



SIMBA's New Executive Director

A Letter from [SIMBA Board President Ed Reese:](#)

It has been my pleasure to serve on SIMBA's Board of Directors for over three years, and I am privileged to lead SIMBA's incredible team of Board and staff members as we head into SIMBA's sixth year. Much has changed - for the good - since SIMBA's pre-launch March 2018 mixer hosted by our outgoing, but not going anywhere, Director of Dynamism Mariah McKay, pictured above. Mariah started SIMBA from an idea to build a prosperous, equitable, and local economy by organizing and educating regional businesses, consumers, and partners.

Since that time, SIMBA has grown to be a powerhouse in supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs, stretching our reach west to the Cascades, east to Idaho, north to Canada, and south to Oregon. Among other things, SIMBA created the Live Local INW Directory and Marketplace, a free, online platform for independent, locally-owned businesses to list their businesses, products, and services. On Monday, December 11, SIMBA actually launched [Live Local INW 2.0](#) with easier functionality for independent business participants and consumers alike with a goal of a standalone eCommerce platform by 2025. In addition, SIMBA has provided 1:1 technical assistance to hundreds of BIPOC, immigrant, and LGBTQIA+ owned businesses in Eastern Washington on topics ranging from compliance to marketing - at no cost. SIMBA has brought millions of dollars of grant funding into the region, including regrants of close to \$250,000 in 2023 alone - providing marketing grants to a variety of small businesses from Spokane to Pullman.

After all that work, Mariah has earned a well-deserved sabbatical, which began earlier this month. Mariah will return to SIMBA in a new role in February 2024 bringing her passion, energy, and vision to the organization in new and innovative ways.

In support of this transition, [SIMBA has promoted Robin Haynes](#), the current Outreach and Operations Director, to serve as Executive Director. Robin was a unanimous pick by the Board and Mariah. Robin brings a passion for small business support, an impressive skill set, and a welcoming, collaborative approach to leadership. Robin began her SIMBA journey in April as a subcontractor, quickly being promoted to our Canvassing Field manager, overseeing a team that added over 800 new businesses to the Live Local Directory and Marketplace, including businesses in Pend Oreille, Grant, Benton, Franklin, Whitman, and Lincoln Counties. She has automated many of SIMBA's internal processes, found cost saving software solutions, and has successfully applied for new revenue streams including a Washington State L&I contract that will allow SIMBA to provide education and support to businesses with 50 or less employees in Eastern Washington starting in early 2024.

SIMBA Member Isiah Middleton, owner of [One Body One Mind Massage](#), summed Robin up best, when saying:

"I think Robin is a great person to have in anyone's circle."

We are grateful to have Robin in SIMBA's circle, and we think you'll feel the same way. You'll hear directly from Robin in our next newsletter, but you can read more about her [here](#) in the interim.

Warm Regards, Ed Reese (Board President)

Other SIMBA Happenings:



[SIMBA hosts Local Investment Event & China Bend Winery Tasting](#)

On Halloween, SIMBA was honored to host "Investing in Local Business with Michael Shuman." This non-spooky discussion led by [economist Michael Shuman](#) outlined how local investment networks can provide funds to grow community-based businesses. On November 13, SIMBA hosted our new business member China Bend Winery for a tasting and demo dinner at the Haystack Heights Common House. Stay in the know on SIMBA-hosted and other community events by following our Community Calendar.

[SIMBA Community Calendar](#)

Meet Our Members

[SIMBA members have invested in making our community a more sustainable, equitable and prosperous place in which to Live Local!](#)

[Strengthening Member Spotlight: Feast World Kitchen](#)

Feast World Kitchen is a nonprofit restaurant, catering company, and food wholesaler in downtown Spokane, Washington. Its mission is to elevate and empower immigrants and former refugees as leaders, using international cuisine as a platform for economic resilience, holistic growth, and culture-sharing. As they share flavors from their original home cultures, the Chef Entrepreneurs in Feast's programs learn career skills, earn the income from their food sales, and build community connections. Feast's membership is a boon to SIMBA.

Feast's rotating menus are posted on their [website](#) and available for purchase in-store and [online for pickup!](#)

