



Tia W. Nelson serves as Assistant Director of Economic Development for the City of Manassas championing several areas of business engagement, growth, advocacy and recruitment, as well as City tourism. She places special emphasis on fostering economic growth and resilience through connecting residents, visitors, and prospective businesses to the City's rich history, competitive offerings, and quality of life.

Originally from Columbia, South Carolina, Tia received her BA in Psychology from Clemson University in 2005. Shortly after graduation, she spent two years on Capitol Hill as an Alexandria, Virginia resident before earning an MA in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Polytechnic and State University. There, she also earned a graduate certificate in economic development and had her hand in many Virginia-based regional projects as a graduate assistant and data analyst for Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement.

Tia moved back to South Carolina in 2009 and has spent the last two decades promoting grassroots, state, and national-level community and economic development within the private, nonprofit, and public sectors.

As innovation program manager and later business intelligence manager at South Carolina Department of Commerce, she researched, authored, and published the state's third innovation plan connecting entrepreneurs to funding, commercialization, and other resources essential for globally competitive products and R&D. Prior to S.C. Department of Commerce, she spent eight years of progressive experience as franchise consultant, marketing director, general manager, and eventually co-owner of SERVPRO of Cayce/West Columbia and Lexington. She helped the franchise double volume and grow 17% in profitability through streamlined leadership practices and enhanced community engagement. Her startup spinoff publication, *Midlands Anchor*, published hundreds of thought pieces, video interviews, and podcasts highlighting leading innovators, entrepreneurs, and community leaders in South Carolina and beyond.

In 2022, Tia and her family moved back to Virginia. Most recently, she served as senior program manager at Rosslyn-based Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness where she helped build robust ecosystem toolkits, facilitation guides, and economic development strategies on behalf of federal clients like EDA, ARC, and U.S. Treasury.

Tia's community involvement and achievements include recognition as Lexington (SC) Chamber of Commerce's Young Professional of the Year, Clemson University's Roaring Ten Award Recipient, former roles as Chair of Lexington Young Professionals, Secretary of Columbia Opportunity Resource (Columbia, SC), and Co-Organizer of One Million Cups, Columbia. She previously served four years on the South Carolina State Chamber Small Business Council and six years as an appointed board member of the South Carolina Midlands Regional Education Center Advisory Board.

Tia is quickly rediscovering the richness of life in the Commonwealth with her husband, daughter, and 80-pound Bernedoodle. They enjoy exploring the many state parks, art galleries, and wineries in and around Manassas, as well as sneaking in time for snow skiing, hiking, and visits to the family farm in North Dakota.