



# INSIDER

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## Best in the West Awards at Annual Conference

The "Best in the West" were recognized during the association's annual conference. Congratulations to all the award recipients!

### Individual Awards

- *Russell E. Pettit "Excellence in Leadership" Award:* **Todd Sanders**, Greater Phoenix (AZ) Chamber.
- *Executive of the Year Award:* **Mark Turner**, Gilroy (CA) Chamber.
- *Gerald W. Hathaway "Staff Person of the Year" Award:* **Allison Walden**, Tulsa Regional (OK) Chamber.
- *25-Year Service Award:* **Lisa Krueger**, ACE, Lake Havasu (AZ) Chamber.
- *30-Year Service Awards:* **Scott Ashton**, Oceanside (CA) Chamber; **Sandy Blankenship**, Exeter (CA) Chamber.
- *35-Year Service Award:* **Diane Schwenke**, Grand Junction Area (CO) Chamber.
- *40-Year Service Award:* **Julia Macias Brooks**, Wickenburg (AZ) Chamber; **Pat Clark Villanueva**, Los Angeles Area (CA) Chamber.
- *ACE 15-Year Renewals:* **Lorraine Clarno**, ACE, Kalispell (MT) Chamber; **Lisa Krueger**, ACE, Lake Havasu (AZ) Chamber; **Janet Steele**, ACE, Albany (OR) Chamber.

### Outstanding Program Awards: Outstanding Achievement

- Arvada (CO) Chamber: "Arvada Resilience Task Force."
- Greater Irvine (CA) Chamber:



**Todd Sanders, Greater Phoenix (AZ) Chamber**, recipient of the Russell E. Pettit "Excellence in Leadership" Award.

"Community Resilience Campaign."

- Vegas (NV) Chamber: "Washington, D.C. Virtual Fly In."

### Outstanding Program Awards: Honorable Mention

- **Billings (MT) Chamber:** "Smart Design, Safe Places."
- **Grand Junction Area (CO) Chamber:** "Variance Protection Program."
- **Long Beach Area (CA) Chamber:** "Sustainable Candidate Promotion."
- **Greater San Fernando Valley (CA) Chamber:** "Save Small Business Coalition."
- **Tacoma-Pierce County (WA) Chamber:** "Rapid Mural Program."
- **Vail Valley (CO) Partnership:** "Welcome Home Neighbor."

### Overall Outstanding Communications Awards

- **Billings (MT) Chamber and Greater Irvine (CA) Chamber.**



**Allison Walden, Tulsa Regional (OK) Chamber**, recipient of the Gerald W. Hathaway "Staff Person of the Year" Award.

### Chamber Video Awards: Outstanding Achievement

- **Greater Coachella Valley (CA) Chamber.**
- **Culver City (CA) Chamber.**
- **Grand Junction Area (CO) Chamber.**
- **Greater Irvine (CA) Chamber.**

### E-Newsletter Awards

- **First Place:** **Greater Irvine (CA) Chamber.**
- **Special Merit:** **Greater Coachella Valley (CA) Chamber.**
- **Honorable Mention:** **Billings (MT) Chamber.**

### Website Awards

- **First Place:** **Billings (MT) Chamber.**
- **Special Merit:** **Greater Irvine (CA) Chamber.**
- **Honorable Mention:** **Yountville (CA) Chamber.**

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## COMMENTARY

# Trust Barometer Reveals Chamber Opportunity



Dave Kilby

to key opportunities for chambers of commerce in the year ahead.

Reading through a summary of the 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer (ETB) confirmed several of my suspicions about the media and government and revealed some interesting data that could equate

The ETB reveals “an epidemic of misinformation and widespread mistrust of societal institutions and leaders around the world. Adding to this, is a failing trust ecosystem unable to confront the rampant infodemic leaving us with an environment of information bankruptcy and a mandate to rebuild trust and chart a new path forward.”

## Key ETB points

- Without a trusted leadership source to look to, people don’t know where to get reliable information.
- With a growing trust gap and trust declines, people are looking for leadership and solutions as they reject media talking heads, who they do not deem credible, and government leaders who are hyper-partisan.
- While the world is clouded by mistrust and misinformation, there is a glimmer of hope for business. This year’s study shows that business (led by small business, in my opinion), is not only the most trusted institution among those studied, but also is viewed as both ethical and competent.
- People clearly expect business to step in and fill the void. The high expectations for business to address and solve today’s challenges has never been more apparent.

