The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
August 26, 2026
VIA Zoom

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
Nick Timm, County Commissioners Rep., Rep. #1, Treasurer
Beth Stroshane, At-Large #4,Applied Bldg Infor
Crystal Gage, Central Co. #1, Confluence Heath,
Steve Quick, Central Co. #2 Okanogan School Super
Jord Wilson, South County #1, City of Pateros
Jon Brown, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Monica Garza Acevedo, At-Large #3, WorkSource
Brent Timm, No Co #1, Tonasket Chamber & TranGO
Lisa Bauer, City Rep. #2, City of Okanogan

Absent Board Members:

Anthony Popelier, 1st Vice Chair, North Co. #2, Reman & Reload
Rocklyn Culp, City Rep #2, Town of Winthrop, Planner
Jordan Ruiz, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2, NNDF
Anna Dalbey, Past Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty
Andy Bertapalle, At-Large #1, Chief Admin Mid Valley Hosp
Lanie Johns, Ok Co Commissioners Rep. #2, Ck of the Brd
Rikki Whipple, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #1, NNDF
Cal Cross, At Large #A2, WVC
William Marchand, CCT Rep., CCT Planning
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep, WA Federal Bank
Vacant - At Large #5
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
Mason Duke, E. Dev. Specialist, Economic Alliance
Carolyn Davis, Project Assistant, Economic Alliance
Rachel McClure, Representative for Rep. Dan Newhouse

Maria Lassila, Chairman, called the meeting to order and asked everyone to sign in to the chat room.

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

Consent Agenda: Minutes from July 22, 2026, were emailed out and financials as of August 19, 2026, were sent. Brent Timm made a motion to approve the minutes, and the financials as presented, Jon Brown seconded. Motion passed with no one opposed or abstained.

Financials: Roni Holder-Diefenbach gave a detailed update on the Economic Alliance's mid-year financials as compared to our proposed income and expenses. With approximately 63–64% of the year over, revenue totaled $377,531 compared to the $533,762 anticipated in the annual budget, while expenditures totaled $303,234 or 57.8% of budget. The resulting cash position was $38,382. Still waiting for the monthly payment from the county and semi-annual PUD payments. We are behind on the SBDC contract because of the retirement of BDS Lew Blakeney. We are in the process of hiring a new counselor and the lead office is aware of this and knows that we probably won't spend all this contract. We are doing six interviews tomorrow for this vacant position and will hopefully be filling that position as soon as possible. Then we will be able to start billing out that contract. The majority of the SBDC contract is for the BDS position, and we do get reimbursed for part of our operating expenses for housing the SBDC. We are on track for funding for our ADO contract and the amount shown does not reflect the additional funds that we received. Our WEDFA income is above projected because we received payment from last fiscal year in January 2026. Our USDA contract, we planned that we would be back filling this billing because we had a couple different contracts that we could not allocate our staffing for more 100%. We depend on the federal funding, and we needed to make sure that we have the state or local match for it. So, this next June all the way through December, we'll be billing for this program, as well as billing for our WEDFA consultants, that are working on the grant writing for small businesses and for our communities who were prioritized through the

infrastructure .09 dollars. We also have interest income from our investments that we have with Edward Jones. The Tourism Council contract is 30,000 in the budget, and we're currently 95% of that. Our expenditures are doing very well and shows that they are significantly less than what was anticipated. Part of that is due to our wages and our SBDC advisor. We had budgeted for a full-time person for Breanna Sollender's position, but she went to part-time, which meant less for wages. Also not having a SBDC advisor for several months reduced that expenditure.

Presentation: No presentation.

Motions: No motions.

Reports

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1)

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she connected the Tribe with the Assistant State Director of the Department of Commerce during the fires to request public assistance for emergency water and communications. She and Mason Duke attended the WEDA conference in the Tri-Cities. She sat on a panel that discussed rural economic development and tourism. She was able to tour a Titanium Factory. They make logs of titanium worth lots of money. The port district provided this company a space and it is a great arrangement. The company is looking for engineers and spoke about working directly with colleges to recruit students.

