

21st Annual AFA Aerospace Leadership Summit

September 24, 2026 | The Museum of Flight | Seattle, WA



2026 Summit Agenda

TIME	SESSION	PRESENTERS	SPONSOR
9:15 AM	Registration Opens & Morning Networking		
10:00 AM	Welcome Remarks	Nicole Zinn, Acting AFA President Ashton Allison, Director of Econ Dvpt, Pierce County	
10:20 AM	Alaska Airlines Industry Outlook: Navigating Growth, Demand & the Future of Aviation	Jason Berry, Chief Operating Officer, Alaska Airlines	
11:10 AM	Aerospace Hubs of Washington: A Mayoral Perspective	Mayor Dana Ralph, Kent Mayor Dustin Swartz, Moses Lake Mayor Armondo Pavone, Renton Mayor Cassie Franklin, Everett Moderator: Jennifer Ziegler, AFA Public Affairs	 ORION
12:00 PM	Networking Lunch		
12:50 PM	AFA Awards	Michael Catsi, AFA Board & President, Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County	
1:00 PM	Workforce Pipeline: Building Aerospace Talent for Tomorrow	Dr. Yoshiko Harden, President, Renton Technical College Kathy Albin, Director of Workforce Training & Continuing Education, Spokane Colleges Lynn Strickland, Executive Director, AJAC Moderator: Matt Poischbeg, Executive Director, WATR & AFA Board	
1:55 PM	Across Government: Washington Leaders on Aerospace	Steve Hobbs, Washington Secretary of State Senator Marko Liias (WA-21), Chair, Senate Transportation Sarah Clifthorne, Interim Director, Department of Commerce Moderator: Jerry Chase, AFA Board Chair & CEO, Orion Industries	

2:35 PM **Networking Break**



3:00 PM **Boeing Keynote** Janene Collins, VP & AGM, Supply Chain & Functional Excellence, Boeing Commercial Airplanes



3:45 PM **Accelerating Advanced Materials Innovation** Steve Cease, Global CTO & US Managing Director, Toray Advanced Composites

4:10 PM **Sustainable Aviation Fuel & Washington Manufacturing** Andy Billig, Senior Advisor, SkyNRG
Angela Rosenwood, SAF & Sustainability Programs Manager, Alaska Airlines
Trudy Soriano, Economic Development Programs Manager, Snohomish County
Sarah Cox, Director of Aviation Environment & Sustainability, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport
Moderator: Jonathan Male, Director of Energy Systems Research Support, WSU

4:50 PM Closing Remarks

5-7 PM Reception at the Historic Red Barn in the Museum of Flight



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Meet Our 2026 Summit Speakers



Jason Berry, Chief Operating Officer, Alaska Airlines

A 30-year aviation industry veteran, Jason Berry serves as Chief Operating Officer of Alaska Airlines, overseeing day-to-day operations on the ground and in the air and working with nearly 28,000 employees across Alaska Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines. He previously served as President and CEO of Horizon Air and Executive Vice President of Cargo for Alaska Air Group, with earlier leadership roles at Alaska Air Cargo, McGee Air Services and Cargolux Airlines International. Berry began his aviation career working on the ramp while still in high school, giving him a hands-on perspective that continues to shape his focus on safety, operational performance and guest experience. He holds an Executive MBA from the University of Washington Foster School of Business.



Mayor Cassie Franklin, City of Everett

Since becoming Mayor of Everett in 2018, Cassie Franklin has led more than 1,200 public servants and overseen city services ranging from public safety and infrastructure to planning, parks, water and economic development. Everett's first elected female mayor, Franklin has guided major investments in the downtown and waterfront, housing, business attraction, public safety and long-term growth planning. She also serves in regional leadership roles with Sound Transit, the Puget Sound Regional Council, Economic Alliance Snohomish County and Greater Seattle Partners. Before becoming mayor, Franklin served on the Everett City Council and spent more than two decades leading nonprofit organizations, including six years as CEO of Cocoon House.