## The Opportunity

As the “voice of business”—and especially small business—what does all of this mean for chambers of commerce.

If chambers choose to “step up to the plate,” they really could, as the theme of our 2021 conference stated, be: “Relevant: Now More Than Ever”!

It’s time for the business community—hopefully, led by chambers of commerce to:

- Embrace its expanded mandate and expectations and be a champion for a thriving community, which will probably take us down some unfamiliar, confrontational and, maybe even, lonely paths.
- Lead with facts, act with empathy and provide content that is truthful, unbiased and reliable. Here’s our chance to really be THE TRUSTED RESOURCE.
- We MUST partner to solve issues. Yes—here’s our chance to truly be that convener of leaders and influencers to get things done and make a difference.

With more and more people fed up with political polarization and constantly doubting the media (especially social media), it seems that everyone is looking for a trusted, objective truth-teller who will lead and truly wants to make things better for everyone.

This definitely sounds like a Chamber of Commerce—or at least those that truly embrace and excel at the 3Cs: being a catalyst, convener and champion.

Let’s accept the challenge and get to work!

*Dave Kilby is president and CEO of W.A.C.E. and executive vice president of corporate affairs at the California Chamber.*

## 2020–2021 W.A.C.E. OFFICERS

### Chair of the Board

**Chris Romer, ACE**

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## Chairman’s Circle

### Gold Members

- CalChamber
- Citslinc International, Inc.
- Google
- MemberClicks

The Chairman’s Circle is a special group of members that have committed to support W.A.C.E. through sponsorships. If your business would like to become a member of the Chairman’s Circle, please contact Dave Kilby, W.A.C.E. president and CEO, at (916) 930-1202 or email [dave.kilby@calchamber.com](mailto:dave.kilby@calchamber.com).

## EXECUTIVE PROFILE

# Vail Valley Partnership Exec Likes Big Ideas, Values Problem Solving, Helping Others



## Chris Romer, ACE

President and CEO of the Vail Valley (CO) Partnership  
2021 Chair of the Board of W.A.C.E.

### Background

**Personal:** Born in Chicago, raised in Cincinnati, got to Colorado as fast as I could! Married for 19 years to Stacey; 13 year old daughter Kylah; golden retriever Cayman.

**Education:** B.S., business administration, University of Colorado, Boulder.

**Chamber Experience:** 14 years chamber experience, all at Vail Valley Partnership. 2016 and 2020 ACCE Chamber of the Year. Launched Vail Valley Economic Development in 2015 (economic development arm of the chamber).

### Business Philosophy

**Guiding Principles:** I'm a fan of six-word stories made famous by Ernest Hemmingway. My six-word story is a good summary of my guiding principles: Big ideas. Intentional efforts. Desired results.

**Yardstick of Success:** Solving problems and helping others. As Simon Sinek said, "When we help ourselves, we

find moments of happiness. When we help others, we find lasting fulfillment."

**Advice to Others:** Don't be afraid to fail; be afraid not to try.

### Judgment Calls

**Best Business Decision:** A number of years back I made a conscious, intentional decision to hire for heart. This has made a huge difference in our organization and our impacts.

**Worst Business Decision:** Sticking with a program after I knew it had run its course — lacking the courage to just stop doing it.

**One-Word Description of You:** Tenacious

### True Confessions

**Like Best About Current Job:** Being looked to as a community problem solver. I love that nothing happens in the community without someone saying, "We need to see what the Partnership says." We get to be at the table on most every community conversation.

**Interests/Hobbies:** Skiing, trail

running, hiking, sports and traveling.

**Pet Peeve:** Just one? Being late.

**Your No. 1 Strength:** Maximizer — focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. Seek to transform something strong into something superb.

**Things You Need to Work On:** Channeling my inner Elsa and learning to "let it go."

**First Choice for a New Career:** Late night comedy writer (think "Saturday Night Live" or "The Tonight Show").

### Predilections

**Favorite Book:** Fiction: *The Stand*, Stephen King. Nonfiction: *The Infinite Game*, Simon Sinek.

**Favorite Movie:** "Star Wars."

**Favorite Quote:** "Do or do not. There is no try." —Yoda.

**Favorite Song:** "The Weight" (The Band).

**Favorite Vacation Spot:** Hawaii (Big Island).

**Favorite Way to Spend Free Time:** Ski or read.



## LEADER TO LEADER

# Increased Communications, Personal Touches Help Keep Boards Active During Pandemic

*How have you kept your board members active and engaged during the last year when many of their own organizations may be struggling?*



**Josh Driskell,**  
IOM  
President/CEO  
Jenks (OK)  
Chamber

For us at the Jenks Chamber, keeping our board members active and engaged this past

year has meant being more purposeful in our communications between board meetings. Reports to the board were more frequent and included more detail than they might have in the past. Rather than snapshots and updates, we included more forecasting and explanations.

