CRM models that can be used by different economic development organizations.

**5:30PM
TO
7:30PM**

**SITE TOUR OF THE LARAMIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ADVANCED
MANUFACTURING AND MATERIAL CENTER** *SPONSORED BY CHEYENNE LEADS*

FRIDAY, JUNE 13TH

8:45AM — THE IMPACT OF CHILDCARE BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

PRESENTER: KRISTIN FONG, WYOMING BUSINESS COUNCIL

Childcare and early childhood education are critical to the well-being of Wyoming's children and families and are essential to employers seeking to hire and retain employees. Access to childcare supports family income, fosters professional development, and enhances workforce participation. Many families in Wyoming, though, struggle to find affordable, high-quality childcare options. This shortage is taking a toll on both families and businesses. This presentation will bring an update on work efforts for childcare business support services and to provide an opportunity for feedback from economic developers.

9:45AM — BRE AT WORK IN CHEYENNE - BLACK HILLS ENERGY

PRESENTER: AUSTIN ALLEN

This presentation will highlight a successful, local business retention and expansion project in the Cheyenne area, the expansion of Black Hills Energy. This presentation will discuss the strategies behind the expansion and the benefit to the local economy.

10:45AM — BREAK

11:00AM — SELLING BRE TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

PANEL DISCUSSION

This session will consist of a panel of BRE practitioners who will discuss how they have 'sold' BRE to their local community officials and constituents. This will include real-world examples of ways that they have collected data, assisted businesses, and gained support for their efforts on the local level.

12:00PM — CONFERENCE ADJOURNS



SPEAKERS



ALAN BAREFIELD

STARKVILLE, MISSISSIPPI

Alan Barefield is a former Extension Professor with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. His primary role was to facilitate economic and community development educational programming efforts in the state of Mississippi. Specific areas addressed included business and entrepreneurship development, community economic and social analysis, business retention and expansion, and community infrastructure development and analysis. Barefield has been a member of BREI for many years and has received the BREI Distinguished Service Award in 2010 and the Master Business and Retention Professional designation in 2011. After years of hard work and dedication, Alan Barefield is now enjoying a well-deserved retirement.



KENT NOBLE

LARAMIE, WYOMING

Kent Noble teaches principle-based leadership and ethics at the University of Wyoming. In 2018, he was named College of Business Professor of the Year and received the Campus Being a Difference Award from the NASBA Center for the Public Trust. In 2019 and 2020, he was recognized as a 'Top Prof' by UW's Mortar Board Honor Society. In 2021, he received UW's Outstanding Service and Dedication Award. In 2022, Kent received the College's Impact Award, and since 2023, he has served as a judge for the Better Business Bureau's International Torch Awards for Ethics.

Kent was appointed to the Wyoming Commission on Judicial Conduct and Ethics by former Gov. Matt Mead in 2018 and was reappointed by Gov. Mark Gordon in 2021. He currently serves on the boards of the John P. Ellbogen Foundation, NASBA Center for the Public Trust, Millennium Bridge Capital, the Better Business Bureau Foundation of Northern Colorado and Wyoming, and the University of Wyoming Alumni Association.

Kent has developed principle-based leadership and ethics presentations for his outreach efforts, delivering them to diverse audiences. Since 2013, he has conducted hundreds of sessions for business, government, and community leaders across the country.



RENNY MACKAY

CHEYENNE, WYOMING

Renny has a passion for Wyoming and knowledge that growing businesses is what makes the state and its communities more resilient. He is focused on serving the Alliance's members and helping to build the strongest network of businesses possible. He's honored to work for a board which represents Wyoming's key employers and leading taxpayers.

Prior to joining the talented team at the Wyoming Business Alliance, Renny was Governor Mark Gordon's Policy Director for nearly 5 years. He also worked for Governor Gordon's 2008 Congressional campaign. The experience in the Governor's Office allowed him to strengthen and cultivate relationships with legislators, cabinet members, stakeholders, industries, small businesses, and the Congressional Delegation and their staff.

Renny also has communications and journalism experience working for Governor Matt Mead as Communications Director, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Public Radio. He is an alum of the University of Missouri Journalism School. He and his wife have two amazing children and enjoy skiing, camping and finding new Wyoming restaurants.



CHRIS DAVIDSON

YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

Chris Davidson is a nationally recognized business strategist, acclaimed speaker & trainer, public policy expert, and dedicated community servant. As a 2001 graduate of James Madison University, he went on to hold management and executive roles in the sectors of finance, technology, and commercial real estate. Early in his career, Chris discovered a knack for redesigning business processes and packaging them into simple, duplicatable systems. This led to him founding his own consulting company in 2012 (then called "IMPACT Advisory Group").

Chris has a passion for leadership and service. He has served on numerous public and private boards and has served as President of eight organizations. Chris was named to the Hampton Roads "Top Forty Under 40" by Inside Business Magazine in 2014. Chris lives in York County, VA, with his beautiful wife Melissa, and their three children.oy skiing, camping and finding new Wyoming restaurants.



BRENDA KAYS

LONGVIEW, TEXAS

Dr. Kays' career as a community college educator, both in Texas and in the North Carolina System, spans over 30 years and includes the roles of faculty member, chief student services officer, chief instructional officer, and college president. Prior to being named the ninth president of Kilgore College (KC) in 2016, Dr. Kays served as the fourth President of Stanly Community College (SCC) in North Carolina and is the first woman to serve in both of those capacities. She earned her Doctorate from the University of North Texas in Applied Technology, Training, and Development. She has a Master's Degree in Counseling from Midwestern State University and is a Licensed Professional Counselor.

