

MEET OUR INSTRUCTORS



Sandi Allen
Independent Consultant

Sandi has been a Consultant since retiring in 2017 after 28 years of service with Memphis Light, Gas and Water. While there, she held several positions including Manager of the Budget, Plant and Rates Department where she was responsible for a budget of over \$1Billion, Electric, Gas and Water rates and all plant assets. She was also the Finance Lead for a “Big Bang” Oracle implementation replacing a 1987 Mainframe System. Sandi served as Executive Director of TGFOA for two years and has continued to consult with them as needed.

Sandi is active in her Community, serving on the Board and past Chairman of the Board of Wesley Living, a Senior Housing community serving over 2200 residents in 2 Assisted Living and 28 Senior Living Communities in West TN, AR and Southern KY, multiple Leadership positions at her Church, and currently serving as Vice-President of Philanthropic Education Organization (P.E.O.) Chapter AB, an International Organization promoting educational opportunities for Women.

Sandi is a Graduate of the University of Memphis with a degree in Accounting and an MBA and is a Certified Public Finance Officer. She resides in Germantown with Randy, her Husband of 45 years and their Standard Poodle, Beau.



Regis Billings
Supervisory Special Agent
The FBI, Nashville

Supervisory Special Agent Billings leads cyber crime investigations and national security cyber matters for the FBI's Nashville Residence Agency located in Middle Tennessee. He has worked in Nashville for seven years and previously worked national security cyber in the FBI's New York office. Before entering the FBI, he served as a cyber warfare officer in the United States Air Force for nine years. He has an undergraduate degree in Computer Engineering, a Master's Degree in Cyber Security, is a Certified Ethical Hacker, and is an FBI certified Digital Forensic Examiner.

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Lillian Blackshear

Member
Bass, Berry & Sims

Lillian is a member of the law firm, Bass, Berry & Sims PLC, and is based in its Nashville office. Since 2010, Lillian has represented clients in public finance transactions totaling more than \$10 billion. Governments and banks look to Lillian as counsel to secure the financing necessary to green-light a wide range of development projects and debt refundings. Exclusively focused on public finance, Lillian represents an array of governmental entities, investment banks, and commercial banks on debt issuances throughout Tennessee. Her practice involves:

- Serving as bond counsel to counties, cities and various districts, authorities, and nonprofit entities in the issuance of general obligation and revenue bonds and notes.
- Serving as underwriter’s counsel and bank counsel to financial institutions in the issuance of state, county, city, and nonprofit debt.
- Serving as disclosure counsel to local governments in the issuance of municipal bonds and notes.

Lillian is a valuable resource to the firm’s Public Finance Practice Group on municipal securities disclosure issues and frequently works with issuers regarding their continuing disclosure obligations.



Bryan Burklin

Assistant Director, Local Government Audit
Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury

Bryan is an Assistant Director of Local Government Audit for Financial & Compliance Audits in the Tennessee Comptroller’s Office. He is responsible for the review, approval, and distribution of the audits of the 91 counties that are performed by Comptroller staff.

Bryan has been with the Comptroller’s Office for 44 years, the last ten in Nashville. He previously lived in Knoxville for 38 years. Bryan has spent his entire career assisting, advising, and auditing county governments in Tennessee.

A lifelong Tennessean, Bryan was born in Fayetteville, TN and raised in Winchester, TN. Bryan is a graduate of UT Knoxville, and he is an avid Tennessee Volunteer and Atlanta Braves fan. He is the father of four – one son and three daughters and a proud grandfather of two beautiful granddaughters (Stella – age 10, Lucy – age 5).

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Toni Chadwick

Open Records Counsel
Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury

Toni is Open Records Counsel in the Tennessee Comptroller’s Office of Open Records Counsel. Toni provides guidance and advice to Tennessee citizens and public officials regarding Tennessee’s open meetings and public records laws. Additionally, she promotes awareness of Tennessee’s public records and open meeting laws; and mediates open records disputes.

