



Meet Our Team: Jennifer Wilding

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Providing communications, reach and in-depth analysis.

Jennifer Wilding, who joined the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City in August 2018 as a community development specialist, supports the community development team in addressing important economic issues and creating opportunity and resilience for lower-income communities.

“People are hungry to help solve problems, but rarely are given the opportunity. I think our team bridges the gap and empowers communities to come up with useful solutions. I’m excited to be part of this effort,” Wilding said.

One of her first projects was to reinvigorate a succession-planning toolkit for nonprofits. The toolkit was designed several years ago, when the team recognized that a wave of baby-boomer retirements was creating need for tools to help nonprofits identify and develop new leaders.

“The toolkit has been incredibly popular and a great hook to encourage nonprofits to use all the resources available from the Kansas City Fed,” Wilding said.

Her work falls into three main areas: communications, reach and in-depth analysis of special issues. She is responsible for “Community Connections,” the Community Affairs department’s e-newsletter.

“‘Reach’ means that I assist with research, writing, process and promotions to expand the team’s reach. I also take on special projects when there is a topic that requires research, analysis and engagement,” she said.

In partnership with Senior Community Development Advisor Jeremy Hagle, she is producing a report on digital inclusion, one of the KC Fed’s focus areas for community development in 2019. In 2018, the team held roundtable discussions with community leaders, conducted a survey and extensive research on the digital divide.

“I’m helping to take all that information and produce a report that explains the issue, the major themes and potential next steps,” she said.

She also will partner with Senior Economist Kelly Edmiston to conduct focus groups in Kansas City, Denver, Detroit and Chicago related to the Kansas City and Chicago Feds' low- and moderate-income survey. The focus groups will provide more insight into the survey findings.

Wilding has been involved in community development for more than 30 years, starting as a research associate with Consensus, a nonprofit group that connects civic leaders and community members on policy matters.

“From 1986 to 2003, I worked with a fascinating mix of people on a wide range of issues,” Wilding said. “I worked with citizen task forces on issues such as minority business development, voting by mail, school district governance, creating safe neighborhoods and funding and governance of the region’s libraries. I’m told I had a reputation for writing policy reports that people enjoyed reading.”

In 2003, Wilding became the nonprofit’s executive director. She worked with major local organizations—including the Kauffman Foundation and libraries across the country—to conduct pro bono, client-funded and philanthropically funded projects that gave community members a voice.

One project involved the Kansas City Fed. In 2010, after the financial crisis, PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer and the Federal Reserve System wanted to give regular citizens the chance to talk with Ben Bernanke, then chair of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. The Fed chose Kansas City as the site, in the Bank’s newly opened headquarters building.

“I was charged with recruiting a mix of 120 people to spend a Sunday afternoon listening and asking questions,” she recalled. “We had a diverse audience of small business persons, college students, minority and women business owners, nonprofit workers and many others.”

The questions and answers helped shed light on what had happened and what was being done in the aftermath, and gave Bernanke a sense of what the public thought about the crash. NewsHour ran the event over three evenings.

Wilding led Consensus until she learned of the KC Fed job opening last year.

“When I saw the job description for the KC Fed position in community development, it was the first time in 30-some years I felt the same kind of pull I did back in 1986 when I wanted to work for Consensus,” she said. “I’ve learned to trust my instincts.”

In her spare time, she enjoys doing letterpress printing. She has a 1,500-pound cast-iron press in her basement, deposited by forklift, and uses metal type and old graphic cuts to put words and images on paper.

She lives in a 110-year-old bungalow in South Hyde Park in Kansas City, Mo., and spends her free time reading, embroidering, listening to bluegrass music and playing with Frankie, her bulldog.

Media