She continues to work with the Loomis Fire District and hoped to have a signed contract with the selected contractor soon. She has also been working with the county and the cannabis growers. The growers came to the table with a two-page list of concerns. They are trying to streamline the process and are also trying to come into compliance with current county regulations. Applying for a cannabis grow shouldn't be a burden for our agriculture businesses. Lisa Bauer with WorkSource reported that they are unable to work with this industry because of federal restri. ctions. She asked about the study that was done and what the economic impact of the cannabis industry on Okanogan County's economy. The recent study will be uploaded to the Economic Alliance website. Commissioner Timm stated that it was a great meeting with the cannabis growers and that the guidance from the state is not well defined, but they are trying to clean it up. He stated that the county is trying to keep and help this industry. Roni Holder-Diefenbach also reported that she was able to tour one of the farms. Lisa Bauer asked if the soil contaminants are still a problem. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that yes, it was still a problem. Rachel McClure stated that there are plants that can be soaking up some of the bad chemicals in the soil.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also reported she recently attended the grand opening of the Indian Health Center and toured the facility. They offer basic health care services as well as specialty care, such as pediatrics. Funding from this facility must be reinvested in additional facilities for healthcare.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also reported that the recent SBDC audit went well. They went through the general ledger and billings and gave us a clean report.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that a press release will go out on August 27, 2026, and we will probably have a huge influx of projects for this prioritization process because there is actual funding available, not just the prioritization ranking. A workshop is scheduled for September 10th at 10:00 and projects must submit a letter of intent by the end of September.

Business Education/Outreach: Mason Duke reported that he attended the WEDA conference in the Tri-cities. He toured the Port of Pasco and saw how the city and private businesses are working together to treat water from the food treatment plants. He also attended a meeting with the Okanogan County PUD

and heard about the impact to the service providers. He has been working on the workshop calendar and hopes to have a Start Simple class in October.

Leonel Marcial reported that he is working on outreach to local businesses (main street as well as Ag) that are struggling because of the fires. He has been doing paperwork referrals to the FSA or the USDA to reach out and being available for businesses. He is sharing with these businesses that the Economic Alliance is here to assist. He has also been attending the chamber meetings and trying to understand the businesses problems. He attended some meetings with Roni Holder-Diefenbach to help with interpreting.

Breanna Sollender reported that she is working on social media posts to help spread the word about the activities of the Economic Alliance and what help is available through the office. She is still in need of Board member's Bios from some Board members, please send to her at Breanna@economic-alliance.com

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also stated that local businesses will now be impacted because of the tariff with Canada. She suggested that we share with Rachel McClure, Representative for Rep. Dan Newhouse, any information or concern.

Rachel McClure also reported that if people have lost their documents, social security, veterans documents, etc., because of the fires, please also send them her way. She might be able to help them get those documents, at least on the federal level. Rachel.Mcclure@mail.house.gov

Discussion

Board Member Recruitment: Still have two positions on the Board that are vacant. The At-Large Position #5 and the CTFC representative. Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she did speak to a Tribal Council member at the ribbon cutting ceremony, and they are going to get back to her with a recommendation for the CTFC position. Leonel Marcial and Roni Holder-Diefenbach have also been working on recruiting another person down in the Brewster area to fill the at-large position.

Port District: No updates. Next meeting will be in September.

Technical Training & Education Committee: No report. Will meet again in September.

Broadband –. Wireless service is very important to our county. There is some transition that is occurring within the county with broadband and with fiber and a decline in wireless services. The county and the PUD need to look at where they put their money in infrastructure. Is it fiber or is it wireless? So, we continue to have our monthly meetings with our core committee, and the next meeting is scheduled for September 26th

Contract/Grant Updates 2026

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we did receive the WEDFA contract and are subcontracting with TwispWorks, Methow Arts Alliance, and Business Impact NW to do some of the work for this contract.

