

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
September 24, 2025
Commissioner's Hearing Room

Attending Board Members:

Anna Dalbey, Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty
Nick Timm, County Commissioners Rep., Rep. #1, Treasurer
Kurt Danison, Past Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner
Lael Duncan, Partners for Rural WA, No. County #1
Patrick Laws, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Steve Quick, Central #2 Okanogan School Super.

Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Infor, At-Large #4
Jord Wilson, At-Large #5, City of Pateros
Lisa Bauer, City Rep., City of Okanogan
Monica Garza Acevedo, WorkSource, At-Large #3
Crystal Gage, Confluence Heath, Central Co. Area #1

Absent Board Members:

Maria Lassila, 1st Vice Chair, Omak Chamber
Anthony Popelier, 2nd Vice Chair Reman & Reload, North Co. #2
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep, WA Federal Bank
Lanie Johns, Ok Co Commissioners Rep., Ck of the Brd Co Rep #2
Scott Graham, South County #1, 3 Rivers Hospital
Rikki Whipple, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #1,

Sarah Jo Lightner, Methow Arts, Sec., Arts Comm Rep
Rocklyn Culp, Town of Winthrop, Planner
Cal Goolsby, WVC, At Large #A2
Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Dist. Super
Jordan Ruiz, NNDF, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2
Vacant, CTFC Representative

Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Economic Alliance
Leonel Marcial, Business Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance
Breanna Sollender, Comm/Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance
Lew Blakeney, Economic Alliance, SBDC

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

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

Agenda: No conflicts with the agenda items and no additions or changes.

Consent Agenda: Minutes from August 27, 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. Crystal Gage seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

CEDS Quarterly Updates: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reviewed the CEDS and gave a brief outline of progress on economic development strategies. The Economic Alliance has started the process last month for the prioritization process for projects. A notice will be sent to those selected to give a full application and the committee will meet to prioritize projects. The final list of prioritized projects be presented to the county commissioners and then will be included in the CEDS and on the Economic Alliance web site.

Properties have been added and updated on the list of available properties for potential businesses to rent, lease, or purchase.

Work on establishing a Port District in Okanogan County is still moving forward and currently looking at a non-taxing district but need to find out how they are funded.

Received a draft report on effects of a Creative Arts Community. A subcommittee has been created for the Arts.

Tourism – Reviewed some of the Datafy reports on visitors coming to the Okanogan area. Asked Jenn Tate to do a presentation about the Datafy reports at the December meeting. Also ask the Tourism Council to provide a link to the Economic Alliance web site.

Still working on the abandoned buildings and workforce and affordable housing.

We are three months into the adoption of the CEDS and things are being done and/or worked on.

Motions:

Nomination Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we need to select a Nomination Committee to select Board members whose terms are finished, as well as present a slate of officers for 2026. Kurt Danison as done this in the past with Roni Holder-Diefenbach's help. Roni Holder-Diefenbach also stated that she needs to speak with those Board Members that haven't been attending to see if we can get them to attend on a regular basis or replace those that have lost interest. Crystal Gage made a motion to select Kurt Danison and Roni Holder-Diefenbach as the Nomination Committee. Lael Duncan seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Vacant Board Position: Patrick Law has agreed to replace Sarah Brown for the remaining term as the Methow Valley Representative on the Economic Alliance Board. Patrick Law stated that he has been with Twisp Works for three years and works closely with the Methow Investment Network. He was also Sarah Brown's alternate on the Economic Alliance Board, so he has been keeping informed about the activities of the Economic Alliance. Kurt Danison made a motion to seat Patrick Law to the remaining Methow Valley Representative #1 through 2027. Jord Wilson seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Reports

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported we still don't have the ADO contract with the Department of Commerce, but we have heard about the amount of decrease for the next two years. We will be reduced by \$24,000. She stated that it does cost more for rural areas to provide services, and they will also be reducing the expected outcomes for this contract. She also reported that the SBDC network has lost about \$1 million in funding for the next year. Roni Holder-Diefenbach also reported that she sat on a panel to talk about Broad Band and was able to meet with the new state director. Breanna Sollender has been working part-time now for the Economic Alliance, and she went back to work at Wheatland Bank.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that there were six people that showed up (most first-time applicants) for the workshop. She has been receiving letters of intent. This is a non-funding year, but projects can be evaluated and ranked for possible funding from other funding sources. She also reported that former Board member, Kate Jones, is now on the Infrastructure Committee.

