

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
December 3, 2025
Commissioner's Hearing Room

Attending Board Members:

Anna Dalbey, Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty
Maria Lassila, Tourism Rep., 1st Vice Chair, Omak Chamber
Kurt Danison, Past Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner
Jord Wilson, At-Large #5, City of Pateros
Rocklyn Culp, Town of Winthrop, Planner
Patrick Law, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Jordan Ruiz, NNDF, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2

Sarah Jo Lightner, Methow Arts, Sec., Arts Comm Rep
Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Infor, At-Large #4
Steve Quick, Central #2 Okanogan School Super
Lael Duncan, Partners for Rural WA, No. County #1
Lisa Bauer, City Rep., City of Okanogan
William Marchand, CCT Planning

Absent Board Members:

Anthony Popelier, 2nd Vice Chair Reman & Reload, North Co. #2
Nick Timm, County Commissioners Rep., Rep. #1, Treasurer
Cal Goolsby, WVC, At Large #A2
Lanie Johns, Ok Co Commissioners Rep., Ck of the Brd Co Rep #2
Rikki Whipple, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #1

Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep, WA Federal Bank
Crystal Gage, Confluence Heath, Central Co. Area #1
Monica Garza Acevedo, WorkSource, At-Large #3
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
Jessica McCarthy, Okanogan Co. PUD Okanogan PUD
Andy Bertapelle, Mid Valley Hospital
Rachel McClure, Representative for Rep. Dan Newhouse

Mason Duke, E. Dev. Specialist, Economic Alliance
Carolyn Davis, Project Assistant, Economic Alliance
Lew Blakeney, SBDC Advisor/Economic Alliance
Paula Chamber, Omak Chamber
Adam Amundson, Colville Tribe Planning
Rena Shawver, Ex. Director, OCCAC

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

Agenda: No conflicts with the agenda items and one addition – Ratify Executive Committee's Infrastructure List for 2026 Rankings and approved of the Emerging Opportunities application.

Consent Agenda: Minutes from October 22, 2025, were emailed out. Financials were sent out as of November 26, 2025. Lael Duncan made a motion to approve the minutes as presented and the financials as of October 22, 2025. Maria Lassila seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Presentation

Jenn Tate with Earth & Sky Studios and contractor with the Okanogan County Tourism Council. Jenn Tate has been working for OCTC since about 2002. The Tourism Council and the County's Lodging Tax Advisory Committee have been trying to figure out who is coming to Okanogan Country and using our tourism activities and facilities and attending our events. The Tourism Council now uses a program called Datafy, which focuses on and gathers information in our DMA (destination marketing area), where cell phone access is available. OCTC uses Datafy information for focused marketing, programmatic ads and to help promote events. It could help to plan events and boost traffic to areas web sites. The Datafy program can break down visitors by type, i.e., cultural audiences, how long they are staying, what they are spending money on while in Okanogan County. We can also receive reports on monthly volumes comparisons, year-to-year comparisons, where people are coming from (destination marketing areas), their age, income, household size, education levels, what areas they are visiting, what they are spending money on, i.e. accommodations, fast food, dining, specialty retail, recreational activities, etc. The cost of the Datafy program is about \$20,000, plus OCTC spend another \$25,000 on targeted advertising with Datafy. The Tourism Council can create reports with specific information for businesses, chambers, cities, or individuals

for a cost, usually the amount of time it takes to create the report. It was asked how much the Westernization of Winthrop contributes to visitors in that town?

Motions

Ratify Executive Committee's Action: The Economic Alliance's Executive Committee approved the list of rankings of Infrastructure and Community Projects as approved by the Infrastructure Committee. Kurt Danison made a motion that the Board approves the Executive Committee's approval of the Infrastructure and Community Projects. Jordan Ruiz seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained

Ratify Executive Committee's Action: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Oroville/Tonasket Irrigation District applied for \$150,000 from the Emerging Opportunity Fund from the County's Infrastructure Fund. It was approved by the Infrastructure Committee and by the Economic Alliance's Executive Committee. Lael Duncan made a motion to approve the Executive Committee's approval of the application from the Oroville/Tonasket Irrigation District. Rocklyn Culp seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained. This is scheduled to be presented to the county commissioners on Monday.

Economic Alliance Board Positions Renewal:

Board positions that are up for renewal:

Beth Stroshane, At-large #4

Maria Lassila, Tourism Representative

Lisa Bauer, City Rep #2

Steve Quick, Central Area #2

Vacant – North #1 (formerly Lael Duncan)

Vacant – At Large #1 (formerly Michael Porter)

Jord Wilson made a motion to approve the list of Board members for re-election for a three-year term. Sarah Jo Lightner seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Approve At-Large #1 position: Andy Bertapelle, Chief Executive Officer at Mid-Valley Hospital, is interested in vacant At-large #1 position. He took over as chief executive officer at Mid-Valley hospital in June 2025. He felt that success of the entire area is mutually beneficial to the hospital district. Kurt Danison made a motion to seat Andy Bertapelle in the vacant At-Large #1 position. Jordan Ruiz seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Executive Committee Slate of Officers: The following was presented as the slate of officers for 2026 – Maria Lassila, Chairman; Anthony Popelier, 1st Vice-Chairman; Sarah Jo Lightner, 2nd Vice-Chairman; Kurt Danison, Secretary; Nick Timm, Treasurer; Anna Marie Dalbey, Past Chairman. Jordan Ruiz made a motion to seat the slate of officers for 2026 as presented. Lisa Bauer seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

2026 Budget: Roni Holder-Diefenbach presented the 2026 Budget with the addition of \$11,000 to the USDA contract. (see attachment #1). After review, Sarah Jo Lightner made a motion to approve the 2026 budget as presented, Jord Wilson seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Presentations: Roni Holder-Diefenbach spoke about Lael Duncan time on the Economic Alliance Board and her contributions through the years and thanked her for her many years on the Board. She presented her with a plaque and gift.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also presented outgoing Chairman, Anna Marie Dalbey, with a plaque and gift and thanked her for her time this past year.