Other Business/News/Member Updates

Maria Lassila reported that Our Mr. Mastura documentary will be showing at the Omak Theater on Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and in Oroville on Friday. The Omak Flyin/Car Show will be at the Omak Airport for breakfast and in the park for the car show on September 19th. There is a candidate forum on September 29 & 30 in Omak.

Lisa Bauer reported that they will be holding a poverty simulation event in Omak on September 17th. They will run simulation of realistic activities and identify gaps and duplication of services. All Board members

are invited to participate at the Omak Dance Pavilion in Omak's Eastside Park. There is also a College and Career Expo at the Agriplex on October 21st.

Sarah Jo Lightner reported that the Methow Arts Alliance is opening a new Okanogan office. They are having an open house on September 12th from 4 to 6. This new office will also be having rental space available. The office in Twisp is also going to have a "re-opening" on October 24th.

Steve Quick stated that schools are opening, please drive carefully!

Brent Timm reported that TransGo has received the NEPA approval and now they are looking for funding and getting property appraised.

Rachel McClure reported that she will be in office through December and a new person will be in January. She is now on part-time.

Meeting adjourned, 12:10 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for September 23, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. in person.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Executive Director



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Executive Director Report

August 2026

WEDA Summer Conference

This month was a busy one for the Alliance. Mason and I began August by attending the WEDA Summer Conference in the Tri-Cities. While there, I toured a titanium manufacturing company in West Richland that produces bulk titanium logs and squares, which are later used to make aerospace parts. It was an excellent visit and a valuable learning opportunity. I was also invited to serve on a Rural Economic Development and Tourism panel with three fellow executive directors. The discussion went well. Because the county was experiencing active fires at the time, I noted that it was not the best moment to visit some areas, but emphasized that once the fires and smoke clear, Okanogan County remains one of the best places in the state to visit.

Cannabis Growers Coordination

I continued working with local cannabis growers this month. We held a second meeting on August 12 to discuss the upcoming presentation and ensure all growers were aligned. The OK Growers are scheduled to present to the Commissioners on August 24 at 1:30 p.m. The goal is for the BOCC, the Planning Department, and the growers to identify key issues and agree on a collaborative plan to address ongoing concerns.

Loomis Fire District Project

A consultant has been selected for the Loomis Fire District project. We are waiting for final cost estimates for NEPA, environmental review, and A&E services. Once those numbers are received, the Loomis Fire District will enter into a contract and services can begin. The project has been delayed because of fires in the area and because some of those involved were directly impacted.

Fire Recovery and Funding Support

I have also been working with the Department of Commerce to identify funding opportunities for communities impacted by the fires. Shortly after the Modrite Fire began and one community lost power and water, I contacted Commerce to ask whether emergency services were available. The Assistant Director at Commerce who oversees PWB, CERB, CDBG, and other infrastructure programs responded that they would contact the community immediately. I also made an email introduction between him and Cody Desautel, Executive Director at the Tribe, since the Tribe is working directly with reservation communities affected by the fires. Broadband infrastructure was significantly damaged, and the Tribe is working with PWB to access emergency funding to restore service. Another issue that emerged is that many homes lost in the fires were uninsured, and some residents are just over the income limits for available assistance programs. I contacted Commerce again to ask whether any programs could help these individuals.

Agriculture and Horticulture Outreach

This month, I attended the Hort meeting, where the Executive Director of the Tree Fruit Association presented on the state of the industry. It was a strong presentation, and I plan to invite him to present to our Board of Directors at an upcoming meeting. We continue to reach out to and work with agricultural businesses that are interested in the Alliance's services and support.

Colville Tribes Medical Center Opening

I also attended the Colville Tribes' grand opening of the new medical center in East Omak. The event was well attended and provided an opportunity to speak with several Tribal Council members and the Executive Director about projects we are working on. I will follow up to request time on a future agenda to share more about the Alliance's current work.

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