We also increased one-on-one communications and check-ins with our board and our members in general. In the past, we relied more on in-person visits but, like all chambers, were unable to do so. We pivoted to phone calls and text messages to address general and, at times, very specific needs each member and board member had.



**Kathi Roetter,**  
IOM  
Executive  
Director  
Troy Area (OH)  
Chamber

We found that the pandemic created a common need and sense of urgency that

united the board and motivated them to be more involved because it impacted each of them, no matter the size of their business.

We kept the board active and involved through increased communication. Transitioning all communication to the board portal we use allowed the board to find key information quickly and respond to it to keep the chamber moving forward while other organizations were paralyzed.



**Patrick Ellis, ACE**  
President/CEO  
Murrieta/  
Wildomar (CA)  
Chamber

It has been difficult to keep board members engaged over the last year with the challenges

that we have been facing. The most successful activity that we did with our board members was changed the way we executed our annual board retreat.

Instead of going away for a couple days to dive into strategic planning, we broke our retreat into three days with specific expectations from each of the days. Our attendance was better than any of our past board retreats and it really helped us identify the most important goals for our organization and shine the light on the things we do that are truly important to our board and members.



**Jill Rowland-Lagan, ACE**  
CEO  
Boulder City  
(NV) Chamber

I am grateful to have a board of directors that is continually active and engaged because

they committed to making their board

commitment their first civic priority. Yes, they are each having their own business or corporate challenges, but they are also keeping the chamber top-of-mind.

I believe that having wonderful facilitators help with orientation and training of our board each year has prepared them to meet this challenging time head on. This has been a huge support system and safety net for staff, volunteers and investors, allowing the chamber to be the beacon of light in our community during this rather dark and frustrating time.



**Amanda Blackwood**  
President/CEO  
Sacramento  
Metro (CA)  
Chamber

In this time of remote work, remote school, remote everything—

there is truly nothing like picking up the phone and checking in on folks as human beings.

Our team made over 2,000 outreach calls in 2020 and while some were about PPP [Paycheck Protection Program], elections and CARES [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act] compliance, the vast majority were human connections about kids, stresses, mental health and taking a moment to control the things you can and just breathe through the rest.

## SURVEY SAYS



WESTERN ASSOCIATION  
OF CHAMBER EXECUTIVES



# GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

### 56%

of chambers receive  
government funding



### 85%

receive their funding  
from the city/town

### 87%

of those who receive funding  
have a contract for services



## TOP 4 USE OF FUNDS

1. Economic Development
2. City Promotion
3. Tourism Promotion
4. Community Events

### 34%

saw an increase in  
government funding  
in 2020



### 39%

reported their funding  
stayed the same in 2020

### 79%

of chambers received an  
Economic Injury Disaster  
Loan (EIDL)



### 53%

received a CARES grant

### 79%

have applied or plan to  
apply for a Paycheck  
Protection Program Loan

Source: January 2021  
W.A.C.E. Opinion Poll

## NOTEWORTHY

# What Chambers Are Doing Around the West

## Chamber of Commerce Hawaii holds Virtual Chamber Week

"Pushing Forward, Together" is the anthem for the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii's Chamber Week that was held January 19 through 22. Attendees from across the state tuned in virtually for the week-long series, which included a panel discussion presentation of pivot success stories, 2021 forecast on legislative initiatives, meet and greets with legislators, including the newest faces at the capitol, increased civic engagement with high school students, trivia fun with young professionals and networking opportunities.

In the spirit of the anthem, 2021 Chamber Week events were 100% complimentary to attend regardless of membership status, for the entire business community. Event Contact: Tricia Fetui, [tfetui@cochawaii.org](mailto:tfetui@cochawaii.org).

