

# The Economic Alliance

## Board Meeting

January 27, 2021  
Zoom Meeting

### Attending Board Members:

Chris Branch, Chairman, Okanogan County Commissioners  
Lael Duncan, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman, No County #1, OCCAC  
Anna Dalbey, Secretary, South County #2, Coldwell Banker  
Maria Lassila, Treasurer, Omak Mirage Theater  
Matthew Pleasants for John St. Pierre, Colville Planning, CCT Rep

Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Works & Winthrop Chamber  
Alan Fisher, Central County #2 Rep., CEO Mid Valley Hosp  
Stacy Luckensmeyer, At-Large Representative #2, WVC  
Aaron Kester, No. County #2, Tonasket Natural Food Co-op

### Absent Board Members:

George Brady, Past Chairman, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Biological Sply  
Kurt Danison, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner  
Ted Piccolo, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Rep. #1, NNDF  
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2, GCD Chamber  
Kristi O'Neill, Central County #1 Rep., WorkSource  
Michael Porter, At Large #1, Omak School Superintendent

Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., clerk of the Brd  
Mayra Pamatz, Community Finance Rep., Umpqua Bank  
Sally Ranzau, Mayor of Winthrop, Methow Valley #1  
Jonnie Crossland, CTFC Representative  
Jon Culp, Mayor of Okanogan, City Representative #2  
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Comm. Rep., MAA

### Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director  
Carolyn Davis, Admin Assistant  
Mikaela Marion,  
Kelly Scalf, Okanogan County Transportation

Sheila Corsen, Okanogan County PUD.  
Carlene Andres, Mayor Pateros  
Zack Mallove, US Senator Murray Office  
John Culton, US Senator Murray Office

Chairman Chris Branch called the meeting to order.

Addition or Changes to Agenda: None

Consent Agenda: Don Linnertz made a motion to approve consent agenda (minutes 12/2/20). Aaron Kester seconded. Motion passed.

### Guest Speakers

John Culton and Zack Mallove with Senator Patty Murray's office spoke about the next steps now that the Democrats have taken the majority. Mr. Mallove has worked for Senator Murray for a long time. He spoke about Covid relief and what they are doing to push it forward. They are looking for a bi-partisan approach. The President is pushing a \$1.9 Trillion plan and \$15 billion would go directly to small businesses with \$35 billion for lending. There is a big push to raise the minimum wage right now and the path forward is a little murky. Roni Holder-Diefenbach asked about funding for Broadband. Mr. Culton said that there might be, but probably down the pipeline somewhere. There is a large infrastructure push but need to get immediate funding for Covid relief passed. Maria Lassila asked if there would be grants and loans such as the PPP and EIDL. Lael Duncan asked if anything was happening with the Wildfire Declaration and there is no movement yet. There are funds in the proposed bill for public infrastructure, such as maintaining and operational needs for buses, railroad, airports. Stacy Luckensmeyer asked if there is funding for communities to do recovery planning. Mr. Culton stated that it depends on what type of planning, but the intent is to make it flexible for what is needed. Mr. Culton can be reached at [john.culton@murray.senate.gov](mailto:john.culton@murray.senate.gov)

### Reports

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the recent Working Washington Grant had 26,000 applications and a little over 7,000 were approved. There were a lot of issues in signing the documents online and businesses accessing the funds. Fifty-two businesses in Okanogan County received the WW 3.0 grant. Forty-six were funded the maximum grant amount of \$12,500 and 6 received \$4,500.

The state is relying on the local ADOs since they know more about what is happening in the local communities. The state has stated that there could be \$240 million in grants and they would roll out the end of February. There could also be some funds for ADOs for administration.

Brewster/Pateros was selected to receive further assistance and Roni Holder-Diefenbach will be joining them as they go through the next steps in this process with the Retail Academy. The Roundtable discussion meetings did a survey to gauge the impacts of Covid-19, how the grant programs have helped businesses. This survey focused on restaurants, movie theaters, bowling alleys. Some businesses are starting to have outdoor dining with pods or having the windows opened and ventilation. February 4, 9 a.m. is the next Roundtable meeting and it is open to all business. The Economic Alliance Facebook page will have the link.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she is now on the Board for the Washington Economic Development Association (WEDA).

