



## WEDA 2025 Summer Conference

**ART OF THE POSSIBLE: *Shaping Cutting-Edge Economic Opportunity for Washington's Future***  
**August 11-13, 2025 – Tacoma, WA**

### Agenda

#### **Monday, August 11**

2:00-5:00 pm  
 (tour times vary)

***Economic Possibilities in Action Highlights Tours – pre-registration required through WEDA's online conference platform, Swapcard (sign ups will open by August 6) – Note: Each tour has unique timing – please be sure to note the timing for your tour. Choose 1:***

- **Workforce Development Innovation Tour: Clover Park Technical College's Center for Advanced Manufacturing Technology**
- **Harbor Tour of Commencement Bay with Destiny Harbor Tours (2 tour times: 2:00 pm or 3:30 pm)**

**3:00 pm - Workforce Development Innovation Tour: Clover Park Technical College's Center for Advanced Manufacturing Technology**

Tour starts at Building 24 - Center for Advanced Manufacturing Technology  
 4500 Steilacoom Blvd SW Lakewood, WA 98499 -  
*see campus map in conference Swapcard app.*

Welcome Remarks & Speakers:

- Dr. Joyce Loveday, President, Clover Park Technical College
- Dr. Thomas Broxson, Vice President for Instruction, Clover Park Technical College
- Dr. Claire Korschinowski, Dean, Aerospace, Technology, Advanced Manufacturing & Workforce, Clover Park Technical College

*Step into the future of skilled trades with an interactive tour of Clover Park Technical College's Center for Advanced Manufacturing, where students build workforce-ready skills through hands-on training in robotics, additive and CNC machining, mechatronics, nondestructive testing, computer science, cyber security and more. This engaging experience highlights how the Center integrates Industry 4.0 technologies—like automation, smart systems and digital design—to prepare learners for the evolving demands of modern manufacturing.*

### **Harbor Tour of Commencement Bay with Destiny Harbor Tours**

Two Times: **2:00 pm Tour** (check in time: 1:40 pm) or **3:30 pm Tour** (check in time: 3:10 pm)

1199 Dock Street, Tacoma, WA 98402

Tour Guide:

- Leslie Barstow, Community Relations & Workforce Development Manager, Port of Tacoma

*Join us for a special and private 90 minute cruise! **Please note that this boat does not have a restroom on it and there is not a public restroom near the dock. This loading location is three blocks from the Hotel Murano so it is recommended that you park there and walk to the dock.** Note from Our Local Hosts: If you arrive early or after your tour, grab a drink or bite to eat at the Fish Peddler Restaurant & Market on Foss Waterway near the marina (and they do have restrooms!). But please **DO NOT** park at the Fish Peddler during the tour. There are many public pay spots and there is a parking lot just North of the 15<sup>th</sup> Street ramp.*

*Experience the economic engine of Pierce County from the water. This exclusive boat tour offers a rare vantage point of the Port of Tacoma's industrial tideflats—home to world-class marine terminals, bustling logistics corridors, and a diverse manufacturing base. As a key part of the Northwest Seaport Alliance, the Port drives over 42,000 jobs and billions in economic activity across the South Sound region. Along the way, learn how the Port is integrating sustainability into its operations, with shoreline habitat restoration, stormwater management, shore power infrastructure and clean transportation initiatives. This tour offers a powerful look at how global trade, industry and environmental stewardship converge on one of Washington's most vital working waterfronts.*

7:30-9:00 pm                      **Reconnecting & Exploring Possibilities: Social Welcome Gathering** (non-hosted, light hors d'oeuvres) – BAR960 - Hotel Lobby, Hotel Murano

*Meet new colleagues from across the state and reengage with old friends.*

### **Tuesday, August 12**

9:30-11:15 am                      **WEDA Q3 Board Meeting** – Board Members & WEDA Staff only  
– Lido Boardroom, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor - Hotel Murano

**Note:** WEDA Registration/Information Table and all WEDA conference meeting rooms are in the Bicentennial Pavilion. The Rotunda is available for networking and work needs. Please be sure to check out the exhibitors!

