

2026 ICEA CONFERENCE AGENDA (All times are CST)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2026

11:30 a.m. **Conference Registration Opens** – Blue Chip Hotel Casino & Spa

1:00 p.m. **Peer Networking**
Location: Fremont Ballroom

Connecting and growing with your peers is the lifeline for your success in this career. We will have four specific groups for peer connects:

- 1.) Exec/CEO Leaders;
- 2.) Young Professionals;
- 3.) Membership & Events;
- 4.) Marketing & Communications

2:00 p.m. **Speed Sponsors**

Our conference sponsors and exhibitors offer valuable resources, services, and expertise to help chambers succeed. During this fast-paced Speed Sponsor session, you'll have the opportunity to meet and connect with these important partners in a fun and engaging format. Learn about products, services, and solutions that can support your chamber's goals and initiatives. These conversations can lead to new ideas, lasting relationships, and valuable connections that will benefit your chamber long after the conference ends.

3:00 p.m. **Elections 2026 – Big Stakes for Business & Indiana**
Location: Fremont Ballroom

Elections matter. Electing thoughtful, get-things-done candidates with a vision and ready to lead Indiana's economic future is key to success. The state just went through Round 1 with an unprecedented primary election cycle and Round 2 general elections are just around the corner.

Speaker: Jeff Brantley, Indiana Chamber of Commerce

3:30 p.m. **Keynote: Take the Initiative**
Location: Fremont Ballroom

Chambers typically find it easy to have programs and events in their annual program of work. Yet, adding "initiatives" to that list is often a daunting task. Find the grit and determination to use initiatives that elevate your Chamber. By reviewing some strategic initiatives of Chambers across the country, we'll highlight the process of implementing initiatives, the selection of the right initiatives, and the benefits for your Chamber.

Speaker: Jason Ebey, YGM

5:30 p.m. **Opening Reception Celebration Hosted by the Indiana Chamber**
Location: Barker Mansion – 631 Washington St. Michigan City, IN 46360

7:00 p.m. **Networking Dinners Out**
Enjoy a nice dinner out with your Chamber peers!
Sign up at the registration table for your choice of restaurant.

THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2026

7:30 a.m. Breakfast
Location: Fremont Ballroom

7:30 a.m. **Leadership Circle Breakfast Sponsored by Rollie Jobs (Invitation Only)**
Location: Suncoast B

The AI Skills Gap Is Your Problem Too. What Chamber Leaders Need to Know Right Now

AI is reshaping how small businesses operate and most of them are figuring it out without any guidance. This session gives Indiana chamber professionals the context, language, and confidence to engage members on AI topics, apply AI tools to their own work, and position their chamber as a trusted resource in a fast-changing environment. Attendees will leave with confidence to engage members on AI topics without needing to be an expert; practical ideas for applying AI to chamber staff work immediately; an honest picture of where Indiana chambers stand digitally and a path forward; and five specific questions to bring back to their team the following week.

8:30 a.m. **Opening Keynote: The IM'Perfect Leader**
Location: Fremont Ballroom

Letting Go of Perfection. Leading Optimally.

The IM'Perfect Leader challenges the myth of flawless leadership and invites participants to embrace a more human, sustainable approach to leading others. Grounded in the concept of optimalism, this session explores how perfectionism shows up in leadership, decision-making, and culture—and how it often limits growth, connection, and effectiveness. Participants are encouraged to reframe mistakes, increase self-awareness, and lead with authenticity rather than fear.

Speaker: Mitch Issacs, Executive Director, Shafer Leadership Academy

9:30 a.m. **Indiana Chamber Review**
Location: Fremont Ballroom
Speaker: Vanessa Green Sindors, President & CEO, Indiana Chamber

10:15 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m. Breakout #1

OPTION #1 - Exploring Innovative Revenue Income

Location: Fremont 1

In this session, attendees will discover innovative strategies to maximize non-dues revenue. You'll hear about successful revenue initiatives and engage in interactive discussions to share best practices. Join us to gain actionable insights and creative approaches that ensure financial growth and sustainability for your organization.

Speaker: Jason Ebey, YGM

OPTION #2 - Setting the Tone at the Top: Navigating Board Dynamics

Location: Fremont 2

Effective Chamber leadership begins with a strong understanding of nonprofit governance and the relationship between staff and boards. This session will explore the fundamentals of nonprofit leadership, including board roles and responsibilities, organizational structure, and the purpose of strategic governance. Participants will learn best practices for building effective board composition, clarifying expectations, and supporting productive board engagement. The session will also address common challenges related to board dynamics, communication, and decision-making within nonprofit organizations. Attendees will leave with practical knowledge and tools to strengthen leadership alignment and support long-term organizational success.

