

DBIA Executive Director/CEO Lisa Washington Announces Retirement After More Than Two Decades with the Organization

Washington's 22-year tenure helped transform DBIA's reach, influence and role in the design-build industry

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, September 10, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Lisa Washington, CAE, Executive Director/CEO of the Design-Build Institute of America (DBIA), has announced that

she will retire in 2027, concluding more than 22 years with DBIA, including 17 years as its chief executive. Washington will continue to lead the organization while the National Board conducts a search for her successor, with a transition anticipated by mid-2027.

“

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*Lisa Washington, CAE,
ED/CEO, DBIA*

Prominently displayed in Washington's office is a reminder of the first three organizational goals she set when she arrived at DBIA in 2004. She achieved all three, and she has been setting new ones ever since.

When Washington joined DBIA, design-build was still widely considered an alternative project delivery method, and the organization was largely focused on building understanding and acceptance of its use. Today, design-build is mainstream, and DBIA has evolved to define and advance the standard for Design-Build Done Right®.

“Lisa will leave DBIA at a moment of extraordinary strength and opportunity,” said Virginia McAllister, AIA, DBIA, LEED AP, NCIDQ, DBIA 2026 National Board of Directors Chair. “The organization is growing and its influence across the industry has never been greater. That position reflects Lisa's leadership in guiding DBIA through more than two decades of growth and an extraordinary evolution of the design-build industry. She has approached her retirement with the same thoughtfulness she has brought to her leadership, giving the Board the time and opportunity to plan carefully for the transition and DBIA's next chapter.”

Washington joined DBIA in 2004 to lead its education and professional development efforts and was named Executive Director/CEO in 2009. During her tenure, design-build authorization expanded from fewer than half of U.S. states to 48, the number of DBIA-certified professionals

grew from fewer than 100 to nearly 7,000, membership increased from fewer than 8,000 to more than 25,000, and the organization's operating budget more than tripled. Together, these measures of growth reflect Washington's leadership and the collective contributions of DBIA's staff, Regions, volunteer leaders and industry partners.

As DBIA's understanding of successful design-build became more sophisticated and multidimensional, Washington increasingly drew on relationships with leading industry experts to broaden the organization's thinking beyond project delivery mechanics to the human and organizational factors that shape performance. That collaborative philosophy also informed her view of DBIA's role in the industry, bringing Owners and practitioners across disciplines together with researchers, policymakers and other industry partners to build consensus, advance research-based practices and raise expectations for design-build performance.



DBIA ED/CEO Lisa Washington, CAE, will retire after more than two decades with the organization.

That future-focused approach extended to strengthening DBIA itself. Most recently, following a Board-led assessment of DBIA's regional structure, Washington developed a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the relationship between the national organization and its 14 Regions, enhance support and resources, and better position the network to serve a growing design-build industry.

"Lisa's leadership changed not only the size and influence of DBIA but she understood the Institute's responsibility to the design and built industry," said Craig Unger, FDBIA, former interim DBIA President, who helped bring Washington to DBIA in 2004. "From the beginning, she had an acute ability to understand what the Institute urgently needed while also looking ahead to what DBIA could become. Lisa immersed herself in the industry and became one of design-build's most visible and trusted advocates, while continuing to guide DBIA to evolve as the industry changed significantly during her tenure."

Washington's commitment to the industry has also earned recognition beyond the association community. Engineering News-Record named her one of its Top 25 Newsmakers of 2012 for her leadership of an industry coalition that worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to improve its design-build procurement processes. In 2023, she was inducted into the National Academy of Construction, which recognized her as a transformational leader in design-build whose collaborative work helped standardize best practices across the industry.

For Washington, however, her connection to the industry has always been rooted in something more fundamental.

"I came to DBIA because of my background in association leadership, but I stayed for more than two decades because I came to believe so deeply in the importance of this work and the people who make it possible," Washington said. "I came to understand how profoundly our industry touches people's lives and the difference design-build can make in delivering better projects. It has been the privilege of my career to work alongside extraordinary staff, volunteer leaders, Owners and industry professionals to advance that mission. I'm enormously proud of what we have built together and confident in where DBIA is headed."

DBIA's National Board of Directors has retained Korn Ferry to lead the national search for Washington's successor, with the goal of welcoming DBIA's next Executive Director/CEO by mid-2027. Interested candidates or those wishing to recommend potential candidates may contact Cristina Fisher at Cristina.fisher@kornferry.com. Washington will continue as Executive Director/CEO until her successor begins and will remain with DBIA through December 2027 in a transition advisory capacity.

More than two decades after arriving at DBIA with three goals in hand, Washington will leave an organization that has transformed and is prepared to keep asking the question that defined much of her leadership: What does the industry need from DBIA next?

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