10:00-11:00 am                      **Upping Our Game for Economic Possibilities: Pre-Conference Professional Development Workshops**

**Pre-Conference Professional Development Workshop: *Leveraging Technology including Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Economic Development*** – Pavilion Room F  
Sponsor: aLocal Solutions  
Host: Jim Hagar, Economic Development Project Manager, Port of Vancouver, USA & WEDA Conference Planning Committee Member

Workshop Leader: Jesse Downs, COO, aLocal Solutions  
Speaker: Adeel Ali, Head of AI Engineering and Strategy, aLocal.ai

*AI has existed for decades, and some companies were early adopters and leaders in leveraging this tool. Recently, many new exciting govtech and economic solutions have emerged that help guide policy, market and economic decisions. This workshop will open discussion with insights from industry leaders on platforms effectively used today by governments and economic development organizations. Attendees will have a robust conversation about the intersection and practical application of AI tools in community engagement, economic and market analytics with public policy. The panelists will provide specific examples and how AI solutions can save money, time and provide a runway for better decisions.*

**Pre-Conference Professional Development Workshop: *Crafting an Economic Development Strategic Plan, Seeking Funding & Leveraging Partnerships to Implement Plans with Constrained Resources*** – Pavilion Room C

Sponsor: Pacific Power

Host: Lorie Fazio, Director of Operations, Clallam Economic Development Council & WEDA Conference Planning Committee Member

Workshop Leader: Brittany Bagent, Project Director, ECONorthwest

Speakers:

- Chris Harder, Deputy Director, Economic Prosperity & Housing, City of Vancouver
- Wesley Nguyen, Economic Development Coordinator, City of Lacey

*This interactive workshop will explore how to move your community or organization forward with an economic development strategic plan. We will also discuss different approaches to engaging with partners to build and implement plans during a resource-constrained environment. Whether your organization is moving forward or just exploring possible strategic planning, you will identify next steps and resources to move ahead successfully.*

11:30 am                      Registration, Buffet Lunch & Networking – Pavilion Ballroom Lobby

11:45 am-2:00 pm        **Opening General Session: *Defining the “ART OF THE POSSIBLE” for Economic Development in Washington*** – Pavilion Ballroom (AGD)

Sponsor: Greater Spokane Inc.

Led by: Betty Baublits, Director of Economic Development, Pierce County & WEDA Board Chair

**Land Acknowledgment**

**Greeting from Governor Bob Ferguson**

**Local Government Welcome: City of Tacoma Deputy Mayor Kiara Daniels**

Opening Remarks from WEDA Leadership & Sponsors

**Keynote Speaker: Susan Loosmore, Executive Vice President, Strategic Advisor, T-Mobile & Chair, Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce Board of Trustees**

Sponsor: Clallam Economic Development Council

Host: Mandy Wallner, Economic Development Manager, City of Richland & WEDA Vice Chair

**Fireside Chat: *Economic Impact & Possibilities of Washington's Tribal Enterprises***

Sponsor: Thurston Economic Development Council

Moderator: Colleen McAleer, Executive Director, Clallam Economic Development Council & WEDA Board Member

**Featured Speakers:**

- Ron Allen, Chairman/CEO, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
- Leonard Forsman, Chairman, Suquamish Tribe & President, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians
- Casey Pearlman, Executive Director, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Economic Development Corporation
- Matt Wadhvani, CEO, Puyallup Tribal Enterprises & CFO, Puyallup Tribe of Indians

2:00-2:15 pm

Networking Break

2:15-3:15 pm

**Breakouts 1: *Building Blocks for Shaping Economic Opportunity*** (choose 1):

***Building Sustainable Food Systems & Growing Local Economies*** – Pavilion Room F

Sponsor: Washington State Department of Enterprise Services

Moderator: Maddie Merton, Vice President, Business Retention & Expansion, Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County

