



# TOWN OF DANVILLE

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES** STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS



PREPARED BY: **VisionFirst Advisors**

SERVICES OFFERED: **3/21/2025**

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Strategy starts  
with a vision first.

# Cover Letter

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March 21, 2025

Ben Comer, President  
Danville Redevelopment Commission  
Town of Danville  
49 N. Wayne Street  
Danville, Indiana 46122

Dear Mr. Comer and Members of the Danville Redevelopment Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our Statement of Qualifications to support the Town of Danville in developing its first Five-Year Economic Development Strategy.

As a consulting firm, we bring extensive experience and strong industry relationships to support our clients' location and economic development needs. We are dedicated to driving economic growth, fostering prosperity, and creating sustainable opportunities for regions and communities. Our approach is rooted in a deep understanding of each region's unique economic landscape, needs, and challenges. Through stakeholder engagement, data-driven research, and comprehensive analysis, we develop customized solutions that address specific economic development goals while aligning with the community's long-term vision.

We understand that Danville's growth, community character, and economic vitality are at the forefront of this initiative. Our team is uniquely positioned to support Danville's objectives through a tailored, intentional approach that ensures informed decision-making and measurable outcomes. Moreover, we have an extensive track record of successfully meeting our clients' needs while maintaining cost control, delivering high-quality work, and adhering to project schedules. We have both the capacity and expertise to complete this work within the agreed-upon timeframe, ensuring the timely delivery of strategic insights and actionable recommendations.

**As your consultant, VisionFirst will provide:**

**Comprehensive Data-Driven Analysis.** Our team, including certified experts such as a CPA and two tax attorneys, will evaluate national, state, regional, and local economic trends to prepare an insightful Economic Opportunity Analysis (EOA) and employment forecast. This analysis will help identify opportunities to expand Danville's commercial and industrial tax base, ensuring long-term fiscal sustainability.

**Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement.** VisionFirst employs a distinct approach to integrating stakeholder feedback, both virtually and in-person, and using a range of tools from facilitated meetings to hands-on activities to online surveys. Our proactive stakeholder involvement allows

entities to understand their role in achieving the vision for growth. We then utilize those perspectives to create a realistic and actionable strategy. It is a cornerstone of our consulting practice, leading to measurable and continued engagement throughout implementation.

**Enhanced Visual Communication & Branding.** Our team includes a dedicated graphic designer with expertise not only in design but also in transforming complex data into clear, digestible insights that help communities make informed decisions. This ensures that all reports, marketing materials, and visual presentations are both professionally designed and strategically crafted to communicate key information effectively. Well-crafted visuals simplify data, making Danville's economic development strategy more compelling and accessible to businesses and investors.

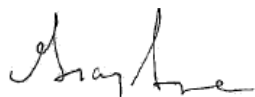
**Realistic & Implementable Strategies.** Our recommendations will integrate policy insights, public-private partnership opportunities, and development tools that support Danville's objectives. Our experience working with similar communities has resulted in economic development strategies that are not only visionary but also practical and achievable.

**Unparalleled Capacity.** In 2024, VisionFirst announced a strategic partnership with The Southern Group, the largest lobbying firm in Florida, with offices throughout the Southeast. This partnership expands our capabilities, providing turnkey solutions for businesses and organizations looking to relocate or expand in markets nationwide.

At VisionFirst, we take pride in delivering strategies that drive meaningful economic outcomes. We are eager for the opportunity to collaborate with the Town of Danville, its leadership, and its stakeholders to craft a forward-thinking plan that supports Danville's vision for sustainable growth.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to the opportunity to further discuss how our expertise can help Danville achieve its economic development goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gray Swoope". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

Gray Swoope, President & CEO



# OUR FIRM.



**WHO WE ARE** VisionFirst Advisors is the go-to firm in the economic development consulting field with clients from 49 states and 29 Fortune 500 companies.

With a customer-driven approach, our team acts seamlessly as an extension of our client's team to develop strategy, solve problems and deliver results while mitigating risks and barriers. No two projects are the same and our approach is tailored to each of our clients.

**WHAT WE DO** We maximize your competitiveness.

Corporations and communities face myriad challenges to stay competitive. VisionFirst enhances client competitiveness, leveraging an extensive network of key connections—aligning resources to goals, transforming ideas into action and designing solutions for tangible results. Our services include:



Site Selection Services  
Incentive Negotiations  
Compliance Services



Strategic Planning  
Organizational Structure &  
Management  
Marketing & Communications  
Facilitated Sessions



Labor Market Components  
Historic & Future Data Trends  
Untapped Talent  
Education & Industry  
Alignment

In addition to Gray, VisionFirst is solidified by a team of professionals that have worked together at the executive level of state economic development entities for years and are now growing the private practice. The same axioms for success exist today as they did years ago, when they started collectively working together:

**RESPECT**  
+  
**TRUST**  
+  
**REPUTATION**  
+  
**RESULTS**

These values define VisionFirst's culture and are evident in our client work.

