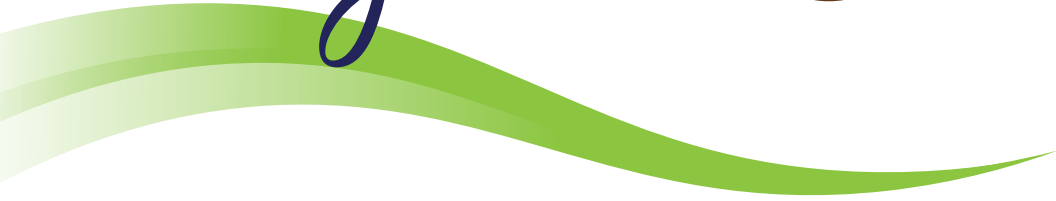


Transforming Tomorrow *Together*

A stylized illustration of a seedling with a brown seed and three green leaves, positioned to the right of the word 'Together'. Below the text is a wide, wavy green line that spans the width of the page.

2026 MCA Summer Conference

Radisson Plaza Hotel

Kalamazoo, MI

July 27 – 30, 2026



Welcome to Kalamazoo and to Michigan Community Action's Summer Conference 2026!

In this space, we will be Transforming Tomorrow Together. Together, because we are all here as one Community Action Movement. Tomorrow, because we see a bright future ahead for those we serve every day. And Transforming, because we have the collective power to bring about radical positive change in our communities.

As you listen and learn throughout our three days together, I challenge you to make a plan as to how you will put it all to work when you return home. Please enjoy the conference, and take the inspiration and energy and ideas with you. I look forward to seeing how we all continue to change lives and make America a better place to live.



Michigan Community Action Board of Directors

President

Susan Harding, Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency
(Pontiac)

Vice President

Lisa Bolen, Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency
(Alpena)

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(Jackson)

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Consumers Energy

Count on Us[®]

Consumers Energy Income-Qualified Energy Efficiency Programs

Working Together to Strengthen Michigan Communities

Who We Are

Consumers Energy is committed to helping income-qualified households improve comfort, reduce energy waste, and lower energy costs through no-cost energy efficiency services.

Single-Family Program

Consumers Energy's Income-Qualified Single-Family Program provides eligible homeowners and renters with a free home energy assessment and energy-saving upgrades. Depending on the home's needs, participants may qualify for improvements such as:

Insulation upgrades • Air sealing • HVAC improvements • Energy-saving products and education

These enhancements help create healthier, more comfortable homes while reducing energy expenses for Michigan families.

Multifamily Program

Consumers Energy's Multifamily Program supports energy efficiency improvements in income-qualified rental properties throughout Michigan. Property owners may be eligible for no-cost or reduced-cost upgrades that:

Improve building performance • Enhance resident comfort • Reduce energy consumption • Support long-term affordability

By investing in energy-efficient housing, we help strengthen communities and create lasting benefits for both property owners and residents.

Let's Connect

Michelle Pittel

Associate Program Manager – Single-Family Income-Qualified Program-michelle.pittel@cleareresult.com

Alex Ovenhouse

Operations Manager – Multifamily Income Qualified Program aovenhouse@franklinenergy.com

Upper Peninsula Officer

Kerri Duff, Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Agency
(Bessemer)

At Large Officer

Lori Johnson, EightCAP, Inc.
(Orleans)

At Large Officer

Jennifer Brozowski, Ottawa County Community Action Agency
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Kerry Baughman, Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency
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Conference Schedule

Monday	10:30 - 11:30 AM	MCA Finance Committee *
July 27 2026	12:00 - 1:00 PM	MCA Board of Directors *
	1:00 - 1:30 PM	Lunch <i>Sponsored by Bellwether Public Relations</i>
	1:30 - 3:00 PM	MCA Directors Council *
	1:00 - 6:00 PM	Exhibitor Set Up
	3:00 - 6:00 PM	Registration Open
	6:00 - 9:00 PM	Directors Dinner

**Meeting will be held in Prairies 6*

A la Carte SPONSORS



Tuesday

July 28 | 2026

6:30 - 7:00 AM	Sunrise Tai Chi - <i>meet in lobby</i>
7:00 AM	Registration Desk Open
7:30 - 8:30 AM	Breakfast
8:30 - 9:30 AM	General Session
9:30 - 9:45 AM	Break
9:45 - 11:00 AM	Breakout Sessions
11:00 - 11:15 AM	Break
11:15 AM - 12:30 PM	Breakout Sessions
12:30 - 1:45 PM	Lunch
1:45 - 3:00 PM	Breakout Sessions
3:00 - 3:30 PM	Break
3:30 - 4:45 PM	Breakout Sessions
5:00 - 7:00 PM	Dinner on Your Own
7:00 - 9:00 PM	Networking Mixer at Lobby Bar <i>Sponsored by Consumers Energy</i>



Conference Greenery Sponsored by IFF

Would you like the chance to take home one of the beautiful plants featured at the conference? Simply drop your drawing ticket at the registration desk to be entered into the raffle. Winning tickets will be drawn during Thursday's breakfast. Must be present to win.