**Panelists:**

- Michael Cade, Executive Director, Thurston Economic Development Council & WEDA Board Secretary
- Stacey Crnich, CEO, GoodRoots Northwest
- Donna Novitsky, CEO, Yiftee
- Naomie Peasley, Intertribal Agricultural Council Technical Assistance Specialist - Washington State, Intertribal Agriculture Coalition
- Maressa Valliant, Program Director, Eat Local First Network, Sustainable Connections

***Staying the Course on Critical Infrastructure Projects for Washington's Future*** –

Pavilion Room C

Sponsor: Kitsap Economic Development Alliance

Moderator: Brant Mayo, Executive Director, Grant County Economic Development Council & WEDA Board Member

Panelists:

- Mike Bomar, Chief Economic Strategy Officer, Port of Vancouver USA & Past WEDA Board Chair
- State House of Representatives Transportation Committee Chair Jake Fey (D-27-Pierce County)
- Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director, Economic Alliance Okanogan County & WEDA Board Member
- Janea Stark, Executive Director, Community Economic Revitalization Board & Chair, Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council
- Dr. Joseph Williams, Acting Director, State Broadband Office, Washington State Department of Commerce

***Shaping Economic Possibilities in Rural Washington*** – Pavilion Ballroom

Sponsor: RAIN Catalysts

Moderator: Stephen McFadden, Economic Development & Marketing Manager, Port of Pasco & WEDA Board Member

Panelists:

- Yani Cisneros, Bilingual Business Development Manager, Yakima County Development Association
- Christine Gilmore, Director of Leadership & Community Engagement, Rural Development Initiatives
- Paul Kimmel, Regional Business Manager (Palouse Region), Avista & Chair of Board, Inland Northwest Partners
- Lynn Longan, Rural & Small Business Manager, Washington State Department of Commerce
- Hon. Kirk Pearson, Washington State Director, USDA Rural Development

3:15-3:30 pm

Networking & Snack Break

3:30-4:30 pm

***Breakouts 2: Talent Building & Creative Partnerships for Washington's Future***  
(choose 1):

***Reflections on Working for Economic Possibilities from Our Emerging Leaders***

*Featuring: A Panel of WEDA's Emerging Leaders & Information about Getting Involved* – Pavilion Room F

Moderator: Katie Enders, Associate Planner for Economic Development, Puget Sound Regional Council & Co-Chair of WEDA's Emerging Leaders Group

Panelists:

- Rhyanne Berryman, Director of Business Retention & Expansion, Grant County Economic Development Council
- Sarah Cho, City Center Program Manager, City of Lynnwood & WEDA Board Member
- Mason Duke, Economic Development Specialist, Economic Alliance Okanogan County
- Tiana Dunbar-Wiles, External Affairs Manager, Economic Development Council of Mason County

***Shaping Economic Opportunity in Our Workforce during Complex Times*** – Pavilion Room C

Sponsor: Washington Workforce Association

Moderator: Katie Condit, Chief Executive Officer, Workforce Central & WEDA Board Member

Panelists:

- Dr. Sheila Edwards Lange, Chancellor, University of Washington Tacoma
- Rosalinda Guillen, Co-Founder & Executive Director, Community to Community Development (C2C)
- Amy Martinez, CEO, South Central Workforce Development Council
- Genevieve Stokes, Director of Government Relations, Child Care Aware of WA
- Korey Strozier, President, Tacoma Public Schools

***ART OF THE POSSIBLE for Washington's Creative Industries*** – Pavilion Ballroom

Sponsor: Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County

Moderator: Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director, Economic Alliance Okanogan County & WEDA Board Member

Panelists:

- Shannon Halberstadt, Creative Economy Industry Sector Lead, Washington State Department of Commerce
- Dr. Kimberly Keith, Executive Director, Hilltop Artists
- Katie Stricker Lappier, CEO of Education and Programs, Tacoma Arts Live
- Darya Pilram, IEDC Economic Recovery Corps Fellow - Creative Economy, Inland Northwest
- Rebecca Solverson, Arts & Cultural Vitality Division Manager, City of Tacoma