As advisors, we recognize that our actions, as representatives, intentional or unintentional, are a reflection on our clients.

[VisionFirstAdvisors.com](http://VisionFirstAdvisors.com)

## Project Team

Our team of professionals brings expertise across all facets of economic and community development, government, data analysis, marketing, and public engagement. With decades of experience in strategy, public policy, workforce and education training, communications, and management, we leverage our knowledge to tackle complex client challenges. Committed to delivering high-quality work on schedule and within budget, we apply our intellectual capital to drive community vitality and long-term sustainability.

ROLES	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>PROJECT EXECUTIVE</b> <b>Minah Hall, Principal</b> (Chicago, IL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guides and directs strategy</li> </ul>
<b>PROJECT LEAD</b> <b>Greg Word, Managing Director</b> (Jackson, MS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central point of contact and coordination</li> <li>Ensures availability and commitment of resources</li> <li>Provides updates</li> </ul>
<b>PROJECT TEAM</b> <b>Gray Swoope, President &amp; CEO</b> (Tallahassee, FL) <b>Griff Salmon, Principal</b> (Orlando, FL) <b>Nancy Blum-Heintz, Managing Director</b> (Tallahassee, FL) <b>Jennifer Carroll, Managing Director</b> (Dallas, Texas) <b>Kathy Gelston, CPA</b> (Jackson, MS) <b>Brenda Lathan, Senior Consultant</b> (Jackson, MS) <b>Meghan DiGiacomo, Senior Consultant</b> (Greenville, SC) <b>Maria Crume, Consultant</b> (Tallahassee, FL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works with lead on all project components</li> <li>Coordinates, drafts and executes project deliverables</li> <li>Collaborates with stakeholders</li> <li>Offers site selection and incentive guidance and expertise</li> </ul>
<b>FINANCIALS</b> <b>Heather Dollar, Administration</b> (Tallahassee, FL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Billing and reporting</li> </ul>

Effective program management is critical to executing a large project with parallel workflows. Given the virtual nature of today's business climate, we will deploy a technology package that will promote effective project management and will include a variety of tools, including:



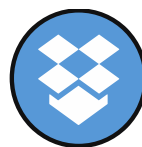
Email  
Communications



In-Person and  
Online  
Individual &  
Group Meetings



Virtual/Online  
Meetings via  
Microsoft  
Teams



--- Technology Solutions ---  
Cloud File  
Sharing



Office 365  
OneDrive

## Team Qualifications

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For this engagement, our entire team will remain fully engaged and accessible throughout the project to ensure the successful achievement of all objectives. While a designated team lead will oversee the process, every team member stands ready to contribute, providing expertise and support as needed. This unwavering commitment to client success has fostered lasting partnerships with many of our repeat clients and remains a cornerstone of our approach.

VisionFirst is committed to maintaining staff availability for the duration of the contract, ensuring seamless collaboration while offering the flexibility to adapt the scope of work as project needs evolve. Furthermore, we have a strong history of consistently fulfilling our clients' needs by effectively managing costs, ensuring high-quality deliverables, and meeting project deadlines with precision.

Below are key professional highlights from our core project team, demonstrating the expertise that will drive this initiative forward.

**Gray Swoope, President & CEO:** With over 30 years of leadership in economic development and site selection, Gray is a nationally recognized authority. As founder and CEO of VisionFirst Advisors, he has led projects across 49 states, guiding Fortune 500 companies through high-profile site selections, facility expansions, and economic growth strategies.

Before launching VisionFirst, Gray served as Florida's Secretary of Commerce and President & CEO of Enterprise Florida, spearheading record-breaking economic initiatives that strengthened the state's global competitiveness. Previously, as Executive Director of the Mississippi Development Authority, he played a key role in securing major corporate investments and leading Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts—shaping disaster recovery programs still in use today.

At VisionFirst, Gray provides strategic counsel to companies and communities navigating complex site selection and economic development challenges. His leadership has driven success in biotechnology, automotive, aerospace, hyperscale enterprise data centers, and other key industries. His expertise and results-driven approach earned him membership in the Site Selectors Guild, the premier global organization for site selection professionals.