Roni Holder-Diefenbach shared the Okanogan County SBDC update from Business Development Specialist, Lew Blakeney. In 2020 his clients had over \$3,176,900 in Capital Infusion for their businesses and 133 jobs were created and/or retained. There were 5 new business startups and a total of 117 clients advised during 2020. Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that Cesar Padella is no longer working with the Economic Alliance's SBDC program and we will be looking at the second runner up applicant to see if they are still interested. Our contract with SBDC Cares Act Funds is through October 2021.

Financial Report: Yearend financial were distributed to Board members. We are still waiting to receive funds for the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Qt billings to the SBDC. Net income for the year was \$48,398. The Economic Alliance ran a little over \$1 million in funds through our books for the Covid-19 loan programs. The Economic Alliance's PPP loan forgiveness request was completed and sent in at the end of December and we are still waiting to hear back from that.

Business Education: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she is working with Central Washington Home Builders Association to do training on building code updates. She met with Kristi O'Neill at WorkSource and discussed what type of training businesses might need. One suggestion was online marketing to help businesses market their products/businesses. She has also been working with PTAC about doing a seminar for government contracting or the 8a Program.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she emailed all projects that were ranked in 2020 to let them know about EDA grants.

Motions: EDA Grant – Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we need to keep the momentum going with the Broadband Action Team. Might partner with the Methow Valley team for a \$100,000 grant (two-year program) from EDA, and there might be a 20% match (could be either cash or/and in-kind). Still working with ACRS on grant application to do an additional study and finish the plan. The application is to be submitted the end of January and then 30 days to hear about funding. She has reached out to the PUD as they will be the owners of the fiber lines. They expressed that they might be able to offer dollars for the match. Roni Holder-Diefenbach has also spoken to our County Commissioners, who also might be able to provide some funding. Don Linnertz made a motion that the Economic Alliance move forward with this grant opportunity. Lael Duncan seconded. Motion passed.

Covid-19 Response: The Economic Alliance still has PPE to distribute to local Chambers to supply their local businesses with PPE for their employees or for customers if needed. The Small Business survey for restaurants, movie theaters, and bowling alleys is out, and the next survey will be for all businesses. Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the PPP and EIDL programs are now opened and they are projecting the funds be used by the next three weeks.

### Discussion:

**Broadband Grant:** Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she did a final presentation to the county commissioners and will have final report to CERB by March. She has been putting together a list of “shovel ready” projects. The Broadband Action Team met yesterday and had a great meeting and received updates about what is happening on the state and federal level. Matthew Pleasants reported that \$1 Billion is set aside for Tribes across the US to look at their backbone infrastructure to see where funding for upgrades would be needed. A portion of the Reservation would not be eligible, and we need to wait for the guidelines to come out. Phase one now include Desautel, Nespelem, Keller.

Don Linnertz reported that the Methow Valley Broadband Action Team is working on EDA grants for administration and to retain the services of their consultant. They are working to deliver their final report to CERB. There is a bill (Bill 1136) out that would allow PUDs to sell wholesale and retail. Many areas are reported as being served but are not and we need to be ready to respond. He also wanted to make sure everyone does the speed test. Link is on their Facebook page.

**Local Investment Network:** Don Linnertz reported that they will be having a meeting tonight from 5 – 7 to host a statewide network of Local Investment Networks. Michael Shuman will be speaking about how LINs can help shape our economy after COVID-19. This is a good way to build a network across the state.

**Okanogan County Economic Recovery Dashboard:** Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has been meeting with this group for the past two months to develop this dashboard. The Washington State Department of Commerce has developed an Economic Recovery Dashboard tool. This tool uses a variety of data sources to track Washington State’s economic recovery and resiliency. It will display the latest available data on employment, businesses, government assistance programs and consumer behavior, and help to monitor the economic impact of COVID-19 across our state. Updates will be made monthly. Also looking at having a county dashboard and updating it regularly.

**Okanogan County Destination Tourism Master Plan:** Carolyn Davis spoke about the Tourism Destination Master Plan that the Tourism Council is doing. OTAK is in the process of incorporating all comments and we have asked the county for a short extension into 2021.