Conference Schedule

Wednesday

July 29 | 2026

6:30 - 7:00 AM	Sunrise Tai Chi - <i>meet in lobby</i>
7:30 AM	Registration Desk Open
7:30 - 8:30 AM	Breakfast
8:30 - 9:30 AM	General Session
9:30 - 9:45 AM	Break
9:45 - 11:00 AM	Breakout Sessions
11:00 - 11:15 AM	Break
11:15 AM - 12:30 PM	Breakout Sessions
12:30 - 1:45 PM	Lunch
1:45 - 3:00 PM	Breakout Sessions
3:00 - 3:30 PM	Break
3:30 - 4:45 PM	Breakout Sessions
5:00 - 6:00 PM	52 Club Fundraiser - <i>Upjohn Suite 937 in the Radisson</i>
6:00 - 10:00 PM	Dinner, LDI Graduation, and Live Auction/ Entertainment

Thursday

July 30 | 2026

7:30 - 8:30 AM	Breakfast
8:30 - 9:30 AM	General Session
9:30 - 9:45 AM	Break
9:45 - 11:00 AM	Breakout Sessions
11:00 - 11:15 AM	Break
11:15 AM - 12:30 PM	Breakout Sessions

Exhibitors



501 ALLIANCE
Unemployment Services For Michigan Nonprofits



**MI HOME ENERGY
REBATES PROGRAM**



Rose Street Advisors

BENEFITS • HR CONSULTING • INVESTMENTS • LIFE INSURANCE • RETIREMENT

Conference Activities

Giving Back

2026 Service Project

This year's service project activities benefit the Kids Food Basket and Care Collective of Southwest Michigan

Brown Bag Decorating

Sack Suppers are nutritious, ready-to-eat evening meals delivered directly to a child's school or local distribution site—making sure kids have the healthy food they need to grow, learn, and thrive. During this activity, you'll decorate brown lunch bags with bright colors, doodles, and uplifting messages. Each bag becomes more than just a meal—it becomes a reminder to a child that their community cares. Come connect, get creative, and help turn simple sack suppers into heartfelt moments of encouragement—one decorated bag at a time!

Care Kits

Since 2023, Care Collective has distributed over two million diapers and period products to people across Kalamazoo county. By providing barrier-free access to diapers, baby wipes, and menstrual products to families and young people, Care Collective supports multigenerational well-being.

They partner with community and grassroots organizations to ensure accessible spaces for BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and immigrant families and young people. We know that consistent access to diapers and period supplies for young people relieves stress for the whole family. With one less thing to worry about, families have greater capacity for connection and joy!

***We want to thank our generous Service Project Sponsors
Michigan Nonprofit Association and ICF.***

Conference Activities

Networking Sessions

Sessions designed for you to connect and have fun!
Pre-registration required

Give Back and Connect

Brown Bag Decorating - Come connect, get creative, and help turn simple sack suppers into heartfelt moments of encouragement—one decorated bag at a time!

Care Kits Assembly - Put together kits to benefit will be sent all across the county to various public schools, colleges, and community centers!

Community Care: Park Beautification - Pitch in by picking up litter or freshening up the flower beds. It's the perfect way to connect with others, enjoy a little fresh air, and leave the park looking better than ever!

Refresh and Recharge

Crafting Connection - Unleash your creativity and relax with a little hands-on fun! Join fellow attendees for a laid-back crafting session where you can design and decorate your own custom plant markers or coasters.

Sound Bath Session - Immerse yourself in a calming, sensory experience designed to help you truly unwind. This restorative experience can help quiet the mind, release tension, and promote a deep sense of calm and balance.

Somatic Release - This session offers gentle, guided movement paired with grounding techniques designed to help you release tension, quiet your mind, and reconnect with your body.

***We want to thank our generous Networking Sponsor
Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency***

Conference Activities

Networking Sessions

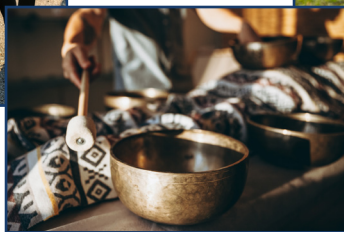
Sessions designed for you to connect and have fun!
Pre-registration required

Connect and Learn

A Walk in the Park: Civil Dialogue in Motion - Join us and experience an unusual way to have difficult conversations. Learn an approach to dialogue applicable to any challenging conversation across divides.

Story Telling for Impact - In small groups, attendees will work through a guided worksheet together – identifying real stories from their own organizations, workshoping the framing, and sharing out with the room. Community action professionals already have incredible stories; they just don't always have a structure for telling them. This session provides that structure in a way that sticks, and attendees will leave with something tangible that they worked on and can hopefully implement back home.

***We want to thank our generous Networking Sponsor
Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency***



Conference Activities

Giving Back

Silent and Live Auctions

The silent and live auctions are back at the conference! Proceeds from the auctions will go towards scholarships for CAA staff to participate in programming like Emerging Leaders, Leadership Development Institute, and the summer conference.

Silent Auction

The silent auction will open Tuesday, July 28, 2026, and will close on Wednesday July 29, 2026, at 3:30 pm.

Live Auction

The live auction will be held Wednesday evening July 29, 2026, after dinner and the LDI graduation. Big thanks to Joe Nolan, Executive Director of Chippewa Luce Mackinac Community Action Agency, for being our auctioneer and emcee.

