

# 2026 STAFF DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

March 9 – 11, 2026

DALTON CONVENTION CENTER • DALTON, GA

HOSTED BY: THE GREATER DALTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



## 2026 CONFERENCE AGENDA

### Monday, March 9, 2026 – Dalton Convention Center – Dalton, GA

- |               |   |                         |
|---------------|---|-------------------------|
| 2:00pm        | <b>CONFERENCE REGISTRATION OPENS</b><br>Please note that hotel rooms may not be available for check-in until 4:00pm.  | Convention Center Lobby |
| 2:00 – 3:00pm | <b>CHAMBER CONNECTIONS: Welcome &amp; Industry Updates</b><br>Join your GACCE Executive Committee for this orientation and networking session designed to introduce all chamber professionals to the association and each other.  | Banquet Hall I          |
| 3:15 – 4:15pm | <b>BEHIND THE CURTAIN:</b><br><b><i>Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce</i></b><br>Peek behind the curtain at how one high-performing chamber keeps operations efficient, mission-driven, and community-focused—even in uncertain times. Learn about governance, internal communication, team culture, and how this chamber balances everything effortlessly.<br><i>Jason Mock, President &amp; CEO</i><br><i>Dr. Stephani Womack, Chief Talent Officer</i><br><i>Anna Adamson, Executive Director, Believe Greater Dalton</i> | Banquet Hall I          |
| 4:15pm        | <b>Hotel Check-In – Hilton Garden Inn, Host Hotel</b>   |                         |
| 6:00 – 8:00pm | <b>WELCOME RECEPTION &amp; DINNER</b><br>Join us back at the convention center for a night of fun and connection with your peers and our sponsors.<br><b><i>Hosted by the Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce</i></b>  | Banquet Hall I          |

### Tuesday, March 10, 2026 – Dalton Convention Center – Dalton, GA

- |                |   |                |
|----------------|---|----------------|
| 8:00 – 9:00am  | <b>BREAKFAST BUFFET</b><br>No formal presentation during breakfast so you can network together.   | Banquet Hall I |
| 9:00 – 9:15am  | <b>OFFICIAL CONFERENCE WELCOME</b><br><i>Jason Mock, President &amp; CEO, Greater Dalton Chamber &amp; 2026 SDC Chair</i><br><i>Christie Moore, President &amp; CEO, Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber &amp; 2025-26 GACCE Chair</i>   | Banquet Hall I |
| 9:15 – 10:30am | <b>GENERAL SESSION</b><br><b><i>Georgia   2050</i></b><br>Georgia   2050 is a bold, strategic initiative designed to ensure that Georgia remains a beacon of economic opportunity through long-term planning and proactive investment. In a rapidly shifting global economy, businesses, educators, and policymakers must anticipate workforce needs, infrastructure demands, and demographic changes to sustain growth and competitiveness. Learn how your Chamber can help navigate these changes for your community.<br><i>Chris Clark, President &amp; CEO, Georgia Chamber</i> | Banquet Hall I |

10:30am

**BREAK**

**Sponsor Area – Convention Center Lobby**

10:45 – 11:45am

**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**Topic 1 – Workforce Development**

**Banquet Hall I**

What's working in workforce development right now? Hear directly from chamber professionals who are leading innovative workforce initiatives in their communities. This interactive breakout session will highlight best practices, lessons learned, and scalable programs.

*Moderator – Daniela Perry, Georgia Chamber*

*Panelist – Dr. Stephani Womack, Greater Dalton Chamber*

*Panelist – Pam Carnes, Cherokee County Chamber*

*Panelist – David Bradley, Athens Area Chamber*

**Topic 2 – Membership Best Practices**

**Meeting Room A2**

Membership models are evolving—and chambers are evolving with them. Join fellow chamber professionals as they share what's working in membership recruitment, engagement, and retention.

*Panelist TBD*

*Panelist TBD*

*Panelist TBD*

**Topic 3 – Marketing in the Age of Overwhelm**

**Meeting Room A3**

**How Chambers Create Belonging, Relevance, and Engagement in a Noisy World**

When everything feels loud, complicated, and crowded, the Chambers that break through aren't the ones producing more marketing; they're the ones telling a clearer story. This breakout session blends high-level narrative strategy with practical, real-world tactics for social media, email, events, and community engagement. You'll learn how to use story to shift perception, build belonging, and communicate in ways people actually notice and value. Walk away with a simple, repeatable system that cuts through noise and strengthens your Chamber's marketing strategy.