**Minah Hall, CCIP, Esq., Principal:** Minah is a nationally recognized expert in tax incentives, financing solutions, and public-private partnerships, with 25 years of experience helping companies structure and optimize major investments. She has successfully guided Fortune 500 corporations, mid-sized firms, and startups through the complexities of securing large-scale incentives, leveraging public-private funding mechanisms, and aligning financial strategies with business expansion goals.

Before joining VisionFirst, Minah led Compass Key Site Solutions, where she provided strategic site selection and incentive negotiation services across a range of industries, including manufacturing, data centers, corporate headquarters, and distribution. As a former partner at

top tax firms, her expertise in complex tax laws and monetizable incentives has been instrumental in securing high-value incentive packages and financing solutions that drive economic growth.

A licensed attorney and Certified Credits & Incentives Professional (CCIP), Minah is a sought-after speaker at national conferences and actively contributes to industry leadership, serving as Chair of the Credits and Incentives Certification program for the Institute for Professionals in Taxation (IPT). Recognized as one of the Women in Tax Leaders, she continues to be a driving force in shaping how businesses and communities collaborate to unlock investment opportunities and long-term economic success.

**Greg Word, Managing Director:** Greg combines his expertise in economic development with a unique ability to distill vast amounts of complex data into clear, actionable insights that empower communities to make informed decisions. His strong foundation in graphic design and digital strategy allows him to translate these insights into compelling visual storytelling, setting new standards in business attraction, retention, and expansion across multiple industry sectors. From website development and virtual site tours to targeted industry analyses, Greg's work ensures regions can showcase their assets with clarity, impact, and strategic precision.

With a background in technical and graphic services, Greg understands how both data and design enhance economic development efforts. His leadership in digital engagement, business intelligence, and marketing strategy has earned national recognition, including helping the Greater Jackson Alliance achieve Digital 25 status for its innovative use of technology. His ability to synthesize economic, demographic, and industry-specific data into digestible, strategic narratives has played a key role in securing billions in investment and thousands of announced jobs across the country.

Recognized as one of North America's Top 50 Economic Developers, Greg's analytical acumen, combined with a design-driven approach, continues to help communities optimize their competitiveness and attract high-impact investments.

**Nancy Blum-Heintz, Managing Director:** Nancy brings over 20 years of executive experience in marketing, communications, government relations, and economic development to VisionFirst Advisors. Known for her strategic outreach and stakeholder engagement, she has helped organizations navigate complex communication challenges and build consensus.

Previously, as Vice President of Strategic Alignment & Communications at Enterprise Florida, she shaped policies balancing public records compliance with client confidentiality. She also held leadership roles in multiple Florida state agencies, managing crisis communications and high-profile campaigns, including the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response.

At VisionFirst, Nancy develops targeted engagement strategies that foster collaboration and mitigate opposition. She recently led a multimedia campaign for Triumph Gulf Coast, a \$1.5 billion economic development fund, and oversees the Tennessee Valley Authority's Workforce Invest grant program.



## Similar Projects & Technical Capability

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VisionFirst has collaborated with communities nationwide and 29 Fortune 500 companies to address complex challenges in economic and community development, site selection, product development, organizational strategy, workforce training, and marketing. Our expertise helps clients navigate these critical areas with tailored, results-driven solutions.

The clients below have graciously agreed to share their experiences working with us, highlighting our ability to consistently deliver high-quality results while maintaining cost efficiency and meeting project deadlines. We hope these references offer valuable insight into our proven track record of success.

### WEYERHAEUSER

#### – *Site Advisory and Marketing & Communications Support on Industrial Properties*

**SITUATION:** As one of North America's largest private landowners, Weyerhaeuser sought to optimize its industrial properties while maintaining its commitment to sustainability and responsible land management. To enhance economic opportunities, the company engaged VisionFirst to provide expertise in site development, workforce analysis, community engagement, and marketing.

**SOLUTION:** VisionFirst has supported Weyerhaeuser by enhancing site development, securing funding, and improving infrastructure. Targeted marketing highlights sustainability and economic benefits, while strengthened partnerships with economic groups and educators align workforce initiatives. A data-driven workforce strategy ensures a strong talent pipeline, positioning Weyerhaeuser for business attraction and growth.

**SUCCESS:** Through VisionFirst's strategic guidance, Weyerhaeuser has attracted more interest from businesses and site consultants. Enhanced marketing has solidified its position as a top provider of industrial sites, while emphasizing economic growth and workforce sustainability.

VisionFirst's workforce analysis is shaping talent pipeline strategies, aligning development with industry needs. By refining messaging and leveraging data insights, Weyerhaeuser and its partners are better positioned to attract businesses that drive regional growth.