Health and Wellness

Sunrise Tai Chi

Start your day with a refreshing Tai Chi session at the KCC Museum Gardens, conveniently located just steps from the hotel. Led by Ed Kehoe, certified Tai Chi and Holistic Medical Qigong Instructor and owner of Kehoe Martial Arts, this experience offers a peaceful and energizing way to begin your morning.

Tai Chi is a gentle, low-impact practice that helps improve balance, flexibility, strength, and overall well-being. Designed to strengthen the body from the inside out, it promotes relaxation, supports internal health, and fosters a lasting sense of calm and focus throughout the day.

Evening Activities

Explore Kalamazoo

MCA Members will receive Downtown Dollars to enjoy dinner at a variety of local restaurants or shop at local stores in downtown Kalamazoo. Enjoy Kalamazoo's walkable and fun social district just steps from the Radisson.



Wednesday Night Dinner Celebration

Join us Wednesday for an evening full of celebration and fun! We will kick off the evening with dinner and celebrate the new graduates of the 2025-2026 Leadership Development Institute Cohort and Emerging Leaders. Finally, we will wrap the evening up with our live auction and entertainment from the Kalamazoo Game Show Experience. We look forward to celebrating with you!

Sponsored by Fortell



Featured Speakers



BRIDGET HILTON

Bridget is an author and keynote speaker on how to take action on your biggest dreams and goals. As a teenager, she used her love of music as inspiration to go from sweeping garbage off Detroit music venue floors to hustling her way into the largest record label in the world - helping to launch some

of today's biggest careers in music such as Taylor Swift, The Weeknd, and Rihanna.

Inspired by a viral video of a deaf woman hearing for the first time, she then founded the first ever social good electronics company (LSTN), sold millions of products, partnered with the likes of Google, Delta Air Lines, and Amazon, was interviewed by Today Show, GMA, NYT, and traveled to 40 countries and all 50 U.S. states giving over 60,000 people the gift of hearing.

Now as co-author of the international bestseller *Experiential Billionaire*, presenter of 2025's viral TEDx *The Keys to Living a Rich Life*, and facilitator of a 20,000 person research study on goals and regrets, she has inspired millions to follow and achieve their dreams personally and professionally.

Featured Speakers



DAN KILDEE

Dan Kildee is the President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint. In fall of 2025, Kildee also begins his three-year appointment as the Griffin Chair of American Government at Central Michigan University.

Dan served as a Member of the U.S. Congress from 2013-2025, representing Michigan's 8th and previously Michigan's 5th congressional district. He served on the Ways and Means Committee and the Budget Committee. He also co-chaired the bipartisan Congressional PFAS Task Force to more urgently clean up toxic PFAS chemicals.

Prior to being elected to Congress, Kildee co-founded and served as President of the Center for Community Progress, a national nonprofit organization, where he was one of the nation's leading voices on urban land reform and revitalization. He also founded Michigan's first land bank - the Genesee County Land Bank, which is responsible for over \$100 million in redevelopment in the city of Flint.

Dan is a graduate of Central Michigan University. He is married to Jennifer Kildee and has three adult children and two grandchildren. He enjoys hunting, fishing, cycling, golf, and is an avid drummer.

Featured Speakers



DR. SABRINA JACKSON

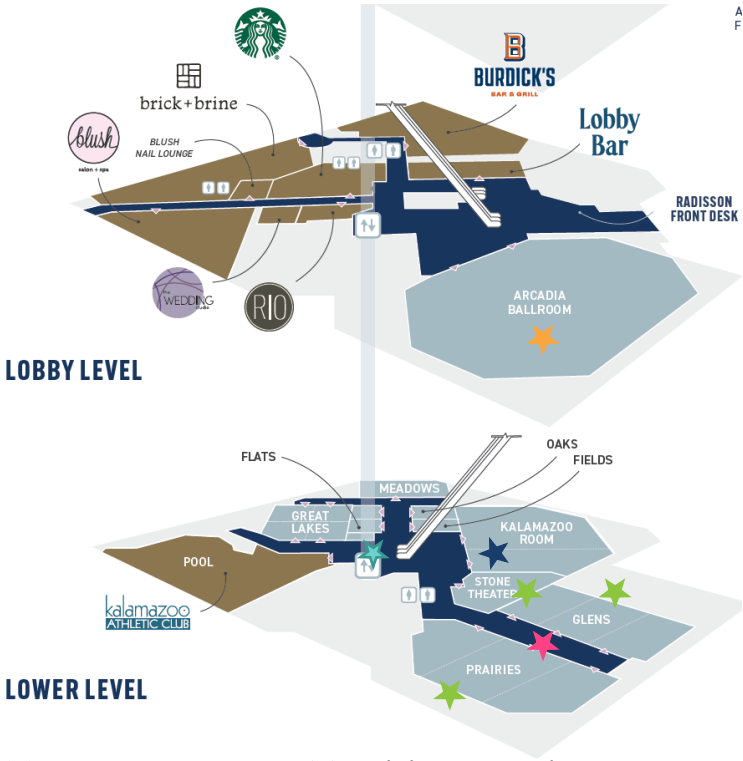
Dr. Sabrina Jackson, known as “The People Expert,” is a renowned clinical therapist and motivational speaker with over 30 years of experience in enhancing interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence. As the creator of the Essential Colors and Essential Lovestyles personality models, she

provides innovative frameworks for understanding individual differences.

