



VAPDC 2018 Summer Conference & Annual Meeting
Speaker Profiles

Beth Doughty
Executive Director
Roanoke Regional Partnership

Beth Doughty has spent almost 30 years in economic development working to attract Ballast Point Brewing, Deschutes Brewery, Ardagh Packaging, Arkay Packaging, Dynax America, Eldor Corporation, and many others to the Roanoke region. She has been executive director of the Roanoke Regional Partnership since 2008 after a stint from 1991 to 1999. She also serves as executive of the Roanoke Outside Foundation and the Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority. She was president of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce for 9 years.

Beth has been recognized as one of the top 50 economic developers in North America three times by Consultant Connect. Under her leadership, the Roanoke Regional Partnership received the Excellence in Economic Development award from the Site Selectors Guild in 2017. She has lectured on economic development at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Virginia Tech, Roanoke College, and was a visiting lecturer for the Mellon Foundation in the Czech Republic.

A graduate of the University of Virginia, Beth is a past president and a Cardinal of the Virginia Economic Developers Association.

Laura Toni-Holsinger
Executive Director, United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County

Laura is a nonprofit management and leadership professional with fourteen years of experience. She currently serves as Executive Director of United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. In addition to her work at United Way, she also serves on the Friendly City Food Co-op Board of Directors. She holds a degree in Communication Studies from Virginia Tech and a Masters of Public Administration from Suffolk University.

Laura spent the first seven years of her career serving in Boston, first as an AmeriCorps member working in the Boston Public Schools, and then in various roles at both City Year Boston and Big Sister Association of Greater Boston. She is passionate about collaborative change and the leadership potential of anyone with the courage to take risks in the name of building a stronger community.

Most important of all, she enjoys spending time with her husband Brent, a fellow community change-agent, and their children Lucy and Myles.

Ann Jennings
Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources
Commonwealth of Virginia

Ann Jennings is the Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources for the Chesapeake Bay under Secretary of Natural Resources Matt Strickler in the office of Governor Ralph Northam. Prior to her current position, she was the Virginia Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative commission created to advise the General Assemblies of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia on matters of Bay-wide concern.

Prior to the Commission, Ann served as the Virginia Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Ann's career also includes work as a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Originally from Virginia Beach, Ann received a bachelor's degree in biology from Virginia Tech and a master's degree in wildlife and fisheries sciences from Texas A&M University. Ann is a graduate of the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute and the Sorensen Institute's Political Leaders Program.

Danette Poole
Director, Planning and Recreation Resources Division
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Danette Poole is the Director of DCR's Planning and Recreation Resources Division, where she oversees development of the Virginia Outdoors Plan; recreational grant programs; State Park master planning; design and construction of DCR facilities; the Virginia's Scenic Rivers program; Statewide Trails; and public access to Virginia's waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. Danette began her 38-year career with DCR in Virginia State Parks and was the first woman to become a state park manager. Her stints in parks included First Landing, Pocahontas, Caledon, Westmoreland, York River, False Cape, and Chippokes Plantation.

Robert E. Gittler
US Economic Development Administration

Mr. Gittler serves as the Economic Development Specialist to Virginia for the U.S. Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration (EDA). Specifically, he develops and manages economic development investments on behalf of EDA and has a key role in the solicitation, analysis, monitoring and quality assurance of investments in accordance with EDA's funding priorities and strategy. He consults to key partners from among a range of local, regional, and state governmental entities, institutions of higher education, and non-profit organizations. Other key responsibilities include client service and assessing economic trends and regional competitive strengths and weaknesses in order to identify the highest-impact priority projects in development-ready distressed communities.

Immediately prior to joining EDA in 2008, Mr. Gittler served nine years as Senior Manager for the Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania (BFTP/SEP), one of the nation's preeminent Technology-Based Economic Development organizations. At BFTP/SEP he directed the Program Analysis and Development unit, undertook the organization's economic impact analyses, and staffed various regional initiatives. Earlier positions included work with the City of Philadelphia Commerce Department and approximately 10 years in commercial real estate consulting and appraisal.

Mr. Gittler holds an M.U.P. (Master of Urban Planning) /Economic Development concentration from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a B.A. in Urban Studies from Drew University in Madison, NJ.