The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting

June 24, 2026
County Commissioners' Hearing Room, Okanogan

Attending Board Members:

Maria Lassila, 1st Chairman, Tourism Rep. Omak Chamber
Sarah Jo Lightner, 2nd Vice Chair, Arts Comm Rep, Methow Arts
Kurt Danison, Secretary, City Rep #1, City Planner
Anna Dalbey, Past Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty
Andy Bertapalle, At-Large #1, Chief Admin Mid Valley Hosp
Jord Wilson, South County #1, City of Pateros
Jon Brown, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Monica Garza Acevedo, At-Large #3, WorkSource
Cal Cross, At Large #A2, WVC,
Rocklyn Culp, City Rep #2, Town of Winthrop, Planner
Beth Stroshane, At-Large #4,Applied Bldg Infor
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep, WA Federal Bank

Absent Board Members:

Anthony Popelier, 1st Vice Chair, North Co. #2, Reman & Reload
Nick Timm, County Commissioners Rep., Rep. #1, Treasurer
Jordan Ruiz, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2, NNDF
Lanie Johns, Ok Co Commissioners Rep. #2, Ck of the Brd
Brent Timm, No Co #1, Tonasket Chamber & TranGO
Vacant - At Large #5
Steve Quick, Central Co. #2 Okanogan School Super
Rikki Whipple, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #1, NNDF
Crystal Gage, Central Co. #1, Confluence Heath,
Lisa Bauer, City Rep. #2, City of Okanogan
William Marchand, CCT Rep., CCT Planning
Vacant - Colville Tribal Federal Corp. Rep.

Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Economic Alliance
Leonel Marcial, Business Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance
Breanna Sollender, Comm/Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance
Chris Branch, Omak
Mason Duke, E. Dev. Specialist, Economic Alliance
Carolyn Davis, Project Assistant, Economic Alliance
Arnie Marchand, Oroville
Jeremy Moberg, Cannabis Farms

Maria Lassila, Chairman, called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Agenda: No conflicts with the agenda items and one change to the agenda, add Arnie Marchand, International Water Issues & Oroville's Legion 250 Celebration.

Consent Agenda: Minutes from May 27, 2026, were emailed out and financials as of June 18, 2026, were sent. Jon Brown made a motion to approve the minutes, and the financials as presented, Cal Cross, seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Presentation:

Arnie Marchand with the Oroville American Legion and the International Watershed Commission spoke about Watershed Group Creating a Watershed Board. Is it feasible to form a membership group to look for solutions for the Osoyoos Lake Region? They are evaluating whether a broader watershed board could help address current and future transboundary water issues. There will be a meeting on July 7, at 6:00 p.m. at the Senior Center in Osoyoos and on July 8 at 6:00 p.m. at the Tonasket Community Cultural Center to discuss forming this group. He also spoke about the upcoming celebration on July 3 honoring Dean Brazle, who will be turning 100 on the 4th of July. Mr. Brazle is a World War II Navy Veteran.

Kurt Danison spoke about the Cannabis Industry in Okanogan County and that it has a tremendous impact on our county. There is a lot of stigma and bias on this industry and more regulations. Chris Branch reported that there is currently no expansion because of concerns about water rights and regulations. According to a recent study, in 2025 Okanogan County reported 118 permitted cannabis licenses, 111 of which are producer/processor licenses. The Cannabis Industry in Okanogan County currently employees about 511 people and contributed about $410,000 to county and municipal revenues. Chris Branch stated

that a binding site plan could replace a conditional use permit and help to treat businesses the same. We need to find a solution for these licensed grows in Okanogan County.

Jeremy Moberg, owner of Cannasol Farms Inc. is one of the licensed growers who also spoke about this industry. He stated that we need to get rid of bias and use some common sense. We need to treat businesses the same. Some growers are out of compliance, and we need to bring more growers to the table to speak about these things. He felt that "sun grown" cannabis was much better than that grown under lights. A meeting will be held soon to gather information and develop a plan to bring to the county commissioners.

Motions
None.

Reports
Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1)
Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that instead of seeing a decrease in ADO funding, which was expected, the Economic Alliance received a small increase. She has been working on the CDBG contract and the Loomis Firehall project. The county has determined they cannot do the NEPA study that is needed, so we are sending out an RFQ for a firm to do this study. The Economic Alliance recently joined the Association of Washington Businesses, and we are looking at the insurance coverage (medical & dental) that is offered by the association and might be able to save some money. Gebbers Farms are declaring bankruptcy. They are the largest landowners in the county and record the largest number of employees. The orchard industry has suffered from impacts over the past three years. Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she and staff have been working behind the scenes to find resources for the farms that have been impacted.