As a media personality, she captivates audiences with her weekly segment “Mental Health Mondays” on Fox 2, where she shares valuable insights on effective communication and conflict resolution. An award-winning global speaker & ordained evangelist, Dr. Jackson has also made cameos in 14 movies, showcasing her versatility and charisma. Passionate about making a positive impact, she empowers individuals and organizations to foster healthier connections in both personal and professional settings.

Lastly, Her Excellency Dr Sabrina serves as a Peace Ambassador to the UN under World of Life Ministries International (WOLMI).

NAVIGATION



- Session Rooms
- Exhibitors/Breaks
- Meals/Keynote
- Pre-function
- Pre-KAC/ Registration

Conference Tracks

- OE Organizational Excellence**
 Finance, HR, data management and integration, strategic planning, board, organizational management, IT, funding.
- LD Leadership Development**
 DEI, communication, personal development.
- IP Innovative Practices**
 Innovative programs and approaches from Michigan CAAs.
- PP Partner Programs**
 Programs and practices from Community Action partners.
- BF Board Focused**
 Focused on board excellence, recruitment, management, best practices

Sessions

Tuesday | July 28

7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast

Sponsored by Shine Early Learning

Arcadia Ballroom

8:30 – 9:30

General Session

Arcadia Ballroom

From Dreaming to Doing: How to Take Action on What Matters Most, in Work and Life

Bridget Hilton

Transform your organization's potential into performance with a proven framework that drives both professional excellence and personal fulfillment.

In this high-impact, entertaining keynote, Bridget shares the four-step system that took her from a small town dreamer to building a globally recognized brand that sold millions of products and transformed over 50,000 lives. Through compelling storytelling and evidence-based strategies, she reveals how the same principles that built her success can revolutionize your team's approach to goals, innovation, and purpose-driven performance.

Drawing from research with over 20,000 participants and partnerships with Fortune 500 companies, Bridget demonstrates how purpose-driven action creates measurable results. Organizations consistently report increased employee engagement, enhanced innovation, and stronger leadership after implementing these strategies.



Sessions

Tuesday | July 28

9:45 – 11:00

From Urgency to Alignment: Designing a Nonprofit Operating System for Community Action Agencies

OE

Sally Andreatta – EightCAP, Inc

Glens 1

This interactive session introduces a nonprofit-adapted operating framework inspired by the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS). Originally designed for private-sector businesses, EOS provides tools for clarity, accountability, and execution. However, nonprofits—and particularly Community Action Agencies—require a different approach.

The Benefits Balancing Act: Managing Rising Costs While Supporting Employees

OE

Jon Andrews and Shannon Thomas – Rose Street Advisors

Glens 2

Designed with HR professionals and Community Action staff in mind, this session will provide strategies to help organizations optimize their employee benefits programs while supporting the well-being of their workforce. Participants will gain insights into navigating the Michigan healthcare landscape, controlling benefit costs, and increasing employee engagement. Emphasis will also be placed on fostering a healthier, more engaged workforce through tailored benefits offerings that attract and retain top talent.

Empathy for Impact: How to Apply Human Centered Design (HCD) and Lean Thinking for Social Change

LD

Lauren Wisniewski – Rise Consulting Company

Glens 3

This session will focus on using Human Centered Design and Lean tools rooted in empathy to find more efficiency within programs and to maximize impact. You will understand the fundamentals of empathy, why empathy is vital to organizational culture, and walk away with practice using HCD and Lean tools for program improvement.

Sessions

Tuesday | July 28

9:45 – 11:00

From Surviving to Thriving: Building a Trauma Informed Organizational Culture

LD

Clint Brugger – Community Action Agency

Prairies 6

Workplace challenges such as burnout, conflict, and disengagement are often rooted in chronic stress and unexamined organizational practices. This interactive session explores how trauma impacts not only the individuals we serve, but also staff and workplace culture. Participants will be introduced to core trauma-informed principles and engage in practical activities that highlight how stress and competing demands influence behavior and decision-making. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies to foster psychological safety, strengthen communication, and begin shifting their organization toward a more trauma-informed, supportive, and effective culture.

Beyond the Myths: NEMCSA Poverty Education

IP

Frances Ommani, Amanda Bergeron, and Jodie Baker – Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Prairies 5

The NEMCSA Poverty Education Course combines insights from nationally recognized poverty experts, including Dr. Ruby Payne and Dr. Donna Beegle, with NEMCSA's more than 55 years of trusted service to individuals and families across Northeast Michigan. This session provides a practical framework for understanding poverty, building shared language, and strengthening respectful, effective responses that reduce barriers and prevent unintentional harm. Designed for community action and social service professionals, this training supports ethical, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive practice. Participants will strengthen communication across economic differences and enhance person-centered approaches essential to effective engagement and improved outcomes for individuals and families.

