Aggie Square, Sacramento
October 13, 2026
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

California Creates: Golden State Manufacturing Forum
Speakers and Panelists Biographies

Stephen Baiter, Deputy Director, East Bay Economic Development Alliance (East Bay EDA). Panelist, Manufacturer Success Stories, Navigating the Golden State. *Stephen is the Executive Director of the East Bay Economic Development Alliance (East Bay EDA), a regional cross-sector economic development organization that supports strategic economic development across Alameda and Contra Costa counties. East Bay EDA has more than 150 members from business, education, labor, local governments, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, research institutions, and other entities. Stephen has more than two decades of experience leading and supporting successful multi-stakeholder public/private partnerships and projects and has an extensive track record with building and connecting regional networks to help businesses and organizations have greater impact. Stephen currently serves as a Vice Chair on the Board of Directors for the California Association of Local Economic Development (CALED). He is also a Past Chair of the California Workforce Association (CWA) and currently serves on a few local and regional nonprofit boards. He has a BA in Political Science from Boston College and a Master's in Public Administration from California State University – East Bay.*

Scott Beckner, Branch Chief, CalRecycle's Business Assistance and Market Development. Panelist, Funding Options – California's Capital Stack. *Scott oversees the administration of CalRecycle's loan programs—including the Recycling Market Development Zone (RMDZ) and Tire Equipment Loan programs—as well as grant and technical-assistance initiatives that support recycling and remanufacturing businesses throughout California. Since joining CalRecycle in 2008, Scott has worked across a diverse portfolio of program areas, including permitting, climate policy, organics management, bioenergy, tribal affairs, and grant administration, bringing deep experience and a collaborative approach to advancing the state's recycling and circular-economy goals.*

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Cheryl Beninga, Co-Founder of FourthWave. Speaker, Fireside Chat - Women in Manufacturing. *Cheryl is an experienced Venture Investor in high growth organizations innovating in clean technology, mobile software, MedTech and enterprise software and services. Managing Director of Wai-Mohala Ventures and Beninga Advisors. Co-Founder FourthWave Accelerator Program for Leading Female Founders in technology sectors providing mentorship, conscious leadership training and access to capital. I have worked with leading technology investors including Intel Capital and GE Ventures on all stages of technology investing. Experienced at the board and operation level at all venture stages Seed round to IPO and M&A exits. Very grateful to work with many great startup teams having successful exits.*

Monique Brown, Knowledge and Community Director, Wexford Science and Technology. Panelist, Emerging Industries – Biotech, Life Sciences. *Monique builds the infrastructure - physical, financial, and human - that helps entrepreneurs and institutions in the Sacramento region grow together rather than alone. As Knowledge Community Director and Site Director at Aggie Square, she leads the regional strategy, programming, and partnerships that turn the campus into a working ecosystem. She also co-founded Growth Factory, SEGA, and NorCal AngelCon, helping deploy $13M+ in pre-seed and seed capital across 65+ startups, and serves on the boards of Valley Vision, the Sacramento Metro Chamber, Growth Factory Nonprofit, and Teach for America. She was recognized as a Women Who Mean Business honoree by the Sacramento Business Journal in 2023.*

Rachael Brown, Owner, Rachael Brown Consulting. Moderator, Local Leaders: Opportunities in Local Communities. *Rachael is the CEO and Founder of Rachael Brown Consulting and EDGE, delivering strategic solutions at the intersection of economic growth, site readiness, and community development. With nearly 20 years of experience across commercial development, municipal economic development with the City of Elk Grove, and civil architecture/environmental remediation, Rachael has driven critical regional initiatives—including infrastructure financing (EIFDs), industrial site readiness, and technical utility feasibility across Northern California. Prior to founding her firm, she served as Executive Director for the Power Inn Alliance, where she led district-wide economic vitality efforts and advanced workforce development initiatives for local manufacturers. A Sacramento native, Rachael holds a Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design and a Master of Science in Urban Land Development from California State University, Sacramento.*

Lauren Dominguez, Manager, CPCFA. Panelist, Funding Options – California's Capital Stack. *Lauren is the Section Manager for the California Capital Access Program (CalCAP), at the Capital Programs & Climate Financing Authority (CPCFA), in the State Treasurer's Office. With more than 15 years of banking industry experience and over 11 years at CPCFA, Lauren brings extensive leadership and financial program experience focused on expanding access to capital. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from the University of Phoenix and is recognized for her commitment to public service, operational excellence, and innovative financing solutions.*

