



Samuel D. Smoots - Bio
Executive Director, AABE Institute

The AABE Institute provides training, technical assistance, market information, supplier partnership opportunities in the U.S. and globally. The vision of the Institute is to be the leading resource for energy issues and opportunities in Africa, the Caribbean and the Diaspora emphasizing sustainable development. The mission of the Institute is to support and catalyze energy sector development in Africa and the Caribbean while also supporting African-American and other minority participation in U.S. business and economic development opportunities.

Sam Smoots is a seasoned international business and economic development specialist whose experience includes eight years as Business Development Manager for Sub-Saharan Africa for the Overseas Private Investment Corporation "OPIC", an independent agency of the US government. Mr. Smoots was responsible for designing and implementing marketing outreach activities to promote OPIC's financing, political risk insurance, and investment funds programs. During his career Mr. Smoots facilitated over \$700m in financing for more than 30 projects across 20 countries. The projects were in a variety of sectors including IT, hospitality, manufacturing, oil & gas, micro-finance, housing, telecommunications, power, healthcare, and agribusiness. His duties entailed working with American & foreign companies to review and to provide structural recommendations on business plans and proposals submitted for OPIC financing.

He represented OPIC at numerous conferences, interagency and Congressional meetings. He also coordinated OPIC's participation in Presidential and Congressional Trade Missions to Africa. Sam coordinated and participated in the negotiation of new bilateral agreements between OPIC and 20 sub-Saharan African countries, which provided for an enhanced investment product offerings and a more efficient country approval process. During the 2000 Clinton – Bush Presidential Transition period, he served as Acting Vice President for the Investment Development Department and was responsible for managing a 17 person staff of business development officers covering 140 countries. The primary objective during this time was to coordinate and present the Department's briefings to the nominees for the President and Executive Vice President of the agency prior to their confirmation hearings in the U.S. Senate.

For four months he was assigned to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation via an interagency transfer detail program to the Office of International Trade and Policy. His responsibilities included helping to revise the strategic plan, enhance private sector outreach, and to develop project financing models utilizing public-private partnerships in Africa, Asia, and the Western Hemisphere.

Prior to joining OPIC, he was the Program Coordinator for the African-American Institute's (AAI) Democratization program, which was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. State Department to provide technical support to African nations pursuing democratic transition. He also served as Executive Assistant to the Vice President of AAI. During his tenure at AAI, Mr. Smoots organized international election observation missions, international conferences, trade forums, and international visitor programs.

Mr. Smoots began his career as an International Protocol Officer for the City of Houston, arranging security, itineraries, and transportation for visiting foreign diplomats and delegations. Highlights include the coordination of a week-long economic development mission of eight West African Ambassadors, and participating in the logistical arrangements for the 1990 G-7 Summit hosted by former President George Bush in Houston.

Mr. Smoots has also worked at the local and federal levels of politics as legislative assistant to a Houston City Councilman who was Chair of the Economic Development Committee. He was Legislative Assistant responsible for banking, tax, and economic development legislation for retired Congressman Mike Andrews of Houston, Texas.

Mr. Smoots has a Bachelor of Science degree in International Trade from Texas Tech University, and continued his graduate studies in International Financial Management at the University of Maryland. He has a Certificate of Completion from the Harvard Business School for International Private Equity and the Federal Executive Institute for Executive Leadership Development.

He's an alumnus of the American Council of Young Political Leaders following his selection and to travel to South Korea as the only non-elected member of a bipartisan delegation of government officials in 2002; Sam is a former term-member of the Council on Foreign Relations. He represents AABE as a Member of the Board of Directors for the U.S. Angola Chamber of Commerce as well as the Advisory Boards for the Houston Museum of African American Culture, and Combustion Associates Inc., a California based MBE manufacturer of modular distributed energy power equipment and systems.