

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
March 26, 2025
Commissioner's Hearing Room, Okanogan

Attending Board Members:

Anna Dalbey, Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty
Maria Lassila, 1st Vice Chair, Omak Chamber
Sarah Jo Lightner, Methow Arts, Sec., Arts Comm Rep
Beth Strohane, Applied Bldg Information, At-Large #4
Crystal Gage, Confluence Heath, Central Co. Area #1

Jord Wilson, At-Large #5, City of Pateros
Sarah Brown, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Lisa Bauer, City Rep., City of Okanogan Cty
Rocklyn Culp, Town of Winthrop, Planner
Riki Wippel, NNDF, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #1

Absent Board Members:

Anthony Popelier, 2nd Vice Chairman Reman & Reload, North Co. #2
Kurt Danison, Past Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep, WA Federal Bank
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Commissioners Rep., Ck of the Brd Co Rep #2
Steve Quick, Central #2 Okanogan School Super.
Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Dist. Super.
Lael Duncan, Partners for Rural WA, No. County #1

Brett Riley, WVC, At Large #A2
William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep
Nick Timm, County Commissioners Rep., Rep. #1
Scott Graham, South County #1, 3 Rivers Hospital
Monica Garza Acevedo, WorkSource, At-Large #3
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1
Vacant, CTFC Representative

Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Economic Alliance
Leonel Marcial, Business Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance
Kaelyn Marchand-Ankney, Business Outreach, Economic Alliance
Brian Points, Points Consulting
Lew Blakeney, SBDC, Economic Alliance

Carolyn Davis, Program Assistant, Econ. Alliance
Mason Duke, E. Dev. Specialist, Economic Alliance
Sabine Boehm, Loggerhead Pizza, Omak
Jessica McCarthy, Okanogan Co. PUD
Richard ??,

Chairman, Anna Dalbey, called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Agenda: Approved.

Board Minutes: Minutes from February 26, 2025, were emailed out. Crystal Gage made a motion to approve the minutes of February 26, 2025, as presented. Rocklyn Culp seconded. Motion passed.

Financials: Roni Holder-Diefenbach presented the updated financials as of March 20, 2025.

Motions

None

Guest Speaker

Mr. Brian Points with Points Consulting spoke about the development of the County Economic Development Strategy for Okanogan County. This is a five-year plan for economic development. What do we want to accomplish over the next five years? Mr. Points shared some of the results of the survey and they will be adding in the five unique geographic regions of the county. People were dissatisfied with the education and training opportunities in Okanogan County but were satisfied with the recreational opportunities in their communities. This document includes regional and organizational background information, demographic data on Okanogan County with regional comparisons, a timeline of the County's development, community engagement insights, and a Strategic Direction & Action Plan. It will also include key performance indicators, a tracking tool and schedule, and recommendations for

measuring progress. After incorporating further input and adjustments, Points Consulting will present the final CEDS that reflect the community's priorities and strategic direction. A final draft will be sent out to Board members for review.

Reports

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1)

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported it has been a very busy month. The Governor's budget came out and the ADO funding was to be reduced by 50%. She testified on bills and worked with the WEDA representative to provide information about the importance of ADOs in rural counties. The SBDC and the CDBG funds are federal dollars, and the Economic Alliance has diversified funding sources, so the hit from the loss of state funds won't hurt as much as a few years ago. Staff have been very busy attending chamber meetings and city council meetings over the past month and trying to explain the activities of the Economic Alliance. Training for the next couple of months has been finalized and includes classes on the Start Simple program, succession planning, social media strategy, strengthening small business and chamber engagement, navigating cash flow and profitability. Roni Holder-Diefenbach announced that Kaelyn Marchand-Ankney will be leaving the Economic Alliance at the end of the month. Roni Holder-Diefenbach would like to schedule a Board Retreat in September. She has also been working on creating an Annual Report for the Economic Alliance to help tell our story. The EDD will be done with grant through the EDA but could apply for additional grant funds once the Board gets better established and if they decide to carry on.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the grant writer contract has been in touch with several entities to help with grant writing.

Business Education/Outreach: Mason Duke reported that he spent a week as a company advisor at Business Week. He has also worked one-on-one with people wanting to start businesses through the Start Simple program. Leonel Marcial has been doing outreach to Latino businesses and encouraging them to sign up for the Start Simple program. He helped to establish a few out-reach offices and has provided the Start Simple program in Spanish. Kaelyn Marchand-Ankney reported that she has been working on doing outreach to some childcare businesses, developing the flyer for various workshops and drafting an annual report for the Economic Alliance.