## Santa Barbara County Chambers Launch Campaign Advocating for Safe Reopening of Businesses

The Santa Barbara South Coast (CA) Chamber, Santa Maria Valley (CA) Chamber, Buellton (CA) Chamber, Santa Ynez (CA) Chamber, Solvang (CA) Chamber and Lompoc Valley (CA) Chamber joined together for a media and advocacy campaign focused on the undue hardships that the current COVID-19 regulations have caused to local businesses.

Their campaign asks for a data-driven approach and allowing

businesses to reopen with proper safety protocols in place. The media campaign involved images, video and radio messaging featuring the slogan "There is something the shutdown data is not considering. Me." View the entire campaign [here](#).

## Digital Development Assistance Program Helps Businesses Pivot to E-Commerce and Build Online Presence

The Burnaby (BC) Board of Trade started a Digital Development Assistance program to provide assistance to businesses struggling to pivot to online shopping, digital communications, and other digital efforts amidst the pandemic.

The program provides direct hands-on support to implement digital solutions for their small business community and better position small businesses for the future. The program allowed the chamber to partner with post-secondary institutions to match local students from the DDA Digital Marketing Team with local businesses at no cost to the business.

Learn more about the program at [www.bbot.ca](http://www.bbot.ca).

## Chamber Merger Results in New Name and New Branding

In October 2020, the Redwood City-San Mateo County (CA) Chamber and the San Carlos (CA) Chamber announced

that they were merging to form a regional chamber.

As part of the efforts to unify the two organizations and collaborate on behalf of all business in the region, they have debuted a new name, logo and tagline. Chamber San Mateo County (CA) has a new logo inspired by local iconic architecture and has the tagline "Elevating business. Engaging community. Empowering the future."

The expanded vision for the chamber expresses their continued deep commitment to bring local organizations, businesses, and communities together to create a brighter future.

View their new logo, website, and press release at [www.chambersmc.org](http://www.chambersmc.org).

## Are We on Your Mailing List?

Information featured each month in Around the West is taken from chamber newsletters and websites that W.A.C.E. receives from its members. We try to share best practices, innovative ideas and programs from chambers working hard to be Catalysts, Conveners and Champions and make a difference in their community. Make sure to subscribe W.A.C.E. to your mailing list, if you haven't done so already, and you may be featured in a future *Insider*!

Send e-newsletters to: [jennifer.johnson@calchamber.com](mailto:jennifer.johnson@calchamber.com).

Send mailings to: W.A.C.E., P.O. Box 1736, Sacramento, CA 95812-1736.



## Chamber Executives in the News

**Theresa Harvey** has announced she will be retiring from the North Orange County (CA) Chamber in June. Harvey has led the chamber for more than 15 years. A search is underway for a new president/CEO to succeed her.

The Tualatin (OR) Chamber has announced that **Roy Gugliotta** is their new CEO. Gugliotta has an extensive background in managing businesses and has served as chamber CEO in Arizona and California. He replaces **Linda Moholt**, who retired after 12 years with the chamber.

**Ashley Huckaby May** has announced she will be leaving the Hood River County (OR) Chamber in February to pursue new personal and professional

opportunities. Huckaby May has been serving as the interim executive director. A search is underway for the next executive director.

The Fresno (CA) Chamber has announced **Scott Miller** as its new interim CEO. Miller is a past board chair and replaces **Nathan Ahle**, ACE, who served the chamber as president/CEO for the last five years.

**Robert Medler**, formerly with the Tucson (AZ) Chamber, has joined Western Growers as Arizona government affairs manager.

Hermiston (OR) Chamber CEO **Kimberly Rill** is stepping down to accept a new position as the education and workforce training coordinator for Port

Morrow. Rill has served as the chamber CEO since April 2019. The chamber is in the process of searching for a new executive.

### In Memoriam

**Joeann Valle**, longtime executive director for the Los Angeles Gateway (CA) Chamber, has passed away.

## Shopping for software?



Read **The Buyer's Guide to Chamber Management Software** for free.



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To download this guide and others, visit [memberclicks.com/resources](https://memberclicks.com/resources)



### MEETING DATES

W.A.C.E. Events • (916) 442-2223  
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#### Conference Webinars

- February 17: Diversifying and Maximizing Revenue Streams
- February 24: Strategic Communications to Deliver Value
- March 3: Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts that Matter
- March 10: Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Equality
- March 17: Streamlining Strategies: Doing More With Less
- March 24: Economic Recovery
- March 31: Chambers Leading Through Crisis

