

2026 Conference Agenda

Thursday, November 5, 2026 – GA National Fairgrounds – Perry, GA

11:00am **REGISTRATION OPENS** *Lobby*
Please note rooms may not be available for check-in until 4:00pm

11:30am **WELCOME LUNCHEON** *Murphy Hall*
Presentation of 2026 GACCE Executive of the Year, the 2026 Class of Georgia Certified Chambers, and Executive Service Awards

12:30pm **BREAK** *Sponsor Area*

12:45– 2:15pm **KEYNOTE SESSION** *Murphy Hall*
The Future of Chambers
Are you prepared for the seismic forces shaping the next decade? Chamber leaders are grappling with unprecedented challenges: political and social fragmentation, a relentless talent development crisis, economic uncertainty, and the pressure of meeting new expectations from members and communities. This keynote guides you on not just surviving but thriving into the future. Based on ACCE's landmark Horizon 2035 research, this session delivers examples from chambers of all sizes and geographic scopes. Gain targeted, actionable strategies to solve your greatest operational and strategic hurdles, from building revenue models that offer sustainability paired with growth, to developing programs that captivate the next generation, to reimagining your role in community leadership. Stop reacting to change and start creating your future. Walk away with the framework hundreds of chambers are already using to transform your organization into a catalytic leader for your region, securing your chamber's relevance and impact for decades to come.
Sheree Anne Kelly, ACCE

2:15pm **BREAK** *Sponsor Area*

2:30– 3:30pm **KEYNOTE SESSION** *Murphy Hall*
When Crisis Hits: The Chamber's Role in Disaster Response & Recovery
When disaster strikes, businesses look for trusted information, resources, and leadership, and chambers are uniquely positioned to help connect the dots. Whether facing a hurricane, tornado, flood, fire, or unexpected community crisis, chambers can play a critical role in communicating timely information, connecting businesses to resources, coordinating with community partners, and supporting economic recovery. This session will bring together the American Red Cross, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, chamber executives, and disaster response partners to explore what chambers should do before, during, and after a disaster. Attendees will learn how to build the right partnerships before a crisis occurs, establish effective communication channels, understand available resources, and position their chamber as a trusted connector when their members and communities need them most.
Alicia Doherty, American Red Cross & Douglas County Chamber Board Chair
Adelaide Kirk, American Red Cross
Morgan Law, Georgia Chamber
Thomas G. Matyók, Ph.D, Middle Georgia State University
Matt Seale, Douglas-Coffee County Chamber

3:30pm **BREAK** *Sponsor Area*

3:45– 4:45pm **KEYNOTE SESSION** *Murphy Hall*

Beyond the Ballot: Navigating Georgia's New Political Landscape

The votes are counted, but what happens next? Hear from two of Georgia's top political analysts as they unpack the post-election landscape, what the results mean for communities across the state, and the policy and advocacy issues chamber leaders should be watching. Beyond the politics, this session will explore the important role chambers play as the **"sane center"** during seasons of significant change. Learn how to navigate political transitions, engage leaders across the aisle, advocate effectively for your business community, and remain a trusted, nonpartisan voice when conversations become increasingly divided.

Frederick Hicks, Hicks Evaluation Group (HEG)
Brian Robinson, Robinson Republic and Co-Host of The Georgia Gang

5:30pm **Welcome to Perry-dise: A Taste of Perry** *Historic Downtown Perry*

Experience an evening of true Southern hospitality in Historic Downtown Perry! Gather with chamber colleagues from across the state for an outdoor dinner featuring local favorites that showcase Perry's culinary delights. Guests will dine beneath the warm glow of lights along Carroll Street, while downtown merchants offer extended shopping hours for exploring and supporting local businesses. Come enjoy a Taste of Perry, connect with fellow attendees, and discover what makes Perry-dise so special!

Hosted by the Perry Area Chamber of Commerce

Friday, November 6, 2026 – GA National Fairgrounds – Perry, GA

8:00am **BREAKFAST BUFFET** *Murphy Hall*

8:30– 10:00am **KEYNOTE SESSION** *Murphy Hall*

Setting Your Board Up for Success: Strategies, Lessons & Tools That Work

A strong board shouldn't just meet the needs of your chamber today. It should help position your organization for where it's going next. This highly interactive session will challenge chamber executives to take a fresh look at who is around the board table, why they are there, and what the board is actually accomplishing. We'll explore how to identify and recruit qualified board members, assess the strengths and gaps of your current board, plan intentionally for future leadership, and recognize what your board is already doing really well. You'll also hear candid perspectives from past board chairs and chamber executives about the things they wish they had known, lessons learned, and what they would do differently. Through facilitated table talk, peer discussion, and practical exercises, you'll have the opportunity to learn from other chamber professionals and evaluate your own approach to board development. Best of all, you'll leave with practical tools you can put to work immediately, including a Board Member Self-Scorecard and resources to help you build a more engaged, effective, and future-focused board.

Alysia Cook, Opportunity Strategies
Melissa Dark, Fitzgerald-Ben Hill Chamber
Leah Harper, H&H Realty & Cartersville-Bartow County Chamber Board Chair
Trevor Quander, Georgia Power Company & Paulding Chamber Board Chair
Cindy Williams, Cartersville-Bartow County Chamber

10:00am **BREAK** *Sponsor Area*

10:15am – 11:45am **CLOSING KEYNOTE SESSION** *Murphy Hall*

Data Centers: Opportunity, Impact & the Chamber's Role

Whether your community has data centers, wants them, or isn't sure it does, one thing is certain: data centers have become one of the hottest topics facing communities across Georgia. This timely panel will explore how chambers can help their communities navigate the opportunities, challenges, and conversations surrounding data center development. Hear from experts and community leaders about best practices, lessons learned, infrastructure and resource considerations, community engagement, and the role chambers can play as trusted conveners and communicators throughout the process. Attendees will also learn about resources available to help chambers better understand the rapidly changing data center landscape, ask the right questions, bring the right partners to the table, and help their communities determine the approach that works best for them.

Leonardo McClarty, Fayette Chamber
Chris Pumphrey, Signal Ventures, LLC
Heath Taylor, Columbia County Chamber

11:45am **CONFERENCE ADJOURNS**