



2025 WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Date: Tuesday, August 12, 2025

Time: 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Location: Walla Walla Police Department
(54 E Moore Street, Walla Walla, WA 99362)

**Rise & Thrive:
Reaching Limitless
Heights by Activating
Your Power Skills,
Growth Mindset, and
Authenticity**



Parking: There is onsite parking lot (22 spaces) and on-street parking along Moore Street. Carpooling or walking from the hotel is recommended. Four (4) ADA parking stalls are available onsite.




In partnership with WCMA, the Northwest Women's Leadership Academy (NWWLA) brings you the first annual Women's Leadership Summit – WLS25! Come together to focus on how we can achieve our career goals, how we can support one another, and how we can exceptionally serve our communities.










WCMA
Washington City/County
Management Association
A State Affiliate of ICMA

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| Time | Session |
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| 9:00 AM | Registration Open Meet & Mingle Coffee, Pastries, Fruit |
| 9:30 AM | <p>Welcome and Introduction to NWWLA Purpose of WLS25</p> <div>  <p>Ana Cortez</p> </div> <p>Ana Cortez, NWWLA Board <i>Public Sector Consultant, MuniTalent</i> <i>Ana Cortez is a seasoned public sector leader with over 30 years of experience spanning local government, consulting, and community-driven policy development. Her career includes five years serving in the political offices of elected officials and six years as a City Manager, with professional experience across California, Washington, and Montana. Throughout her career, she has held key roles in redevelopment, public works, finance, federal grants management, project management, and collaborative policymaking. In 1997, she founded The Garo Group, a public sector consulting firm focused on capacity-building and civic engagement. In 2024, she rebranded the firm to MuniTalent, reflecting its evolution toward talent development and public sector innovation. As a consultant, she has designed and facilitated large-scale community engagement processes, particularly in the areas of environmental justice and child abuse prevention. She also leads strategic planning sessions for nonprofits and municipalities, bringing groups together to shape shared goals and actionable plans. Born in El Salvador, she holds a B.A. from the University of California and a Master of Public Administration from the Evans School of Public Policy & Governance. She also served as a Sloan Fellow at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. She has been married for 33 years and is the proud parent of two fully employed adult children—and two beloved furry companions.</i></p> <div>  <p>Julie Underwood</p> </div> <p>Julie Underwood, President, NWWLA Board <i>Deputy City Manager, Kirkland</i> <i>Julie is the Deputy City Manager of Operations and functions as the chief operating officer. Julie has over 25 years of local government management experience, serving previously as City Manager for the City of Mercer Island, WA, Assistant City Manager of Daly City, CA, City Manager and Assistant City Manager for the City of Shoreline, WA, and Assistant to the City Manager for the City of Rockville, MD. Prior to becoming Deputy City Manager for the City of Kirkland, Julie served as Kirkland's Director of Public Works. Julie holds a Master of Public Administration Degree from Virginia Tech and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Government and Politics from George Mason University. Julie has had the privilege of being the first woman and person of color to serve in her two City Manager roles. Besides having a passion for public service, Julie is an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Julie has spear-headed the Washington City/County Management Association's Northwest Women's Leadership Academy, designed to prepare, and promote more women into local government leadership roles.</i></p> |

| Time | Session |
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| <p>10:00 AM</p> <div data-bbox="120 279 332 527"></div> <div data-bbox="120 642 332 890"></div> | <p>Small Group Icebreaker</p> <p>Leslie Harris, NWWLA Board Assistant to the City Administrator, Bonney Lake <i>Leslie Harris serves as the Assistant to the City Administrator for the City of Bonney Lake. With a strong background in public administration and community engagement, Leslie brings a wealth of experience in municipal operations, policy analysis, and intergovernmental relations. Prior to her current role, she worked as a community relations manager and policy analyst for the City of Kenmore, where she was instrumental in fostering transparent communication between city leadership and the public. Leslie is known for her collaborative approach, strategic thinking, and commitment to enhancing civic services. Her career reflects a dedication to building resilient communities through thoughtful policy development and responsive local governance.</i></p> <p>Carolyn Hope, Treasurer, NWWLA Board Deputy City Manager, Mountlake Terrace <i>Carolyn Hope is the Deputy City Manager of Mountlake Terrace, Snohomish County. She has a passion for supporting all employees in their career journeys using tools she learned through Northwest Women's Leadership Academy (NWWLA,) Leadership Eastside, the NRPA Director's School, and her own experiences. Carolyn has professional experience in environmental and work, transportation and park planning, community engagement, and as a Director of Parks and Recreation. Carolyn served on many regional and state grant review committees and non-profit boards of directors, including her current role as Treasurer of the NWWLA. She earned a bachelor's degree in public administration and political science from the University of Maine and a master's degree in environmental studies from Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.</i></p> |
| <p>10:30 AM</p> | <p>Break Time</p> |
| <p>10:45 AM Session 1</p> <div data-bbox="120 1310 332 1558"></div> <p>Prins Cowin</p> | <p>Maybe It's Me - What Gets in the Way</p> <p>In this engaging session, learn how to address what gets in the way of our career goals and upward mobility. Are we coachable and open to feedback? Do we face challenges with a growth mindset? Do we exude confidence or uncertainty?</p> <p>Prins Cowin, Communications & Networking Chair, NWWLA Board Administrative Services Manager of Planning & Building Department, Kirkland <i>Prins currently serves as the Administrative Services Manager in the Planning and Building Department. She is a successful professional with over 25 years of local government experience in organizational management, change management, budgeting, accounting, and people management. Prins assists in developing and implementing policies and procedures, and she manages department operations. Prins received Kirkland's first-ever City Manager's Leadership Award (2024). She is a graduate of the Northwest Women's Leadership Academy (Cohort #3) and serves as the current Chair of the Communications and Networking Committee. Prins has a passion for mentoring women in local government. She also enjoys spending time with her family and exploring the area's many hiking and backpacking trails.</i></p> |

