

# The Economic Alliance Board Meeting

June 25, 2025

County Commissioners' Hearing Room

## Attending Board Members:

Anna Dalbey, Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty  
Maria Lassila, 1st Vice Chair, Omak Chamber  
Nick Timm, County Commissioners Rep., Rep. #1, Treasurer  
Kurt Danison, Past Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner

Rocklyn Culp, Town of Winthrop, Planner  
Beth Strohshane, Applied Bldg Infor, At-Large #4  
Sarah Jo Lightner, Methow Arts, Sec., Arts Comm Rep  
Rob Gillespie for Lisa Bauer, City Rep., City of Okanogan

## Absent Board Members:

Anthony Popelier, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman Reman & Reload, North Co. #2  
Sarah Brown, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works  
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Commissioners Rep., Ck of the Brd Co Rep #2  
Jord Wilson, At-Large #5, City of Pateros  
Scott Graham, South County #1, 3 Rivers Hospital  
Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Dist. Super.  
Lael Duncan, Partners for Rural WA, No. County #1  
Rikki Whipple, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #1, CCT

Monica Garza Acevedo, WorkSource, At-Large #3  
Steve Quick, Central #2 Okanogan School Super.  
Brett Riley, WVC, At Large #A2  
Crystal Gage, Confluence Heath, Central Co. Area #1  
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep, WA Federal Bank  
Vacant, CTFC Representative  
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2

## Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Economic Alliance  
Leonel Marcial, Business Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance  
Breanna Sollender, Comm/Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance  
Rachel McClure, Representative for Rep. Dan Newhouse  
Lew Blakeney, Economic Alliance & SBDC

Mason Duke, E. Dev. Specialist, Economic Alliance  
Carolyn Davis, Project Assistant, Economic Alliance  
Paula Chambers, Omak Chamber  
Jessica McCarthy, Okanogan Co. PUD

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

Agenda: No changes or any conflicts with the agenda items.

Consent Agenda: Minutes from May 28, 2025, were emailed out. Nothing unusual in the financials. Maria Lassila made a motion to approve the minutes as presented and the financials as of June 18, 2025. Sarah Jo Lightner seconded. Motion passed.

## Motions

The CEDS was sent out to the Board last week to review. Roni Holder-Diefenbach spoke about the changes that were requested at the last review and asked for any additional changes and/or corrections that needed to be made.

Discussed the increase interest in CTE programs and that the school boards need to be pushing this forward. Discussion about local schools providing training for continuing education and stressed that this is not just the Economic Alliance's projects but a community / county-wide list of projects in the CEDS

Discussed the possibility of creating a Port District and that we would have to work with representatives of the legislature to see if it can be changed from a county-wide district to a specific area, such as the Omak-Okanogan School Districts.

Kurt Danison made a motion to approve the CEDS as corrected. Nick Timm seconded. Motion passed.

## **Reports**

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the ADO contract with the Department of Commerce is still not finalized as of yet. They are still working on the grant amount, but we could experience a \$5,000 to \$10,000 budget cut. She is still meeting with DOC and the ADOs to get an equitable solution for all ADOs.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach introduced a new employee, Breanna Sollender. She started work in mid-June. Breanna Sollender spoke about her past experiences in banking and that she wanted something different when this position at the Economic Alliance opened. She has lived in several places in Okanogan County and has a daughter that will be a senior at Omak School this year.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also reviewed the budget for the Economic Alliance. The CDBG grant is still waiting for a contract, and the USDA grant request is still waiting. The WEDFA will restart on July 1. Most expenses are under what was proposed, except for a couple that are over. The grant writing contract will be ending as of June 30, 2025.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that next month she will bring a spreadsheet showing what grants were submitted and what was funded.

Business Education/Outreach: Mason Duke spoke about the types of workshops held recently. He reported that he and Leonel Marcial set up a booth at the recent Okanogan Days and will be at most of the Farmers Markets with information about the Economic Alliance and the various projects and workshops available. Leonel Marcial spoke about assisting businesses that are actually ready to open their business. He is finding that people are saying they are ready to open their business but really aren't. Breanna Sollender reported she has been learning about the organization and will start updating the web site and getting the next newsletter out.