**REFERENCE:** Rose Fagler, Economic Development Manager, Weyerhaeuser,  
Phone: (352) 415-4518, Email: [rose.fagler@weyerhaeuser.com](mailto:rose.fagler@weyerhaeuser.com)

### MADISON COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

- *Economic Development Strategic Plan*
- *Marketing & Communications*
- *Workforce Assessment*
- *Organizational Assessment*

**SITUATION:** The Madison County Economic Development Authority (MCEDA) has attracted major investments, including Nissan and Amazon. With a new regional mega site, MCEDA

sought to showcase its workforce and infrastructure advantages. Having previously partnered on an organizational assessment, MCEDA again turned to VisionFirst for a marketing and communications strategy.

**SOLUTION:** VisionFirst developed strategic messaging leveraging the region's workforce assets and investments to the mega site to shape opinion and motivate behavior about the region. The messaging platforms allow for asset development while also providing a suite of messaging for MCEDA and its partners to use in multiple marketing and communications products and efforts, including the mega site's new online microsite.

**SUCCESS:** The key messaging points developed in the marketing and communications plan demonstrate how the region can support future growth, even with all the success experienced to date. MCEDA is adequately equipped to prove they have a robust talent pool to support expansion and new industry, recently awarding them a project win from Amazon.

**REFERENCE:** Joey Deason, Executive Director, Madison County Economic Development Authority, Phone: (601) 605-0368, Email: [jdeason@madisoncountyed.com](mailto:jdeason@madisoncountyed.com)

## **CENTRAL FLORIDA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

### *– Asset Optimization Analysis*

**SITUATION:** The Central Florida Development Council (CFDC) has established Polk County as a top logistics hub but aimed to diversify beyond warehousing. To leverage the 3,000-acre Central Florida Innovation District—home to Florida Polytechnic University and SunTrax—CFDC engaged VisionFirst Advisors to conduct an asset optimization analysis and identify high-growth target industries.

**SOLUTION:** VisionFirst Advisors helped the Central Florida Development Council (CFDC) optimize the 3,000-acre Central Florida Innovation District by conducting a strategic asset analysis. This included assessing economic trends, workforce availability, and the talent pipeline within a 45-minute drive-time radius. By identifying high-growth target industries aligned with the district's strengths, VisionFirst provided insights into its competitive advantages on a national and global scale. The firm then developed strategic recommendations to help CFDC market the district to site selectors, business leaders, and investors. Armed with this analysis, CFDC can now position the district as a premier hub for emerging industries, driving regional economic growth.

**SUCCESS:** VisionFirst's analysis provided CFDC with a detailed market assessment of high-growth industries poised for expansion, particularly in the Southeast. With these insights, CFDC can launch a targeted marketing campaign positioning the Central Florida Innovation District as a prime hub for emerging, high-value industries, driving regional economic growth.

**REFERENCE:** Sean Malott, President & CEO, Central Florida Development Council, Phone: (863) 937-4430, Email: [sean@cfdc.org](mailto:sean@cfdc.org)

## Appendix: Staff Bios

# MEET THE TEAM.



**Gray Swoope**  
PRESIDENT & CEO



**Griff Salmon**  
PRINCIPAL



**Minah Hall**  
PRINCIPAL



**Nancy Blum**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR



**Greg Word**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR



**Jennifer Carroll**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR



**Kathy Gelston, CPA**  
FINANCIAL ANALYST



**Brenda Lathan**  
SENIOR CONSULTANT



**Meghan DiGiacomo**  
SENIOR CONSULTANT



**Lesley Hatfield**  
CONSULTANT



**Maria Crume**  
CONSULTANT



**Heather Dollar**  
ADMINISTRATION





## Gray Swoope

President & Chief Executive Officer



[Gray.Swoope@VisionFirstAdvisors.com](mailto:Gray.Swoope@VisionFirstAdvisors.com)

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- 30 Years of Leading Site Selection, State, Regional & Local Economic Development
- Economic Development Risk Mitigation
- Leverage of Economic Development for Greater Impact
- Experience in Helping States & Communities Invest in Infrastructure & Talent
- Building Community Capacity to Leverage Funds
- Compliance Processes & Procedures

***“We greatly value every engagement knowing that we have been invited to the table to be a partner. It is important we reflect the values of our client, fill that gap of knowledge and deliver results while maintaining trust.”***

A recognized leader in economic development and site selection, Gray Swoope is president and CEO of VisionFirst Advisors. After a successful 30-year career in state and local economic development, Gray launched VisionFirst in 2015. Since then, VisionFirst's client portfolio has expanded to encompass 49 states and includes eight Fortune 500 companies.

