



BUILD STRONG. STAY STRONG.
Building Economic Resilience & Preparedness in Washington's Communities
2026 WEDA WINTER CONFERENCE
 Saint Martin's University & the Governor's Mansion – Legislative Reception

preliminary Agenda as of 1/27/2026 9:41 AM

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

7:00 pm **Informal No-Host Pre-Conference Dinner** – Brewery City Pizza, Lacey

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

9:30 - 11:00 am **WEDA Q1 2026 Board Meeting** – *Board Members & WEDA Staff only* (Capital Room, Hampton Inn & Suites Olympia/Lacey)

11:30 am - 12:00 pm **Conference Registration Opens** (Norman Worthington Conference Center, Saint Martin's University, Lacey)

12:00 - 12:30 pm **Buffet Lunch & Interactive Networking** (Norman Worthington Conference Center)

Welcome and Introductions: Gina Stark, CEO, Stark Impact Consulting & WEDA Board Chair

12:30 - 1:00 pm **Opening General Session**

**Land Acknowledgement &
 Tribal Welcome:** Cheebo Frazier, Vice Chairwoman, Nisqually Indian Tribal Council

Remarks from WEDA Leadership & Sponsors

1:00 - 1:40 pm **BUILD STRONG: *How Can We Build Economic Resilience & Preparedness in Our Communities?***

Keynote Speaker: Aaron Davis, Deputy Executive Director, BuildStrong America

1:40 - 2:30 pm **Fireside Chat: *Resources, Best Practices & Reflections on How We Should BUILD STRONG. STAY STRONG.***

Featured Panelists:

- Abe Diaz, Senior Manager for Disaster Relief, Amazon
- Robert Ezelle, Director, Emergency Management Division, WA Military Department
- US Small Business Administration (SBA) Pacific Northwest Region Administrator Apollo Fuhrman
- *Additional Panelist TBA*

2:30 - 2:45 pm	Snack Break
3:00 - 4:30 pm	WEDA 2026 Economic Development Awards Ceremony <i>Honoring Outstanding Achievement in Economic Development</i> <i>All nominees will be recognized and brief presentations will be given by award winners.</i>
5:30 - 7:00 pm	WEDA Legislative Reception (Governor's Mansion) Featured Speaker TBA
7:30 pm	BUILD STRONG: Emerging Leaders Get Together (Ricardo's Kitchen + Bar, The Fireside room, 676 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey)
8:00 – 9:30 pm	STAY STRONG: <i>Building Partnerships & Friendships, Old & New: After Hours No-Host Get Together</i> (Ricardo's Kitchen + Bar, The Fireside room, 676 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey)

Thursday, February 26, 2026

8:00 am	Conference Registration Opens (Norman Worthington Conference Center, Saint Martin's University, Lacey)
8:00 - 8:45 am	Buffet Breakfast & Interactive Networking (Norman Worthington Conference Center)
8:45 - 9:30 am	Morning General Session: <i>Building Washington's Economic Resilience</i> Keynote Speaker: Washington State Treasurer Mike Pellicciotti
9:30 - 10:30 am	Washington State Key Industry Sector Partners Panel: <i>Emerging Trends, Innovations & Opportunities for Building Washington's Economic Resilience</i> Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joshua Berger, Founder & President/CEO, Maritime Blue • Mel Clark, President & CEO, CleanTech Alliance • Kayla Coffee, CEO & President, Aerospace Futures Alliance • Rhianne Ham, International Marketing Manager, WA State Department of Agriculture • Laura Ruderman, CEO, Technology Alliance
10:30 - 11:00 am	Roundtable Strategic Discussions with Key Commerce Staff & Industry Partners: <i>Building Washington's Economic Opportunities & Resilience</i>
11:00 am - 12:00 pm	Legislative Discussion with WEDA Partners: <i>Building Washington's Economic Opportunities & Resilience through Partnerships & Shared Interests</i> Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candice Bock, Director of Government Relations, Association of Washington Cities • William Westmoreland, CEO, PacMountain Workforce Development Council on behalf of Washington Workforce Association • Eric ffitch, Executive Director, Washington Public Ports Association • Kris Johnson, President & CEO, Association of Washington Business • Derek Young, Executive Director, Washington State Association of Counties

12:00 - 1:30 pm

Lunch & Legislative Update: *Responding to the Call for Action As We Work to BUILD STRONG. STAY STRONG.*

Legislative Economic Development Leaders Panel

- House Technology, Economic Development & Veterans Committee Chair Cindy Ryu (D-32nd District-NW King & SW Snohomish Counties)
- House Technology, Economic Development & Veterans Ranking Member Stephanie Barnard (R-8th District-Tri Cities)
- *Senate Leaders TBA*

Closing Session: *Our Call for Action* - BUILD STRONG. STAY STRONG.

Featured Speakers *TBA*

Closing Remarks & Action Items