Toni joined the Comptroller’s Office in 2023 after serving as an Administrative Judge for the State of Tennessee’s Division of TennCare presiding over hearings related to program eligibility. She began her career in state government in 2009 with the Department of Labor, where she served as a Commissioner’s Designee making final decisions regarding eligibility of unemployment insurance claims.

Toni is a graduate of Mississippi State University where she received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. She received her Juris Doctorate from the University of Mississippi School of Law. While in law school, she worked as an intern for renowned Mississippi attorney Lee Abraham, where she not only sharpened her law skills, but also encountered wild animals and learned to make donuts.

Toni and her husband, attorney W. Lyon Chadwick, Jr., live in Nashville with their two children. In her spare time, she enjoys running, baking, reading, and all of The Real Housewives.



Marisa Combs

Area Executive Vice President – Public Sector
Gallagher

Marisa has over seven years of experience in employee benefits with the public sector team and nearly 20 years as a licensed attorney. Marisa holds a J.D. from the University of Tennessee College of Law and a B.A. in English from Samford University. Her focus is on leading the public sector team for Gallagher’s Tennessee and Georgia markets, including selling and serving clients as a broker. She began her work with insurance brokerage in the public sector while in private practice at Lewis Thomason law firm in 2015.

In directing the team, Marisa emphasizes strategic planning, insurance product development, regulatory compliance, State Health Plan monitoring, and legislative affairs. She often speaks on employment laws of interest to finance and HR in public sector, including FMLA, state paid family leaves, the ADA, and FLSA.

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Christopher Coviello

Vice President/Senior Analyst
US Public Finance Group
Moody's Investors Service

Chris covers credits primarily in Alabama and Tennessee. He has authored numerous reports on his most high-profile credits including Nashville and Knoxville, Tennessee and Jefferson County, Birmingham and Huntsville, Alabama, and other topics.

Prior to joining Moody's, Chris was a Mutual Fund Portfolio Manager with William R. Hough and Company and Fund Information Supervisor with Franklin Templeton. Chris holds an MBA in Finance from the University of Tampa and a BA in Economics from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida.



Will Denami

Executive Director
Tennessee Association of Assessing Officers

Will is the Executive Director for the Tennessee Association of Assessing Officers. In that role he serves as the chief advocate for Assessors of Property in Tennessee and their mission to promote fairness in the property tax system. Will is a registered lobbyist and a frequent witness before the Tennessee General Assembly on local government tax related issues. Will presents on various topics related to mass appraisal throughout the year for various local government professionals. Additionally, Will advocates for the 911 industry in Tennessee and several local governments including the South Central Tennessee Development District, Blount County, Hamilton County, Rutherford County, and Williamson County.

Will previously worked in the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development and the Tennessee House of Representatives Office of the Chief Clerk. Will has a law degree and is a former listed rule 31 mediator. Will and his wife Betsy live in Franklin and are the proud parents of William and Annie.

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Maryanne Durski
Chief Financial Officer
Tennessee Department of Education

Maryanne is a native of Cleveland, Ohio. She holds a bachelor’s degree in French from Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts and a master’s in business administration with a concentration in finance from Boston College in Boston, Massachusetts. Maryanne worked for Bank of Boston in the Trust and Estate Division for ten years. In 1991 her family relocated to Tennessee where she began her career in education finance. She worked in various school and district level positions for Sumner County Schools, including school bookkeeper, internal auditor and assistant director of schools for finance, a position she held from 1997 to 2011. In 2011 Maryanne joined the Tennessee Department of Education as the Executive Director of the Office of Local Finance. In this position she led a team responsible for the allocations of state and federal funds to districts. She also supervised six regional finance consultants who provide financial technical assistance and support to Tennessee’s 147 districts and state special schools. In April she was appointed Chief Financial Officer for the Tennessee Department of Education.

A member of the Tennessee Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) since 1997, Maryanne has served on the board since 2000. She was president in 2007 and since 2011 serves as the executive secretary to the board. In 2011 she received the James D. McCullough Distinguished Service award from TASBO and was named Tennessee’s Outstanding Business Official by the Southeastern Association of School Business Officials (SASBO). Maryanne recently received the Governor’s Excellence in Service Award.

