



## Economic Development Seminar Series Pilot for AY 2018-2019

**CURRENT LANDSCAPE:** Domestic US economic development is a topic of great interest to Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) students. Outside of international development, and a new GSD class which looks in part through a planning lens, there are currently very limited offerings on the subject at HKS for students to engage in and learn from.

At the same time, with ongoing and growing economic inequities across racial, socioeconomic and geographic lines, economic development is consistently a top priority for governors, mayors and public and civic leaders, and they frequently struggle with defining and executing on viable economic development strategies with clear and sustained outcomes. The recent Amazon H2Q “sweepstakes,” with 238 proposals submitted by 54 states, provinces, regions and cities from throughout the US, Canada and Mexico seeking its approximately 50,000 jobs and projected \$5 billion in new construction, represents one of the largest economic development deals in history.

But should states and cities be competing for companies using public funds for incentives and subsidies? Should they instead focus only on helping entrepreneurs or existing small businesses, or a more diversified portfolio approach? What strategies are being utilized (or should be) to develop, retain or attract the workforce of today and the future? Should states and cities even be involved in this space or should they just leave it to the private sector? And how is success currently being measured? How should it be? Who is benefitting and what is being done to ensure equitable opportunities for all?

**OPPORTUNITY:** With these and other questions in mind, and to address the strong interest from HKS students, the Taubman Center for State & Local Government is thrilled to be launching a new pilot Economic Development Seminar Series for the 2018-2019 academic year. The objectives are to provide students:

1. an orientation to the landscape of existing state + local government economic development strategies
2. a deeper understanding of which economic development strategies are (not) working well and why (not)
3. connections to and advice from economic development experts to pursue career opportunities
4. a community of connected students, and eventually alumni, passionate about economic development
5. a developing body of scholarship for the Taubman Center to expand future economic development offerings

**AUDIENCE & FOCUS:** this pilot Seminar Series is for Harvard Kennedy School students from across all degree programs (MPP, MPA, MPA/ID, MC/MPA, Joint & Concurrent) who have an interest in better understanding, and potentially having a direct hand in some day shaping and improving, the increasingly competitive, complex and changing field of economic development. Students need not be experts on the topic, but they would ideally have an interest in applying what they learn through this series to positively influence state and local government economic development policy and decision making, either serving as or in collaboration with public sector leaders.

While economic development is being pursued around the globe, and while discussion will be informed by those efforts, for the purposes of this pilot, the focus will be on domestic US economic development.

The seminar series will cover some economic development theory, but will have more focus on practice, with specific examples of what is being done, where, and by whom. Common themes to be covered throughout the series will include the role of who is (or should be) providing economic development assistance and funding (government vs. private sector vs. philanthropy), the strategies being utilized, the scale at which it is happening (state vs. region vs. city), and the impact and measurability of these efforts (traditional vs. new vs. future). Equitable economic development will also be an important topic of discussion throughout the entire series.



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**TOPICS & SEQUENCE (dates subject to change):**

1. **Oct 19 - The origins & evolution of traditional econ dev** – from chasing smoke stacks to Economic Gardening
2. **Nov 16 - Recruitment & retention** – the site selection industry and fierce competition to lure/steal companies
3. **Dec 7 - Entrepreneurship** – the sexy start-ups and the rough realities
4. **Feb 1 - Clusters & sector-based strategies** – leveraging assets, creating connections and linking supply chains
5. **March 1 - Small business development** – from main street retail + restaurants to “gazelles” poised for growth
6. **March 29 - Workforce development & talent pipelines** – the traditional systems + the evolving future of work
7. **May 3 - Ecosystems & infrastructure** – weaving the systems, the strategies and the stakeholders all together

**FORMAT & EXPECTATIONS:**

The Economic Development Seminar Series will provide participants with a package of 3 unique engagements:

1. **Breakfast Seminar Sessions** – 7 monthly 90-min sessions held on a Friday from 8:00 - 9:30am at HKS
2. **Speakers + Students Social** – informal conversation + connections held the evening prior to each session
3. **Speaker Office Hours + Mentoring** – post-session 1:1 time w speakers for career advice and connections

Each session will have a pre-reading (approx. 30-60 minutes) and framing questions to inform/spark discussion. Depending on the topic, there will be 1-3 guest experts and a moderator to facilitate a conversation. Speakers will share brief remarks/slides to complement the pre-reading, leaving the majority of the time for discussion. The format is intended to foster dynamic discussion, different perspectives and active participation by all students. Speakers will be practitioners and thought leaders with diverse backgrounds from different regions of the US, including Chris Gibbons from Colorado, founder of the Economic Gardening model; Sarah Jane Maxted, Executive Director of the MIT Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Program; and Josh Carpenter, Director of Innovation & Economic Opportunity for the City of Birmingham, Alabama, to name just a few.

Students will submit a very short application for consideration to participate in the seminar series. Depending on demand, approximately 15 students will be selected to participate for the entire series. There will also be a single-session application each month to allow approximately 5 more students with topical interests to also participate.

There is an important commitment to be made by students given the seminar series will take place over the course of the academic year. And while recognizing that life happens, the seminar series is only once a month and the expectation is that students will attend all 7 sessions unless a truly unavoidable conflict arises. There is also an expectation for participating students to attend the social hour with speakers the evening prior to each session. While 100% attendance would be wonderful, collectively coordinating to have at least 10 students attend each evening will be the expected minimum standard.

This is in fact a pilot, and the goal is for students, speakers and the Taubman Center to learn from it and each other. This seminar series is an important first step to providing a deeper focus on and offering of state and local government economic development strategy content and expertise at HKS. It will be an experiment and it will succeed with lots of participation and feedback from everyone involved. The expectation is to have students and speakers participating who are not only clear about this, but who are truly excited about and eager to help the Taubman Center and HKS successfully deliver on this topic via this approach.

**To apply, please complete this form by Wed, Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>:** <https://goo.gl/forms/b5Fq6v5YJejya4n13>

If you have any questions, please contact:

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