



# WEBINAR GUEST BIOS

## *Community-driven strategies to address persistent poverty in rural areas*

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### **Emily Burleson**

#### **Senior manager of advocacy and research Partners for Rural Transformation**

Emily Burleson, M.S.W., is the senior manager of advocacy and research at Partners for Rural Transformation. She researches and advocates for rural regions of persistent poverty and the community development financial institutions (CDFIs) serving these regions. Her work includes a broad swath of sectors, including affordable housing, financing community projects, disaster resilience, community infrastructure, small business development, and more. Emily supports regional and federal policy initiatives that benefit communities experiencing persistent poverty and forges solutions where

impact can be maximized, all through thought leadership with a variety of stakeholders. She recently graduated from George Mason University's Master of Social Work Accelerated Program in 2021. While in her early career, Emily has led or collaborated on state, federal, and international-level research initiatives. Emily also has experience in the disaster relief field, as she previously was a disaster resilience coordinator for [Fahe](#). She strives in her professional and personal life for a thriving rural America with a healthy, safe, and sustainable foundation to generate local and familial wealth. She is a social worker at heart, tediously considering complex interactions between systems, individuals and communities. She spends her free time enjoying the outdoors through hiking and fishing in the Blue Ridge Mountains, or inside listening to true crime podcasts. She is based in Fredericksburg, Virginia.



### **Lisse Regehr**

#### **President and CEO Thrive Allen County**

Lisse Regehr is the president and CEO of Thrive Allen County, a nonprofit organization that works to improve quality of life and economic conditions in Allen County, Kansas. Thrive Allen County is a countywide organization that has been instrumental in the development of more than 60 miles of new trails and routes within the past decade; lowering the uninsured rate in Allen County from 21% in 2013 to 9% in 2018; the implementation of public and safety-net transportation for Allen County residents; the creation of a free, rural bike-share program replicated throughout the

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nation; and overseeing the statewide Kansas CARES program that assists uninsured residents throughout Kansas in applying for affordable health insurance. During Regehr's leadership, Thrive has served as the administrator for Allen County's SPARK and ARPA funds, as well as the administrator for the Community Development Block Grants for several communities throughout southeast Kansas. In addition, Regehr co-created Thrive Kansas, which exists to build capacity in rural Kansas communities to better the quality of life and bring about rural revitalization efforts.

Before becoming president and CEO of Thrive Allen County, Regehr oversaw many different departments at Thrive, including communications and the care coordination program. Regehr coordinated all local communication following Allen County's successful pursuit of the 2017 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize. In addition, she has worked as part of the economic development team at Thrive since 2015, successfully recruiting Peerless Products into Iola in 2020, assisting in the recruitment and development of G&W Foods and Eastgate Lofts in 2017, and overseeing the recruitment of Green Cover Seed into Iola in 2019. Prior to returning to her hometown of Iola, Regehr worked for nine years with the Sisters of St. Joseph Ministries Foundation in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she was a planned giving officer and social networker. Regehr grew the foundation's planned giving society by 35%, and as the social networker, was responsible for all online communications for the foundation.