Mayor Dana Ralph, City of Kent

A fourth-generation Kent resident, Mayor Dana Ralph leads a city with a long legacy of aerospace and space innovation. First elected to the City Council in 2011 and mayor in 2017, she is now serving her third term. Kent Valley is home to nearly 32,000 aerospace jobs and more than 200 aerospace workplaces, with a history stretching from the Lunar Roving Vehicles built for Apollo missions to today's work by companies such as Blue Origin and Stoke Space. Ralph has prioritized preparing the next generation through STEM education, robotics, apprenticeships and skilled trades. Under her leadership, Kent also helped establish the Kent Valley Air and Space Manufacturing Roundtable, connecting industry, education and workforce partners.

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Mayor Dustin Swartz, City of Moses Lake

Dustin Swartz is Mayor of Moses Lake and brings both local roots and private-sector experience to his public service. A Moses Lake native, he returned to the community after college to work in his family's commercial and industrial electrical contracting business. Swartz is a licensed Washington State Electrical Administrator and has also pursued commercial electrical apprenticeship training through the Construction Industry Training Council of Washington. Beyond city leadership, he serves as President of the Grant County Home Builders Association and participates on the Legislative Policy Committee of the Building Industry Association of Washington. His background in construction, skilled trades and business gives him a practical perspective on workforce, infrastructure and economic growth in Central Washington.



Mayor Armondo Pavone, City of Renton

Drawing on decades of business and public service experience, Armondo Pavone is serving his second term as Mayor of Renton after six years on the City Council. A lifelong Renton resident and downtown business owner for more than 40 years, Pavone brings an entrepreneurial perspective to city leadership. He is also deeply involved in regional governance and, in 2026, serves as President of the Sound Cities Association alongside leadership roles with the Valley Communications Center, South Correctional Entity, Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board and King County Regional Policy Committee. His experience across business, local government and regional policy informs his work on economic growth, public services and the issues affecting communities and employers throughout the Puget Sound region.



Jennifer Ziegler, Aerospace Futures Alliance

Jennifer Ziegler brings more than 25 years of legislative and government relations experience to her role supporting Aerospace Futures Alliance. As owner of Jennifer Ziegler Public Affairs, she specializes in advocacy, transportation policy and government affairs. Her previous roles include staff counsel to the Washington State Senate and House Transportation Committees, Government Relations Director for the Washington State Department of Transportation and Transportation Policy Advisor to Governor Christine Gregoire. Ziegler is also active with the Washington State Bar Association and Association of Washington Business and serves in board roles with the Washington Department of Transportation Memorial Foundation and Washington Highway Users Federation.



Dr. Yoshiko Harden, President/CEO, Renton Technical College

Leading Renton Technical College as President and CEO, Dr. Yoshiko Harden provides strategic direction and oversight across the institution. Her career in Washington's community and technical college system includes senior roles at Seattle Central College, Bellevue College and Highline College, with experience spanning student services, diversity and student development. Harden serves on the boards of the Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council and Renton Chamber of Commerce and is a member of Renton Rotary. She is also an Aspen Institute Rising President's Fellow and has received statewide recognition for leadership in multicultural student services. Harden holds a doctorate in Higher Education Policy from Northeastern University, along with degrees from Seattle University and the University of California, San Diego.



Demetria "Lynn" Strickland, Executive Director, AJAC

An Army veteran with more than 25 years of management experience, Demetria "Lynn" Strickland has led AJAC | Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeships as Executive Director since 2014. She previously served as Dean of Instruction at Bates Technical College, overseeing apprenticeship, career training and continuing education programs. At AJAC, Strickland and her team develop pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs that allow participants to earn while they learn, gain college credit and work toward nationally recognized industry credentials. AJAC partners with employers, schools, community organizations and state agencies to expand advanced manufacturing career pathways across Washington. Strickland holds degrees in organizational leadership and business administration.



Kathy Albin, Director of Workforce Training & Continuing Education, Spokane Colleges

More than 25 years of experience in education and workforce development inform Kathy Albin's work as Director of Workforce Training and Continuing Education for Spokane Colleges. She leads short-term workforce training, customized employer programs and continuing education aligned with regional needs. Her background spans community colleges, K-12, adult and Tribal education, with 18 years focused specifically on career and technical education and workforce programming. Recent initiatives include supporting Spokane Community College's inaugural Northwest Aviation Maintenance Competition and participating in the Metallica Scholars Initiative. Albin is also advancing academic credit for prior learning and serves as President-Elect of the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity.