**WSMA – Future MDO Partnership:** Microenterprise funds up to \$5,000. Roni Holder-Diefenbach met and discussed becoming a MSA and to offer micro enterprise loans/grants. This would not occur, if we move forward, until 2022.

### Contracts:

Contracts have been signed for 2021 except for the SBDC. SBDC Cares Act contract still has funds to use if we find someone to hire.

### Other Business, News, Member Updates:

Chris Branch reported that Okanogan County had a cyber-attack and most everything is back up now. This has had a very big impact on the county.

Lael Duncan reported that OCCAC has several vacant positions opened. She also suggested that everyone go and sign the Wildfires declaration.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2021.

Meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Davis, Administrative Assistant

## Attachment # 1



## ECONOMIC ALLIANCE *Executive Directors Report*

*January 2021*

### **Overview:**

*This month we completed several of our year end and quarterly reports for many of our contracts. We continued to work with local businesses as new guidance and a regional strategy for opening back up have been introduced by the governor's office in response to the increase in COVID-19 cases. We also have continued to provide technical assistance to the small businesses who applied for and were awarded Working Washington 3 grants.*

### **State Policy Issues**

*The Governor recently extended the restrictions on several industries including restaurants, bars, gyms, music venues, bowling alleys and dental and health clinics. We received notification that we had **52 businesses who received the WW 3.0 and 46 were funded the maximum grant amount of \$12,500.00 and 6 who received \$4,500.00.** These funds have been distributed to the businesses during the month of January.*

*Below is a summary of potentially significant bills, upcoming events for this week and a list of bills of interest.*

**HB 1170**—*An Act Relating to Building Economic Strength through Manufacturing, is sponsored by Representative Boehnke (R-Kennewick). The legislation declares a state goal for Washington State to have the highest share of the workforce involved in manufacturing and research and development occupations of any state in the United States. The primate sponsor is working with the Department of Commerce and developing a substitute version of the bill. The bill is scheduled for a public hearing on January 29th in the House Community and Economic Development Committee.*

**SB 5115**—*An Act Relating to Establishing Health Emergency Labor Standards is sponsored by Senator Keiser (D-Des Moines). This legislation includes the following provisions:*

- *Creates an occupational disease presumption for frontline workers during a public health emergency for the purposes of workers' compensation.*
- *Requires employers to accommodate an employee's voluntary use of protective equipment*
- *Expands the eligibility for Family and Medical Leave to employees that earn at least \$1000 in covered employment if their qualifying period includes a public health emergency;*
- *Requires an employer to pay its lower-paid frontline employees health emergency pay during a public health emergency;*
- *Establishes additional sick leave for employees who are quarantined or infected, caring for someone who is quarantined or infected, or caring for their child due to school or childcare closures during a public health emergency;*
- *Requires employers with 50 or more employees to provide emergency childcare leave during a public health emergency; and*
- *Establishes a business and occupation tax credit for the wages paid by an employer under the new sick leave and childcare leave requirements under the bill.*

*This bill had a hearing on January 18th in the Senate Labor, Commerce and Tribal Affairs Committee and has not been scheduled yet for a committee vote.*

**SB 5061**—An Act relating to unemployment insurance is sponsored by Senator Keiser (D-Des Moines) and is Governor's request legislation. The legislation includes the following provisions:

- Provides unemployment insurance benefits to high risk individuals, or those who live with high risk individuals, who voluntarily quit their jobs during a public health emergency if they cannot work from home for that employer, but can work from home for other employers;
- Decreases the maximum social tax and suspends the solvency surcharge tax for five years;
- Expands the period for calculating employer experience-related taxes from four years to five years; and
- Requires that unemployment insurance benefits paid for all weeks starting with the week ending March 28, 2020 through May 2, 2020, are not charged to the experience rating account of an employer.

Both the House and Senate versions of this bill were heard by the relevant committees last week. The Senate Labor Committee passed the bill on January 18th and the expectation is that the full Senate will consider it this week.

**HB 1095**—This legislation is sponsored by Rep. Walen (D-Kirkland) and provides a business and occupation tax, a public utilities tax, and a retail sales tax exemption for qualifying grants received after February 29, 2020, that are related to a national or state emergency proclamation. This House passed this bill on a vote of 98-0.

