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LISC Atlanta names top economic development official as executive director to drive community investments, catalyze opportunities for families

New office of nat'l nonprofit ramps up Atlanta work with small business lending, workforce development

ATLANTA (March 11, 2019) – The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) has named a 30-year veteran of impact investing, public finance and community development to lead its new full-service office in Atlanta—investing in projects and programs that support a broadly shared prosperity and create significant opportunities for people to improve their health, wealth, and well-being.

This week, Dale Royal began work as executive director of LISC Atlanta, the 33rd metropolitan program office for the national social enterprise, which invests \$1.5 billion annually in economic development, affordable housing, community safety, good schools, and local health, while also helping people build the skills they need to compete for living wage jobs. LISC announced last year that it would open an Atlanta office and is now moving forward to hire staff and expand its local partnerships.

Royal was most recently president of Atlanta Emerging Markets, Inc., an affiliate of the city's Invest Atlanta economic development authority. There, he oversaw work with impact investors to raise venture capital, deploy \$200 million in New Markets Tax Credit financing, and assemble a \$500 million “green” building fund—all focused on helping capitalize development throughout the city.

“Dale has a unique blend of public, private and nonprofit experience, and most importantly, a deep understanding of Atlanta’s communities,” said Maurice A. Jones, LISC president and CEO. “He knows the city’s neighborhoods and community organizations. He knows its business leaders and its policymakers. He understands what it means to leverage local strengths in order to catalyze opportunities for families across the city.”

LISC has already begun connecting new capital to Atlanta communities. Last week, LISC’s small business lending affiliate, [immito](#), closed its first deal in the city, providing a Small Business Administration loan to [The Westside School](#), an early childhood education center, so it could upgrade its facility and expand high-quality programs to meet the needs of families in Southwest Atlanta.

With the new financing, the school is able to hire new staff to grow its enrollment from just 17 children to eventually serve as many as 80.

“This is her passion, her life’s work,” said *immito* President Julie Huston of the school’s entrepreneurial founder, Dr. Honey Meadows. “She has put everything she has into this school, and we are thrilled to be

able to come in with the capital she needs, structured in a way that works for her business, so she can offer a remarkable educational experience to young children who might not otherwise have access to it.”

Over the last few years, LISC has invested \$18 million in Atlanta projects and programs, which includes \$210,000 in recent grants to support workforce development, with funding from State Farm, MetLife, Wells Fargo and JPMorgan Chase Foundation, as well as \$275,000 to help build community-based athletic facilities at a local Boys and Girls Club through partnerships with the NFL Grassroots program and the ESPN Foundation. With local staff on the ground, LISC expects to dramatically expand its investments and its impact.

“The best way to tap into economic opportunity for all Atlantans is to support the ingenuity of entrepreneurs, the talent of our workforce, and the vitality of our communities—and, all of those require capital to grow,” said Royal. “It’s up to us to make sure that opportunities reach across race, class and community boundaries so that all our residents—no matter where they live—have the chance to flourish.”

Royal speaks from deep experience in community investing. Earlier in his career, he raised capital for the nonprofit Self Help Venture Fund to finance development of commercial and community facilities in underserved areas. He also has worked in various capacities for the cities of San Diego, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, working in agencies focused on commercial development, affordable housing and transportation. Royal also worked for LISC, fueling investment and program activity in Grand Rapids, Mich.

“Leading LISC Atlanta feels like my career is coming full circle—working in a city I love, with the tools to make a difference, as part of an organization that helped me form my view of community investing 20 years ago,” Royal said. “I’m ready to roll up my sleeves and get to work.”

Royal has a master’s in public policy from Duke University, a bachelor’s in economics from the University of California/Irvine and spent a summer at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, honing his policy skills. He can be reached at droyal@lisc.org.

About LISC

With residents and partners, LISC forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America – great places to live, work, visit, do business and raise families. Since 1979, LISC has invested \$18.6 billion to build or rehab 376,000 affordable homes and apartments and develop 63 million square feet of retail, community and educational space. To learn more, visit www.lisc.org.