Beth Esponette, Co-founder and CPO, Unspun. Panelist, Creative Economy, Technologies, and Manufacturing. *Beth is the cofounder and CPO of unspun, establishing novel 3D weaving systems for automated, localized, and zero-waste garment production. Esponnette holds an MFA in Design from Stanford University and a BS in Fiber Science & Apparel Design from Cornell University. She previously served as Assistant Professor of Product Design at the University of Oregon and as a grant proposal reviewer for the National Science Foundation. Her career includes roles in materials research and product development at Mountain Hardwear, Pearl Izumi, and Ralph Lauren. A MIT Technology Review 35 Innovators Under 35 honoree and a Vogue Business Sustainability Thought Leader, Esponnette draws from biological systems, evolution, and material efficiency to challenge conventional models of globalized mass manufacturing.*

Laura Fickle, Economic Development Manager, City of Rancho Cordova. Panelist, Local Leaders: Opportunities in Local Communities. *Laura is the Economic Development Manager for the City of Rancho Cordova, where she focuses on business growth, innovation, workforce development, and community-centered economic strategy. Laura is helping advance Rancho Cordova's AI and Robotics Ecosystem, a public-private effort connecting technology, infrastructure, education, and workforce pathways to create practical benefits for residents and businesses. She also serves on the National League of Cities' AI & Emerging Technology Forum, and participates in the Rancho Cordova Area Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) collaboration for Rancho Cordova manufacturers.*

Jessica Grimes, PhD, Executive Director, California Employment Training Panel (ETP). Panelist, Support Structures, Financing, and Operations. *Jessica, was appointed by Governor Newsom as the Executive Director of the California Employment Training Panel (ETP) in November 2023. ETP is one of several state departments within the Labor and Workforce Development Agency that partners with businesses to retain jobs and boost wages by funding employment training. Since its establishment, ETP has invested over $2 billion into 104,000 businesses to train and retain 1.5 million California workers.*

Prior to her appointment, she served as the Associate Vice Chancellor of Career Education and Workforce Development at the Kern Community College District (KCCD) and as the Regional Chair for the Central Valley/Mother Lode Regional Consortium (CVML). Additionally, she co-led the Kern Coalition, the regional convener for California Jobs First.

Jessie HF Hammerling, PhD, Director, Green Economy Program at UC Berkeley Labor Center. Panelist, Local Leaders: Opportunities in Local Communities. *Jessie is the director of the Green Economy Program at the UC Berkeley Labor Center, and the principal investigator for the program's work in support of the Green Empowerment Zone in Contra Costa and Solano Counties. Dr. Hammerling's work involves close collaboration with policymakers, industry, labor, and community organizations on strategies for building a more equitable and sustainable economy.*

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Sarah Harper, CEO, All Weather Architectural Aluminum. Speaker, Fireside Chat – Women in Manufacturing. *Sarah is President of All Weather Architectural Aluminum, a family-owned California manufacturer of custom aluminum windows and doors founded by her grandfather more than 50 years ago. Her career has included leadership roles in manufacturing, supply chain, and operations, including experience at E. & J. Gallo Winery and Cisco.*

Sarah earned her bachelor's degree from Princeton University and an MBA in Supply Chain Management from Arizona State University. She is passionate about building strong teams, developing future leaders, and creating workplaces where people feel connected and valued.

Lance Hastings, President and Chief Executive Officer, California Manufacturers & Technology Association. Speaker, Welcome and Opening Remarks. *Lance is the President & CEO of the California Manufacturers & Technology Association (CMTA). Under his leadership, CMTA passed historic legislation to provide a Manufacturing Investment Credit for manufacturing equipment with broad, bipartisan support. Before joining CMTA, he served as MillerCoors' vice president of national affairs. Previously, he was the vice president of government relations at the California Grocers Association and senior director for state affairs at the Grocery Manufacturers of America. He also served as legislative staff in the California State Legislature for almost a decade.*

He has served as President of the Sacramento State Alumni Association, the Sacramento State University Foundation, the Red Cross Sierra-Delta Chapter, the Los Angeles County Business Federation, and the Food Industry Association Executives. He also served on the advisory boards of the California Association for Local Economic Development and was appointed to the California Future of Work Commission by Governor Newsom.