Maryanne has been married to her husband, Zyg, for 45 years. They live in Hendersonville, Tennessee as do their two children, daughter-in-law and two grandsons, who are the lights of her life.

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Mark Ezell, Commissioner

Tennessee Department of Tourist Development

As Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD), Mark Ezell spearheads the state’s global tourism strategy. He is responsible for building national campaigns that reinforce Tennessee as a world-class destination while fostering long-term growth through revenue and job creation.

Since 2019, Tennessee achieved record-breaking tourism growth, ranking 11th in the nation for travel spending in 2023. In 2023, the state welcomed 144 million visitors, generating \$30.6 billion in direct spending—a 6.2% increase from the previous year.

Ezell has led transformative initiatives such as the groundbreaking “Kid Reviewed” campaign and introduced Tennessee Playcation, the first-ever toy catalog for travel. He established the Office of Rural Tourism to bolster economic growth in the communities where it’s most needed and spearheaded the creation of Bill Dance Signature Lakes and BikeTN to enhance Tennessee’s footprint in outdoor recreation. His contributions continue to broaden the state’s influence and cultural awareness with work on ongoing initiatives including the U.S. Civil Rights Trail, Tennessee Music Pathways and Tennessee Songwriters Week.

In 2020, Governor Lee appointed Ezell as the Director of the Economic Recovery Group (ERG) to revitalize the state’s economy amid pandemic-related job losses affecting nearly half a million Tennesseans. Steering a diverse coalition from public and private sectors, Ezell orchestrated Tennessee’s economic resurgence.

Prior to joining Tourist Development, Ezell worked his way from entry-level to eventually serve in a range of senior roles at both his family-owned business Purity Dairies, Inc., as well as Dean Foods, a Fortune 500 Company where he focused on brand development and achieved record profitability. He received national recognition for his work on campaigns including the iconic “Milk Mustache – Got Milk?” campaign.

A seventh-generation Tennessean, Ezell holds a bachelor’s from Lipscomb University and master’s from Tennessee Technological University. He and his wife Martha are active community members, passionate philanthropists and proud parents to four children and grandparents to seven grandchildren.

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William F. Fox

Special Advisor to the Chancellor and Boyd Professor Emeritus
University of Tennessee

Bill Fox is Special Advisor to the Chancellor and Boyd Professor Emeritus at the University of Tennessee. He is former Director of the Boyd Center and Head of the Economics Department. He was the 2013-14 University of Tennessee Macebearer. He is a past President and recipient of the Steven D. Gold Award from the National Tax Association. He has held visiting appointments as Professor at the University of Hawaii, scholar at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, and Distinguished Fulbright Chair at the University of Frankfurt, Germany. Fox has served as a consultant to both the private and public sectors on a wide range of public policy issues in over 40 countries and 15 U.S. states.



Dan Grattan

Senior Vice President for Federal Government Relations
Regions

Dan serves as senior vice president for Federal Government Relations at Regions. In this role, he is responsible for much of the bank’s advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill.

With more than 20 years of professional experience, Grattan joined Regions in 2020 from the Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) where he served as associate vice president for Legislative and Political Affairs. At MBA, Grattan was involved in advocacy relating to real estate finance issues, including significant legislation on regulatory relief, tax reform, and the COVID-19 pandemic response, among other items.

Prior to MBA, Grattan served as vice president of Strategy and Capital Markets for Annaly Capital Management where he was also Head of Government Relations. Grattan has served as Director of Business Development for The McNamara Group and began his career as a commercial real estate salesperson in the Washington, D.C. area. He has also enjoyed the opportunity to be a college lacrosse coach at the NCAA level.

Grattan is a frequent public speaker and has been named to the “Top Lobbyists” list by The Hill each of the past five years. He holds a degree in Journalism and Mass Communications from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia and resides in the suburbs of Washington D.C. with his wife and two young children.