Gray has led VisionFirst in a host of facility and plant expansions as well as relocations in industries such as biotechnology, automotive, aerospace and hyper-scale enterprise data centers. Due to his unparalleled experience and deep understanding of project drivers, Gray was inducted into the Site Selectors Guild, the highest standard in the corporate site selection industry.

Prior to starting VisionFirst, Gray served in Florida Governor Rick Scott's administration (2011-2015) as secretary of commerce and president and CEO of its public/private economic development organization, Enterprise Florida, Inc (EFI). Before joining Governor Scott, Gray served as executive director of the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) under Governor and current VisionFirst board chair, Haley Barbour. During his tenure at MDA, Gray led the project team in successfully recruiting several global corporations to the state.

Additionally, his leadership following Hurricane Katrina was critical to Mississippi's recovery efforts. The team's efforts were widely accoladed and can be credited to many of the natural disaster recovery programs currently in place today.

Gray earned both undergraduate and graduate degrees from Mississippi State University.

In his spare time, Gray can most likely be found out on the water. He has a passion for boating, fishing and simply spending time outdoors. He has a deep appreciation for Florida's natural beauty, from the coastlines to the wetlands to the freshwater springs. Gray and his wife have two daughters: one is an attorney in Houston, and the other works in the film and entertainment industry in New York City.





## Griff Salmon

Principal



[Griff.Salmon@VisionFirstAdvisors.com](mailto:Griff.Salmon@VisionFirstAdvisors.com)

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Location Advisory & Asset Review
- Staffing Structures & Performance
- Stakeholder & Board Meetings
- Business Development & Retention Programs
- Staffing Attraction & Retention

*“Not everyone’s chosen profession offers them the chance to provide opportunity to others. In Economic Development you have the chance every morning you walk into the office. Having just a small impact on the creation of a job or the benefit of new investment is why is cherish the opportunity to work at VisionFirst.”*

A pioneer in the field of economic development, Griff serves as principal for VisionFirst Advisors in the firm’s Orlando office. His extensive background in operations and business development allows him to offer a unique perspective to economic development organizations and companies looking to expand or relocate. His dedication to fostering business growth, helping economies flourish and encouraging healthy, sustainable growth is unmatched.

Prior to joining VisionFirst, Griff served as the executive vice president and chief operating officer for Enterprise Florida (EFI), where under his leadership the business development team announced project wins such as GE, Amazon and Lockheed Martin. In addition, Griff effectively managed the organization's divisions to strategically focus resources while his collaborative management style led to partnerships with a statewide network of regional and local economic development organizations.

Griff also served as director of the Mississippi Development Authority's (MDA) Global Business division. At MDA, the business development team announced competitive project wins from companies such as GE Aviation, Toyota, PACCAR and McKesson. Griff was also congressional liaison for MDA's Federal Department of Defense and Congressional Liaison Bureau where he worked to maintain military presence in the state as well as expand capabilities to secure future missions as part of the federal government's Base Realignment and Closure Act.

Griff earned a master's degree in public policy and administration at Mississippi State University and a B.S. from Millsaps College.

In his spare time, Griff can be found on the tennis courts. He also enjoys spending time with his wife, son and two German Shepherds.



## Minah Hall, CCIP, Esq.

Principal



[Minah.Hall@VisionFirstAdvisors.com](mailto:Minah.Hall@VisionFirstAdvisors.com)

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Location Advisory
- Tax Incentives, Credits & Negotiation
- Accounting
- Financial Analysis
- Tax Advisory
- Government Incentives

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*We are excited to join the VisionFirst team and continue to set the standard for excellence in economic development strategy, location advisory as well as tax and incentive consulting.*

Minah Hall, a renowned expert in tax credits and incentives, joined VisionFirst Advisors after a merger with Compass Key Site Solutions. With over 20 years of experience in strategic site selection and incentive negotiation, she has delivered exceptional results for Fortune 500 companies, mid-sized firms and startups alike.

At Compass Key Site Solutions, Ms. Hall served as Managing Director, guiding companies through site selection processes and negotiating tax incentives across various sectors, including manufacturing, distribution, data centers, back-office operations, retail and corporate headquarters relocations. Her expertise has consistently created significant value for organizations making substantial investments.

Ms. Hall is actively involved in professional organizations, including the Institute for Professionals in Taxation (IPT), where she serves as Vice Chair of the Credits and Incentives Certification program and is a former Chair of the C&I Symposium and Education Committee. She frequently speaks at national conferences such as the Area Development Consultants Forum and Women in Economic Development events.