Reports

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #2) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that it was quite a process to get the prioritized list of projects for 2026. Getting everything prepped and listening to presentations and scoring the projects. Contracts have been signed with Okanogan County and with the Okanogan County PUD for 2026.

She is working with members of the EDD to see if the entity will continue or dissolve. Funds for this organization are a major problem, and only being able to hire a part-time director/manager has been a real detriment.

She was also able to present the CEDS to the Okanogan County Tourism Council this past month and share relative sections about tourism with their Board. ADOs are looking for additional funding since funding from the state has been cut. The SBDC has lost subrecipients because of funding cuts also. Positions are being cut or people are retiring and positions are not being filled.

Infrastructure Committee: Discussed under motions.

Business Education/Outreach: Mason Duke reported that he and Leonel Marcial participated in SBDC training and he was also able to assist the Infrastructure Committee and listen to presentations. It was good to have this exposure to other projects. The Canva class in November was well attended and next week another class will be held with instructor Caroline Sancken doing a deeper dive into online marketing.

Leonel Marcial spoke about his upcoming classes teaching the basics on financials and selling but not making a profit.

Breanna Sollender reported she is working on getting the newsletters out, working to make the web site more “user friendly”, creating flyers for the workshops, etc. She still needs bios and pictures for each Board member so she can do social media posts and use in the newsletters.

Discussion

Port District: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported she is meeting with Commissioners Nick Timm next week to discuss a non-taxing Port District.

Technical Training and Arts Education Committee: Hope to start having meetings soon.

Other Business/News/Member Updates

Brewster Chamber is going to have a meeting soon and will discuss whether to keep the Chamber functioning. Maria Lassila reported that Omak will be having it Christmas on Main on December 13th. The Mirage Theater in Omak has been approved as a State Heritage Place

Meeting adjourned, 1:15 p.m. **Next meeting is scheduled for January 28, at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom.**

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Executive Director



Attachment #1



2026 BUDGET.pdf



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE Executive Director Report

November/December 2025

Happy Holidays! Last night we had the first snow in the Okanogan Valley, and I think we all were ready for it right before Thanksgiving, it doesn't seem like we could have the holidays without a little snow on the ground. I know I am excited to take my Grandson's outside to play in it!

November started off busy. The Mayor from Entiat and I have been working to keep the NCW EDD alive and met with a consultant to work on identifying folks from the region to interview as well as a survey to go out to all past members to gauge whether the organization is viable moving forward. I and many others from Okanogan County have participated on the NCWEDD board for many years and have seen the value it brings to the region, and the relationships that are built between communities. We hope to have an answer by the end of the year on what the status will be moving forward.

I have also been continuing to work on the CEDS and making progress on the goals, objectives and strategies that we are responsible for. At the beginning of the month, I presented the CEDS to the Okanogan County Tourism Council, and shared the items that are specific to tourism, and we discussed how we could partner with them to move those items forward. We distributed the full CEDS to the board, and I will get on their agenda for a follow-up conversation with them after they have had time to review it fully. I also met with Sarah Jo who will be taking the lead on our subcommittee that will deal with CTE/Creative Economy/Workforce Development and Higher Ed. This was a great meeting, and we came up with a lot of ideas on what the focus of this committee will be and how to move it forward. She will be working on a Committee Charter and will be in contact with those who volunteered to be apart of it.

This month we held our Okanogan County Prioritization Process presentations, and we had 21 projects that the committee ranked. We had several new infrastructure committee members this year, and we are always thankful for those who step up and volunteer their time and energy to this very important process. Mason, Maria and I met with the Okanogan County Commissioners and presented the list, and they approved it and passed a resolution adopting the list on November 25th. I was then able to notify the communities and organizations where their projects ranked. I also sent it to our local state representatives, so they have it as well. We will be putting together a press release as well that will go out to all the local papers.

We had our quarterly ADO Best Practices meeting in November and I was asked to facilitate a discussion regarding diversifying funding. This was a great opportunity to hear from other ADOs in the state where they get their funding, and for those who are very small to hear ideas from those like us who have looked outside just .09 dollars and DOC ADO dollars to support their organizations. I also attended virtually the CERB Board meeting and heard about several projects and had a great conversation about workforce development, and whether CERB could fund Irrigation and other special purpose districts.

December will be another busy month, while in the office. I will be taking a lot of leave as if I don't use it I will lose it! The Economic Alliance's Executive Director is currently representing the Economic Alliance on the following boards:

NCW Economic Development District	Community Economic Revitalization Board
NCW Workforce Development Council	Washington Economic Development Association
CCT & Okanogan County BAT	Partners for Rural Washington