From Seats to Strength: Reimagining Board Recruitment for Impact

BF

Katena Cain – K. Cain Consulting, LLC

Prairies 4

Many boards recruit to fill vacancies. High-performing boards recruit to build power, perspective, and long-term impact. This session reframes board recruitment as a strategic function, not an administrative task. Participants will learn how to identify gaps in skills, lived experience, and influence; design recruitment pipelines; and build a board that reflects and advances community action priorities.

From Collaboration to Action: Building Community Movements for Systems Change

LD

Lauren Conrad and Mark Woltman – Kconnect

Stone Theater

This interactive workshop focuses on what it takes for Community Action staff and leaders to step into systems-level work and build the kind of cross-sector collaboration required to make lasting change. The session introduces a practical approach to movement building and shared decision-making, including five core components that help initiatives grow and a structured Decision-Making Protocol that supports clear, actionable decisions—even in complex, multi-partner environments. Participants will leave with concrete strategies to strengthen partnerships, expand engagement, and lead collaborative efforts that drive systems change at the community level.

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

Pre-Function

Sponsored by Capital Access and Yeo & Yeo CPAs & Advisors

11:15 – 12:30

Building Strategic Energy Partnerships

PP

Christian Deuel, Brody Vance, Annalisa Wilder – ICF

Glens 1

ICF leads utility partnership initiatives nationwide that help Community Action Agencies move beyond traditional program delivery and engage utilities more strategically. Drawing on ICF's experience advising states, utilities, and community-based organizations, this session will highlight how ICF helps agencies understand utility planning processes, regulatory filings, and settlement agreements, and identify partnership models that advance affordability, energy equity, and community priorities. Participants will learn how ICF translates national energy partnership frameworks into practical, state-level strategies that agencies can apply in Michigan, positioning them for deeper collaboration with utilities and stronger influence in energy decision-making.

Sessions

Tuesday | July 28

11:15 – 12:30

Building a Resilient Nonprofit with Strategic Financial Planning

OE

Abby Daugherty and Brandy Mikula – Maner Costerisan

Glens 2

Financial uncertainty is one of the biggest challenges nonprofits face—but it also creates an opportunity for stronger, more strategic leadership. This session explores how to build a financially resilient nonprofit by aligning resources with mission, diversifying revenue, and strengthening organization-wide financial stewardship. Designed for leaders of all backgrounds, it offers practical, accessible insights to help participants make informed decisions, improve accountability, and support long-term sustainability.

Strategic Planning with Hoshin Kanri: Turning Strategy into Executable Action

OE

Natalie Howden – Lean Solutions

Glens 3

In this interactive session, participants will learn how Hoshin Kanri provides a structured, visual approach to deploying strategy into daily work. Attendees will explore how the X-Matrix, SMART goal development, and performance metrics create focus, engagement, and measurable progress across teams. Special emphasis will be placed on service and nonprofit applications, demonstrating how strategy deployment can drive clarity, engagement, and sustained organizational impact. Participants will leave with practical tools and frameworks they can immediately apply to ensure their strategic plans translate into real, measurable outcomes.

Active Shooter Training

OE

Tom Moore, Jason Russell, Denise Neuhaus – BHS Insurance

Prairies 6

This session provides how to best prepare your staff for an active shooter situation, create an emergency action plan (EAP) and conduct training exercises. Together, the EAP and training exercises will prepare your staff to effectively respond and help minimize loss of life.

11:15 – 12:30

Understanding Intersectionality in the Workplace

LD

Tedi Parsons – PRO Leadership Lab LLC

Prairies 5

The concept of “bring your whole self to work” is a compelling idea, but it does not clearly account for the intersectional lens required to enable individuals to truly express all aspects of their identity without fear of discrimination, hate and/or racism in the workplace. In this session, participants will learn key terms for Intersectionality, Social & Identity Markers, discover the impact of Intersectionality in the workplace, and discover ways we can use Intersectionality to increase company morale.

From Funding to Foundations: Leveraging FHLBank Indianapolis Grants for Community Impact

PP

Anna Shires – FHLBank Indianapolis and John Harpst – Lake Michigan Credit Union

Prairies 4

FHLBank Indianapolis staff will discuss how tens of millions of FHLBank grant dollars are being invested across Michigan communities through member local banks, credit unions and CDFIs. These grant dollars have supported small-scale housing development, first time homebuyers, owner-occupied home repairs, and non-profit operating costs. FHLBank member financial institutions will discuss how they have formed partnerships with non-profits and community action agencies to facilitate grant investment.

Engagement is the Scoreboard, Not the Game

LD

Tom Daniels – Knight Insurance Group

Stone Theater

This session will introduce the shift from employee engagement to well-being, highlighting how fostering well-being in individuals leads to better long-term outcomes, beyond just engagement metrics. Participants will learn about the limitations of engagement, the importance of well-being, and the five pillars of engagement.

12:30 – 1:30 Networking Lunch

Arcadia Ballroom

Sponsored by Mutual of America



Sessions

Tuesday | July 28

1:45 – 3:00

Practical AI Applications for Community Action Agencies on Expanding Capacity

OE

Christian Deuel, Ryan Piatt, Danielle Knutson – ICF

Glens 1

ICF is actively leading Community Action Agencies in exploring and applying practical AI tools to address limited administrative capacity and increasing demands. The session will showcase how ICF works with agencies to use AI—such as Copilot-style tools—to support proposal development, community needs assessments, strategic planning alignment, and data synthesis, without losing a community-centered focus. Grounded in ICF's hands-on technical assistance and advisory work, the discussion will focus on responsible adoption, realistic use cases, and how AI can complement existing workflows to help agencies operate more efficiently while strengthening planning and decision-making.