Matt Poischbeg, Executive Director, Edmonds College

At Edmonds College, Matt Poischbeg leads the Advanced Manufacturing Skills Center and Washington Aerospace Training & Research Center, overseeing workforce training initiatives supporting aerospace and advanced manufacturing. Before joining the college, he spent nearly 30 years in plastics injection molding and tooling, including service as Vice President and General Manager of SEA-LECT Plastics. Poischbeg began his career through Germany's apprenticeship system, an experience that continues to shape his support for employer-driven training and apprenticeship models. Drawing on experience from both industry and education, he works to strengthen connections between employers, training providers and the skilled workforce needed to support the future of aerospace and advanced manufacturing in Washington.



Steve Hobbs, Washington Secretary of State

Washington Secretary of State Steve Hobbs has built a public service career spanning state government, transportation policy, international trade and military leadership. He has served as Secretary of State since 2021 and previously represented the 44th Legislative District in the Washington State Senate from 2006 to 2021, including service as chair of the Transportation Committee. Hobbs has maintained close ties to Washington's aerospace industry and, as Secretary of State, established an international trade program and led trade missions supporting targeted Washington industries. He also served in the U.S. Army and Washington Army National Guard, attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel. Hobbs holds a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College.



Senator Marko Liias, Washington State Senate

Representing Washington's 21st Legislative District, Senator Marko Liias serves communities including Edmonds, Everett, Bothell, Lynnwood and Mukilteo. A lifelong Washingtonian, he entered the Legislature in 2008 as a member of the House of Representatives and was appointed to the State Senate in 2014, where he is now serving his third term. Throughout his legislative career, Liias has focused on transportation, education and career opportunities, community safety and economic policy. His district includes communities closely connected to Washington's aerospace and aviation sectors, giving him a direct perspective on the relationship between state policy, transportation infrastructure, workforce opportunity and regional economic competitiveness.



Sarah Clifthorne, Interim Director, Washington State Department of Commerce

Sarah Clifthorne serves as Interim Director of the Washington State Department of Commerce, leading an agency portfolio that spans economic development, housing, energy, local government, community services and government relations. She previously served as Commerce's Deputy Director, working closely with executive leadership to align agency operations and strengthen delivery of programs and services across Washington. Clifthorne's work emphasizes collaboration across government and communities and improving how public systems respond to statewide needs. She holds a Master of Science in Earth Sciences from the University of California, Santa Cruz, a Bachelor of Arts in Geology from Smith College and a Certificate in Strategy Execution for Public Leadership from Harvard Business School Online.



Jerry Chase, Orion Industries

Bringing more than 18 years of CEO experience to Orion Industries, Jerry Chase has led organizations across technology, communications and industrial markets. Before joining Orion, he served as President and CEO of BSQUARE, a provider of Internet of Things solutions for industrial companies. His previous executive roles also include leadership of Lantronix, Terayon Communications Systems and Thales Broadcasting & Multimedia. Earlier in his career, Chase served as an officer and naval aviator in the United States Marine Corps, experience that complements his executive perspective on leadership, operations and technology. He graduated magna cum laude from East Carolina University and earned an MBA with honors from Harvard Business School.



Janene Collins, Vice President and Assistant General Manager, Supply Chain & Functional Excellence, Boeing Commercial Airplanes

Leading Supply Chain & Functional Excellence for Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Janene Collins oversees supply chain operations including performance metrics, inventory, tools, processes and SAP implementation. She previously served as Vice President of Strategy, Contracts & Category Management, where she led future supply chain planning, sourcing decisions and contract strategy across BCA programs. Her Boeing career also includes leadership roles in sourcing, 737 Supplier Management and contracts, with responsibility for quality, cost, delivery and supplier performance. An attorney by training, Collins previously served in Boeing's Office of the General Counsel. She holds degrees from Georgetown University and the University of Michigan Law School, along with an MBA from the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business.