## **Discussion**

Vacant Board Member Positions/Alternates: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that there are still 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). We are still looking to fill these positions.

Port District: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that this committee isn't meeting again until they get additional information. She did ask our local legislators to attend today's Board meeting, but they were unable to attend. Hopefully they can attend the in-person meeting in September.

Broadband Funding – BEAD funding: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the state now has a new Director for the State BB office. There is currently a lot of frustration with inconsistencies with the interpretation of the RCWs. Those that have submitted applications, Okanogan County PUD and the Okanogan County Electric Co-op, won't find out if any were funded until August or September.

**Contracts/Grant Updates** – Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she is waiting for the ADO contract from the Department of Commerce, which begins July 1, 2025, and for the paperwork for the WEDFA grant. She is waiting for the contract on the CDBG funding.

**Other Business/News/Member Updates**

Maria Lassila reported that the Omak Skate Park is holding a one-year anniversary celebration on June 28; Motors & Mocktails is the first Saturday of the month. Omak Chamber Business After Hours will be at the Fitness Zone on July 9.

Sarah Jo Lightner reported that on July 4th the Arts Festival at Twisp Works will be held.

Rachel McClure reported that both versions of the Laser Light Show will be shown on the face of Grand Coulee Dam on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

The Loomis Fire District, a project that has been ranked through the Prioritization Process, has finally been able to secure some property for their new firehall and this project can now move forward.

Brewster has a 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> of July event, parade, food, music and fireworks.

Oroville will have fireworks on July 4<sup>th</sup> at Deep Bay Park.

Meeting adjourned, 1:00 p.m. **Next meeting is scheduled for July 23, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Davis

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Executive Director





## **ECONOMIC ALLIANCE Executive Director Report**

### **May 2025**

Spring is here and we have been extremely busy at the Economic Alliance office! This month we continued our workshop series and had some great speakers who provided very valuable information to our small businesses, chambers and other nonprofit organizations.

After our last board meeting, we convened a few board members who wanted to meet directly with Points Consulting to provide input on the draft CEDS. The meeting went well, and when we concluded the meeting, I believe that everyone was on the same page in regard to how important it is to have a clear, concise plan that represents Okanogan County as we plan for the next 4-5 years. Brian and his team are committed to having the final CEDS document to us by our June board meeting.

In May we received some great news on two of our three grant applications. Okanogan County was awarded a 3-year CDBG grant in the amount of 250,000.00. We are working with Lanie at the county on contract documents etc. We also heard from WEDFA that we were awarded a 1-year 80,000.00 grant with 26,000.00 being subcontracted to Twisp Works for services connected to the MIN and small business support. We are very excited about these funding opportunities and are waiting to hear back from USDA on our RBDG application!

Due to the notifications for funding awarded, and the need for program coverage, I posted the Communications and Business Outreach position on Indeed. We received 20 applications, and I am in the process of interviewing 7 individuals. I hope to have the position filled by the end of May.

This month I attended the CERB meeting in Spokane. We attended the Spokane Conservation Districts Ribbon Cutting ceremony for their new building that was funding partially by CERB. This was a great event, and I encourage everyone to check out their campus, they have some cool things happening! <https://spokanecd.org/pages/the-quarry>

May seemed to be the month for Audits as well, we had both the SBDC and the ADO Grant Writing Contract contact us and request to do an audit. I met with both, and they were happy with the work that we are doing. For our SBDC audit, Craig did offer us some tips that will help us out and them when we are addressing our match.

This month I attended several meetings including the BAT Committee Mtg, CERB , WEDA Mtg, Housing Mtg, Business Impact NW, WA Fed, Mid Valley CEO, EA Executive Committee, and BAT Meeting. In June I will be taking some leave to be with my daughter after she has her baby. I will update the board when I know more!

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

NCW Economic Development District  
NCW Workforce Development Council  
CCT& Okanogan County BAT

Community Economic Revitalization Board  
Washington Economic Development Association