*Our special Conference Reception at the Museum of Glass is a quick drive from the Hotel Murano and there is parking there. But we recommend walking, which will take just over 10 minutes and ends with the incredible Chihuly Bridge of Glass. If you would like to walk with the group, meet in the main Hotel Murano Lobby at 5:15 pm. There will be music and a speaking program at 6:15 pm. Please be sure to wear your WEDA nametag!*

5:30-7:30 pm

***Celebrating Tacoma-Pierce County, Our Creative Economy & All of Washington State's Economic Possibilities - Networking Reception***

Museum of Glass, 1801 Dock Street, Tacoma, WA 98402

Sponsor: King County

Host: Betty Baublits, Director of Econ. Development, Pierce County & WEDA Board Chair

**Local Government Welcome: Hon. Ryan Mello, Pierce County Executive**

**Featured Speaker:**

**Washington State Department of Commerce Director Joe Nguyễn**

*Join us for a special reception at the Museum of Glass, a premier contemporary art museum dedicated to glass and glassmaking in the West Coast's largest and most active museum glass studio. The Museum*

*has established a reputation for hosting impactful and engaging artist residencies, organizing and exhibiting nationally traveling exhibitions, and creating unique programs for visitors, all while building a growing permanent collection chronicling the development of modern and contemporary glass. Since opening in 2002, the Museum has served as a catalyst for change in Tacoma. The iconic building was erected on a Superfund site which started the restoration of the Thea Foss Waterway. Today, you will find a thriving arts and culture center, including six museums all within walking distance.*

***Dress code: business casual -- WEDA conference registrants must wear their nametags, please. Will Bentley Music will be playing and there will be a brief speaking program at approximately 6:15 pm. Heavy hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served. After the reception at the Museum of Glass, join the group to take Sound Transit's Tacoma Link Light Rail to our always-fun after-hours gathering! Getting around Downtown Tacoma is easy on the Link, which travels between ends about every 12 minutes. Just walk back across the Chihuly Bridge of Glass and catch the Link on Pacific Avenue for a 6 minute trip from the St. Joseph station to the Old City Hall station. Then take a short walk to Odd Otter Brewing Company. The Link will cost \$2 for a one-way fare and you can buy your ticket at the station with cash or credit card. You can also walk (in groups, please), drive or rideshare – just please join us!***

8:00-9:00 pm                      **ART OF THE POSSIBLE for Economic Development Talent: Emerging Leaders Gathering**  
Odd Otter Brewing Company, 716 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma WA 98402

8:30 pm on. . .                      **Continuing to Build Connections: After Hours No-Host Get Together**  
Odd Otter Brewing Company, 716 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma WA 98402

### **Wednesday, August 13**

8:00-8:40 am                      Breakfast & Networking Activities (Affinity Groupings) – Pavilion Ballroom

8:40-9:45 am                      **Morning General Session: Cutting-Edge Success Stories & Economic Development Resources for the "ART OF THE POSSIBLE"** – Pavilion Ballroom  
Sponsor: Pierce County  
Host: Gina Stark, Interim Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity in Whatcom County & WEDA Board Incoming Chair

**Local Government Welcome: Port of Tacoma Commission President John McCarthy**

**TIF for Jobs Update: Shaping Economic Possibilities through Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**

Sponsor: Port of Vancouver, USA

Speakers:

- Mike Bomar, Chief Economic Strategy Officer, Port of Vancouver USA & Former WEDA Board Chair
- Alice Ost diek, Partner, Stradling Yocca Carlson & Rauth LLP

**Keynote Speaker: Lieutenant Governor Denny Heck**

Sponsor: Washington Small Business Development Center

9:45-10:00 am                      Networking Break

10:00-11:00 am                      **Breakouts 3: *Fostering Cutting-Edge Economic Possibilities for the Future*** (choose 1):

***Navigating Global Complexities & Possibilities: Capturing Foreign Investment, Understanding Tariffs and Growing Exports*** – Pavilion Room F

Sponsor: Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

Moderator: Mandy Wallner, Economic Development Manager, City of Richland & WEDA Vice Chair

Panelists:

