



## **ELISSA HANSEN: LEAD PRESIDENT & CEO**

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**ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION,  
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP, AND THE ABILITY  
TO CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE  
IN OUR COMMUNITIES.**

Elissa Hansen leads Northspan with more than 20 years of experience in business, community, organizational, and economic development across Minnesota and Wisconsin. She invests her time creatively advancing others' capabilities. In Elissa's role at Northspan, she engages with and elevates every client by facilitating tough conversations and moving organizations forward with action-oriented strategic methods. She works to create a setting for meaningful communication that respects diverse perspectives, creates joint resolve, and inspires individual and group action.

Hansen grew up in central Minnesota and achieved her undergraduate and master's degrees from Northern Arizona University. More recently she has completed certification coursework with the Institute of Cultural Affairs - USA in the Technology of Participation. She is a certified Economic Development Finance Professional with the National Development Council and a graduate of both the Leadership Duluth and Blandin Community Leadership programs. Hansen has also been honored as one of the Duluth News Tribune's "20 under 40," which celebrates professionals who are making a positive impact and working for change in the region.

### **RELEVANT CREDENTIALS, EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE:**

- Strategic planning facilitation for a variety of groups, including the East Range Joint Powers Board and its constituent communities, Benton Economic Partnership, Wadena Development Authority, Chester Bowl Improvement Club, Hermantown EDA, Kanabec County EDA, Chisago County HRA-EDA, Generations Health Care Initiatives, and Mineland Vision Partnership.
- Elissa has been directly involved in community engagement processes in numerous rural communities across northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. These tight-knit communities often have passionate and dedicated community advocates, but need assistance recognizing their assets, gathering their ideas into a coherent plan, and following through on ideas to create genuine change in their community. So much of this work includes the ability to successfully create space for communities to look at their future and aid them in making connections to resources that will get them moving in that direction.
- Planning, community engagement, & facilitation services for a variety of public, private, and nonprofit groups, including several City of Duluth initiatives, including its Coffee and Conversation series designed to clarify city construction and permitting processes and the Mayor's Housing Task Force, Minnesota Power's Low Income Solar Program, ItasCAP & EastRange CAP (Community Advisory Panels), Arrowhead Regional Development Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Advancing a Healthy Wisconsin, and most recently with the Mille Lacs Corporate Venture's Tribal Economy Business Incubator initiative.
- Led the development and launch of the Minnesota Opportunity Collaborative (MNOppCo), a grassroots statewide program designed to inspire investment in the federal opportunity zones tax incentive. Work included building a web platform to advertise projects statewide, funding development, facilitation of training events, and organization of a webinar series and statewide summit.
- Certified Exit Planning Advisor (CEPA) by the Exit Planning Institute and has completed the Mastering the Technology of Participation (MToP), an intensive training program in facilitation leadership from The Institute of Cultural Affairs in the USA.
- Certified Economic Development Finance Professional with coursework in business credit analysis, real estate finance, and the art of deal-structuring with recertification courses in loan packaging, negotiating and problem-solving, as well as developing and financing affordable for sale housing.
- Training in public life through Knight Foundation's Intensive Study Tour & Training in Copenhagen, Denmark and a master class with Gehl Architects on public life studies and engagement strategies focused on people-first design, master planning, and urban development frameworks.
- Served as a Duluth City Councilor, Council President, and Council Finance Committee Chair between 2016 – 2018. In this role her abilities and knowledge around inclusion, equity, and diversity grew exponentially. She was challenged at every meeting to create a welcoming and comfortable place for all residents and set a precedent for civil behavior. In this time, she worked with the community and councilors to update the City's Tools of Civility.
- Previous experience in marketing, economic development, and strategic planning at Lake Superior Consulting, Buzz Frenzy, the Area Partnership for Economic Expansion (APEX), and the Brainerd Lakes Economic Development Corporation (BLAEDC).



**BOB PALMQUIST: SUPPORT  
VICE PRESIDENT**

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Bob Palmquist provides technical and financial assistance to large and small businesses, financial institutions, local units of government, and development organizations. His work includes local and regional revolving loan fund administration, technical loan reviews, grant and loan application packaging, business valuation and succession planning, and feasibility assessments. Palmquist spent 17 years in commercial lending prior to joining Northspan in 1991.

