

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
August 27, 2025
Via Zoom

Attending Board Members:

Anna Dalbey, Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty	Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Infor, At-Large #4
Anthony Popelier, 2 nd Vice Chair Reman & Reload, North Co. #2	Jord Wilson, At-Large #5, City of Pateros
Kurt Danison, Past Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner	Lisa Bauer, City Rep., City of Okanogan
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep, WA Federal Bank	Monica Garza Acevedo, WorkSource, At-Large #3
Sarah Jo Lightner, Methow Arts, Sec., Arts Comm Rep	

Absent Board Members:

Maria Lassila, 1st Vice Chair, Omak Chamber	Rocklyn Culp, Town of Winthrop, Planner
Nick Timm, County Commissioners Rep., Rep. #1, Treasurer	Sarah Brown, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works Lanie
Johns, Ok Co Commissioners Rep., Ck of the Brd Co Rep #2	Cal Goolsby, WVC, At Large #A2
Scott Graham, South County #1, 3 Rivers Hospital	Crystal Gage, Confluence Heath, Central Co. Area #1
Lael Duncan, Partners for Rural WA, No. County #1	Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Dist. Super.
Rikki Whipple, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #1,	Steve Quick, Central #2 Okanogan School Super.
Vacant, CTFC Representative	Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2

Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Economic Alliance	Mason Duke, E. Dev. Specialist, Economic Alliance
Leonel Marcial, Business Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance	Carolyn Davis, Project Assistant, Economic Alliance
Breanna Sollender, Comm/Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance	Jessica McCarthy, Okanogan Co. PUD Okanogan PUD
Jordan Ruiz, NNDF	

Anna Dalbey, Chairman called the meeting to order and asked everyone to sign in to the chat room to introduce themselves.

Agenda: No conflicts with the agenda items.

Consent Agenda: Minutes from August 20, 2025, were emailed out. Financials were sent out as of August 20th, 2025. Kurt Danison made a motion to approve the minutes as presented and the financials as of August 20, 2025. Jord Wilson seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Motions: None

Jordan Ruiz is interested in the vacant Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2 position and was asked to give some information about herself. Jordan Ruiz is the Executive Director with the Northwest Native Development Fund. She lives in Elmer City and has been with the NNDF for four years and the Executive Director for the past two years. The NNDF has a nice reserve of funding and should be able to continue operations if federal funding is cut. The NNDF is a CDFI and provides financing for businesses, especially if they are not eligible at traditional lending institutions. The NNDF has access to a network of experienced business professionals to help existing or potential businesses. They also offer a variety of financial and business educational courses. Jordan Ruiz stated she likes to be involved and works to help organization thrive.

Beth Stroshane made a motion to seat Jordan Ruiz to the vacant Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2 position for the remainder of the term. (2026). Sarah Jo Lightner seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained

Reports

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she and Mason Duke attended the WEDA conference, and both spoke on panels. She has been working to get the Infrastructure Committee process started for this year.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the notice was sent out on Monday to past applicants and to local media. There are already three people signed up for the applicant readiness workshop scheduled for September 11, from 9 – 11 a.m. Pre-Application letters of intent to apply are also now being received from organizations, entities, municipalities, counties, private businesses and individuals in Okanogan County and the Colville Confederated Tribe project prioritization process. This isn't a funding year, but projects can be evaluated and ranked for possible funding from other funding sources.

Business Education/Outreach: Mason Duke reported that he spoke about young emerging leaders in economic development on the panel he participated in at the recent WEDA conference. It felt like it was a very good experience. He is working on setting up workshops and trainings that the Economic Alliance is sponsoring over the next couple of months. Topics will be social media, business plans, etc. He will also be starting a new Start Simple class in September.

Leonel Marcial spoke about assisting businesses that are ready to open their business. He is doing the Start Simple classes in Spanish again. He had a good turnout with a lot of questions and discussions. He is still doing outreach with several of the clients.

Breanna Sollender reported she recently attended the NW Economic Development Training held in Lacey. She is working on the next newsletter and social media posts for the Economic Alliance. She will be reaching out to gather information about some of our Board members too, so she can start writing about them for the newsletters.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach spoke about the benefits of the Start Simple classes and maybe we can get people to start thinking outside the box about entrepreneurship.

Discussion

Jord Wilson asked Roni Holder-Diefenbach to give an update on the NCW EDD. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that the EDD is contracting with 501 Commons to do an evaluation of the organization and whether to continue it or work to dissolve. Another entity has since stepped forward and offered to take over. One of the good things about the EDD was that they helped communities access federal EDA funds.

Vacant Board Member Positions/Alternates: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reminded each Board member that they need to appoint an alternate to attend meetings if they are unable. Since seating Jordan Ruiz to the vacant Nespelem/Coulee Dam area position today, there is still one position vacant for a CTFC representative. They are still looking to hire someone for their vacant Executive Director position and this new person could serve on the Board or could appoint someone from that organization.

Port District: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Port District Committee won't be meeting again until they can meet with our legislators to see if they are willing to sponsor a bill to change or amend legislation that requires any new Port District needs to be countywide.

Technical Training and Arts Education Committee: Sarah Jo Lightner reported that she hasn't spoken with anyone but plans to get together the first part of October.

Broadband Funding – BEAD funding: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she received notice that neither the Okanogan County PUD nor the Electric Co-op receive any funding for their projects. The Tribe did receive \$25 million for buildout over the Columbia River Road and down into Malott.

Contracts/Grant Updates – Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has a meeting with the Department of Commerce this afternoon and she should learn about the budget cuts, she is expecting cuts to be in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range. We should then receive the ADO contract from the Department of Commerce, which began July 1, 2025. The CDBG funding was approved by the commissioners and a contract with the Economic Alliance has been signed.

Other Business/News/Member Updates

Kurt Danison reported that Pateros lost out on a metal recycling business, but they are now looking at locating in Omak. He also spoke with representative from the Marriot Hotel and took him on a tour of the Omak area. Roni Holder-Diefenbach spoke about the Datafy information that the Tourism Council is collecting about our visitors. Jord Wilson stated that Pateros would be interested in getting some of these reports. Carolyn Davis spoke about the Tourism Council's reports and because it does cost to have these reports generated, they need to probably charge for the information. It was suggested that Jennifer Tate speak at an upcoming meeting about the type of reports that the Tourism Council can access.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach received an award at the recent WEDA conference for outstanding leadership!

Meeting adjourned, 12:09 p.m. **Next meeting is scheduled for September 24, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. in person.**

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Executive Director





**ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Executive Director Report**

August 2025

This month was notably shorter due to my participation in the WEDA Conference and a week of vacation.

During the WEDA Conference, I had the honor of speaking on a panel discussing Public Infrastructure. This panel provided valuable insights into the current state and future prospects of infrastructure development, highlighting the importance of sustainable and innovative solutions. I was asked to talk about our prioritization process, the Tech Teams both Federal and State that we brought to Okanogan County and our Broadband Action Team.

In addition to speaking on the Public Infrastructure panel, I also facilitated a panel on Washington Creative Industries. This session focused on the growth and impact of creative industries in Washington, emphasizing the need for continued support and investment in this sector.

Following the conference, I took a week of vacation to recharge and return with renewed energy and focus.

Now I am ramping up the start of the Okanogan County Public Infrastructure process, a press release is scheduled for next week, along with renewed engagement with the Infrastructure Committee.

Despite the shortened month, the engagements at the WEDA Conference were highly productive and provided significant opportunities for networking and collaboration.

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