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Mila Grigg, CEO

Author, Coach, Consultant
MODA Image and Brand Consulting, LLC

Mila is not just an author but a trailblazer in the realm of personal and corporate branding. Her #1 best-selling book, "Forged by Fire: How to Develop an Unstoppable Personal Brand," acclaimed as a Forbes Top 5 book on personal branding, encapsulates her expertise and vision. Mila's journey over the last 20 years has been a testament to resilience and tenacity. Transforming her company into a leading U.S. brand consultancy, she has become synonymous with authenticity and real-world experience.

Mila's forte lies in not just understanding the concept of branding, which has become a buzzword today, but in having championed its critical role in success over a decade and a half ago. Her forty-year odyssey in leadership, branding, marketing, coaching, and entrepreneurship is marked by a narrative of overcoming personal challenges to build a powerful personal brand and a successful business. As an experienced consultant, she provides expert guidance on Personal & Company Brand, social media, Storytelling, Marketing, and Employee Brand Training and Coaching.

Over two decades of experience, Mila excels in delivering engaging, interactive sessions, adeptly tailoring content to audience needs. Her keynotes go beyond mere motivation; they are transformative experiences, offering practical tools for personal and company brand building. Mila founded MODA, driven by her passion and extensive knowledge in business, branding, and marketing. Recognizing the pivotal role of branding in success, she positioned MODA as a unique entity, amalgamating various aspects of corporate and personal branding into comprehensive training and coaching.

Mila's diverse professional journey spans multiple sectors, from insurance to the music industry, including significant involvement in NASCAR's brand and corporate sponsorships. At MODA, her leadership has been instrumental in serving a wide range of clients, from Fortune 100 to 500 companies, in various sectors. As a recognized expert in leadership, image, and branding, her work is infused with her core values of integrity, work ethic, and extensive business acumen.

Additionally, Mila is a sought-after contributor to publications, a speaker at national events, and a TV expert consultant. Her accolades include being named a Forty under 40 recipient and a Woman of Influence. MODA's seminar and training programs have notably served a myriad of esteemed organizations across the United States, showcasing the broad impact and reach of her expertise and the foundational belief that Brand Drives Everything.

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John Grubbs

HR Consultant
UT Municipal Technical Advisory Service

John has served in management, human resources, and consulting roles for more than 35 years in the public and private sectors. He has served multiple organizations as HR director including two Tennessee cities (White House, and Portland). He has been with MTAS since 2015 and currently serves as the HR Consultant for Middle TN. He holds a Masters in HR Management from the University of Connecticut and is currently a master’s candidate in Industrial/Organizational Psychology at Austin Peay State University. He also holds senior level certifications from the HR Certification Institute (SPHR), Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM-SCP), and the Public Sector Human Resources Association (IPMA-SCP).



Brad Harris

Finance and Accounting Consultant
UT Municipal Technical Advisory Service

Brad is a finance and accounting consultant with the University of Tennessee’s Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS). He has served as a member of the GFOA Budget and Fiscal Policy Committee as well as on the board of several not-for profit entities. He previously served as the President of the Tennessee Government Finance Officer Association, and currently serves as the agency director for the Tennessee Association of Municipal Clerks and Recorders.

Brad is a CPA and a Certified Municipal Finance Officer, and prior to working for MTAS he served as the finance director for the City of Athens, TN and Rhea County, TN. Brad’s passion is to help others grow in the field of government accounting. He teaches frequently through the United States on a variety of accounting topics and has been designated a Distinguished Fellow in Professional Practice by the University of Tennessee Master of Public Policy and Administration Program. He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech University and lives in Dayton with his lovely wife Beth and daughter Katie. His older daughter Hannah resides in Columbia, TN.