Tiffany Heisler, Business Banking Market Leader for Northern and Central California, US Bank. Panelist, Support Structures, Financing, and Operations. *Tiffany is the Business Banking Market Leader for North and Central California at U.S. Bank, leading teams that serve business clients from Sacramento and the Central Valley to Chico and Redding. In her 22 years with U.S. Bank, she has been recognized as a top performer known for her client-centric approach, strong credit and advisory expertise, and consistent market growth. She works closely with manufacturers and business owners on capital access, treasury management, and growth strategy. Tiffany holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from Metropolitan State College of Denver and has served on boards including Habitat for Humanity Denver and A Precious Child. She now serves on the Board of United Way California Capital Region.*

Charles Henkels, Executive Director, LAUNCH Apprenticeship Network. Panelist, Support Structures, Financing, and Operations. *Charles is the Executive Director of the LAUNCH Apprenticeship Network, a statewide intermediary expanding access to high-quality apprenticeship opportunities across California. Under his leadership, LAUNCH has partnered with California businesses to train approximately 900 manufacturing and industrial technicians. Through its partnership with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, LAUNCH is also leading statewide efforts to streamline talent recruitment and development by helping colleges and employers build scalable, industry-responsive apprenticeship programs.*

Phillip Herrera, Managing Partner, Herrera & Company. Panelist, Emerging Industries – Biotech, Life Sciences. *Phillip helps California businesses secure government incentives that support workforce development, job creation, and capital investment. His clients range from mid-sized companies to Fortune 1000 corporations in advanced manufacturing sectors, including semiconductors, life sciences, and clean energy.*

Phillip specializes in California's Employment Training Panel (ETP), the CAEATFA Sales and Use Tax Exclusion, and the California Competes Tax Credit. He has successfully negotiated more than 750 ETP awards and, in partnership with an associate firm, helped manufacturing and R&D companies secure more than $175 million in CAEATFA incentives. His work has supported thousands of California jobs and more than $200 million in employer-funded workforce training.

Phillip holds a degree in accounting and an MBA. Before entering private practice, he served in government tax and workforce-development roles. Outside of work, he enjoys golf, yoga, surfing, and swimming from Alcatraz to Aquatic Park. He is a member of the Stockton Mexican Sports Hall of Fame and holds the Brookside Country Club scoring record with an 11-under-par 61.

Thomas Hungerford, Vice President of Business Operations, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company. Speaker. *Tom brings more than 20 years of experience in leadership, business operations, and finance. Tom has a proven track record of driving revenue growth and improvement in various Lockheed Martin programs. Currently, he serves as Vice President of Business Operations for the Skunk Works, where he leads a team responsible for managing $3B+ of annual revenue including capture activities, financial management, and financial planning.*

Bryant Jenkins, Managing Principal, Sperry Capital Inc. Panelist, Private & Public Finance: Financing Options for Powering Manufacturing Growth. *Bryant leads Sperry Capital, a California-headquartered municipal advisory firm registered with the SEC and MSRB. He has more than 25 years of experience helping public agencies and private companies finance infrastructure, including more than 15 years as a municipal advisor. His work focuses on bringing advising public agencies and private borrowers into the tax-exempt bond market. He has frequently advised workforce housing developers on innovative private activity bond financings. Bryant also leads Sperry's work for the Oregon Facilities Authority, advising on conduit revenue bonds for nonprofit and private borrowers. He has advised private concessionaires and public owners on public-private partnerships (P3s). Before Sperry, Bryant was a Director in KPMG's Infrastructure Advisory practice, where he focused on P3s. Before that, he spent more than nine years as a public finance investment banker. He also served as Principal Investigator on a Transportation Research Board study of how to use private capital to renew infrastructure. He holds a BA in Economics from Columbia University and an MBA from Stanford.*

Kubilay Karul, Regional Manager, SA Recycling. Panelist, Manufacturer Success Stories: Navigating the Golden State. *Kubilay, "Kubi," is Regional General Manager at SA Recycling, a California-founded company headquartered in the state and the nation's largest metal recycler, with more than 170 locations and 24 metal shredders nationwide, including over 30 facilities in Southern California. Since joining the company in 2009, he has held a range of leadership positions across multiple regions, contributing to the company's operational growth and expansion. His work centers on operational excellence, strategic development, and long-term competitiveness, with a particular focus on advancing the circular economy and strengthening resilient domestic supply chains for critical materials.*

