



The Voice of Economic Development

WEDA Newsletter – January 2019

Working Together for Jobs & Economic Prosperity Across Washington State

Message from the Executive Director, Suzanne Dale Estey *Why Economic Development Matters & Why You Should Care*



Economic development is fundamentally about improving quality of life in our communities. Without jobs for our residents and revenues for our governments to pay for important services such as public safety, transportation, parks and education, families and communities erode. It's not a partisan/urban vs. rural/or business vs. labor issue – the economic prosperity of all of our communities matters to all of us. This is why you should care about the work of WEDA to retain, expand and recruit jobs and investment across Washington. And this is why, after serving on WEDA's board for nearly ten years during my roles as Economic Development Director at the City of Renton and CEO of the Seattle-King County Economic Development Council -- and as a passionate native of this incredible state -- I was thrilled to be asked to serve as the new Executive Director of WEDA.

WEDA recognizes that while Washington State has enjoyed an unprecedented economic boom, there are many communities across the state that are still struggling, and some counties with unemployment rates over 9%. There are also pockets of serious poverty in our urban counties. WEDA believes we need to empower communities across Washington with the tools to be world-class economic engines and assist businesses large and small in becoming globally competitive. We believe the time is now to plan ahead for the next economic downturn with proactive measures to sustain our economic vitality and strengthen the economic development ecosystem at the state, regional and local levels.

WEDA is the only trade association focused on economic development in Washington State, and it is a small but mighty non-profit organization. We are working hard to re-ignite and strengthen WEDA as your Voice of Economic Development in Washington. And we are making great progress! We are actively advocating for [WEDA's 2019 Legislative Agenda](#) which is focused on the most critical actions lawmakers can take to retain and grow living wage jobs, foster vibrant communities and spark investment in Washington State. You will hear from us more frequently through this newsletter, and we are also strengthening and growing our membership. Two weeks into 2019, we already have as many new WEDA members as joined in all of 2018! We also have a record number of sponsors for our upcoming Winter Conference which will be held March 5-6 in Olympia. Please join us!

Since starting with WEDA in September, among countless meetings, I have spent several days in Olympia and a full day in Ellensburg/Kittitas County. I learned a great deal at the Association of Washington Business' Rural Jobs Summit in Longview as well as engaging with the Washington Public Ports Association's Economic Development Committee. We are actively partnering with these organizations, our partners at the Washington

State Department of Commerce, in cities, counties, industry trade associations, and many others, to move our common priorities forward.

I want to be sure to thank the WEDA Board leadership, Jonathan Smith and Mike Bomar, for their patience and support as we have been in “re-startup” mode with WEDA. I am grateful to our entire WEDA Board, which is an amazing group of economic development leaders from across the state. And we wouldn’t be making progress without the stellar work of my friends Jennifer Ziegler, WEDA’s new lobbyist and Samantha Gotkin, our Events & Operations consultant. I hope you will join us all as we help elevate the commitment to economic development statewide. It really does matter – to your family, your community and our state.