Speaker: Lindsey Bloos, IOM, CP, Senior Consultant, TPMA

OPTION #3 - Branding Your Chamber: It Benefits You AND Your Members

Location: Fremont 3

You spend your days advocating for your members and your community (and kudos for that!). But unless you're spending a little time marketing and building your Chamber's brand, you're not just hurting your own organization's prospects for growth – your members will be missing out as well.

In this session, we will give you some simple rules of the road – think visual identity, social media strategy, email marketing tactics, and website tips – to help you easily build your chamber's brand WHILE you keep the focus on your members, helping you grow your profile and build memberships. We'll also touch on the basics of your key marketing channels to make sure you're in the know on best practices for social media, email marketing and beyond.

Speaker: Sean Hay, Co-Owner, JCMA, Inc.

OPTION #4 - THE EVOLVING ROLE OF EMPLOYERS IN WORKPLACE WELL-BEING

Location: Suncoast B

Today's workforce challenges are increasingly showing up as health and well-being challenges in disguise, from mental health and burnout to chronic disease, caregiving, workforce participation, and retention. This session will explore the evolving role employers play in shaping employee health and well-being, the business case for investing in workforce well-being, and practical ways organizations can respond to the changing needs of today's workforce. Attendees will also learn how the Wellness Council of Indiana supports employers across the state in building healthier, safer, and more productive workplaces.

Speakers: Ashley O'Rourke, Executive Director, Wellness Council of Indiana
Olivia Lockard, Director, Programs and Training, Wellness Council of Indiana

11:15 a.m.

Break

11:30 a.m.

Powering the Future Growth in Northern Indiana

Location: Fremont Ballroom

“Powering Growth” explores the rapid rise of data center development and what it means for local economies. This conversation will equip Chamber leaders with practical insights on how to engage in thoughtful, fact-based discussions around large developments in their communities. Panelists will share perspectives on how communities can prepare for growth, ask the right questions, and build partnerships that align development with local priorities.

Speakers:

Jeff Rea, President & CEO, South Bend Regional Chamber of Commerce

Bert Cook, Executive Director, La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership

Deann Patena, President & CEO, Crossroads Chamber

12:30 a.m.

Annual Awards Luncheon - Sponsored by NIPSCO

Location: Fremont Ballroom

Join us as we celebrate the accomplishments and excellence of Indiana's chamber professionals during the Annual Awards Luncheon. This special event recognizes outstanding achievements, innovative programs, professional development milestones, and the dedicated leaders who strengthen chambers and communities across the state. Celebrate with us as we recognize the best of the best representing ICEA members from across Indiana.

1:30 p.m.

Break

2:00 p.m.

Breakout #2

OPTION #1 - How Foundations Advance the Mission of the Chamber

Location: Suncoast B

Stop choosing between impact and revenue. Learn how your Chamber foundation can strengthen your mission while helping grow sustainable operating revenue and the necessary policies and agreements to make it legal!

Speakers: Rob Parker, President & CEO, Kosciusko Chamber

Sherry Searles, LaunchPad Director, Kosciusko Chamber

OPTION #2 - Listening to Understand

Location: Fremont 1

One of the greatest challenges for chamber leaders is finding the time to truly listen. Between handling upset staff, emotional members, and a demanding workload, creating space for meaningful conversations can feel overwhelming. This session explores common barriers to effective listening and introduces a powerful approach: seeking to understand before being understood.

Speaker: Mitch Isaacs, Executive Director, Shafer Leadership

OPTION #3 - How to Sell to Humans

Location: Fremont 2

Sales does not have to feel pushy, awkward, or manipulative. In this engaging and practical session, Eric Beschinski reframes sales as the process of helping people make confident buying decisions. Attendees will learn why trust, communication, and relationship-building matter more than high-pressure tactics, along with practical techniques they can immediately apply in conversations, networking, sponsorship discussions, memberships, partnerships, and business development efforts.

This session explores:

- Why people really buy
- The difference between marketing and sales
- How to build trust quickly
- Common mistakes that hurt sales conversations
- Simple ways to handle objections naturally
- How to guide conversations without sounding “salesy”

Whether you are selling memberships, sponsorships, services, ideas, or yourself, this session will help you communicate more effectively and improve your ability to connect with people in a meaningful way.

Speaker: Eric Beschinski, ISBDC

OPTION #4 - Flat to Dimensional: Creating Depth in Your Graphics

Location: Fremont 3

In this Canva Workshop, we will show you how to take your graphics from flat to eye-catching by adding depth and dimension. You'll learn simple, practical design techniques that instantly elevate your visuals and make your content stand out. Whether you're creating social media, marketing or everyday business use, you'll leave with tools you can apply right away to level up your designs.

Speakers: Traci Hill, Franklin Chamber of Commerce
Ian Mullen LaGrange Chamber of Commerce

2:45 p.m.

Break

3:00 p.m.