Cameron Law, Executive Director, Carlsen Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship at Sacramento State University. Panelist, Support Structures, Financing, and Operations. *Cameron serves as Executive Director of the Carlsen Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Sacramento State University, with responsibility for the university's entrepreneurship programming and its work connecting founders and growing companies to capital, customers, and technical assistance across the Capital Region. Cameron's work spans entrepreneurial development, capital formation, and economic development. Through the Carlsen Center he serves as Accelerate CA Hub Lead for the Capital Region, connecting companies to grant capital, technical assistance, and mentorship. He also leads NorCal AngelCon, an investment education program that grows the region's base of early-stage capital.*

In addition to his work at the Carlsen Center, Cameron serves as Coalition Manager for the California Starters Coalition, powered by Right to Start, working statewide to remove the barriers that keep people from starting and growing a business.

Alice Loy, Co-founder, Creative Economy Finance Network. Panelist Creative Economy, Technologies, and Manufacturing. *An accomplished impact investor and founder of Creative Startups, the world's first and leading entrepreneurship accelerator for creative industries, Alice is widely recognized as a driving force behind the global creative economy movement. Under Alice's leadership, Creative Startups grew to serve nearly 800 creative companies across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the USA. In 2025 Alice co-founded Creative Economy Finance Network, LLC, in response to the urgent need to develop innovative capital solutions for creative organizations and businesses. CEFN works closely with the California State Treasurer's Office and Washington State Department of Commerce to cultivate a regional network of 120+ impact investors, foundations, CDFIs, family offices, and banks working to design and scale innovative capital tools for creatives.*

Heather Luzzi, Director, Small business Administration's Sacramento District Office. Panelist, Funding Options – California's Capital Stack. *Heather is District Director of the U.S. Small Business Administration's Sacramento District Office and Acting District Director of the San Francisco District Office. In that dual role, she is responsible for SBA programs and services across 35 Northern California counties.*

Created in 1953, the SBA is the federal agency charged with helping Americans start, grow, expand, and recover small businesses. As District Director, she provides leadership and oversight for capital programs, entrepreneurial counseling and training, federal contracting certifications, and disaster recovery. She also stewards the Resource Partner Network in her jurisdiction, including Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, SCORE, and the Veterans Business Outreach Center.

Fiona Ma, California State Treasurer. Moderator, Fireside Chat – Women in Manufacturing. *Fiona Ma is California's 34th State Treasurer. She was first elected on November 6, 2018, with more votes (7,825,587) than any other candidate for treasurer in the state's history. She was reelected November 8, 2022. She is the first woman of color and the first woman Certified Public Accountant (CPA) elected to the position. The State Treasurer's Office was created in the California Constitution in 1849. It provides financing for schools, roads, housing, recycling and waste management, hospitals, public facilities, and other crucial infrastructure projects that better the lives of residents. California is the world's fifth-largest economy and Treasurer Ma is the state's primary banker. Presently, her office processes more than $3 trillion in banking transactions. She provides transparency and oversight for the government's investment portfolio and accounts, as well as for the state's surplus funds. Treasurer Ma oversees an investment portfolio that currently averages over $200 billion, a significant portion of which is beneficially owned by more than 2,200 local governments in California. She serves as agent of sales for all State bonds and is trustee of billions of dollars of state indebtedness.*

Dustin McDonald, Senior Business Development Specialist, GoBiz. Panelist, Funding Options – California's Capital Stack. *Dustin is now in his fourth year with GO-Biz, Dustin has dedicated his career to supporting a healthy California economy, having worked at the state and federal levels to secure funding and key policy reforms for critical California industries such as manufacturing, aerospace and defense, and bio/life sciences. In his current role Dustin works across the Los Angeles and Orange counties region, the largest manufacturing region in the entire country, helping businesses save money on everything from financing and site selection to permitting and energy, and connecting them with public and private partners to grow and thrive.*