Steve Cease, Global CTO and U.S. Managing Director, Toray Advanced Composites

Four decades in composite technologies underpin Steve Cease's role as Global Chief Technology Officer and U.S. Managing Director of Toray Advanced Composites. He leads strategy, technology and operations for a 300-person organization and oversees composite systems used across aerostructures, space, satellite, automotive and industrial applications. His career includes engineering, operations, technology and business leadership roles across Toray, Cytec, BASF, Narmco and Fiberite. Cease also represents Toray on the Technical Oversight Committee for NASA's High-rate Composite Aircraft Manufacturing program. Throughout his career, he has worked closely with aerospace manufacturers to accelerate adoption of advanced composite technologies. He holds a chemical engineering degree from Pennsylvania State University.



Andy Billig, Senior Advisor, SkyNRG

Andy Billig is a Senior Advisor at SkyNRG, where he supports the company's U.S. work on sustainable aviation fuel policy, external relations and airline offtake relationships. Before joining SkyNRG, Billig served 14 years in the Washington State Legislature, including six years as Senate Majority Leader. During his legislative career, he was a leading voice on sustainable aviation fuel policy and served for 12 years as the founding chair of the legislatively created Washington State Alternative Jet Fuel Work Group. Billig also brings private-sector leadership experience from the sports industry, having served as CEO and part-owner of minor league sports teams in his hometown of Spokane. His career bridges public policy, industry engagement and Washington's growing sustainable aviation sector.



Angela Rosenwood, SAF & Sustainability Programs Manager, Alaska Air Group

At Alaska Air Group, Angela Rosenwood leads Sustainable Aviation Fuel efforts supporting the airline's work to expand SAF use and advance lower-carbon aviation. The source material identifies Alaska Airlines as the most fuel-efficient U.S. premium carrier and as voluntarily uplifting the highest percentage of SAF among U.S. premium carriers. Before joining Alaska, Rosenwood spent more than 20 years at Starbucks in roles spanning sustainable packaging, business strategy, product and experience innovation, operational efficiency, product management and marketing. Her experience across sustainability, strategy and operations gives her a cross-industry perspective on the challenge of scaling sustainable aviation fuel and integrating sustainability goals into complex business and operational environments.



Sarah Cox, Director, Aviation Environment & Sustainability, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport

With 30 years of experience in aviation environmental management, Sarah Cox leads the Port of Seattle's aviation environment and sustainability portfolio at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Her work advances cross-disciplinary strategies that connect sustainability priorities with airport capital projects and day-to-day operations. Cox has guided environmental programs supporting large-scale infrastructure investments at SEA, helping align operational performance with the airport's broader sustainability goals. Her experience sits at the intersection of aviation growth, environmental planning and long-term infrastructure strategy, providing a practical perspective on how airports can integrate sustainability objectives while maintaining the operational performance required by a major regional and international aviation hub.



Trudy Soriano, Economic Development Programs Manager, Snohomish County

Focused on translating climate and energy policy into practical economic development strategies, Trudy Soriano serves as an Economic Development Programs Manager in the Snohomish County Executive's Office. She manages the county's Sustainable Aviation Fuels Program, including cross-sector coordination to launch a first-of-its-kind SAF Laboratory & Repository at Paine Field in Everett. Soriano also supports countywide Green Economy strategy and implementation. Before joining Snohomish County, she worked in the nonprofit sector on policy and advocacy related to open space and water quality. She holds a Master of Public Administration in Environmental Policy from the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy & Governance and a bachelor's degree in biology from Whitman College.



Dr. Jonathan Male, Director of Energy Systems Research Support, Washington State University

Bridging research, federal policy and academic leadership, Dr. Jonathan Male serves as Director of Energy Systems Research Support in Washington State University's Office of Research and as an Affiliate Professor in Biological Systems Engineering. He also supports the Washington Alternative Jet Fuels Work Group. Before joining WSU in 2023, Male served as Chief Scientist in the Energy Processes and Materials Division at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. Earlier, he led the U.S. Department of Energy's Bioenergy Technologies Office for more than six years, advancing bioenergy and renewable chemical technologies. His career also includes research and leadership roles at PNNL and catalyst development at General Electric's Global Research Center.