Community Engagement and Public Participation at EGLE: Resources and Best Practices

PP

Natalie Brown – Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)

Glens 2

Ever wondered what happens behind the scenes when EGLE plans and hosts a public meeting or hearing? Curious about how EGLE does outreach to community members and organizations? Join this session to learn more about EGLE's public participation process, what resources and tools are available, and community engagement best practices and lessons learned.

Leading Change That Sticks: Turning Improvement Ideas into Lasting Results

LD

Natalie Howden – Lean Solutions

Glens 3

Research and real-world experience consistently show that most transformation efforts fail not because of technical design, but because of people-related challenges. This session provides a practical roadmap for navigating those challenges. Participants will explore how individuals experience change, learn how to build readiness and trust, and practice using structured tools to drive adoption and accountability. Through relatable examples and actionable exercises, attendees will leave with a clear approach to leading change that delivers measurable results and becomes part of everyday work.

1:45 – 3:00

Make Someday Today: Turning Inspiration into Action

LD

Bridget Hilton

Prairies 6

Effective strategic planning is more than just a document—it's a roadmap for lasting impact. This interactive workshop will equip participants with practical tools and frameworks to develop, refine, and execute strategic plans that drive organizational success. Through engaging discussions and hands-on activities, attendees will learn how to assess priorities, set measurable goals, engage stakeholders, and adapt strategies in an ever-changing landscape. Whether you're launching a new initiative or refining an existing plan, this session will provide actionable insights to move from vision to results.

Beyond Case Management: Designing a High-Impact Economic Mobility Program

IP

Amanda Bergeron and Jodie Baker – Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Prairies 5

The BOSS Program (Bridges of Self-Sufficiency) was launched by Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA) in 2022 as an innovative response to multi-generational poverty and fragmented service delivery systems. This session will walk participants through the full evolution of the BOSS model, from concept to implementation to measurable outcomes. Attendees will leave with practical insight into how to design, launch, or strengthen an economic mobility program within their own Community Action Agency, including tools, frameworks, and lessons learned from both successes and challenges.

Beyond Attendance: Activating Boards for Real Engagement

BF

Katena Cain – K. Cain Consulting LLC

Prairies

Attendance does not equal engagement. This session explores how to move boards from passive participation to active leadership. Through practical strategies and real scenarios, participants will examine how meeting design, committee structure, and leadership culture either enables or blocks engagement. The session will provide tools to increase accountability, deepen participation, and strengthen board-staff alignment.

1:45 – 3:00

The Six Dimensions of Food Security: A Systems Framework for Community Level Change



Phil Knight and Gerry Brisson – Know Better Do Better, LLC Stone Theater

Community Action Agencies sit at the center of community-level poverty solutions—housing stabilization, energy assistance, workforce development, nutrition access, and client empowerment. Yet even strong programs can struggle to produce aligned, systems-level outcomes when operating in silos. This dynamic session introduces The Six Dimensions of Food Security—Availability, Access, Utilization, Stability, Sustainability, and Agency—as a practical framework for advancing coordinated, community-wide impact.

3:00 – 3:30

Sponsored Break

Pre-KAC

Take a break from learning to network with your peers, visit sponsors and exhibitors, and recharge with some yummy snacks.

Breaks sponsored by Capital Access and Yeo & Yeo CPAs & Advisors

3:30 – 4:45

This session block is pre-registered special sessions. If you did not pre-register for a 3:30 session please visit the registration desk and speak to an MCA staff member. More Information about these special sessions can be found in the Conference Activities section.

Sound Bath

Ignite Studios

Oaks

Service Projects

Glens 1

Somatic Release

Blush Spa

Glens 2

Park Beautification

Kalamazoo in Bloom

Glens 3

Sessions

Tuesday | July 28

3:30 – 4:45 Pre-Registration Special Sessions

A Walk in the Park: Civil Dialogue in Motion

Jennifer Grau – Grau Interpersonal Communication

Prairies 6

Crafting Connection

Prairies 5

Storytelling for Impact

Angela Minicuci, Mariam Robinson, Bridgette Bauer, and Tatum Fetting
Bellwether Public Relations

Prairies 4

Leadership Pathways

Stephanie Kasprzak, Eva Rohlman, and Michelle Stevens – Monroe County
Opportunity Program, Mid Michigan Community Action Agency, Michigan
Community Action

Stone Theater

5:00 – 7:00 PM

Dinner on Your Own

Explore Kalamazoo

MCA Members will receive Downtown Dollars to enjoy dinner at a variety of local restaurants or shop at local stores in downtown Kalamazoo. Enjoy Kalamazoo's walkable and fun social district just steps from the Radisson.

7:00 – 9:00 PM

Networking Mixer – Lobby Bar

Join fellow conference attendees for some networking, conversation, and connections at our Networking Mixer, generously sponsored by Consumers Energy. Enjoy a complimentary drink ticket and take advantage of this relaxed setting to meet peers, exchange ideas, and build valuable professional relationships.

