

Regional development agency seCTer gets new leader

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Groton — An executive for United Community and Family Services with a background in banking has been named the new executive director of the region's leading economic development agency.

Nancy Cowser of Uncasville, a resident of the region for three decades, will start her new position at the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region in January, replacing interim Director Sean Nugent. Nugent had served since the August resignation of Stephen MacKenzie, who took a similar position in Canada.

"We are extremely thrilled and excited to have Nancy accept the leadership of seCTer," said Chuck Seeman, chairman of the regional economic development agency's board who also is a former executive with United Community and Family Services.

Cowser, reached by phone, said she is excited about her new position and looks forward to creating a plan to move the usually low-key economic development agency forward.

"My No. 1 priority is to make seCTer relevant again," Cowser said.

For Cowser, this means working on more collaborations and partnerships to bring the agency's visibility up and "get a better seat at the table." She said seCTer should support rather than be

duplicative of what other economic development groups are working on.

The first step in this process, she said, is about three-quarters complete, as seCTer finalizes a new strategic plan to help pinpoint priorities. She said her legislative work, broad community experience, background in banking, as well as efforts at cross-organizational collaboration, apparently worked in her favor in securing the new position.

"I'm starting from a place of having relations in place that I can build upon," Cowser said.

She said she has experience in both the nonprofit and for-profit industries. Currently senior vice president for strategy at UCFS, she has experience in strategic planning, grant development, legislative affairs, community needs assessment and business initiatives.

She is currently a member of the Population Health Workgroup looking into statewide health care payment reform.

Cowser, once an internal auditor and branch manager for a bank in Boston, also has worked with local firms such as Mystic Color Lab and the consultancy Creative Connections. At Thames Valley Council for Community Action, she managed regional welfare-to-work and dislocated-worker programs in the region.

"She was selected from a strong field of professionals with various business and economic development backgrounds," seCTer said in a news release Tuesday.

A Boston College graduate with a master of science degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Cowser is on the board of the ISAAC School, the Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce and ARC of New London County, as well as doing work for other community organizations.

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