**RELEVANT CREDENTIALS, EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE:**

- Long history of successfully structuring and packaging financing for numerous business development projects within the region and the State of Minnesota. Has extensive experience in Small Business Administration (SBA) loan programs.
- Manages or provides professional and responsive loan administrative services to numerous local and regional loan funds since 1991.
- Accredited business appraiser associated with the Institute of Business Appraisers (IBA) since 2010. Completed 79 business valuations since 2011, in part supported by grants from USDA Rural Development and the Blandin Foundation to assist businesses with costs in the valuation and succession planning process.
- Served from 2005-2011 as a member of the Northland Foundation’s (a Minnesota Initiative Fund) Business Loan Program Technical Advisory Committee.
- Provided administrative services and technical loan reviews to the Duluth 1200 Fund, Carlton County’s Economic Development Loan Fund, City of Cloquet EDA, Two Harbors Development Fund, and area independent banks.
- Long-time member, loan committee member, and current board member for the Minnesota Business Finance Corporation (MBFC) an SBA 504 Community Development Corporation.
- Past member & chair of the Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation’s Loan Technical Advisory Committee.
- Staffed and administered the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission’s (ARDC) regional revolving loan fund from 1991 to 2020, originating over 148 loans totaling in excess of \$11 million.
- Past Senior Loan Officer of the Minnesota Community Capital Fund (MCCF), a statewide, membership-based loan pool, which originated over \$34 million in approved loans.
- Past Senior Loan Officer of the Twin Cities Community Capital Fund (TCCCF), another membership-based loan pool which originated over \$6 million in approved loans.
- Provided temporary staffing as the Director of Lending for the Entrepreneur Fund in 2009-2010 and 2011-2012.



## **KARL SCHUETTLER: SUPPORT RESEARCH DIRECTOR & SENIOR CONSULTANT**

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Karl Schuettler manages regional economic development partnerships, provides support services to local communities, and researches and analyzes economic trends for Northspan's clients. He joined Northspan in 2016 and has previous experience in local economic development, organizational planning and analysis, public relations, and freelance journalism. A Duluth native, he holds a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University and a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Minnesota.

### **RELEVANT CREDENTIALS, EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE:**

- Manage the Northland Connection program; regular activity maintaining the program's database of commercial sites and buildings in the Northland region, provision of data and property information to regional economic development staff, and incubation of regional initiatives around priorities such as Shovel Ready sites and opportunity zones.
- A wide range of research projects including a population study for the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, a cluster analysis and rail feasibility study for the City of Sandstone, financial feasibility studies for the Northeast Higher Education District and City of Cohasset, and market research projects for the Duluth Greater Downtown Council and several private developers. Frequent research work to support Northspan-facilitated strategic planning processes.
- Completed a study on drivers of housing costs and policy solutions completed in 2018, *Housing for the Next Generation of Duluth's Workforce: A Comparative Study of Single-Family Housing Construction Costs in Duluth*. The study included a list of recommendations to enhance housing affordability in Duluth, including multiple policies and programs, several of which the city has adopted, and led to the creation of an affordable housing task force co-facilitated by Northspan.
- Involved in work surrounding the opportunity zones federal tax incentive since its inception, including assistance with designation of zones, panel participation in discussions of the program in Minnesota and Vermont, and management of the Minnesota Opportunity Collaborative program and its webinar series.
- Comprehensive community development services for clients with long-term relationships, including the East Range Joint Powers Board, City of Sandstone, and GPS 45:93. Work includes meeting management, business retention and expansion visits, community engagement and research projects, support for marketing and communications activity, and policy recommendations.
- Support for community engagement processes, strategic planning, and feasibility studies led by other Northspan staff, including work in Hermantown, Itasca County, East Range communities Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures, nonprofits, and with regional partnerships including the Laurentian Vision Partnership, Arrowhead Growth Alliance, and NORTHFORCE.
- Active role in several regional economic development efforts that include dozens of member communities and organizations and require stakeholder input, including directing the Northland Connection program, membership on the boards of the Iron Range Economic Alliance and Duluth Community Schools Collaborative, and a member of the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council's Transportation Advisory Committee.
- Undergraduate degree in Regional and Comparative Studies from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, with coursework in diplomacy, economics, conflict negotiation, and research methods. Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs, with coursework in public participation process planning, economic development, housing policy, and community research methods.
- Economic Development Association of Minnesota Emerging Professional of the Year, 2021; Leadership Duluth graduate, Class of 2020; 2020-2021 Minnesota Young American Leaders Program participant.



**ALI BILDEN CAMPS: SUPPORT  
CONSULTANT & NORTHFORCE PROGRAM MANAGER**

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Ali joined Northspan in 2022 as a Consultant and provides community and organizational development services. Ali manages the NORTHFORCE program by connecting career-minded individuals with professional advancement opportunities and supporting our regional employers' current and future workforce needs.