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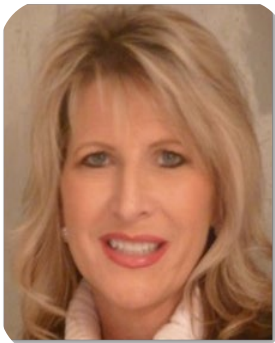


Trevor Henderson

Middle TN Substance Use Response Consultant
UT-SMART, UT Institute for Public Service

Trevor grew up in Northern Ireland and has been living in Tennessee for the past twenty years. He has a broad background from working in construction, outdoor education, peace and reconciliation programs, unemployment issues, supporting victims of violent crime, HIV and several other public health issues. Most recently he has been working on the opioid/overdose crisis as director of the Metro Nashville Public Health Department Overdose Response Program and as a public health analyst with the CDC Foundation Overdose Response Program (ORS). His work with the ORS program across Tennessee has involved collaboration with multiple state and local agencies and coalitions. He has had the opportunity to develop an extensive network of relationships and access to expertise on opioid/overdose response strategies.

In September 2023 Trevor joined the UT-SMART Initiative team as the “Middle TN Substance Use Response Consultant” and has been working with multiple Middle TN counties on strategies to allocate resources and develop overdose response interventions.



Janet Jennings, CPA, CPFO, CMFO

Finance Director
Town of Jonesborough

Janet serves as the Finance Director for the Town of Jonesborough. She has a bachelor’s degree in Accounting from East TN State University and a master’s degree in Business Administration from Western Governors University. She is a CPA, CPFO (through GFOA) and a CMFO. She spent the majority of her local government career, 21 years, serving as the Finance Director for the City of Johnson City. After leaving Johnson City, she briefly served as the CFO for the City of Bristol, Virginia. Prior experience includes Public Accounting, as well as a Controller in a manufacturing environment. Janet was involved in a major software conversion during her tenure in Johnson City and is in the midst of a software conversion in Jonesborough.

Janet’s involvement with the TGFOA includes serving as 2nd Vice President, Vice President and President, as well as Program Chair. She was also involved with the Tennessee Chapter of Women in Public Finance.

On a personal note, she has been a church pianist since she was 13, and enjoys spending time with her husband, 2 daughters and 3 grandchildren.

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Ben Johnson

Senior Financial Analyst
Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury

Ben serves as a Senior Financial Analyst for the Tennessee Comptroller’s Office Division of Local Government Finance. Ben is the Region 5 budget analyst and serves as staff to the Tennessee Board of Utility Regulation. Ben also serves as a member of the Comptroller’s Legislative team when the Tennessee General Assembly is in session.

Prior to his current role, he worked for the Comptroller’s Division of State Audit and for Deloitte as a Forensic Auditor. Ben has two college degrees, one in Accounting and the other in Agriculture Economics. Ben has been married to his wife Amie since February of 2023. Ben and Amie have one son, Sheppard, who was born in July of 2024.



Roland M. Kooch, Jr.

Senior Vice President
Davenport & Company LLC

Roland has worked in public finance since 1993 and has served as Municipal Advisor to public sector and not-for-profit clients throughout the nation. Since joining Davenport in 1998, Mr. Kooch has led the analytical, financial modeling, and credit work on a wide variety of governmental and enterprise system engagements including large, complex municipal issuers, small local government borrowers and troubled entities. Mr. Kooch received his B.S. in business administration with a major in accounting from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

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Victory Lay
Town Manager
Town of Nolensville

Victor Lay graduated Memphis State University in 1989 with a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering. Victor is a registered Professional Engineer in the state of Tennessee. He practiced five years in the Transportation Engineering field in Chicago area Before moving back to his hometown of Waynesboro, TN and taking the job as the City Manager in 1995.

Victor completed his Master's in Public Administration in December 2009 and was employed by the City of Spring Hill, TN as the City Administrator. While in Spring Hill, Victor received a peer award from the Tennessee City Management Association as the 2013 City Manager of the Year. Victor remained with the city of Spring Hill experiencing significant growth from 27,000 population in 2009 to just over 50,000 population in the 2020 Census.

Victor has been with the Town of Nolensville as the Town Manager since January 2021, once again experiencing a rapidly growing community. Victor has been married to Bethany, a Vice-President with Columbia State College for 36 years. They have three grown children and one Grand Daughter.



