

Deborah V. Durham

BIO

Governor Terry E. Branstad appointed Debi Durham director of the Iowa Department of Economic Development in January 2011. As one of her first orders of business, Debi worked with the Governor and legislators to restructure the department to create a public-private partnership to update and improve Iowa's delivery of economic development services.

That led to the creation of the Iowa Partnership for Economic Progress – the umbrella organization for the new structure. Debi now serves as the director of the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), the public arm that replaces IDED and oversees the traditional economic development programs.

Additionally, Director Durham oversees IEDA's efforts to develop and expand Iowa's entrepreneurial ecosystem. In collaboration with the Iowa Innovation Corporation, the private side of the public-private partnership, funding to support companies at early stages of development was increased and the mentoring processes to ensure these companies could be successful were made more robust.

Further, in her role as a senior advisor to Governor Branstad and Lt. Governor Reynolds, Debi plays an integral role in the Home Base Iowa initiative to place veterans in rewarding careers at Iowa employers. Also under Director Durham's leadership, efforts to expand Iowa's apprenticeship programs – both providing Iowans with good paying career opportunities and Iowa businesses with the highly skilled employees they need to grow – were successful in 2014.

Prior to leading Iowa's economic development initiatives, she served as president of the Siouxland Chamber of Commerce since July 1995. She also served as president of The Siouxland Initiative (TSI), the economic development corporation serving the tri-state metropolitan area, and the Siouxland Chamber Foundation. TSI has routinely been recognized as one of the nation's top economic development groups. Debi also serves on the board of directors for Briar Cliff University, located in Sioux City, Iowa.

In June 2014, Director Durham was recognized as a Janus Fellow by the Janus Institute, an organization with the mission of contributing to the body of knowledge in economic development and advancing its practice. In 2009, the Downtown Rotary Club in Sioux City recognized Durham as their Key Way award winner, designating a local leader who has "contributed greatly to the health and prosperity of the area through business and community involvement." Durham was also recognized by the Iowa Association of Business and Industry as one of "Five Iowa Women You Should Know" in 2007. In 2003, she was named to the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame and was the Republican Lt. Gubernatorial candidate in 2002.

Debi holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a Marketing and Management degree from Missouri Southern State University. Durham and her husband Joel have two grown children, Beau and Jordan.