Ali brings over 15 years of nonprofit management and community development experience including working with organizations and individuals across all sectors. She has roots in northern Wisconsin and has called northeast Minnesota home for almost 20 years.

**RELEVANT CREDENTIALS, EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE:**

- Manages the NORTHFORCE program; regular activity maintaining the program's database of employers, job posts, and candidate profiles.
- Works one-on-one with employers to optimize job posts, provide candidate data, and create job ads for social media.
- Provides individual support for job seekers, including resume reviews, industry data, and referrals for additional training, education, or support.
- Works with area partners on high-priority projects including improving access to talent in the fields of child care, health care, construction, and manufacturing.
- Participated in community improvement initiatives including the Earned Legitimacy Learning Cohort for Carlton County in 2021.
- Administered by the Centre for Public Impact, this initiative improved opportunities for rural representation in local government and expanded DEI training for all government employees. Facilitated community-action groups including the Carlton County Housing Coalition and the Carlton County Food & Nutrition Network.
- Coordinated community events to improve access to social services, health care, educational institutions, and employment opportunities.
- Bachelor of Science Degree in English with a minor in Gender Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Superior in 2006.
- Superior/Douglas County Leadership Graduate Class of 2014.
- MBA in Leadership and Change from the College of St. Scholastica in 2018, with coursework in Organization Development, Diversity and Inclusion, and Consulting.



## MIRIAM KERO: SUPPORT CONSULTANT & NORTHLAND CONNECTION PROGRAM MANAGER

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Miriam joined Northspan in 2022 as a Consultant and provides community and organizational development services. Miriam manages the Northland Connection program and provides support to Northspan's partners through demographic data, economic analysis, and information on commercial real estate.

Miriam brings over 25 years of experience in industry, government, non-profit, and education. With a specialty in communication, Miriam is practiced in engaging people, communities, and organizations in strategic development work.

### RELEVANT CREDENTIALS, EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE:

- Adept at starting and guiding difficult and critical conversations.
- Performs analyses and crafts marketing plans for clients including current state, SWOT, visioning, target market analysis, basic research, target customers, key competitors, competitive analysis, positioning, market strategy and budget setting.
- Assisted client in building a gated, fee-based, online membership site with exclusive, professional development content. Crafted the social media launch and membership drive and achieved enrollment goals.
- Coordinated the planning, recruiting, marketing, and tracking of retail business recruitment efforts for the City of Hibbing. Analyzed community demographic and psychographic data, traffic counts, and properties. Crafted communications, attended, created, and staffed trade-show booths, and followed up on leads.
- Managed brand development and execution including the creation, maintenance, and implementation of brand marketing plan; active management of the brand's identity (enforcing guidelines and standards) and budget; and planning, coordinating, and monitoring of advertising.
- Designed and executed social media strategies on Twitter and Facebook.
- Led Hibbing Community College Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) efforts including facilitating the EDI team, analyzing disaggregated student success and retention data to locate gaps, performing equity and inclusion analyses of collateral, developing EDI strategic plans, requesting funding, writing grants, creating and running initiatives, measuring indicators, and revising strategies as needed.
- Provided sexual harassment and diversity training.
- Over a dozen years of experience teaching best practices in interpersonal, small group communication and public speaking. Expertise in cultivating critical perspectives. Minnesota State Colleges Board of Trustees Educator of the Year 2020.
- Developed, administered, coordinated, and evaluated the arts, history, and cultural program for the 29 libraries of the Arrowhead Library region. Included grant application, interim, and final reporting.
- Volunteer coach for West Range Composite Mountain Bike team and President of Iron Range Off Road Cyclists.
- Master of Arts in Communicating Arts with a Mass Communication cognate from the University of Wisconsin-Superior, a Bachelor of Science in English with a Speech Communications minor, and 18 graduate credits in Sociology.
- A graduate of the Hibbing Chamber of Commerce Leadership program.



## ZACK FILIPOVICH: SUPPORT CONSULTANT

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Zack joined Northspan in 2022 as a Consultant and provides community, organizational, and business development services such as facilitating conversations, conducting business valuations, packaging Small Business Administration (SBA) loan applications, and designing loan fund services.

Zack brings over 9 years of in-depth accounting and financial experience and 8 years of public service experience including reviewing and approving budgets. Zack grew up in Duluth with Iron Range roots and in 2016 was selected as one of the Duluth News Tribune's "20 Under 40" which recognized professionals who are making a positive impact in their communities.