J. Seth May
Assistant General Counsel
Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury

Seth is an Assistant General Counsel to the Comptroller of the Treasury. In this role, Seth answers inquiries to the Office of Open Records Counsel, sits as counsel to the two utility boards within the Comptroller's Office, and addresses various other inquiries to the Office of General Counsel.

Seth previously served as an Exemption Designee for the State Board of Equalization. Prior to joining the Comptroller's office in 2018, Seth worked for the Division of TennCare, Tennessee's Medicaid program. Before his employment with the state, Seth was in private practice. Seth has extensive experience with administrative law and policy research.

Seth graduated from the University of Tennessee with degrees in political science and economics. He graduated from the University of Mississippi School of Law. He lives in Nashville with his wife, their cat, and their daughter. They enjoy the symphony, traveling, and the cries of woe when it's time to turn Daniel Tiger off.

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Ashley McAnulty
Senior Vice President
Stephens

Mr. McAnulty has over 30 years of experience working with public entities in Tennessee. He graduated from Belmont University as a Massey Scholar, with a Bachelor of Business Administration undergraduate degree and a Master of Accountancy graduate degree. Ashley joined Stephens Inc. in 2002 in the firm’s Nashville, Tennessee, office, where he has served on financing transactions throughout Tennessee totaling more than \$5.1 billion. He regularly assists Tennessee municipalities with their financing needs including counties, cities, utilities, educational institutions, housing facilities, healthcare facilities, and others.

Prior to joining Stephens he served in the corporate lending divisions of Bank of America and SunTrust Bank in Nashville. Mr. McAnulty handled debt financing and financial analysis of a wide range of tax-exempt and taxable entities in Tennessee. Mr. McAnulty is a registered Municipal Advisor Representative, Municipal Advisor Principal, Uniform State Law Combined Registered Investment Advisor, and a General Securities Representative.



Jason E. Mumpower
Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury

Jason was elected Tennessee’s 35th Comptroller of the Treasury on January 13, 2021. He is responsible for leading the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury, which comprises 12 divisions and more than 600 employees, and ensuring the Office fulfills its mission to make government work better. He is currently serving his second term.

Prior to his service with the Comptroller’s Office, Comptroller Mumpower served in the Tennessee General Assembly as the State Representative for Sullivan and Johnson counties in the Tennessee General Assembly. He was first elected to office at age 23 and during his 14-year tenure, he held the positions of House Minority Leader and House Majority Leader. He joined the Comptroller’s Office in December 2010, serving as former Comptroller Justin P. Wilson’s Deputy Comptroller and Chief of Staff.

Comptroller Mumpower has received numerous awards and recognitions during his career. In 2023, he was named the Top Leader among large Middle Tennessee businesses as part of *The Tennessean’s* Top Workplaces competition. He has also been named Legislator of the Year on multiple occasions by several organizations.

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Additionally, he has received the National Federation of Independent Businesses’ Guardian of Small Business Award and the Future Farmers of America’s Lifetime Alumni Award.

Comptroller Mumpower is a graduate of King University (née King College) with a B.A. in Economics and a minor in Political Science. Notably, in June 2013, he graduated from Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government *Senior Executives in State and Local Government* program.

Comptroller Mumpower is an Eagle Scout and active in many community organizations and projects, including the Rotary Club of Bristol, TN/VA and the chambers of commerce in Kingsport, Bristol, and Johnson County, Tennessee. He currently serves as a member of King University’s Board of Trustees.

Comptroller Mumpower resides in Bristol, Tennessee with his wife, Alicia, and son, Max.



Tara Wohlgemuth Pedraza

Deputy Director of External Affairs
Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation

Tara is the Deputy Director of External Affairs in the Nashville Environmental Field Office. In addition to serving the stakeholders of the 13-county Mid Cumberland region, she has statewide duties associated with TDEC’s Customer Service Survey and Annual Report. Tara joined TDEC in 2015 as the Regional Director of External Affairs in the Cookeville Office.