- Steve Balaski, Director of Business Development, The Northwest Seaport Alliance
- Josh Davis, Chief Economic Development Officer & Senior Vice President, Greater Seattle Partners
- Tom Gould, CEO, Tom Gould Customs Consulting, Inc.
- Christy Mastin, Certified Business Advisor, International Trade, Washington Small Business Development Center

***Possibilities & Cutting-Edge Solutions for Workforce & Attainable Housing*** – Pavilion Room C

Sponsor: Grow America

Moderator: Gina Stark, Interim Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity in Whatcom County & WEDA Board Incoming Chair

Panelists:

- Nicholas Carr, Senior Policy Advisor for Housing, Office of the Governor
- Gina Chamberlain, Homeownership Program Manager, Rural Community Assistance Corporation
- Kathleen Hosfeld, CEO/Executive Director, Homestead Community Land Trust
- Jamie Maciejewski, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity of East Jefferson County

**Innovation in Economic Development Presentations** – Pavilion Ballroom

Sponsor: Columbia River Economic Development Council

Moderator: Michael Cade, Executive Director, Thurston Economic Development Council & WEDA Board Secretary

Speakers:

- Jim Kuntz, CEO, Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority - Trades District Project – Business Incubator
- Chandler Lewis, Managing Director & Founder, 360 Social Impact Studios & Enough Ventures
- Colleen McAleer, Executive Director - Clallam County Economic Development Council & WEDA Board Member - The Recompete Pilot Program (RECOMPETE) & Clallam Forest Product Innovation Program
- Maria Serra, Public Works Director, City of Pasco – City of Pasco Water Reuse Facility



11:00-11:15 am            Networking Break

11:15 am-12:00 pm        **General Session: *Finding the Economic Possibilities in Complex Times – Assessing Our Progress & Forecasting Washington’s Future*** – Pavilion Ballroom  
Sponsor: Impact Washington  
Moderator: Jon Smith, Executive Director, Yakima County Economic Development Association & WEDA Board Member

**Featured Speakers:**

- **Anneliese Vance-Sherman, PhD, Chief Labor Economist, Washington State Employment Security Department**
- **Chris Mefford, President & CEO, Community Attributes, Inc.**

*Gain insights about statewide, national and global economic trends that could affect your community and region from these leading economists. They will highlight labor market trends, statewide economic indicators, inflation, global trade impacts and more. This data-driven look at our economy, focusing on Washington state will leave you better prepared to navigate our ever-evolving economic landscape with actionable insights.*

12:00-1:00 pm            **Lunch**

12:15-1:30 pm            **Closing General Session: *Moving Forward on the “ART OF THE POSSIBLE” for Washington’s Future*** – Pavilion Ballroom  
Sponsor: Washington State Microenterprise Association  
Host: Betty Baublits, Economic Development Director, Pierce County & WEDA Board Chair

***Fireside Chat: Shaping Cutting-Edge Economic Opportunity through Sustainable Aviation Fuel***

Sponsor: Port of Seattle  
Moderator: Sarah Cho, City Center Program Manager, City of Lynnwood & WEDA Board Member

**Featured Speakers:**

- Port of Seattle Commissioner Ryan Calkins
- Dr. Joshua Heyne, Director, Bioproducts, Sciences & Engineering Lab (BSEL) and Co-Director, WSU-PNNL Bioproducts Institute (BIO-IN)
- John Plaza, CEO, SkyNRG Americas
- Ryan Spies, Managing Director, Sustainability, Alaska Airlines

1:10-1:30 pm            WEDA Annual Meeting, Board & Officer Elections, Action Items & Next Steps

Led by: Betty Baublits, Economic Dev. Director, Pierce County & WEDA Board Chair

***Looking Ahead to Future Opportunities:***

- Preparing for the 2026 FIFA World Cup

*All conference attendees are encouraged to stay for this brief but important Annual Meeting & Closing Session.*

***Thank you to our generous sponsors!***



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## 2026 WEDA WINTER CONFERENCE

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Please save **February 25-26, 2026** for our annual Winter Conference in Olympia!  
Watch [www.wedaonline.org](http://www.wedaonline.org) for details.

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