Infrastructure Committee: No report.

Business Education/Outreach: Mason Duke reported that he held another business education webinar. He has also been sharing information about the SBA loan programs for agricultural businesses and listened to a presentation by SBA about these programs. He has also been working with a few clients to help them navigate the licensing process.

Leonel Marcial reported he has attended some meetings with Roni Holder-Diefenbach and has been talking with businesses about what the Economic Alliance can do to assist. He also did some interpreting in a meeting with the county commissioners and a Hispanic group.

Breanna Sollender reported that she and her daughter are moving to Spokane as soon as her daughter graduates. She will still be working remotely for the Economic Alliance, but she and Roni will evaluate how that is working in a few months. Still need Bios back from some Board members.

Discussion
Board Member Recruitment: Still have two positions on the Board that are vacant. The At-Large Position #5 and the CTFC.

Port District: No updates.

Technical Training & Education Committee: No report.

Broadband – Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the next meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. Mason Duke will be doing a presentation about Digital Literacy and what the EA has done this quarter.

Contract/Grant Updates 2026
Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we are still waiting for a signed new contract with WEDFA. She is waiting to get approval of the job description from SBDC and hopes to get someone hired as soon as possible.

Other Business/News/Member Updates
No reports

Meeting adjourned, 1:20 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for July 22, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Executive Director 

Attachment #1

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Executive Director Report

June 2026

June has been a busy month for us here at the Economic Alliance. It is the end of the year for several of our contracts, so we have been busy wrapping them up and working to meet our goals and outcomes. At the same time, we have continued our normal daily work to meet the small business needs within Okanogan County.

This month, we also had the added impact of working with the Okanogan Horticulture Association and the Farm Bureau to bring in Todd Broadman, the Public Affairs Specialist for the SBA who provided an Economic Impact Disaster Loan overview for the farmers and orchardists who are struggling significantly at this time due to the drought, freezing, transportation/labor/fertilizer costs. We are trying to work with our partners at FSA, USDA, WSDA and others to identify programs and resources to help meet their needs. On June 17th Leonel and I attended the Hort meeting in Tonasket where the FSA State director spoke about their programs, they brought in Crop Adjusters, and a gentleman from Save Family Farms. I also had the opportunity to provide an overview of the SBA EIDL programs and spoke about the Economic Alliance programs and services.

This month I also had the opportunity to attend several meetings, I attended the Stakeholder input event for the OCCAC's 60-acre parcel housing development, met with the BOCC to continue the conversation regarding the county creating a rendering plant, and on grant funding for the NCW Drug Task Force. I attended the WEDA Housing committee meeting, where I learned information that I thought could benefit our partners at OCCAC, so I forwarded it to Rena. Mason and I also attended the Federal Grant Workshop sponsored by the Department of Commerce and Hagerty Consultants who are available to assist with federal grant writing to small cities, counties, and tribes. I forwarded the meeting information, slides and contact information to our communities and county representatives as there was no one in attendance from any of them. This is a great resource and our grant writers at Partners for Rural Washington have already been in contact with them on several of the projects we are working on.

I have also been working with Lanie, County Clerk and Jacquie from CDBG to get the Legal notice out for our RFQ for an Architect, Engineering and Environmental review consultants. The notice went out on June 12th, and I will be the main contact for the responses. I drafted a full RFQ and got it approved by CDBG, as everything must be approved by them before we publish. The due date for this will be July 1, 2026, at 5pm, and we will hopefully award the contract to a consultant mid-July. We are happy to finally get this process started.

This month we have also been working on the Department of Commerce's annual reporting requirements that are due at the end of this fiscal year. We must complete an annual report and SWOT analysis for the county that is on top of our normal annul reporting process. We hope to have this done before the end of the month.
I will also be attending several upcoming meetings, OK Planning Commission meeting on June 22, BOCC Mtg with the Liquor and Cannabis Board, Western Washington University SBDC program, WEDA ADO Meeting, and Advance.

Community Economic Revitalization Board
Washington Economic Development Association
Partners for Rural Washington
CCT& Okanogan County BAT