Kathy McIntyre, Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder, Roadmap 4 Innovation (R4I). Panelist, Permitting, Regulatory, and Technical Assistance. *Kathy brings more than four decades of manufacturing experience spanning C-level leadership, Fortune 100 companies, entrepreneurial manufacturing, and more than a decade working directly with hundreds of California manufacturers. Her multidisciplinary career includes factory operations, engineering and R&D, finance, supply chain, automation, quality, technology implementation, global sales and strategic planning. Today, Kathy helps small and mid-sized manufacturers solve operational challenges, adopt new technologies, strengthen their workforce and pursue sustainable growth. She is passionate about keeping California manufacturing innovative, competitive and positioned for the future.*

Adrienne McKee, Head of Campus Development and Industry Innovation, BEAM Circular. ***Panelist, Local Leaders: Opportunities in Local Communities***. *Adrienne leads the initial buildout and user engagement for BEAM Circular's California Bioeconomy Innovation Campus in the Central Valley. She brings more than 15 years of experience in R&D, early market testing, and commercialization of bioproducts spanning food and feed, plastics, and industrial materials. Her work is informed by firsthand experience taking California-developed technologies out of state and overseas to access the manufacturing infrastructure needed to scale them. Adrienne holds a PhD in Systems Biology from Harvard University and completed postdoctoral research in microbial engineering at the Joint BioEnergy Institute.*

Molly Morse, CEO, Mango Materials. Speaker, Fireside Chat – Women in Manufacturing. *Dr. Molly is the CEO and co-founder of Mango Materials, a next generation biomanufacturing company that uses biology to make formulated pellets called YOPP/YOPP+ that are replacements for conventional plastics. YOPP+ is made by bacteria that are fed biogas methane and convert it into high-value biodegradable materials. She received her Ph.D. in Civil & Environmental Engineering from Stanford University, and her B.S. from Cornell.*

Khaim Morton, California Deputy Treasurer. Moderator, Creating a Manufacturing Ecosystem. *Khaim serves as State Treasurer Fiona Ma's Deputy Treasurer, with responsibility for public policy formation and overseeing several state financing authorities – focusing on healthcare, education, economic development, and sustainability.*

Khaim brings nearly 20 years of government and public policy experience encompassing legislative staff work that span from policy to community field relations and advocating for local businesses. For two decades, he has worked on legislation and regulations from environmental policy, retirement, land use, economic development, cyber-security, government service delivery, and taxation.

Andy Nakahata, Chief Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (IBank). Panelist, Bond Public Finance. *Andy was appointed by California Governor Gavin Newsom in 2025 as Chief Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (IBank).*

Prior to joining IBank, Nakahata worked at TD Securities as Director and Western Region Head, UBS Financial Services as Managing Director and Regional Head of Public Finance, West Region, and National Public Finance Guarantee Corporation as Managing Director and Head of West Region New Business. Nakahata also served as a public finance investment banker with Citigroup, J.P. Morgan, and Goldman Sachs.

Mark Olson, Vice President, Mill Operations, Pacific Steel. Panelist, Manufacturer Success Stories. *As vice president of mill operations at Pacific Steel Group, Mark is leading the Mojave steel mill project in California from initial planning to full rebar production. He has more than 36 years of experience across all aspects of steel manufacturing, including operations, finance, quality, safety and environmental performance. Previously, he served as vice president of North American operations and as vice president/general manager with Gerdau North America in the U.S. and Canada. Olson earned both his civil engineering technology degree and M.B.A. from Purdue University and is known for building and managing high-performing teams across multiple facilities.*

John Sheldon, California Deputy Treasurer. ***Moderator, Bond Public Finance.*** *John brings 34 years of public finance experience, primarily as a banker to many of the largest municipal debt issuers in the U.S., including the State of California, and has helped raise over $100 billion of capital for state and local governments throughout his career. He spent the majority of his career at a national investment bank where he managed the infrastructure group and served as a lead banker to the State of California. His banking experience includes working on some of the State's largest and most complex bond issues for the State's General Obligation Bond Program, Public Works Board Lease Revenue Bond Program, Department of Water Resources and Water Resources Control Board. He has also worked closely with the State's bond issuing authorities and the IBank.*

Rachel Shepherd, supervisor, Manufacturing and Carbon Management Unit, California Energy Commission. Panelist, California's Capital Stack. *Rachel is the Manufacturing and Carbon Management Unit Supervisor in the Energy Research and Development Division at the California Energy Commission (CEC). She manages a team overseeing more than $60 million in research, development, and demonstration programs and projects focused on industrial decarbonization and carbon management technologies. Before joining the CEC, Shepherd spent nearly a decade at the U.S. Department of Energy, deploying energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies at federal sites. She also spent a year at the Office of Management and Budget's Made in America Office, where she helped establish the office as its first staff member and implemented new and existing domestic manufacturing policies.*