Dr. Kays holds and has held membership in numerous local, state, and national organizations, including most recently the Board of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Executive Council; Vice-President and Legislative Chair for the Texas Association of Community Colleges; National Center for Inquiry and Improvement: Rural Leader Learning Community; Arts!Longview Board of Directors, and Rotary International. Additionally, in the Fall of 2021, Dr. Kays was appointed to the Texas Commission on Community College Finance by Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, Dade Phelan.



TIM SMITH

LONGVIEW, TEXAS

Timothy D. Smith, Major, USAF (Ret), is the Director of Business Retention & Expansion and Workforce Development for the Longview Economic Development Corporation. Before joining LEDCO, he served as Business Services Manager for Workforce Solutions East Texas, where he built lasting relationships and gained a deep appreciation for the region's industries.

A combat veteran with 21 years of service in the U.S. Air Force, Timothy held both enlisted and commissioned roles, supporting Operations DESERT STORM, ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM, and NEW DAWN across multiple countries. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Education from Wayland Baptist University, majoring in Business Management.

Timothy is a Certified Business Retention & Expansion Coordinator (BREC) and Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP). He actively serves on the Longview Hospitality and Tourism Board and Longview Educates and Prospers (LEAP) Board.

Known around the office for his broad knowledge on nearly any topic, Tim enjoys cooking and spending quiet time with his wife of over 30 years in the peace of East Texas country.



SIMON WEBB

KINGSTON, ONTARIO

Simon Webb is a Manager at Deloitte with a strong foundation in economic theory, data analytics, and sustainability. With advanced degrees in Economic Policy from McMaster University and a dual BA in Economics and Environment, Sustainability and Society from Dalhousie University, Simon brings a unique interdisciplinary perspective to solving real-world environmental and social challenges.

He holds a certificate in Big Data Analytics and has expertise in predictive modeling, machine learning, and programming in R, Python, and SQL. Passionate about optimizing the triple bottom line, Simon is known for his adaptability and drive to develop practical, data-driven solutions that benefit both business and society.



REP. TREY SHERWOOD

LARAMIE, WYOMING

Representative Trey Sherwood serves Wyoming's House District 14, representing Albany County since 2021. As Minority Caucus Chairman, she advocates for policies that support economic diversification, education, and the preservation of individual freedoms. Beyond the legislature, Sherwood is the Executive Director of Laramie Main Street, where she champions local businesses, historic preservation, and community development. With a background in public history and over two decades of experience in nonprofit leadership, she is deeply committed to building a thriving and inclusive Wyoming. An outdoor enthusiast, Sherwood enjoys kayaking, hiking, and gardening in her free time.



REP. PAM THAYER

RAWLINS, WYOMING

Representative Pam Thayer is a Republican member of the Wyoming House of Representatives, serving District 15 since January 2025. With a professional background as an executive director, she brings extensive experience in community and economic development to her legislative role. Thayer is known for her commitment to fiscal responsibility and pragmatic problem-solving, focusing on policies that support Wyoming's rural communities and small businesses. She resides in Rawlins with her husband, Scott, and is a proud mother of two.



ERIC CANADA

WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Eric P. Canada is the author of Economic Development for the Team and a recognized innovator in economic development. Known for creating unique intellectual property and generating "market gravity," he is widely cited as a thought leader in organizational dynamics, marketing, and business retention and expansion (BR/E). A veteran of local, regional, and statewide roles, he began his consulting career in 1994.

In response to COVID-19, he led the BR/E Response Network—350 professionals from 330 organizations, guided by a 25-member volunteer Steering Committee. The Network launched two surveys and hosted three best practice webinars to assess business and worker impact. Canada also led the development of a PowerBI dashboard displaying 3,000+ business responses, producing the first-ever national business impact assessment led by economic developers—in just 27 days.

His first book, *Economic Development: Marketing for Results!*, helped professionalize economic development marketing, introduced competitive intelligence to BR/E, and laid the groundwork for national business assessment benchmarks. It also inspired the award-winning Synchronist Suite® software.

His newest book, *Economic Development for the Team*, is written for new and experienced economic developers alike. It includes theory, strategy, graphics, case studies, and a glossary to make the field accessible and actionable for all audiences.



KRISTIN FONG

BILLINGS, MONTANA

Kristin Fong serves as a Regional Director with the Wyoming Business Council, where she has established herself as a dedicated leader in economic development with a particular focus on strengthening the state's childcare infrastructure.

For the past year and a half, Fong has been at the helm of an innovative Childcare Working Group, bringing together diverse stakeholders including multiple nonprofit organizations and state agencies. Under her leadership, this collaborative initiative has worked to address Wyoming's critical childcare needs through strategic planning and resource development.

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As the state economic development agency, the Wyoming Business Council leads economic growth in order to build resilient communities and create opportunities for people to thrive.
WYOMINGBUSINESS.ORG



THANK YOU!

Business Retention and Expansion International (BREI) extends a sincere thank you to all of our speakers, sponsors, staff, and board members for making this year's conference a success. Your passion, commitment, and contributions are the foundation of our strength.

We're also incredibly grateful to all who attended. It was a pleasure to gather in beautiful Cheyenne, Wyoming, and we're honored to be part of your BRE journey—thank you for being part of ours.

Continue your BREI journey by maintaining an active membership. BREI is a dynamic organization supporting professionals committed to business retention and expansion in their communities. Whether you're renewing or joining for the first time, membership connects you to a global network of economic developers, tools, and resources designed to help you succeed. Stay connected and supported—visit our online portal to join or renew today.

STAY CONNECTED...



BREI.ORG



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