

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
January 28, 2026
Via Zoom

Attending Board Members:

Maria Lassila, 1st Chairman, Tourism Rep. Omak Chamber	Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Infor, At-Large #4
Anthony Popelier, 1st Vice Chair Reman & Reload, North Co. #2	Monica Garza Acevedo, WorkSource, At-Large #3
Planner Kurt Danison, Secretary, City Rep. #1, City	Jord Wilson, South County #1, City of Pateros
Sarah Jo Lightner, Methow Arts, 2 nd Vice Chair., Arts Comm Rep	Lisa Bauer, City Rep., City of Okanogan
Rocklyn Culp, Town of Winthrop, Planner	Patrick Law, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Crystal Gage, Confluence Heath, Central Co. Area #1	

Absent Board Members:

Anna Dalbey, Past Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty	Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep, WA Federal Bank
Nick Timm, County Commissioners Rep., Rep. #1, Treasurer	Jordan Ruiz, NNDF, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2
Cal Goolsby, WVC, At Large #A2	Rikki Whipple, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #1, NNDF
Lanie Johns, Ok Co Commissioners Rep., Ck of the Brd Co Rep #2	William Marchand, CCT Planning
Steve Quick, Central #2 Okanogan School Super	Vacant, CTFC Representative
Andy Bertapalle, At-Large #1, Chief Admin Mid Valley Hosp.	Vacant, North County #1
Vacant - At Large #5	

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	Rachel McClure, Representative for Rep. Dan Newhouse
Rena Shawver, Ex. Director, OCCAC	Nikki Medved, NC Empl Security Dept.

Maria Lassila, Chairman called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves by signing in on the chat.

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

Consent Agenda: Minutes from December 3, 2025, were emailed out and financials as of January 22, 2026, were sent. Financials look a little different because of a switch over from regular QuickBooks to QuickBooks online. Kurt Danison made a motion to approve the minutes as presented and the financials as of January 22, 2026, as presented. Jord Wilson seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Presentation

Nikki Medved, NC Educational Services Department, spoke about the Tech Ready grant, and their hope to address NCW IT and computer science workforce needs by expanding internships, building industry-aligned credential pathways and fostering collaboration between K-12 and post-secondary institutions and employers. Their goal is to connect a minimum of 60 high school and early college students with placements based on employer participation in North Central Washington. This will include a strong participation in Okanogan County. This program will target 16 – 18-year-old students interested in advancing technology. They will be asking employers to be willing to host at least two interns and follow up with evaluations, paperwork, and provide a safe internship experience for the student. These are non-paid interns and they could work 8 – 10 hrs with very flexible scheduled for either six weeks or three weeks through June 2027. Beth Stroshane suggested reaching out to WVC-North to target Running Start Students. Rocklyn Culp asked about screentime and AI and how it affects the teenage brain. For further information contact Nikki Medved at 509 670-7085 or nikkim@ncesd.org.

Motions

Roni Holder-Diefenbach spoke about the new committee – Arts in Education and Career & Technical Education. Committee Chair, Sarah Jo Lightner, drafted a “charter” and “goals” for this committee. Some of the goals align with the CEDS. There are several members that have volunteered to serve on this committee but wanted to get this charter and goals approved prior to meeting. Lisa Bauer asked if the committee would reach out beyond just Board members. Yes, it is hoped to have additional members on this committee besides Board members. Rocklyn Culp made a motion to approve the Charter for this committee, along with goals and timelines. Lisa Bauer seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained. If anyone else is interested in serving on this committee, please let us know as soon as possible.

Reports

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has been working to get our contracts signed and updated for 2026. There was an addition to the ADO contract of \$10,000. The CDBG is completed and we are still waiting for a contract for SBDC. Both she and Mason took vacations and office staff have been sick, so it has been a busy month.

The Loomis Firehall project is moving forward, and land has now been acquired, and they are waiting for funds to build the firehall. We have also been working on finding properties for rent or sale where potential new businesses could locate. It was asked if the Economic Alliance is expected to provide administration for this contract with the county. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that the county is the administrative organization for this CDBG contract, and that funding for a project manager had been writing into the grant. But, since this project went through the prioritization process, she has been working with them to find funding or write grants. She felt that most likely she would continue to be involved with the project on a smaller scale.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that we are moving forward with the process for 2026. We also continue to report on some of the projects that went through the process. County Planner, Pete Palmer, is working on the draft of the Cannabis Study, which will help to determine if the county will continue the moratorium on additional cannabis operations. We also need to set dates for the next prioritization process and since 2027 is a funding year for projects, we should have a lot of submittals. She has also been speaking with the county about the county’s properties that could be used for development. They might apply for funding through CERB to help develop these properties and the Infrastructure Fund dollars might be able to use as matching dollars.

Business Education/Outreach: Mason Duke reported that he had been teaching himself how to edit videos from the workshops to upload them to the website. Recently we held a class about creating content for your marketing. Another class is coming up in February about “Finding your online Audience”. He has also spoken with the Community Cultural Center in Tonasket about holding a computer class at their facility.

Leonel Marcial reported that he is looking at workshops that would be in Spanish. He continues to work with Hispanic businesses and teaching them about cash flow and break-even points. He tries to outline attainable goals for them, such as getting their license, finding out what volume of sales they need to be profitable, etc. He has also been attending chamber meetings and working with Twisp Works about scheduling a workshop.