Business Education/Outreach: Mason Duke reported that he has been looking back at information about the previous attempt to establish a Port District in Okanogan County. There are several trainings that are lined up for the next couple of months, including a digital series about expanding your reach online, Lew Blakeney will be doing a workshop on business plans and Leonel Marcial will be doing a series in Spanish about pricing your products. Both Mason Duke and Leonel Marcial have been working to become certified as SBDC counselors. Leonel Marcial spoke about his upcoming class, about pricing and about the clients he is currently working with. Breanna Sollender reported she is working on a flyer to help advertise the workshops and working on the newsletter. She would like to do a segment on our Board members but needs each Board member's bios as soon as possible.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach spoke about partnership with various organizations to provide services at their locations around the county.

Discussion

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 there is only 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. Nick Timm spoke about his efforts to create a non-taxing Port District. This would help to foster growth, create businesses, etc. He has been working with Commissioner Neal and wants to get it on the ballot and elect Port District Commissioners.

Technical Training and Arts Education Committee: No report.

Broadband Funding – BEAD funding: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that most of the main applications were for fiber and now it has changed to LEO and fixed wireless.

Contracts/Grant Updates – Already covered under Executive Director's Report.

Other Business/News/Member Updates

Kurt Danison reported that Domino's Pizza should be opened in a couple of weeks. A Park and Recreation Plan for Omak is in process, and they have sent out a survey.

Jessica McCarthy reported that the PUD budget is out for comments and there should not be any rate increases.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she and Mason Duke will be attending the IAC Conference in Wenatchee on October 7th.

Lael Duncan reported that the Rotary will be having their Steak Night at the end of October, and they are looking for any donations.

Meeting adjourned, 12:09 p.m. **Next meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.**

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Executive Director





Executive Director's Report

September 2025

We are ready for fall! This year due to our crazy August we did not have a booth at the Okanogan County Fair. Staff attended the event, visited with the vendors and handed out business cards to those businesses and organizations who might be interested in our services or programs. Next year we will plan on having a booth again.

This month has been extremely busy, with lots of meetings and contract discussions occurring with the Department of Commerce and the SBDC for 2025-2026 year. Our ADO contract has been reduced by 12,000.00 per year, and a total of \$24,000.00 for the biennium. We will have the opportunity to review our contract obligations and scope of work and reduce our outcomes based upon the reduced funding coming to the EA. The SBDC also did not receive 1 million from the State of Washington so they are looking at how that will impact their budgets and contracts. We should receive a formal announcement from SBDC soon. Due to the reductions seen in both statewide contracts, many EDC and SBDC sub recipients will be or already have had to make significant cuts to their organizations.

The prioritization workshop was a success; we had 6 in attendance and many more who I sent the presentation to. As of the 17th we already have started receiving Letters of Intent for the committee to start reviewing after the deadline. I have also confirmed that Kate Jones will fill the Methow Valley Position on the Infrastructure Committee. Kate is a long-time Methow Valley resident who recently moved back to the area and started her own consulting business. She has experience with the process in her past as the ED for Methow Arts Alliance and is very familiar with the process. We are excited to have her join the committee.

This month I attended several meetings one on Regional Policy with Thriving NCW, to discuss state and federal budget cuts and how it is impacting our communities. Another meeting I attended was with Methow At Home to learn more about the work that they are doing on Digital Literacy for Seniors in the Methow Valley, we discussed ways in which we can partner together to help education, market and promote training and workshops that we are doing to promote education for digital literacy programs. We also connected her to several folks who provide the direct training.

I also had the opportunity to participate on a panel at the Regional Fiber Broadband Event, to discuss Economic Opportunity and impact of Fiber with Kendal Ingram from the Okanogan PUD. This was a great opportunity for us to share the challenges that rural counties face, at the same time also talking about why it is so important for us to have Fiber infrastructure in our county, to stay relevant and competitive.

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

NCW Economic Development District
NCW Workforce Development Council

Community Economic Revitalization Board
Partners for Rural Washington Board