James Simonelli, Executive Director, California Metals Coalition. Moderator, Manufacturer Success Stories – Navigating the Golden State. *James is the Executive Director of the California Metals Coalition. For 29 years he has represented the state's metalworking sector, which consists of nearly 4,000 businesses employing over 350,000 Californians. From 1997 to 2012 he served as the organization's chief lobbyist, authoring several pieces of legislation into law. He is co-Chair of Sacramento's WATER Coalition. and operates two metals industry storm water compliance groups. In 2006, Mr. Simonelli received a State Senate Certificate of Recognition for the state's first fuel cell generation system at an aluminum ingot manufacturer. • In 2009, he received a State Assembly Certificate of Recognition for achievements in energy efficiency within the metals sector. In 2012, he was project lead with UCLA and the Japan Industry Federation to find lead free alternatives for potable water system components. In 2015, he received the North American Die Casting Association Distinguished Service Award. In 2019, he received the Los Angeles County and Mujeres de la Tierra "Alas al Futuro Award" for environmental achievements in storm water. In 2025, he received the Climate Conversations Award from Permacity Foundation for elevating voices across public policy, environmental law, and climate justice.*

Vijay Singh, Vice President of Manufacturing Operations, Cepheid. Panelist, Emerging Industries – Biotech, Life Sciences. *Vijay Singh serves as Vice President of Manufacturing Operations at Cepheid, where he oversees large-scale manufacturing operations dedicated to delivering high-quality molecular diagnostic solutions that enhance patient outcomes worldwide. Over the course of nearly two decades with the organization, Vijay has held a broad range of operational and leadership positions encompassing manufacturing, process improvement, factory expansion, and lean transformation, developing extensive expertise across the end-to-end manufacturing value stream. His leadership is characterized by a commitment to building high-performing teams, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and achieving operational excellence within highly regulated manufacturing environments through workforce development, quality enhancement, and scalable production strategies.*

Brant Smith, President, Community Capital Alliance. Speaker, Program Spotlight: LPP. *Brant Smith is President of Community Capital Alliance (CCA), where he leads the development of programs that expand access to capital and support California's small business economy. With over two decades in public finance and economic development, he and his team have built CCA into a trusted partner for public agencies, including the State Treasurer's Office and Caltrans, as well as financial institutions and civic organizations across the state. CCA built its "Team California" approach to financial infrastructure on a simple commitment: every dollar it helps deploy stays in California, working through California lenders to help businesses grow, create jobs, strengthen local economies, and support the tax base communities depend on. Working with the Capital Programs & Climate Financing Authority, CCA designed the Authority's $150 million Loan Participation Program and now administers it. Funded through the federal State Small Business Credit Initiative, the program shares lending risk with community banks so they can say yes to more California small business loans at a lower cost to the borrower.*

Gabrielle Stevenson, Associate Deputy Director for Regional Business Development, Gobiz. Moderator, Permitting, Regulatory, and Technical Assistance. *Gabrielle Stevenson is the Associate Deputy Director for the Regional Business Development team for the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development's CalBIS team. Stevenson first joined State service with IBank in 2019 and then spent three years with the State Treasurer's Office supporting the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), green financing programs and supervising the Development teams at the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee. Upon returning to GO-Biz, Stevenson spent two years on the Energy Unit, before joining CalBIS. Stevenson has worked on brand launches, national campaigns and niche marketing efforts to increase visibility, awareness, sales and more in both the private and public sectors. Highly adept at managing people and programs, developing communications, marketing and other strategic plans, Stevenson has worked with major organizations such as Harley-Davidson as well as nonprofits including United Way. Stevenson started out as a sportswriter for Bay Area newspapers before working in media relations and communications in motorsports prior to taking on sports facilities management roles in Texas and California.*

