

## **Message from the President**

**By Robert E. Barnes, Jr., CEcD**

Economic development is a competitive endeavor. Competition continues to drive business and industrial location decisions. Consequently, we face a choice of leadership. We can become competitive by building attractive communities and working toward secure economic stability; or we can be apathetic and accept whatever happens as a matter of course. In short, investing in ourselves will encourage others to want to invest here as well.

Competition is intense between geographic regions and states who actively recruit new jobs and investment capital. As more communities prepare and plan for new investment, there will be fewer businesses to occupy the available locations. Private investors have a plethora of choices when deciding where to locate their next venture, store or industrial operation.

We must continue to promote and develop our strengths and competitive advantages, while proactively addressing our weaknesses and challenges. The most significant challenge will be a shift from a labor-driven economy to a knowledge-driven economy. While it is imperative that we concentrate on the development of talent and skills to meet this challenge, we cannot ignore the need for, and the cost of, developing the public infrastructure required to attract and support this new economy.

Economic Development is a vital component of any modern, progressive state. Wyoming communities have made key investments that contribute significantly to the quality of life and superior business climate we all now enjoy. However, we must realize that all sectors of our local community must be constantly engaged in making positive impacts on our business and economic environment. No single organization alone can address the myriad of issues before us. Success will truly require a team effort.

WEDA will focus on issues and initiatives that will lead our state into more intense economic development efforts. We will examine our strategic plan and key legislative issues to determine their impact on developing business sectors. In particular, we should focus our efforts on those issues with the ability to grow the economy and the overall economic base. Communities that innovate will survive within the new economy and will thrive in new, more dynamic ways.

WEDA is a respected institution that has been instrumental in training leaders, impacting policy and working with agencies that attract jobs and encourage investment in this vibrant state. Our members and investors love to tell the Wyoming story.