| Time | Session |
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| 10:45 AM Session 1 <div>  <p>Anya Warrington</p> </div> | <p>Maybe It's Me - What Gets in the Way cont.</p> <p>Anya Warrington, Secretary, NWWLA Board <i>HR Director, Lake Stevens</i> <i>Anya Warrington is the Human Resources Director for the City of Lake Stevens, where she leads HR and Risk Management operations and serves as a strategic advisor to executive leadership. She is a certified Lean Six Sigma Black Belt with over 10 years of public sector experience, including her previous work with the Washington State Department of Corrections. Anya specializes in process improvement, labor relations, and organizational development—leading cross-functional initiatives that align people, policy, and performance. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Washington and is a graduate of the Northwest Women's Leadership Academy (Cohort #4), where she now serves as Executive Board Secretary, as well as a curriculum leader and mentor. Her passion lies in creating inclusive, people-centered workplaces and helping women in public service rise to leadership with confidence and authenticity. Outside of work, Anya enjoys music, traveling, and exploring the Pacific Northwest with her family.</i></p> <p>Julie Underwood, President, NWWLA Board <i>Deputy City Manager, Kirkland</i></p> |
| 12:00 PM | Lunch Networking Speed Mentoring |
| 12:30 PM <div>  <p>Melissa Littleton</p> </div> | <p>Speaker: Melissa Littleton, Governor's Regional Outreach Representative <i>Melissa is a dedicated mother of four and a passionate professional. A proud 2022 graduate of Tacoma Community College, she earned her Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management and was honored with the prestigious President's Medal for academic excellence. During her time at TCC, Melissa served as Student Body President and interned with the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, gaining valuable experience in the legislative process. Since 2023, she has served as Regional Representative for the Governor's Office. Governor Inslee appointed her to the Interagency Committee of State Employed Women (ICSEW) and she also serves as a board member for the William Factory, a small business incubator in Tacoma as a board member. Melissa values creative problem solving, building strong community relationships, and fostering continuous growth both professionally and in her personal life.</i></p> |
| 2:00 PM Session 2 <div>  <p>Vicky Baker</p> </div> | <p>#SheLeadsGov Leadership Panel Meet a panel of women city managers/administrators who have overcome barriers and landed on top. Learn what skills they had to master and what keeps them resilient.</p> <p>Vicky Baker, City Manager Yakima <i>Vicki was born in Corvallis, Oregon. She moved to Yakima in 1982 and graduated from Eisenhower High School. After high school she attended and graduated from Oregon State University with a BA Technical Journalism with a Spanish minor. Vicki and her husband Dennis purchased the Grocery Outlet store from her parents in 1999 and owned and managed it until 2025. In addition to owning and managing Grocery Outlet, she ran her own public relations firm, served as the interim executive director at Habitat for Humanity, was County Commissioner, and deputy director at Yakima Valley Conference of Governments. She was hired as Yakima's city manager in August 2024. Vicki has served on numerous boards and commissions and enjoys giving back to her community by being involved. She currently serves as immediate past President on Safe Yakima Valley's board, and as a director for the Central Washington State Fair Board. Vicki lives in Yakima with her husband Dennis and daughter Lauren. When she isn't working, she enjoys spending time with her family and going to the beach.</i></p> |