Discussion

Board Member Recruitment/Alternates: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we still currently have two positions on the Economic Alliance Board that are vacant. One is for the Nespelem/Coulee Dam area, and one is for a representative from the Colville Tribal Federal Corporation (CTFC). The CTFC is in the process of hiring a new CFO and hopefully that person will appointment someone to fill this position. She has also been in touch with the manager of the Grand Coulee Dam Area Chamber regarding ideas for a representative from the Nespelem/Coulee Dam area.

Port District: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that this committee will be meeting tomorrow and will continue to develop a list of action items that they need to work on. Please let Roni Holder-Diefenbach know if you would like to be involved.

Broadband Funding – BEAD funding: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Okanogan County PUD and the Okanogan Electric Co-op submitted applications, but did not get funded. They were

invited to reapply. One project was funded in Okanogan County. An ISP applied and was funded. The Okanogan County PUD will begin work on getting wireless services to the town of Conconully as soon as the weather breaks.

Contracts/Grant Updates – no report

Other Business/News/Member Updates

Jord Wilson reported that the feasibility study for a metal recycling facility is still moving forward.

Maria Lassila reported that Our Mr. Mastura Documentary will be showing at the Omak Theater on April 18 & 19. This was a three-year project done by Beth Harrington.

Maria Lassila reported that the Omak Chamber will host a Motors and Mocktails in downtown Omak on Fridays for the next several weeks from 4 – 6.

Coulee Dam movie theater will re-open mid-July. Pateros will host an event for Arbor Day with live music and hot dogs. Sabina Boehm announced that the Loggerhead Restaurant will soon be leased, and a new restaurant will be opening. Riki Wippel reported that the NNDF will be holding its annual fund raiser auction and will have live entertainment.

Meeting adjourned, 12:20 p.m. **Next meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.**

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roni Holder-Diefenbach', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Executive Director Report

March 2025

This has been a busy month for the Economic Alliance. It started off with us hearing news regarding the potential for the ADO Funding to be cut by 50%. We immediately started working with WEDA and contacted our local legislators to share the importance that this funding has on rural Frontier 1 counties. Executive Committee Members Kurt Danison and Anthony Popelier also sent letters to our legislators on the Economic Alliance's behalf. I also attended Chair Berg & Chair Ryu's Small Business Roundtable that is held twice a month during the legislative session to hear directly from small businesses and technical assistance providers, and on March 18th I testified at the House Technology, Economic Development and Veterans Committee meeting on Senate bill 5677 otherwise known as the ADO bill.

On March 11th the public hearing was held at the BOCC hearing room on our CDBG application. I was the only one in attendance and shared the importance of the CDBG application to our organization and how during a time when budgets are uncertain, we continue to apply to diversify our funding streams. The BOCC was very supportive, and the hearing closed with no concerns. I followed up with Lanie, regarding the second step in the application process, which is providing the documentation that the hearing has occurred which she has completed. Now we are waiting for Jon to get back to us so we can move forward with the next step in the process.

The team and I continue to conduct outreach at Chamber meetings, in the communities and by getting on the schedule to attend City Council meetings to share what the Economic Alliance is working on. We presented to the Nespelem City Council and are working on scheduling times to meet with the Elmer City and Coulee City. I also participated as a panelist at the WEDA Membership virtual meeting to speak about ADO funding and the impacts on rural counties. Through WEDA I am mentoring another ADO Executive Director and I got to meet with her at her location in Lincoln County. This was a great opportunity to meet with her in her place of business and share how we conduct business, offer and create programs and services and have grown our EDC over the last 10+ years. It is important that rural ADOs know that there is opportunity out there and that the challenges that they are facing can be overcome!

We continue to work with our consultants at Points Consulting to provide updates to the board as the drafts of different sections of the CEDS plan come out to gather input. We hope to have this complete by the end of March 2025. I also met with our partners at PRWA on the grant writing program, and they are moving forward on several projects who have been through our prioritization process. This program is good through June 2025, so they are diligently working on expediting these conversations to get as many applications as possible in that timeline.

The team and I have been working to finalize our training courses from April through June. We will have some great workshops for Chambers and nonprofits, small businesses and will be partnering with Sister Sky, part of the DOC Resiliency Network to hold 2 workshops. We also held the first class in our Digital Literacy Series on Accessing Medical Records and Online Banking and had a good turnout! We hope to schedule more of these throughout the county.

This month I attended several meetings including the local Workforce Development Board, WEDA Membership Mtg, ADO Membership Mtg, ADO Best Practices Mtg, Digital Navigation Planning Mtg, FHC Board and Committee Mtg's, WDC Retreat, FHC Retreat, NCW EDD Board Mtg.

The Economic Alliance's Executive Director is currently representing the Economic Alliance on the following boards:

NCW Economic Development District
NCW Workforce Development Council
Okanogan County BAT

Community Economic Revitalization Board
Washington Economic Development Association CCT&