AI at Work: What Every Business Leader Needs to Know

Location: Fremont Ballroom

Artificial intelligence is reshaping how we work, but you don't need a tech background to use it well. This session offers a plain-language introduction to generative AI: what it is, how it works, where it shines, and where it falls short. We'll cover the basics of how AI models make predictions, explore real-world use cases through live demonstration, and address the ethics and safety considerations every professional should understand, including bias, privacy, and the limits of AI-generated content. You'll leave with a clearer picture of where AI fits into your work, the confidence to start experimenting, and the judgment to know when not to use it at all.

Speaker: Alex Sejdinaj, Co-founder & CEO, Code Works & Rollie Jobs

3:45 p.m.

ICEA Annual Meeting and Silent Auction Wrap Up

Location: Fremont Ballroom

5:30 p.m.

Lakeside Reception sponsored by Schafer Leadership Academy

6:30 p.m.

IT'S TIME TO DISCOVER MICHIGAN CITY!!!

Following the lakeside reception, enjoy a free evening to experience Michigan City and the beautiful Lake Michigan shoreline. Take in a stunning sunset, stroll along the beach, visit the historic lighthouse, or explore local restaurants, breweries, wineries, and shops. As guests of Blue Chip Casino Hotel Spa, attendees can also enjoy gaming, dining, and evening entertainment right at the hotel. Whether you choose to continue networking with colleagues or unwind by the water, Michigan City offers plenty of ways to experience the charm and hospitality of Northwest Indiana.

FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2026

7:30 a.m.

Breakfast

Location: Fremont Ballroom

8:30 a.m.

You're Invited to Play the Feud! Chamber Industry Trends

Location: Fremont Ballroom

Get ready to strategize and shout out your answers because GrowthZone's session is inspired by the iconic TV show Family Feud. Put your thinking caps on as we dive into industry trends, member insights, non-dues revenue, and association dynamics.

In addition, Scott Robertson, IOM, will ask some of the most popular survey questions from the hit game show "Family Feud" as contestants face off to give the top answers.

Get ready to dive headfirst into how associations compare and unlock the secrets to supercharging your current software tools!

Speaker: Scott Roberston, Director of Strategic Accounts

9:30 a.m.

Break

9:45 a.m.

Breakout #3

OPTION #1 - How to provide value that members want

Location: Fremont 1

Chambers are not one size fits all, especially with the value that businesses seek from their chamber membership. Hear how chambers are addressing the question of how to provide the value their members are seeking.

Speakers: Jack Russell, One Zone; Erin Prible, Wells County Chamber; Dan Robison, Jackson County Chamber

OPTION #2 - The Adaptive Chamber: Resiliency by Design

Location: Fremont 2

Today's most successful Chambers are not just reacting to change — they are designing organizations built to adapt and thrive. In this session, Chamber leaders will explore practical frameworks for strengthening organizational resilience through proactive planning, effective leadership, and agile decision-making. Participants will learn how to create flexible strategies, track progress efficiently, and maintain momentum for implementation year-round. The session will also

examine how resilient Chambers can successfully navigate economic shifts, leadership transitions, and evolving community needs while maintaining relevance and impact. Attendees will leave with actionable ideas to help future-proof their organizations and lead with confidence in changing environments.

Speaker: Lindsay Bloos, Senior Consultant, TPMA

OPTION #3 - Building Indiana's Future Workforce: Aligning Employability Skills with AP Kickstart

Location: Fremont 3

As Indiana employers continue to emphasize the importance of durable, transferable skills, chambers of commerce play a critical role in bridging the gap between education and workforce needs. This session brings together the Indiana Chamber and College Board to explore how partnerships between business and education can better prepare students for long-term success.

Participants will gain insight into the most in-demand employability skills identified by Indiana employers, such as communication, critical thinking, and professionalism and how these competencies can be developed through rigorous academic pathways. The session will highlight the College Board's *Preparing Tomorrow's Workforce* initiative and the impact of AP Kickstart courses in expanding access to advanced coursework while building real-world skills.

Attendees will learn how chambers can champion workforce readiness in their communities by supporting school districts, engaging employers, and promoting scalable solutions that strengthen the talent pipeline. The session will provide practical examples, actionable strategies, and opportunities for local collaboration.

Speakers: Sally Saydshoev, Executive Director, Institute for Workforce Excellence; Kris McAloon, Senior Director K-12 State & District Partnerships, College Board

10:30 a.m.

Break

10:45 a.m.

Fireside Chat: Careers, Community & Impact

Location: Fremont Ballroom

Fireside chat on Careers, community and Impact - Join a candid fireside chat with fellow chamber leaders who have built lasting careers in the chamber industry. They'll share why chamber work matters, the role chambers play in strengthening communities and regions, and how this profession offers both purpose and long-term opportunity.

Speakers: Nick Kieffer, Goshen Chamber; Cheryl Hamilton, Linton Chamber;

11:30 – 12:30

Conference wrap up / Adjournment