In 2018, she was appointed Economic Development Commissioner for the Village of Long Grove. She has also been recognized as one of International Tax Review's Women in Tax Leaders (2016 & 2017) and was named IPT's Instructor of the Year in 2016. Her prior roles include Managing Director at a boutique tax consulting firm and positions at Big Four accounting firms, beginning her career at Arthur Andersen.

Ms. Hall earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a Juris Doctor from Loyola University Chicago School of Law. She is a Certified Credits & Incentives Professional (CCIP) and is licensed to practice law in Illinois.

At Compass Key Site Solutions, she specialized in securing incentives for businesses expanding, relocating, consolidating, or making significant investments



# Nancy Blum-Heintz

Managing Director



[Nancy.Heintz@VisionFirstAdvisors.com](mailto:Nancy.Heintz@VisionFirstAdvisors.com)

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- 20 Years of Executive Level Communications Leadership, Strategy Development & Demographic Research
- Government Accountability & Transparency
- Strategic Communications
- Workforce & Demographic Research & Strategy
- Educational Choice Policy
- Regional Planning

***“I love how our team approaches each client from a unique perspective. We bring together our various backgrounds and expertise to help our clients achieve success by working together passionately and with purpose***

Nancy brings two decades of executive-level marketing, communications, government relations and economic development expertise to VisionFirst. Most recently, she served as the National Director of Communications for the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd), a leader in designing policy and implementation strategies to improve our nation’s educational attainment and workforce competencies.

Nancy worked alongside VisionFirst’s principals as Vice President of Strategic Alignment & Communications at Enterprise Florida (EFI). In that position, she developed strategies to adhere to strict public records laws while at the same time balancing necessary client confidentiality. She also served in leadership roles at several state agencies in Florida.

VisionFirst’s clients have come to rely on Nancy’s marketing and communications background and capabilities. She recently led the development of a multi-media marketing campaign for Triumph Gulf Coast, a \$1.5 billion economic development fund to expand Northwest Florida’s economy. The strategy included message and asset development to reach target audiences and motivate behavior.

Nancy’s efforts have also focused on workforce and education initiatives that grow talent pipelines, improve competitiveness and assist underserved populations. Currently, Nancy is leading the development and implementation of the Tennessee Valley Authority’s new Workforce Invest grant program. She is a certified JobsEQ user, combining her education outreach expertise with data analytics to assist communities in explaining and implementing education and workforce initiatives.

Outside the office, Nancy, a true fitness fanatic, can most likely be found at the gym or spending time with her two daughters.



## Greg Word

Managing Director



[Greg.Word@VisionFirstAdvisors.com](mailto:Greg.Word@VisionFirstAdvisors.com)

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Strategy Development, Technology & Data Analytics
- Economic Development Research, Analysis & Reporting
- Industrial Lead Generation (community-side)
- Product Formation & Development
- Graphic Design; Marketing, Branding & Identity Creation
- 3D Modeling, GIS Mapping, Conceptual Plans & Presentations
- Collaborative Management



***Our work is always changing. Always evolving. I enjoy being part of a collaborative team that provides concepts and innovative solutions to a wide variety of clients.***

As a Managing Director at VisionFirst Advisors, Greg brings a rare combination of expertise in economic development, data analysis, and visual communication. His ability to distill vast amounts of information into clear, strategic insights helps communities make informed decisions that drive investment and growth. Whether analyzing industry trends, assessing competitive advantages, or developing digital tools, Greg ensures that complex data becomes accessible and actionable for economic development professionals, business leaders, and policymakers.

His unique blend of analytical acumen and creative problem-solving has earned him widespread recognition in the field, including being named one of North America's Top 50 Economic Developers by Consultant Connect. Greg's commitment to every client and project reflects his deep passion for helping communities position themselves for long-term success.

Before joining VisionFirst, Greg served as Senior Vice President of Economic Development for the Greater Jackson Alliance, helping earn recognition on Community Systems' Digital 25 for innovative technology use. He also led business intelligence at the Mississippi Development Authority and managed technical and graphic services for the North Mississippi Industrial Development Association. Across these roles, he played a key part in securing over \$3 billion in investment and creating thousands of jobs.

A graduate of Mississippi State University, Greg serves as Past President on the Board of Directors for the Mississippi Economic Development Council. His dedication to community service extends beyond economic development—he actively supports efforts to combat food insecurity as a board member for Extra Table, a nonprofit focused on ending hunger in Mississippi.





