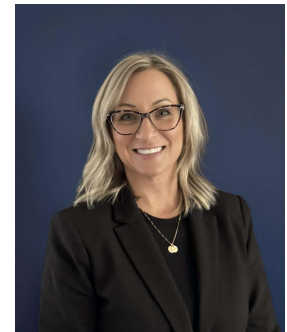


Press Release: Introducing Kristina Hines as Executive Director of the Economic Development Council for Island County

Written by: Samar Army | Co-Chair of the Search Committee, EDC Board Member (Secretary)

Whidbey Island, WA – August 22, 2024 – The Economic Development Council (EDC) for Island County is excited to announce the appointment of Kristina Hines as its new Executive Director. Kristina brings over two decades of experience in business advisory, small business consulting, communications, marketing, and human resources, with a proven track record of supporting economic growth and fostering community engagement.



Kristina has been a cornerstone of the Washington Small Business Development Center (SBDC), where she served as a Certified Business Advisor for nearly four years. In this role, she provided invaluable education, technical support, and resources to **307 small businesses across Island, Skagit, and San Juan Counties. Her efforts resulted in more than \$5.7 million in capital infusion and supported the retention and creation of over 500 jobs.** Kristina's deep understanding of Island County's unique economic ecosystem, combined with her strategic leadership and commitment to community development, makes her the ideal leader to guide the EDC into the future. Her leadership is deeply rooted in collaboration and connection, which she views as essential components to achieving sustained economic growth.

"I am honored to take on this new role and continue my work in supporting the economic vitality of Island County," said Kristina Hines. "Island County is home to incredibly unique and resilient businesses, and I am excited to collaborate with our local communities, officials, business owners, and stakeholders to drive sustainable growth and innovation. Together, we have the opportunity to shape a future where our community thrives, businesses grow, and every individual has the chance to succeed."

George Henny, President of the EDC Board of Directors, stated, "The board is thrilled to welcome Kristina Hines as our new Executive Director. Kristina's proven leadership and innovative approach make us confident that she will not only build on the strong foundation laid by Sharon Sappington but also elevate the EDC's mission to new heights, driving impactful change and growth across our community."

Samar Army, Co-Chair of the Search Committee and EDC Board Secretary, remarked, "Kristina's appointment is a significant milestone for the EDC. Her extensive understanding of rural business challenges, along with her proactive support for small businesses and dedication to fostering growth, equips her to lead with both strategic foresight and compassion. We are confident that Kristina's leadership will greatly enhance our mission to drive economic progress and enrich the vitality of our community."

Sharon Sappington, who served as the EDC's Executive Director for six years, expressed her confidence in Kristina's ability to lead the organization. "I brought Kristina into the EDC team in 2020 as the first SBDC advisor in Island County. She quickly demonstrated her capability and became an invaluable member of the team. With her proven track record in advising businesses and entrepreneurs in Island County, her deep understanding of the local business community, and her ability to rapidly adapt, Kristina is the ideal leader for the organization's next chapter," said Sappington.

Under Sharon Sappington's leadership, the EDC made significant strides, including securing over \$1.5 million in grants to support small businesses and emerging entrepreneurs, launching the Entrepreneur Ecosystem Initiative, and developing the first-ever countywide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Kristina is joining the EDC at a time when the organization is well-positioned to continue its upward trajectory.

Kristina holds a Master of Arts in Mass Communications with a specialization in social media and digital marketing from the University of Florida, and a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from the University of Delaware. She is also a graduate of Leadership Whidbey and a trained mediator through the Washington Dispute Resolution Center of Skagit, Island, and Snohomish Counties.

The EDC for Island County is enthusiastic about the future under Kristina Hines' leadership and looks forward to her guiding the organization in its mission to foster economic development and strengthen the local business community.

Contact: Samar Army
Co-Chair, Search Committee
Board Member & Secretary, Economic Development Council for Island County
SamarArmy@gmail.com