Sessions

Wednesday | July 29

7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast

Arcadia Ballroom

Sponsored by SEMCO Energy Gas Company

8:30– 9:30

General Session

Arcadia Ballroom

From Policy to Possibility: A Conversation with Congressman Dan Kildee

Dan Kildee – Greater Flint Community Foundation

As Genessee County Treasurer, Dan Kildee was an innovator, creating Michigan's first land bank and laying the groundwork for what was to become the Center for Community Progress. As Congressman, Kildee had a strong reputation as an advocate for communities struggling with adversity, most notably during the Flint water crisis. Now, as President and CEO of the Greater Flint Community Foundation, Kildee continues his life's work in fighting for economic opportunity for legacy communities and working families. Join us this morning for inspirational comments and exciting dialogue as Kildee reflects on his career and talks about what's next for all of us in the community development space.



9:45– 11:00

Trending: Strategic Fund Development During the Greatest Wealth Transfer of All Time

OE

Melissa Thompson – Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Glens 1

This session will provide strategies to incorporate in your giving profile, including, how to expand individual giving, how to build corporate partnerships, and exploring planned giving and endowment funds.

Passing the Compass: Navigating Leadership Changes

LD

Katie Appold – Nonprofit Nav

Glens 2

Leadership transitions can arrive suddenly or be delayed by the hope that change is still far off. Either way, many organizations find themselves unprepared when the moment comes. This session introduces the three types of succession planning and outlines how nonprofits can proactively prepare for each. Through real-life scenarios, participants will explore the practical steps needed to ensure continuity of operations, preserve institutional knowledge, and intentionally carry forward organizational culture.

From Modifications to Stabilization: Using HUD's Older Adults Home Modification Program in Community Action

IP

Mark Polega and Cherri Swanstra – Mid Michigan Community Action Agency

Glens 3

This session shares Mid Michigan Community Action Agency's experience implementing HUD's Older Adults Home Modification Program, including program design, partnerships, and early outcomes. Participants will learn how the program has become a gateway for connecting older adults to additional services such as water assistance and weatherization, strengthening household stability while supporting aging in place.

Designing for Community Influence: A Practical Framework for Research and Decision-Making

OE

Courtney Barthle – ICF

Prairies 6

Participants will explore how different approaches to engagement—from sharing information to co-designing solutions—can shape the quality, relevance, and equity of community initiatives. Through facilitated discussion and hands-on exercises, participants will leave with practical approaches they can apply to Community Needs Assessments, program design, and other planning processes to strengthen community voice and influence.

Sessions

Wednesday | July 29

9:45– 11:00

Banking Access, Poverty, and Financial Survival: Understanding Unbanked and Underbanked Households in Michigan

OE

IP

Christopher Smith – Western Michigan University

Prairies 5

This session will help Community Action Agency staff, board members, and other community partners better understand the unbanked and underbanked population in Michigan. The presentation will use findings from the 2023 FDIC National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households, along with related background from the attached research document, to explain who is most affected, why some households remain outside of mainstream banking, and why many continue to rely on high-cost alternative financial services such as check cashing, payday lending, money orders, and similar services.

Decisions Before the Storm: Preparing Your Organization for What's Next

BF

Katena Cain – K. Cain Consulting LLC

Prairies 4

This session equips board members and organizational leaders with practical scenario planning tools to prepare for multiple possible futures. Participants will learn how to anticipate change, test assumptions, and guide their organizations through uncertainty with clarity and confidence. Rather than reacting in crisis, leaders will leave with a structured approach to making informed, proactive decisions that protect mission and strengthen long-term impact.

Developing Leaders from the Inside Out

LD

Caryn Bedford – HRM

Stone Theater

Participants in this session will learn how to build or improve organizational and individual leadership development programs. Three examples will be utilized to showcase the critical importance of aligning programs with core values and competencies. You will leave this program knowing how to generate organizational buy-in from key stakeholders. You will also learn about how to assess and evaluate participant needs and program success. The focus of this session will be on content development and delivery.

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

Sponsored by Capital Access and Yeo & Yeo CPAs & Advisors

Pre-function

11:15 – 12:30

From Crisis to Collaboration: Expanding Water Access Through Strategic Partnerships

PP

IP

Elizabeth McClain – Well Water Trust and Brenda Molendyk – Community Action of Allegan County

Glens 1

This session will highlight how this collaboration successfully leveraged multiple funding sources to expand access to critical water infrastructure for low-income to moderate income households. Participants will gain practical insights into building cross-sector partnerships, navigating funding streams, and implementing scalable solutions in rural communities. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies and resources to replicate this model and improve water access in their own communities.

Supporting Our Communities Through Change: What Immigration Policy Means to You

OE

Julie Powers and Marcelo Betti, JD – Immigration Law & Justice Michigan

Glens 2

As immigration policies continue to evolve at the federal and state levels, Community Action Agencies in Michigan and across the United States face new challenges in serving their communities and maintaining program operations. This session brings together legal expertise and practical insights to help staff, board members, and volunteers understand the current legal landscape and prepare for what lies ahead.