*Erika Mosteller, Erika B. Marketing*

Noon – 1:30pm

**SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON**

**Banquet Hall I**

We will be presenting our 2026-27 GACCE Scholarships & our 2026 Staff Service Awards.

1:30 – 2:30pm

**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**Topic 1 – Small Chamber Operations**

**Banquet Hall I**

**How Small Chambers Are Leading Big Change**

Learn how small chambers are leveraging creativity, efficiency, and partnerships to lead impactful initiatives and drive meaningful change in their communities.

*Moderator – Heath Taylor, Columbia County Chamber*

*Panelist – Melissa Dark, Fitzgerald-Ben Hill Chamber*

*Panelist – Jeffrey Fowler, Warren County Chamber*

*Panelist – Beth Truelove, White County Chamber*

**Topic 2 – Foundations**

**Meeting Room A2**

**Leveraging Chamber Foundations for Community Impact**

Foundations are helping chambers extend their reach and deepen their impact. Learn from a seasoned GACCE peer on how his Chamber's foundation supports business and community priorities.

*Leonardo McClarty, CCE, Fayette Chamber*

**Topic 3 – Non-Dues Revenue**

**Meeting Room A3**

**Swipe + Deploy: Real Chamber Examples & Ready-to-Use Ideas**

In this rapid-fire session, you'll hear what chambers are doing right now—programs, events, and initiatives that are working and can attract sponsorship support. This is a “steal these ideas” session. Learn what chambers are doing to monetize programs, events, and initiatives—and leave with immediate takeaways you can implement. Expect practical examples, plug-and-play ideas, and simple upgrades you can bring back and launch quickly.

*Jason E. Ebey, YGM*

2:30pm

**EXTENDED BREAK**

**Sponsor Area – Convention Center Lobby**

**3:00 – 4:00pm**

**GENERAL SESSION**

**Banquet Hall I**

***Your Strongest Chamber Advantage Is Your Story:  
How Stories Shape Economic & Community Development***

Every chamber wants more engagement, more relevance, and more momentum. But none of that happens without a clear story. This keynote reveals how the right story becomes a chamber's most powerful advantage, influencing perceptions, attracting investment, and aligning your community around a shared identity. Learn how to craft your Big Story and reinforce it with Small Stories that make people believe in your place, your mission, and your future.

*Erika Mosteller, Erika B. Marketing*

**5:30pm**

**RECEPTION & DINNER**

**Creative Arts Guild**

Join us for a fun night featuring authentic Mexican food and margaritas – a relaxed, cultural experience to end the day on a high note!

**Wednesday, March 11, 2026 – Dalton Convention Center – Dalton, GA**

**8:00 – 9:00am**

**BREAKFAST SESSION**

**Banquet Hall I**

**Boundaries and BINGO!**

Ever feel like your chamber work is sneaking into every corner of your life (including your vacations, weekends and even your dreams)? You're not alone. Setting boundaries at work isn't about building walls—it's about creating smart, healthy habits that help you stay productive, happy, and human. Join us for a fun, interactive session where we'll dive into the magic of saying no (without any of the guilt), setting clear expectations, and protecting your time and energy like the treasures they are. You'll walk away with practical tips, a few laughs, and a renewed sense of control over your work-life balance. Because let's face it—you're kind of a big deal, and it's time to protect your most important resource...yourself.

*Anissa Starnes, YGM*

**9:00am**

**FINAL SPONSOR BREAK**

**Sponsor Area – Convention Center Lobby**

**9:15 – 11:15am**

**CLOSING WORKSHOP**

**Banquet Hall I**

***The Profound Role of AI in Revolutionizing Chamber Management***

AI is reshaping how chambers serve their members – not someday, but right now. This workshop breaks AI down into practical, real-world strategies that chamber staff can use immediately: smarter membership management, better campaigns, clearer communication, and productivity gains that free up time for truly meaningful work. We'll explore simple tools, real case studies, and step-by-step approaches that show chamber professionals how to build confidence with AI and apply it directly to the challenges they face every day. The goal is straightforward: leave the room with ideas you can use as soon as you get back to your desk, a sense of what's possible, and the momentum to move forward.

*Craig Turner, Momentum*