Prior to joining TDEC, Tara worked on various efforts around land conservation planning and education in Memphis and staffed the Mid-South Regional Greenprint & Sustainability Plan. She continues to fulfill her passion for conservation through her work with the nine Tennessee State Parks in her region on stakeholder engagement, special event planning and strategic planning.

She can often be found at a State Park on the weekends as well, drawing inspiration and strength from nature. Tara earned her B.A. in Environmental Studies from Dartmouth College and is currently pursuing a Professional Science Master’s in Environmental Informatics at Tennessee Tech. She is also fluent in Spanish.

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Scott Reeser

Senior Project Manager
Governmental Accounting Standards Board

Scott is a senior project manager with the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) in Norwalk, Connecticut. He is currently working on a GASB project related to the reexamination of the financial reporting model and infrastructure assets. Previously, he has worked on several projects, including those leading to statements on accounting and financial reporting for postemployment benefits, public-private partnerships, fiduciary activities, and transactions reported as deferred outflows of resources and deferred inflows of resources.

Before joining the staff of the GASB in 2010, Mr. Reeser spent ten years working for the Office of the Comptroller in the State of Illinois. During that time, Mr. Reeser was responsible for the coordination and preparation of the state’s annual comprehensive financial report and the development of statewide accounting policies. His previous experience also includes over five years with a public accounting firm performing financial and compliance audits of not-for-profit entities and governmental agencies.



Sarah Schirmer

PFM

Sarah is a Managing Director with PFM’s Management and Budget Consulting practice and Executive Director of PFM’s Center for Justice & Safety Finance (CJSF). Sarah brings to CJSF more than 15 years of experience working in the municipal government and criminal justice fields, with a focus on policy, data analysis and research. As a Managing Director, Sarah serves as the engagement manager for clients across the South.

Sarah supports local government clients with criminal justice and public safety priorities that bridge policy, finance, and operations including organizational and operational assessments, performance management, and policy improvements.

Prior to joining PFM, Sarah was the Criminal Justice Policy Advisor to New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, where she was responsible for strategic planning, policy research and cross-agency coordination of the mayor’s priorities for the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Early in her career, Sarah was an assistant budget analyst at the New York City Office of Management and Budget, liaising with the five borough District Attorneys and New York Police Department.

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Steven Simmons

Help Desk Manager
Local Government Corporation

Steven Simmons is a seasoned Accounting and IT Professional with over 29 years of experience working directly with city and county governments. Steven has worked in several capacities in this arena over his career including accounting, audit, software installation/training, software design, software testing/documentation, software support, and data conversions/migrations. He currently serves as the Help Desk Manager for Local Government Corporation.

Steven and his wife Susan have been married 27 years. They live in Columbia TN. When he's not working, Steven enjoys spending time with family, cooking, reading, going to movies, church mission work, and traveling.

Steven's knowledge of Excel precedes him around the LGC office as he often shares tips and tricks with his colleagues and customers to make their jobs easier. Some have given him the tagline "this calls for a spreadsheet."



Michael Strickland

Senior Research Associate, PhD
Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Michael is a senior researcher with the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR), a state agency that carries out research for the General Assembly on policy challenges that cut across multiple levels of government. Originally from Middle Tennessee, Dr. Strickland received his doctorate in anthropology from UCLA.

His work with TACIR has run the gamut from tangible personal property taxation to health insurance pricing, state contracting equity to passenger rail development—and, most recently, housing affordability.

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Eric Stuckey
City Administrator
City of Franklin

Eric Stuckey has served as City Administrator for the City of Franklin since January 1, 2009. As the City’s top administrative official, Mr. Stuckey oversees day-to-day operations and works with the Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BOMA) to chart the strategic direction of the city. Since joining the City of Franklin, Mr. Stuckey has worked closely with the Board to adopt wide-ranging financial policies that have helped the City obtain the highest possible bond ratings (triple-A) from both Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s. His efforts have also focused on providing long term planning for the organization and community, responsive local government, and cost-effective service delivery. In recent years, the City of Franklin has received numerous awards including All America City recognition in 2020 by the National Civic League (the first Tennessee City to receive this prestigious recognition since the 1990’s). Franklin is consistently rated as one of the best places to live in America by publications such as USA Today, Fortune Magazine, Money Magazine, and Livability.