Shela Tobias-Daniel, Executive Director, CPCFA. Moderator, Funding Options – California's Capital Stack. *Shela leads three very different programs as the Executive Director of CPCFA: risk management tools for small business lending as well as for zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure for small fleets; issuance of private activity bonds; and grants for community development organizations. The common thread is increasing access to capital, either to improve the growth and success of small business in CA, or to improve e9ffects on climate—and sometimes both as in the CalCAP ZEHD program. As a Black woman with family ties to underserved communities throughout California, Ms. Tobias-Daniel is proud her agency is implementing half of the $1.1 billion in credit enhancement for California's small businesses — including those which are very small businesses (VSB) with 9 or fewer employees, and those which are owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDI) which includes underserved communities—from the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), part of the American Recovery Plan Act.*

Jerrod Voong, Senior Economic Development Specialist, Sacramento County. Panelist, Local Leaders: Opportunities in Local Communities. *Jerrod is a Senior Economic Development Specialist with the Sacramento County Office of Economic Development, where he leads business development efforts focused on business attraction, expansion, site selection, and project facilitation. He works directly with businesses, developers, and site selectors to identify viable locations and help projects navigate sites, infrastructure, permitting, and regulatory considerations.*

Jerrod's work focuses on translating business needs into actionable solutions by coordinating across County departments and regional partners, identifying site opportunities, and helping companies navigate the path from initial site evaluation to project implementation. His work also supports Sacramento County's broader efforts to strengthen site readiness, revitalize commercial and industrial corridors, attract advanced manufacturing and other priority industries, and improve the County's competitiveness for private investment.

Abbie Wertheim, Partner, Northern California, Panattoni Development Company. Panelist, Local Leaders: Opportunities in Local Communities. *Abbie is the Partner for Northern California with Panattoni Development Company. Abbie is responsible for oversight and execution of all aspects of development including origination, design, entitlement, construction, leasing and disposition. She leads the development team in Northern California in build-to-suit and speculative development.*

Prior to joining Panattoni, she was an industrial broker at JLL and worked in real estate economics, helping local jurisdictions in California finance improvements using tax increment financing to encourage development. She managed complex entitlements and significant scale public-private partnerships. Her early work included building an affordable manufacturing facility in San Francisco with New Market Tax Credits.

Clair Whitmer, Deputy Director, Office of the Small Business Advocate. Panelist, Support Structures, Financing and Operations. *Clair is the Deputy Director for the Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA) within the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, appointed to three different positions by Governor Newsom over five years. Prior to joining CalOSBA, Whitmer served as a FUSE Corps Executive Fellow for the City of Fresno, supporting small businesses during the pandemic shut-downs while running her own small business, UpBay Express. Prior to being tapped as a FUSE Corps Fellow, Whitmer was Head of Consumer Experience for Maker Media, publisher of Make: and producers of Maker Faire. Whitmer has worked for major Silicon Valley brands, holding positions in product management and tech-focused journalism. While living in France, she served as Director of Voter Outreach for the Overseas Vote Foundation and wrote widely for the expat press. Whitmer graduated summa cum laude in Political Science from San Francisco State University and is a dual citizen of France and the United States. Her mission is to help grow California's entrepreneurial ecosystem in pursuit of an economy that works for everybody.*

Sean Yates, Senior Associate, Orrick. Panelist, Bond Public Finance. *Sean Yates is a Senior Associate public finance lawyer at Orrick focusing on utilities, transportation, public power, and affordable housing. Sean serves as bond counsel, disclosure counsel, and underwriter's counsel on a variety of public finance transactions, including general obligation and revenue bond financings. Sean's experience includes counseling large public transportation agencies and public utilities across the country, and assisting in the financing of affordable housing throughout California.*

Jeannie Yu, Manager, CAEATFA. Panelist, Funding Options – California's Capital Stack. *Jeannie began her California state career in 2023 as a Program Analyst with the California Alternative Energy and Advanced Transportation Financing Authority (CAEATFA). Before joining state service, she worked in the banking, mortgage lending, and real estate industries, building a strong foundation in financial analysis, client engagement, and operational management. She holds a bachelor's degree in managerial economics from the University of California, Davis.*

Jeannie now serves as CAEATFA's Program Manager, overseeing the agency's core financial programs, including the Sales and Use Tax Exclusion Program and the PACE Loan Loss Reserve Program. She leads program development and implementation, manages complex clean-energy and advanced-manufacturing project approvals, and works closely with industry partners, state agencies, and local governments to support California's climate and economic development goals. Her efforts focus on expanding program accessibility, strengthening operational processes, and supporting manufacturers and clean-energy companies that are driving innovation in California.