| Time | Session |
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| <p data-bbox="61 149 185 212">2:00 PM Session 2</p> <div data-bbox="121 254 332 491">  <p data-bbox="162 504 292 525">Sabrina Combs</p> </div> <div data-bbox="121 583 332 821">  <p data-bbox="121 840 332 861">Heidi Behrends Cerniwey</p> </div> <div data-bbox="121 982 332 1220">  <p data-bbox="129 1236 323 1257">Elizabeth Chamberlain</p> </div> <div data-bbox="121 1593 332 1831">  <p data-bbox="170 1845 277 1866">Laura Gloria</p> </div> | <p data-bbox="386 153 870 184">#SheLeadsGov Leadership Panel cont.</p> <p data-bbox="386 224 951 256">Sabrina Combs, City Administrator, Oak Harbor</p> <p data-bbox="386 262 1563 541">Sabrina has a bachelor's degree in business management, a master's in strategic communications, and is currently enrolled at Syracuse University in their Executive MPA program. She is an alumnus of the Northwest Women's Leadership Academy (NWWLA), and after completing the program, she jumped right into serving as a mentor and supporting the NWWLA mission. Sabrina is comfortable in political circles because she is also the daughter of State Senator John Lovick and served as his campaign manager for nearly ten years. She worked in corporate leadership roles before working in municipal government and still prefers working at a city to working in a corporate building. In her free time, Sabrina volunteers with youth to provide mentorship through local church programs.</p> <p data-bbox="386 581 1013 613">Heidi Behrends Cerniwey, City Manager, Ellensburg</p> <p data-bbox="386 619 1563 930"><i>Heidi has served as Ellensburg's City Manager since May 2021. She has nineteen years in local government, including two rapidly growing full-service cities—Tumwater, WA (2012-2021) and Lacey, WA (2006-2012)—with prior experience in private and nonprofit leadership. Heidi grew up in a small town in Southwest Minnesota. She attended the University of Minnesota, holds a B.A. from Metro State University in St. Paul, an MPA from The Evergreen State College, and completed the Senior Executives program at the Harvard Kennedy School. Heidi is committed to maintaining a well-managed city, supporting a strong team to deliver quality public services and resilient infrastructure systems; and building successful community partnerships to address complex challenges facing our communities.</i></p> <p data-bbox="386 974 990 1005">Elizabeth Chamberlain, City Manager, Walla Walla</p> <p data-bbox="386 1012 1563 1541"><i>Elizabeth is the City Manager for the City of Walla Walla. She joined the City ten and half years ago as the Development Services Director, transitioned Deputy City Manager, July 2020, and appointed City Manager December 2022. Elizabeth and her team completed a major update to the City's comprehensive plan, Walla Walla 2040, adopted by the City Council June 2018. Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan led to eliminating single family zoning, the first City in Washington State to do so, and allowing a variety of housing types with the goal of making housing diverse again. Walla Walla has been a leader in the state on missing middle housing. Addressing the housing crisis is a key focus of Elizabeth's work with the City of Walla Walla. Under Elizabeth's leadership, the city adopted a tax increment financing area in 2024 which is financing construction of the last leg of key north/south transportation route that will facilitate the construction of 70 acres of commercial and residential development anchored by a WinCo. She graduated from the University of Washington in 2001, earning a degree in geography with a focus in urban planning and GIS. Elizabeth worked for several jurisdictions in the Puget Sound region before moving to the City of Walla Walla. Outside of work, Elizabeth enjoys book club (aka wine club), skiing, cycling, traveling, and cooking as well as spending time with family especially her niece and nephew.</i></p> <p data-bbox="386 1583 911 1614">Laura Gloria, City Administrator, Wenatchee</p> <p data-bbox="386 1621 1563 2039"><i>Laura Gloria is a seasoned local government leader and change-maker, currently serving as City Administrator for Wenatchee, Washington. With over a decade of experience in public service, Laura brings a values-based leadership style that centers on authenticity, empathy, and strategic vision. At the heart of Laura's work is a deep commitment to building community, not just through policy and planning, but by cultivating workplace culture and public trust. She has spearheaded major civic economic development initiatives like the Reimagine Wenatchee Target Area Master Plan and launched creative engagement efforts like "Wenatchee Valley 101," a community onboarding experience for new residents. Ms. Gloria believes that strong communities are built through strong relationships—and that leadership is most powerful when it lifts others up. Ms. Gloria earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from California State University, Fresno and is the first in her family to graduate college, first-generation Mexican immigrant and is the first female City Administrator in the history of the City of Wenatchee.</i></p> |

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| | #SheLeadsGov Leadership Panel cont. Moderator: Ana Cortez , NWWLA Board <i>Public Sector Consultant, MuniTalent</i> |
| 3:15 PM | Break Networking Speed Mentoring |
| 3:30 PM Session 3 | Hot Topics Organize into the small groups by topic area which were crowd sourced earlier in the day. This is an opportunity to make new connections, share personal challenges, and learn constructive, practical solutions. |
| 4:30 PM | Wrap-up Group Photo |
| 4:35 PM Laura Gloria | Return to Marcus Whitman Hotel for Conference Reception |

NWWLA Board:

Jessi Bon, Tracy Burrows, Ana Cortez, Prins Cowin, Rhonda Ender, Melanie Harding, Leslie Harris, Carolyn Hope, Shannon Kelley-Fong, Stephanie Lucash, Kristi Rowland, Julie Underwood, Gwen Voepel, Anya Warrington