Eric’s 30-year public service career has included service as Assistant County Administrator for Hamilton County, Ohio (Cincinnati, Ohio), Assistant City Manager and Budget Director for the City of Elgin, Illinois and service in the City of Dayton, Ohio’s Office of Management and Budget. Mr. Stuckey is a cum laude graduate of Miami University (Ohio) with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. Eric also earned a Master of Public Administration degree with honors from the University of Kansas. Eric is active in his profession having served as President of the Tennessee City Management Association (2019-2020) and is currently a Vice President representing the Southeastern United States on the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Executive Board. Eric was named City Manager of the Year by the Tennessee City Management Association in 2023. Eric is also active in the community working in various service and leadership positions including the United Way of Greater Nashville Executive Board and the Williamson County Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors.

Eric and his wife, Lisa, have been married for 35 years. Lisa serves as a Literacy coach at Sunset Middle School in Williamson County and was recognized as Williamson County Middle School Teacher of the Year in 2018. Lisa and Eric have two children who both graduated from Franklin High School. Beth, a graduate of Ohio State University and Belmont University (Doctorate), is an Occupational Therapist living in Spring Hill, TN. Scott is an Emergency Medicine Resident Physician at Ohio State University.

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Outside of his work life, Eric enjoys sports, exercise, reading, and travel. Eric summited Mount Kilimanjaro with his brothers, Kent and Doug, a few years. He also claimed the mirror ball trophy from the Nashville Dancing with the Stars competition (a fund raising, ballroom dancing competition benefitting Feed America First).



R.T. Taylor
Vice President
Davenport & Company

R.T. began his professional career as an auditor with Ernst & Young, analyzing the financials of numerous clients throughout various industries, including Fortune 500 client engagements. Mr. Taylor came to Davenport & Company LLC in 2001 and joined the Davenport Public Finance Team in 2004. Mr. Taylor specializes in local government finance throughout the Mid-Atlantic / Southeast Region performing multi-year financial modeling and strategic capital planning, Rating Agency strategy and interaction, debt issuance and execution for various credit structures, economic development projects, and utility enterprise pro forma development. Mr. Taylor received his B.S. in Accounting from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA.



Jennifer Tourville, DNP
Executive Director
UT-SMART, UT Institute for Public Service

Jennifer is an East Tennessee native. She holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Vanderbilt University and continues to practice as a nurse practitioner. Since 2022 she has also served as the Executive Director of the UT Institute for Public Service SMART Initiative where she oversees a team of experts that are working with communities across the state to address the effects of the overdose crisis.

Her previous role with UT was as faculty with the College of Nursing where she taught newborn and pediatric courses and mentored student research related to neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome.

Dr. Tourville serves on several university task forces, community committees, and grant teams focused on substance use.

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Valesa Wells
Finance Director
Town of Collierville

Valesa serves as Finance Director for the Town of Collierville. Her previous roles include Budget Officer for Collierville and Senior Manager, Budget and Fiscal Planning for Shelby County Government. Prior to joining the local government ranks, she served local governments as a public sector finance professional with national independent municipal advisory firm PFM.

Valesa is a proud veteran having served eight years of active and reserve duty in the United States Navy. She is also a proud graduate of the University of Memphis where she received a Bachelor of Arts in Professional and Technical Writing graduating with the distinction Cum Laude and a Masters of Public Administration with a certification in Local Government Management. She is also a graduate of the Leadership Memphis Executive Class of 2008.

One of her greatest joys is working in ministry with her husband and Pastor, Dickerson Wells. The two are blessed with four children. And their greatest delight is that of their five grandchildren. As time permits, Valesa serves as a volunteer reader for FM89.3 WYPL Radio (a program designed for the visually impaired) and teaching Microsoft Excel classes at local public libraries.