

THE PANELISTS

Our Keynotes

Maria Contreras-Sweet, *Administrator* - U.S. SBA



Maria Contreras-Sweet became the 24th Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and a member of President Obama's cabinet on April 7, 2014. Contreras-Sweet is a seasoned manager, corporate executive, state cabinet official and three-time entrepreneur. She entered the private sector as the only female executive for Westinghouse's 7-Up/RC Bottling Company. She was a leading corporate negotiator for the creation of the Beverage Container Recycling and Litter Reduction Act, which led to the largest-ever expansion of the state's recycling system.

Contreras-Sweet was a cabinet official in California, becoming the longest-serving cabinet Secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing in state history. Upon re-entering the private sector, Contreras-Sweet set her sights on improving access to capital for small businesses. She founded a successful community bank in downtown Los Angeles focused on financing small- and mid-size businesses, especially the region's underserved entrepreneurs.

Contreras-Sweet began her work in the public sector with a U.S. Senate appointment to serve on the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission to advocate for the advancement of women in corporate America. Contreras-Sweet was a founding director of The California Endowment, a multi-billion dollar philanthropic health foundation.

Diane Smith, *Founder & CEO* - American Rural



Diane Smith is an entrepreneur, investor, attorney, author, and advocate with an extensive background in start-up companies and new industries. She is also the founder and CEO of American Rural, a non-profit dedicated to ensuring robust opportunities for rural and small town Americans.

Smith serves on profit and not-for-profit boards across the U.S. and often advises start-ups on their technology and growth strategies. She has written for *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Yonder*, *The Flathead Beacon*, numerous tech publications, and the American Rural newsletter, *Ruralistically*. She is a frequent guest lecturer on entrepreneurship at universities, hosts webinars on entrepreneurship and technology, and has spoken in the U.S. and internationally on topics such as Women in Technology, Success in Unlikely Places, and What is Rural?

Smith is a graduate of George Mason University and George Mason University School of Law and is a member of the state bars of Virginia and Montana. She and her husband David live in Columbia Falls, MT.

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Panel # 1: *Traditional Financing*



Ed Garding
CEO
First Interstate Bank

Recently retired, Mr. Garding had been Chief Executive Officer of First Interstate BancSystem from 2012, through 2015. He was Chief Operating Officer from 2010 to 2012, and served as an Executive Vice President since January 2004. Garding began his career with First Interstate in 1971, as a management trainee after receiving his B.S. in Business from Montana State University-Billings. Mr. Garding serves on the board of the Billings YMCA and is a member of the MSU-Billings School of Business Board. He has also served as chairman of the Montana Bankers Association, the Wyoming Bankers Association, and the Pacific Coast Banking School.



Jack Lawson
CEO & President
Missoula Federal Credit Union

Mr. Lawson is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Missoula Federal Credit Union (MFCU). Prior to joining MFCU, he worked for 5 years as Chief Operating Officer of Self-Help Federal Credit Union in California. Prior to that time, Lawson spent about 10 years at Brooklyn Cooperative Federal Credit Union, working first as the credit union's founding organizer and then as its Chief Executive Officer. Lawson was born and raised in Vermont. He attended the University of Vermont, where he earned a B.A. in Biology, and then the University of London and the New School for Social Research, where he earned an M.A. and an M.Phil in Economics.



Casey Winn Lozar
Business Res. Bureau Chief
MT Dept of Commerce

Mr. Lozar is the Bureau Chief of the Business Resources Bureau for the Montana Department of Commerce. He and his team provide services, technical assistance and funding opportunities for the business and entrepreneur communities, particularly in the media manufacturing, Native American development, trade and international relations and small business industries. Additionally, Lozar serves as the tribal policy advisor for the Montana Department of Commerce. Lozar is a graduate of Dartmouth College, Harvard University and the University of Colorado. In 2010, he was recognized as a Top 40 Native American Under 40 and was selected as an American Express NGEN Fellow by the Independent Sector.



Shalon Hastings
Owner
Taco Del Sol & Hub Coffee

Ms. Hastings is a fourth generation Montanan and the owner of Taco del Sol and Hub Coffee, both of which are located in downtown Helena. She opened the first franchise location of Taco del Sol in April 2004 and purchased Hub Coffee in June 2013. She is a serial entrepreneur who enjoys working on additional business ideas; likes to advise others in their aspirations to open a business of their own; and currently serves on the Montana Business Assistance Connection Loan Review Committee board. She was named SBA's Montana Small Business Person of the Year of a Medium Sized Company in 2015.