### RELEVANT CREDENTIALS, EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE:

- Offers recommendations to broaden clients' internal strengths and assists business owners, nonprofit executives, and boards gain a better understanding of their financial situation by clearly interpreting and presenting financial statements.
- Creates efficiencies by automating accounting processes and data gathering procedures allowing for faster decision making.
- Prepares financial information for grant compliance and ensures public resources are put to their best use.
- Pursuing his Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Minnesota Duluth with course work in Estate Planning and Business Ethics.
- Advised and presented financial statements to over 50 clients across northwest Wisconsin and northeast Minnesota.
- Reviewed and approved revolving loan applications as a board member of the Duluth 1200 Fund and helped write new loan criteria to better measure project success.
- Worked with 18 officials representing 16 communities in Northwestern Wisconsin and Northeastern Minnesota as a Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) Policy Board member and oversaw MIC activities.
- Communicated with customers across the 16 community, 530 square mile Western Lake Superior Sanitary District service area and ensured compliance with statutory requirements.
- Elected as a Duluth City Councilor for eight years serving as Council President, and Chair of the Finance, Planning & Economic Development Committee Chair. Served as the Secretary of the Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA) and researched, modified, and approved annual budget and capital improvement plans.
- Earned Certified Management Accountant (C.M.A.) credential including coursework in strategic financial management and demonstrates proficiency in financial forecasting, financial statement analysis and asset valuation.
- Bachelor of Accountancy from the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD) with minors in Political Science and Marketing. Completed George Washington University's Semester in Washington Politics program including two courses, an internship, and modeled a US Senate race as Political Director for the program's capstone project.



## AMANDA VUICICH: SUPPORT CONSULTANT & OPERATIONS MANAGER

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Amanda Vuicich oversees Northspan operations, supports community banks by providing SBA 7a loan packaging services, and assists with business, organizational, and community development clients as led by other Northspan staff. Amanda holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota Duluth, with a major in International Studies. She joined Northspan in 2018 and has previous operations experience in the accounting and hospitality sectors.

### RELEVANT CREDENTIALS, EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE:

- Manages Northspan financials including invoicing, accounts payable and receivable, payroll, annual 990 preparation, and monthly reporting for Northspan staff and Board.
- Manages Northspan hosted program budgets for NORTHFORCE, Northland Connection, Minnesota Opportunity Collaborative, and Welcoming Communities.
- Manages logistics and budgeting for regional partnerships, such as Minnesota Power and PolyMet's Community Advisory Panels.
- Leads coordination of regional partners to present non-traditional lending options to city staff, bankers, and other community leaders.
- Assists with analysis of business financials to provide SBA 7a packaging services to community banks in Minnesota & Wisconsin.
- Provides fiscal agency services for the Iron Range Economic Alliance and Mineland Vision Partnership, including timely updates to leadership with monthly financials, dues collections, and making payments on behalf of the organizations, as requested.
- Support staff for comprehensive community development services for clients with long-term relationships, including the East Range Joint Powers Board and GPS 45:93. Work includes business retention and expansion visits, community engagement surveys, coordination and administration of community lending programs, and regular assistance with updating organization website information.
- Support staff for community engagement processes, strategic planning, and feasibility studies led by other Northspan staff, including work in Hermantown, Itasca County, East Range communities, nonprofits, and with regional partnerships.
- Provided regional partners support with designing, reviewing and verifying small business grant applications throughout the coronavirus pandemic, including experience with federal, state and locally funded relief programs. Provided community bank technical assistance to prepare and submit Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) loans to support small businesses.
- Graduate of Leadership Duluth, Class of 2021.
- Bachelor's degree in International Studies from the University of Minnesota Duluth, with a minor in Political Science.



## **ASHLEY LUNA: SUPPORT OPERATIONS SPECIALIST**

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Ashley Luna assists in administrative operations for the Northspan team and provides logistical support for regional partnerships. She also works on Northspan powered programs such as Northland Connection, NORTHFORCE, and the Minnesota Opportunity Collaborative. Ashley previously worked for a non-profit organization providing advocacy and case management services to at-risk youth in the Duluth area. She holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Minnesota Duluth.

### **RELEVANT CREDENTIALS, EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE:**

- Assists in administrative operations for the Northspan team, including logistical support for regional partnerships.
- Provides regular assistance on Northspan-powered programs such as Northland Connection, NORTHFORCE, and the Minnesota Opportunity Collaborative.
- Prior experience in case management, program supervision, and reporting compliance for various program funders, plus prior positions in hospitality and retail.
- AAS Degree from Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College and BAS with a major in Psychology from University of Minnesota Duluth.