# Jennifer Carroll

Managing Director



[Jennifer.Carroll@VisionFirstAdvisors.com](mailto:Jennifer.Carroll@VisionFirstAdvisors.com)

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Location Advisory
- Tax Incentives, Credits & Negotiation
- Accounting
- Financial Analysis
- Tax Advisory
- Government Incentives

*I look forward to leveraging my expertise and collaborating with my talented colleagues to provide strategic insights and tailored solutions to optimize opportunities.*

Jennifer Carroll joined VisionFirst Advisors after a merger with Compass Key Site Solutions, bringing over 15 years of expertise in negotiating state and local tax incentives. Known for her ability to navigate complex tax statutes and create sophisticated cost models, Ms. Carroll delivers innovative, high-impact solutions for clients nationwide.

At Compass Key Site Solutions, she specialized in securing incentives for businesses expanding, relocating, consolidating, or making significant investments. Her practice spans more than a decade and includes handling state business incentive applications and negotiations across numerous states, including California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania. Ms. Carroll is also highly skilled in addressing statutory ambiguities through extensive research and writing.

Earlier in her career, Ms. Carroll served as a law clerk for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the University of Notre Dame and a commercial law practice in Indiana. In these roles, she conducted in-depth legal research on federal and state codes, administrative law and case law to draft memoranda, motions, negotiation strategies and settlement offers. Additionally, she worked as a negotiated incentives consultant at a Big Four firm in Texas.

Ms. Carroll is a sought-after speaker at economic development conferences, including the NextGen Talks at the Institute of Professionals in Taxation and the Women in Economic Development Forum. A published author on intellectual property legal systems, she has a strong interest in helping start-ups develop effective tax planning strategies.

She earned her Juris Doctor from the University of Notre Dame and a Bachelor of Arts in Politics, cum laude, from the University of Dallas. Ms. Carroll is licensed to practice law in Texas.





## Kathy Gelston, CPA

Financial Analyst



Kathy.Gelston@VisionFirstAdvisors.com

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Government Finance
- Deep Understanding of State Taxation
- Incentives Contracting & Compliance
- Public/Private Partnerships
- Complex Financial Mechanisms
- Accounting Oversight

***“Working with industry professionals to help them understand the true costs and values of their location operations is very satisfying to me. It is not enough to provide an incentive number; to make an informed decision, companies need the actual value of those incentives alone with the cost of doing business at that location. That is what leads to long-term success.”***

As VisionFirst Advisors' financial analyst, Kathy, a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), is known near and far for her unparalleled abilities in understanding the numbers. With close to 30 years of executive-level public-sector experience, she brings a depth of understanding of public and private-sector finance particularly in the execution and compliance of economic development programs. Kathy has the unique ability to explain incredible complex financial mechanisms in a way that both the media and taxpayers can understand.

Prior to joining VisionFirst, Kathy served as associate vice president of corporate engagement and economic development at Mississippi State University working with industry to identify university and business partnership opportunities in research, training and problem resolution. As a member of the executive management team for the Office of Research and Economic Development for the university, Kathy set research policy, managed the university research park as well as several university level research centers, provided technical assistance and identified university opportunities for projects considering location or expansion in the state.

Before her tenure at the university, Kathy served as chief financial officer for the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), the state's primary economic development entity, overseeing the agency's Financial Resources and Accounting and Finance divisions. She was responsible for the agency's legislative activities, coordinating state-funded incentive programs and developing incentive packages for industry locating or expanding in the state.

Previously, Kathy worked at KPMG, where she served as the Mississippi specialist and a state and local tax manager for two years, and at the Mississippi Department of Revenue, where she worked for 12 years. She served as deputy director of audit and compliance while at the agency.

Outside of work, spending quality time with family is Kathy's biggest priority. She can usually be found doting on her four grandchildren, whom she greatly adores. She also enjoys reading a good book, croqueting and watching sports.

# Brenda Lathan

Senior Consultant



[Brenda.Lathan@VisionFirstAdvisors.com](mailto:Brenda.Lathan@VisionFirstAdvisors.com)

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Regional & Rural Development
- Product Development
- Retail Development
- Project Management
- Business Retention & Expansion

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*Economic development is the common vehicle to affect change in the communities we serve. I enjoy seeing the light in the eyes of people who have been positively affected by the work we do. I do not know of another profession that can continuously see life-changing results on projects as they evolve.*

Brenda, a senior consultant for VisionFirst Advisors, is a certified economic developer specializing in rural and regional economic development. Her passion and dedication for making a difference for our clients combined with her more than 20 years' experience brings instant value to projects. Brenda focuses on improving community competitiveness through her commitment to meeting customer and project demands.

