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ONWARD

PIERCE COUNTY MEANS BUSINESS

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Build, Belong, Succeed -2025 EDB Annual Meeting-

More than 300 local business-minded people attended the 2025 EDB Annual Meeting on Wednesday, February 26th. Held at the Tacoma Convention Center, the Annual Meeting was opened by the new Board Chair, Bett Lucas, Sr VP at the Commercial SeaPort Sound Terminal.

During her remarks, she underscored the upcoming EDB Capital Campaign that will raise the resources needed to support the next five years of economic development work in Tacoma-Pierce County. According to Lucas, "... I am confident that together, we will continue to drive meaningful economic growth and prosperity for our community.

President and CEO of the EDB Tacoma Pierce County, Michael Catsi took center stage to update the audience on all things EDB. During his remarks, the highlights of the 2024 Annual Report were presented. You can view this report [HERE](#).

There was a significant call to action at this Annual Meeting. A postcard was placed at every place setting and attendees were encouraged to send it to a person or business and encourage them to move to Pierce County. With the message, Pierce County is a place where people and businesses Build, Belong, and Succeed.

One of the most anticipated areas of the agenda was the presentation of the Excellent 10 Awards. This year's presenter was newly elected Pierce County Executive and new EDB Board Member, Ryan Mello. For a complete listing of winners click [HERE](#).

The Excellent 10 was followed by two other coveted awards ... The Golden Shovel and the Mountain Mover Award presented by Don Clark, Jr. President CEO of Sound Credit Union and the EDB Vice Chair. Accepting the award for The Golden Shovel was Ozan Kaya, CEO of Voltage Park whose mission is to make AI machine learning infrastructure accessible to all, from large enterprises and research universities to seed-stage startups and nonprofits. The 2025 Mountain Mover Award, intended for people with the most exemplary records of accomplishments and service was given to Bruce Dammeier, former Pierce County Executive.

No Annual Meeting is complete without an inspiring keynote, and this year's event delivered. Tyler Pigott, Senior Director of Sales at StoryBrand, took the stage to share a powerful message on the impact of clear storytelling in business and economic growth.

Tyler's keynote captivated the audience with the StoryBrand Framework, showing how businesses and communities thrive when they communicate clearly. Through engaging examples and practical takeaways, he encouraged attendees to DEFINE their message, CLARIFY their customer's problem, and SHARE their story consistently, a framework that not only helps businesses grow but also strengthens Tacoma-Pierce County's position as a premier place for entrepreneurship and expansion.

Missed the keynote? Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the StoryBrand Framework and how it can transform your business

EDB 2025 Board Spotlight - Jemima McCullum



Jemima J. McCullum is a Partner in Gordon Thomas Honeywell LLP's Tacoma office and a member of the Firm's Real Estate and Land Use Practice Group. Jemima has over 24 years' experience at her firm in work of a transactional nature, focusing her work primarily on commercial real estate, financing and business transactions. An EDB Board Member since 2023, Jemima has received many accolades over the years including making the list of Top Women Attorneys multiple times.

Learn more about Jemima in her own words by visiting this link.

[Read more about Jemima](#)



Business Spotlight - Jennifer Stiefel of Heritage Distillery



City Spotlight - Lakewood

In recognition of Women's History month, this March issue is highlighting a local female business owner, Jennifer Stiefel, Co-owner & President of Heritage Distillery which recently went through a public offering. Stiefel, a former educator, turned business owner shares advice and insight from her experiences working with her husband to launch, grow and prosper in their local award-winning distillery business.

At Heritage Stiefel oversees many aspects of the company including the Tribal Beverage Network (TBN) which brings economic opportunities to tribal partners throughout the United States. She also takes the lead in interacting with staff, specifically the directors of each department, to ensure things run smoothly.

Enjoy this question-and-answer presentation with Jennifer Stiefel.

[Read Q & A](#)

Known for its beautiful lakes and views of Mt. Rainier, the City of Lakewood is home to many young families and retirees who have lived there for generations. Originally a vacation spot for Seattleites in the early 20th century, Lakewood gives a nod to its past with its tourism website [NEARcation.com](#). Filled with information about fun things to do in Lakewood, events to attend, places to eat and great places to lay your head at night, the site showcases the city's 14 public parks, 7 lakes, 11 natural areas, 165 restaurants and 500 shops

The city also proudly calls itself a military town. The second largest employer in Washington state, Joint Base Lewis-McChord is adjacent to the city and has a \$15 billion impact on the state. It is predicted to grow in the coming years. Lakewood knows that growth translates to a tremendous need for more housing and infrastructure, as well as daycare operators, already a national challenge. Working to meet these challenges involves many elements and projects.

[Read more about Lakewood](#)

NEWS BRIEFS

Expand Your Business Internationally

Join the Washington State Department of Commerce's Small Business Export Assistance (SBEA) team to learn how your business can successfully enter and grow in international markets. Whether you're new to exporting or looking to scale up, the SBEA can help your business represent Washington State overseas! Presented through a Zoom meeting on Tuesday, March 18th from 1-2pm PDT, the webinar will cover:

[Register Here](#)

Green Career Explorer

Goodwill's Milgard Work Opportunity Center is presenting a 7-week course that teaches practical job skills needed for entry-level jobs in construction, environmental services, and energy efficiency. Enrollees will learn basic workplace skills, job site safety, hand-on training, job search support, green industry basics all while earning a nationally recognized Energy Fundamentals credential.

The class starts on Monday, April 25th with in person attendance.

[Read More](#)

EDB Board Member Thomas Kruse Receives Industry Recognition

Thomas Kruse recently made the Becker's Hospital Review List for healthcare strategy. Becker's Healthcare offers forward-looking business news, analysis and guidance relating to the healthcare industry. Becker's recognized 70 outstanding chief strategy officers from national leading hospitals and health systems in 2024.

[Read More](#)

EDB Advocacy Day

An Economic Development Advocacy Day was implemented in Olympia on February 6th. Twenty-five WEDA members, including a five-person team from the EDB Tacoma Pierce County, participated in advancing statewide economic development priorities. Following an agenda organized through the Washington Economic Development Association's Suzanne Dale Estey, the day was filled with individual and group meetings with WA State Legislators, State Officers including Secretary of State Steve Hobbs and Lt. Governor Denny Heck and Legislative staff. The day was long, but the benefits will be felt for years to come. The group worked to advance three priorities.

[Read About the Priorities Here](#)

NEWS

[NFIB Report: 35% of Small Businesses Facing Hiring Challenges](#)

[January Housing Report: More Homes for Sale, Higher Prices](#)

[City of Tacoma Appoints Tanja Carter to Community Economic Development Director](#)

[Don Clark, Jr, featured in South Sound Business Journal's Lead + Follow in February.](#)

Team With Us

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Onward is a service of the EDB, a non-profit corporation focused on recruitment and retention of primary businesses in Tacoma and Pierce County, Washington, USA.

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