Breanna Sollender stated that January has been a long month! She has been getting information about Infrastructure Projects up on the web site. She is still working on the Board member’s Bios and getting the monthly newsletters out, as well as updating flyers and social media.

Discussion

Board Member Recruitment: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has been in touch with the Tonasket Chamber and their new Chamber president is a small business owner and would be a good addition to our Board. She has also met with Chris O'Neil, CEO of Tribal Fuels and Grocery Store, and he is interested in the At-Large vacant position.

If you haven't picked an Alternate for your position, please do so, and let Carolyn Davis know. We will also send out the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Statements for all Board members to sign. These need to be signed every year.

Port District: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that there hasn't been a meeting held since she last spoke about this. Did discuss a possible "non-taxing" district.

Arts in Education and Career & Technical Education: A doodle will be sent out to those that have expressed an interest in being on this committee to find a good meeting date for the first meeting.

Broadband – Bead Funding: The Washington State Broadband office now has another new director and won't be in the office until mid-February. We will be doing an updated survey, and a lot of work has been done since this project started. Okanogan County Electric Co-op and Okanogan County PUD were not funded. NCI Data did receive some funding. Mostly satellite services received funding.

Contract/Grant Updates 2026

No updates. Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Economic Alliance will not be applying for CFNCW funding, but we are getting the information out to smaller non-profits.

Other Business/News/Member Updates

Maria Lassila reported that the Omak Theater has been approved for listing on the Washington Heritage Register. It was built in 1939 and on April 1, 2026, it will be the 50th anniversary of when her parents bought the theater. Kurt Danison asked about the ramifications of being on this list. Maria Lassila stated that she received funding for the Department of Commerce and the building needed to be on the register to access this funding. She said that being on the register wasn't going to make her do anything she doesn't want to do. Kurt Danison also reported that the state will be having a new grant opportunity for "clean buildings".

Kurt Danison reported that the cities and county received grants to do a required Critical Area and Comp Plan Update. There is also a new Flood Plain Map available. Changes could be a big deal for some of the communities.

Jord Wilson spoke about an open house/meeting last night in Pateros to discuss new projects coming to Pateros and to provide a recap of 2025 activities. It was a great get-together and lots of information was shared. He also spoke about pop-up vendors and possibly having a small vendor area in their "mall" area. Roni Holder-Diefenbach spoke about "pop-up" stores and trucks selling things outside of the city limits for cash with no taxes or oversight. This continues to be a problem, and we have spoken with the county commissioners about this topic and to find out about the regulations.

Patrick Law spoke about a 4-part grant writing series for nonprofits and businesses being held via Zoom through Twisp Works. Recordings of these workshops will also be available for two weeks after the series, but you must register.

Rocklyn Culp reported that grants were approved for the town of Winthrop to connect housing to infrastructure and getting pipes in the ground and another appropriation to improve the Winthrop water system.

Monica Garza Acevedo spoke about the upcoming Career Resource Fair scheduled for March 25 at the Okanogan County Agri-plex Annex.

Meeting adjourned, 12:27 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 25, at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Executive Director





ECONOMIC ALLIANCE Executive Director Report

January 2026

Happy New Year! We are excited for 2026!

In January, we collected program data for quarterly reporting. Each contract requires outcome tracking such as business startups, retention, workshop attendance, jobs created or retained, and capital invested. Staff have efficiently tracked clients and avoided service duplication across contracts. We billed out over \$69,654.78 for Q4 of 2025 across four contracts. We are now in the planning process of scheduling new workshops for January-June to finish out our WEDFA contract, partnering with Worksource Okanogan, Okanogan County Community Action Council and Twisp Works.

One of the other items that I have worked on this month has been staffing cost allocations for each of our grant programs. It is important that we break this down and have an accurate reflection of how staff spend time. We recently went through a transition from QB desktop to QB online which has been a learning experience for everyone involved but will allow Debbie the ability to work more efficiently and effectively on our accounts. This transition will also allow additional classes so we can print the specific reports needed when we are audited by funders to show only dollars spent on their specific program.

This month I also went to Olympia for our January CERB meeting and heard about several great projects throughout the state. We funded almost 10 million dollars in Public Infrastructure and Planning through this program.

I also attended the Confluence Health Foundation Board meeting, and a meeting to discuss the NCW Economic Development District. Currently the remaining board of directors has decided to dissolve the board and are following guidance from our consultant on how to do so.

In January we also continued to work with the Loomis Fire District, OK County and CDBG on the CERB application. Before I went on vacation I submitted the application, when I got back we were going to hold the public hearing and it got pushed back to February 3rd at 1:30. CERB reached out last week and stated that once the public hearing document is turned in they plan on funding us the 2 million for the Loomis Fire District to build a new Fire Hall!

This month I have also been working with several businesses on site selection, expansion opportunities, investigating information for property purchases as many of these are unique circumstances and will require us to facilitate discussions between many interested parties to actually make happen.

Next week I will attend a community listening session at Mid Valley Hospital on a facility update and attend the WEDA ADO meeting. Mason and I will also be attending the WEDA legislative conference at the end of February.

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

Community Economic Revitalization Board
Washington Economic Development Association
Partners for Rural Washington