Before joining VisionFirst Advisors and forming her own consulting company, Brenda served as Senior Vice President of Economic Development for the Golden Triangle Development Link, where she managed Lowndes County's Golden Triangle Industrial Park and its three TVA certified megasites. During Lathan's tenure with the LINK, the community experienced investments of over \$6 billion and the creation of 5,000+ jobs. Lathan currently serves as chairperson of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality Commission, which oversees all environmental activity in the state. She also serves on the Governor's Gulf Coast Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations for the use of funds received from the BP oil spill.

Active in the community, Brenda was recognized by the Mississippi Business Journal as one of Mississippi's Top 50 Businesswomen and she has served on the Board of Directors for the Mississippi Economic Development Council as well as the International Council of Shopping Centers. She is also passionate about mentoring and motivational speaking, with an inspiring dedication to encouraging young women to work in economic development.

A graduate of the Mississippi University for Women, Brenda is also extremely passionate about mentoring and motivational speaking, with an inspiring dedication to encouraging young women to work in economic development.

Outside of work, Brenda loves spending time with her close-knit family. She has two daughters, three sons, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



# Meghan DiGiacomo

Senior Consultant



Meghan.DiGiacomo@VisionFirstAdvisors.com

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Site Readiness
- Competitive Assessment
- Site Asset Analysis
- Regional & Rural Development
- Site Visit Coaching
- Economic Development Best Practices

***“My enthusiasm for location advisory and economic development strategy stems from the chance to shape communities, drive growth, and foster prosperity for businesses and individuals. Collaborating within a dedicated team like Visionfirst amplifies this impact.”***

Meghan, a Senior Consultant at VisionFirst Advisors, brings a wealth of experience in global site selection and economic development at various levels – state, local, and regional. Her expertise is both wide range and specialized, making her a valuable member of the VisionFirst team. Her dedication to each client has earned her significant recognition and respect in the field, including being named as one of North America’s Top 50 Economic Developers by Consultant Connect.

Before her tenure at VisionFirst, Meghan was a Senior Consultant with Global Location Strategies (GLS). In this capacity, she guided companies in making strategic location decisions that fostered growth and success. She invested time in understanding the client’s process, key drivers, preferences, and risks to address their location, logistics, workforce, and incentive needs, ultimately helping them achieve their goals. She also provided advice to economic development organizations on best practices, site readiness efforts, workforce development, and site visit coaching.

Earlier in her career, Meghan served as the Executive Manager of Business and Economic Development for her hometown at Highlands County Economic Development. She also held board positions for the Florida Heartland Economic Region of Opportunity and the Florida Rural Economic Development Association. Additionally, she was a Business Development Director at Enterprise Florida (EFI), where she initiated projects that resulted in more than 2,000 jobs and \$110 million in capital investment. Meghan’s professional journey began at the Small Business Development Center at UCF.

Meghan is a proud alumna of the University of Central Florida, holding a bachelor’s degree in business management and an MBA. Outside of her professional duties, she enjoys spending time with her cherished Goldendoodle, Gunther, solving jigsaw puzzles, and listening to true crime podcasts. A devoted Elton John fan, Meghan has attended his concerts twelve times worldwide.



## Maria Crume

Consultant



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### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Communications & Marketing
- Social Digital Media
- Internal Communications & Messaging
- Project Management
- Event Management

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*I'm grateful to be part of a team dedicated to helping communities and clients adapt and succeed in today's constantly evolving economic landscape.*

As a consultant for VisionFirst Advisors, Maria brings a fresh perspective to economic development with her background in communications, digital marketing and social media. She is well versed in the importance of clear and creative messaging to build a successful brand and grow an engaged online presence. Her innovative thinking, inquisitive nature and enthusiasm for people make her an asset to clients who want to control their narrative and effectively tell their unique stories.

After graduating from the University of Florida, Maria lived in the Pacific Northwest and New York City before returning to her home state of Florida. From her background in the hospitality and nonprofit industries prior to working in economic development, Maria developed a passion for working with people and collaborating with others to find effective solutions.

Maria is passionate about what successful economic development can bring to communities and how that success can increase the quality of life for all citizens. A certified user of Chmura's JobsEQ, she is well versed in not only data analysis, but interpreting the unique story behind the data and what it means for the community. She enjoys helping people thrive both in and out of the office, volunteering for various outreach programs in her community.

In her spare time, Maria's passions include traveling, cooking, music festivals and doting on her beloved pets, Arlo the Irish Setter and Anastasia the cat.