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Panel # 2: NextGen Financing



Will Price

Managing Partner
Next Frontier Capital

Mr. Price founded Next Frontier Capital to partner with mission-driven, talented entrepreneurs to build Montana technology companies of impact, utility, and value. With a Montana family history dating back to the 1870s, Price is passionate about investing in the state's promising future. Prior to Next Frontier Capital, Price served as CEO of Flite, an advertising and analytics firm, and as a Managing Director at Hummer Winblad Venture Partners. Price joined Hummer Winblad from Pequot Capital, after working for Morgan Stanley in NYC and Hong Kong. He graduated from Harvard College, studied Mandarin at Nanjing University, and earned his M.B.A from Northwestern University, where he graduated at the top of his class.



Monica Lindeen

Montana Commissioner of
Securities and Insurance

Ms. Lindeen was elected Commissioner of Securities and Insurance in 2008 and re-elected to a second term in November 2012. Lindeen was also elected President of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) and served in that capacity throughout 2015. In 2013, she received the Excellence in Consumer Advocacy Award, presented by the NAIC's Consumer Representatives. Lindeen began her career in public service representing a rural district in the Montana House of Representatives. Prior to public service, Monica formed a highly successful Internet business—Montana Communications Network, one of the first Montana-based, local Internet Service Providers. She earned her bachelor's and graduate degrees from MSU-Billings.



Stan Abel

President & CEO
SiteOne Therapeutics

Mr. Abel became President and Chief Executive Officer of SiteOne Therapeutics in February 2014, bringing more than 20 years of senior management and financial experience to the company. Prior to that, he served as CEO of Corthera, Inc., from 2007 through the successful sale of the company to Novartis in 2010. Prior to joining Corthera, Abel was a founder and Chief Financial Officer of Cerexa, Inc. from its inception in 2005 through the successful sale of the company to Forest Laboratories in 2007. Prior to Cerexa, he was the Chief Financial Officer of Peninsula Pharmaceuticals, Inc. from 2003 through the sale of the company to Johnson & Johnson in 2005. Abel received a B.S. in business from Indiana University; an M.B.A., with honors, from the University of Chicago; and his CPA from the state of Indiana in 1995.

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Panel # 3: *Writing a Business Plan*



Brent Kinghorn

Asst. Professor of Management
MSU Billings

Dr. Kinghorn is an assistant professor at Montana State University, Billings. In the past, he has helped dozens of students start a total of 25 businesses during class, 20 of which are still in operation. Currently, his classes help small businesses develop their own business plans for continuing success. Dr. Kinghorn has published research in several management journals, including the American Journal of Management and the Journal of Leadership, Accountability, and Ethics. He earned his Ph D., with a focus in strategy and entrepreneurship, from New Mexico State University. He earned his M.B.A., with a focus in finance and information technology, from Southern Methodist University. And he earned his B.S. in Industrial Engineering from Texas Tech University.



Les Craig

Director
Bozeman Launchpad

Since February of 2015, Mr. Craig has proudly served as the Director of the Blackstone LaunchPad at Montana State University. Prior to that, he co-founded two companies, The Twenty, based in Bethesda, MD and Red Owl Analytics, a software product company which built a platform to analyze trends in different industries. Previously, Craig served as a Technical Operations Officer at the Central Intelligence Agency and as a member of the National Security Technology Department at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab. He considers his time as a US Army Infantry Platoon Leader (173rd Airborne Brigade and 1st Ranger Battalion) as some of the most critical and formative years of his life. Craig is a distinguished graduate of West Point and serves on the Board of Directors for Montana State University Innovation Campus.



Michael Finnerty

State Director
Small Business Development Centers

Mr. Finnerty is the State Director of the Montana Department of Commerce's Small Business Development Center Network (SBDC). Established in 1989, the Montana SBDC Network offers free one-on-one business advising to entrepreneurs. The SBDC Center is located at the Montana Department of Commerce in Helena and supports ten centers statewide, each hosted by economic development and higher education institutions. Prior to joining the Montana SBDC, Finnerty had nearly 10 years of experience working in and leading the SBDC program in Utah. Over the last 13 years he has been the President and CEO of NxLevel Education, a national small business training entity that many of the SBDCs throughout the US have leveraged to increase success in their small business community. Finnerty joined the Montana SBDC team in 2015.