SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER

AMERICA'S SBDC WASHINGTON

the Economic Alliance

Part of the Solution

Rural Economic Development

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director

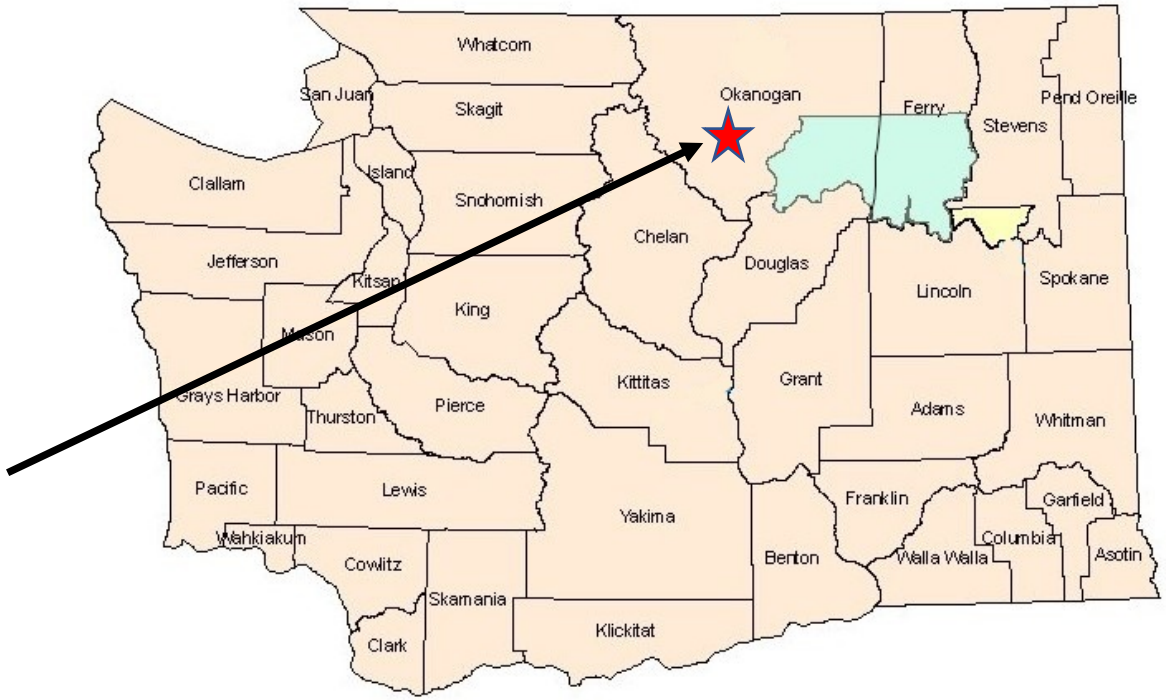
OKANOGAN COUNTY

OKANOGAN COUNTRY *Open for Adventure!™*

How does the E.A. work with Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses in Rural Okanogan County?

PARTNERSHIPS

- Cross-sector partnerships
- Develop & sustains authentic, trusting relationships
- Honors diverse voices representing Okanogan County's demographics.
- Transparency



Ensure Equitable Access to Resources and Growth Opportunities

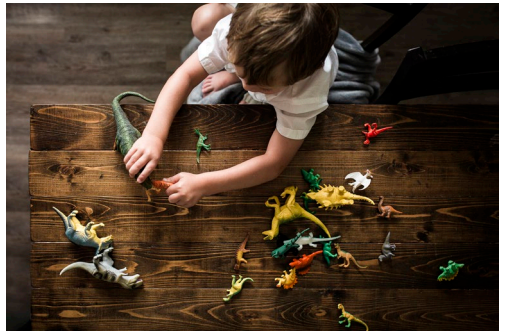
- Communication Strategy (Chambers, Twisp Works, Cities, County) Newsletters, Social Media
- Education & Training (SBRTC, PTAC, NNDF WVC, Indianprenership Classes)
- Business Outreach- including marketing materials and trainings in English and Spanish
- Provide 1 on 1 Small Business Assistance through our SBDC (English & Spanish)
- Provide Administrative Support to DMO
- Access to Financial Assistance
  - Local Banks (Tribal Credit, NNDF-Native CDFI)
  - Craft 3
  - Tri County EDD Loan Fund

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Barriers and Challenges that Rural Businesses & Communities Face

- Feeling Remote and Isolated
- Connectivity-Lack of Broadband infrastructure
- Workforce Housing
- Childcare
- Available Workforce
- Public Infrastructure for growth
- Transportation Costs
- Capacity: Very small communities that lack staffing to apply for grants or to facilitate projects









The impacts that the Economic Alliance has on Economic Development in Rural Okanogan County Current Projects

- **Facilitate the OK/CCT Broadband Action Team**
  - 84 Million in Broadband infrastructure funding brought into Okanogan County since 2019
  - Updated Broadband and Digital Equity Plans
- **Chair the NCW Workforce Development Council**
  - Partnership with Skillsource to address rural apprenticeship and training for the construction field. Challenges with Transportation and distance to training sites.
  - Work with OIC to provide outreach to our Agriculture employers and employees.
- **Latino Small Business Outreach**
  - Provided first time service to 35 Latino Small Business owners
  - Provide 1 on 1 small business advising
  - Training offered in Spanish
- **Partner with the Northwest Native Development Fund**
  - Co sponsor training and events for Native entrepreneurs
  - Provide 1 on 1 small business advising
- **Facilitate the .09 Public Infrastructure and Community and Economic Development Prioritization Process for Okanogan County**
  - County Commissioners Adopt List by Resolution
  - Support Letters/Assist in Grant writing
  - Communities Received Special Appropriations and state and federal dollars due to ranking and project need.
- **Co Sponsor the SBDC**
  - Training 2 new Associate Business Advisors to assist our Certified Business Advisor in providing the services need by our Small Businesses.
- **Host and Facilitate the 2024 Workforce Housing Summit**
  - Coming March 2024
- **Small business Resource and Tech Center**
  - Held 15 Trainings this last year for small businesses over 50 participants
  - Provided computer space, equipment and tools to help businesses expand into a online environment
  - Provide Chromebooks to Small Businesses at no cost

PARTNER/COLLABORATE

To best serve our small businesses and communities we have to be at the table advocating for them and sharing their story at the larger table. This is a **CHALLENGE**, due to limited funding and lack of capacity for small Rural ADO's like the Economic Alliance.

How would we like to enhance Economic Development Services as the ADO in Rural Okanogan County?

- **Expand the partnership with Workforce Development** -- At this time, our businesses cannot get back to pre-COVID numbers due to the lack of available workforce and training. We need to look at solution-based approaches to help these employers, and that could be done by innovative training programs partnering with our WDC, and local community colleges.

- **Focus on the DEI work that we are doing**. Additional funding would allow us to continue the programs and services recently created using one-time only grant funding to assist our minority, woman owned and other disadvantaged businesses, who desperately need these services.

- **CAPACITY**. As many of you know Okanogan County is the largest county in the state of Washington, we are very rural and historically distressed. We have 13 municipalities and the Colville Confederated tribe within our boundaries, at the current funding levels we do not have the ability to hire the additional staff needed to cover this large of an area to address the many needs of the communities and businesses that we serve.



THANK YOU

RONI HOLDER-DIEFENBACH

Okanogan County Economic Alliance

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