**HB 1018** and **SB 5176**—These bills sponsored by Rep. Lovick in the House and Senator Van De Wege in the Senate, apply existing motorized boater education standards to canoes, kayaks, rafts, stand-up paddleboards and dragon boats. The House Community and Economic Development Committee had a public hearing last week and based on concerns expressed, Representative Lovick is working with stakeholders on a potential substitute version of the bill. The Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Park Committee will consider a substitute version of the bill in its public hearing on January 28th.

**HB 1263**—Sponsored by Representative Abbarno (R-Centralia) creates a rural infrastructure assistance account and establishes a competitive grant program to award funding to local governments located in rural counties for public facilities, including broadband. The bill has a public hearing in the Community and Economic Development Committee on January 27th.

#### **Washington Small Business Resources Mobilization Campaign:**

Organizations that serve small businesses and non-profit organizations are working together to maximize the amount of federal aid that will come to our state through the Washington Small Business Resources Mobilization Campaign, which WEDA is helping coordinate. We are committed to working proactively to provide accurate information about the relief opportunities and to connecting people to technical assistance should they want help navigating the process and forms/requirements. This group has a major focus on reaching and serving small businesses and non-profit organizations in underserved communities and areas of the state, including rural. The scale of the challenge is enormous, the needs are unprecedented. We are continuing to receive emails from the SBA about what's happening on the new round of PPP and other resources such as EIDL and the Shuttered Venues grants and attending weekly webinars to receive updates to the programs.

The landing webpage [www.SmallBizHelpWA.com](http://www.SmallBizHelpWA.com) is intended to be a relatively simple portal/hub for resources such as the SBA and SBDC. It includes a roster of technical assistance providers, a resource portal, a training calendar that is inclusive of and beyond SBDC and SBA, and soon, a rapidly updated statewide list of lending institutions available for PPP lending. If you have additional resources or updates for the website, please email: [SmallBizHelpWA@gmail.com](mailto:SmallBizHelpWA@gmail.com). Additional Technical Assistance providers can be considered by completing this Google form: [Technical Assistance Organization Sign Up: WA State Small Business Resources Mobilization Campaign](#)

#### **Federal Policy issues**

In case you missed it, President Trump signed the federal coronavirus relief package. This bill includes \$284 billion in funding for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which provides distressed small businesses with forgivable loans to

help them survive and keep their employees employed. As a reminder, over 102,000 businesses in Washington state received over \$12 billion in support this year. We continue to work with local businesses to share information with them regarding all the SBA programs available to them.

**LOCAL/REGIONAL:**

**Economic Recovery Dashboard:** I am working with a group to develop a Okanogan County specific Economic Recovery Dashboard. We met this month and will continue working to determine what that should look like for our area. There is a potential that working with the EDD we can expand this to continue on an annual basis.

**Regional Retail Academy-** Completed the Training-Pateros/Brewster was selected and I will be joining them on their journey through the next steps in this process.

**Small Business Roundtables-**partnership with Ok Public Health to roll out new guidance and provide updated resources to small businesses (SBDC, Worksource/ESD). We are also answering questions that they have. We have also asked participants to complete a survey so we can gauge the impacts COVID-19 and the shutdowns have had on their businesses.

**Small Business Working Group-**Led by Representative Cindy Ryu, MBA, (D-32nd)

Community and Economic Development Committee Chair and Representative Noel Frame, 36th Legislative District, Chair of the House Finance Committee and I will be representing small businesses and rural communities we will meet biweekly through the session.

**Memberships:** Joined Central Washington Homebuilders Association, Washington Economic Development Association, North Central Washington Economic Development District

**Okanogan County/CCT Broadband Action Team:**

Presented to the Board of Okanogan County Commissioners on January 11<sup>th</sup>. We will be closing out our CERB grant in March but will continue our monthly meetings.

**External Board of Directors:** Currently I am representing the Economic Alliance on the following boards:

NCW Economic Development District

NCW Career Connect Leadership Team

NCW Workforce Development Council

Family Health Centers Board

CFNCW Helping Hands Grant Committee

Washington Economic Development Association