Human Connection in the Age of AI

OE

IP

Scott Schubert and Rob Symes – Fortell

Glens 3

As technology rapidly transforms human services, how do we ensure we do not lose the heart of the work? This session explores how ethical, trauma-informed AI can strengthen, rather than replace, human connection in Community Action and social service programs. Attendees will hear practical examples of how conversational AI is being used to reduce staff burnout, improve access to services, expand language accessibility, and create more dignified experiences for families seeking support. The session will also include reflections from lived experience and leadership perspectives on balancing innovation with compassion.

Sessions

Wednesday | July 29

11:15 – 12:30

Building a Magnetic Employee Value Proposition

OE

Susan Bailey – Marsh McLennan Agency

Prairies 6

Talent survey data indicates 75% of active job seekers are likely to apply for a job if the employer activity manages its employer brand and their company's Employee Value Proposition (EVP). A dynamic Employee Value Proposition is intentional and comprehensive in nature...capitalizing on the strengths of the organization and its purpose while providing benefits and resources that resonate with employees, enabling them to be productive and thrive. Applying a combination of frameworks and real-world examples, this session aims to provide insight into steps an employer can take to create an EVP that helps to retain high-performing talent while solidifying and improving the relationship between employees and the organization.

Retention Best Practices (Why Retention Needs Attention)

OE

Jodie Bonham and Traci Haynes – Yeo & Yeo CPAs & Advisors

Prairies 5

Employee turnover is one of the most costly and disruptive challenges facing agencies today — yet it often doesn't get the strategic attention it deserves until key people are already walking out the door. This session moves beyond the usual conversation about pay and benefits to explore the deeper drivers of why employees stay or leave mission-driven organizations. Participants will walk away with practical, low-cost retention strategies they can implement immediately, a framework for identifying flight risks before they become vacancies, and a clearer understanding of how intentional retention efforts strengthen both organizational culture and community impact.

CSBG State Plan: What You Really Need to Know

OE

Ben Gulker – Bureau of Community Action & Economic Opportunity

Prairies 4

A fast, practical, no jargon dive into the CSBG State Plan and how it affects your daily work. If you've ever wondered, "Why do we do it this way?"—this session connects the dots. Join us for a lively, interactive walkthrough of what's in the State Plan, why it matters, and how it shapes Community Action. Clear, engaging, and informational —and we'll be looking for your feedback to help strengthen Michigan's State Plan moving forward.

11:15 – 12:30

Community Solar 101 – A Tool to Help MI Families Navigate Electricity Price Cost Hikes

IP

PP

Ella Kitterman and Karen Lewis – Dimension Energy

Stone Theater

This workshop will provide a comprehensive overview of community solar, how it has been successfully implemented in other states and on a smaller scale in MI, and how Community Action and affordable housing agencies can benefit.

12:30 – 1:30 Networking Lunch

Arcadia Ballroom

Sponsored by Michigan State Housing Development Authority



1:45 – 3:00

Understanding the Implications of H.R. 1 on Medicaid

OE

Nicole Hudson – Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Glens 1

This session will provide a deep dive into the provisions of H.R. 1 and how they will affect certain populations within the Medicaid program. The focus will be on the significant eligibility changes starting January 1, 2027, including work requirements, six-month renewals, and retroactive coverage changes.

How Facilities Can Support Your Mission

OE

PP

Kate Humphrey – IFF and Brad Michaud – Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Glens 2

Making facility plans can be overwhelming! Are you considering relocation, additional space/sites or investment in an existing site? Do you feel torn between investing in programs and investing in space? Join IFF to discuss how to approach facility planning and learn from Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency about their exploration of rightsizing their space needs.

Sessions

Wednesday | July 29

1:45 – 3:00

Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences – How Can We Create a World for All to Thrive

IP

Zoe Lyons – Nonprofit Network

Glens 3

Every day, Community Action professionals walk alongside individuals and families facing barriers no one should have to face alone. While understanding trauma and adversity is essential, it is hope, connection, and opportunity that ultimately change lives. This interactive session invites participants to shift the narrative from “what’s wrong” to “what’s strong.” Grounded in the HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) framework, the session highlights how everyday moments—feeling seen, supported, safe, and empowered—can have a lifelong impact on health, well-being, and community stability.

MiLEAP, Office of Early Education, Informational Session

PP

Dr. Sophia Lafayette-Lause, Cynthia Derby, and Samuel Owusu

Prairies 6

Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP)

Please join us for updates from the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP), Office of Early Education. This focus session will provide information on the latest MiLEAP Office of Early Education projects and the PreK for All initiative, including the Great Start Readiness Program and the Michigan Head Start programs. There will also be time set aside for Q & A.

Weatherization Succession & Success Planning: Sustaining Workforce, Leadership, and Program Excellence

OE

Aderika McClain – National Community Action Partnership

Prairies 4

Today more than ever, succession planning in Weatherization is crucial. Due to the aging workforces, evolving funding requirements, and technical skill demands in Weatherization and energy efficiency, organizations must have structured processes in place to ensure continuity in key positions, identify and develop future leaders, maintain service quality, and reduce disruptions. Learn from Weatherization providers and leaders who are developing plans for success that include skills inventory, knowledge transfer sessions, job shadowing, cross-training, credentialing and certifications. Join us as we discuss a tool called the Succession Planning for Success check list to drive strategic thinking and conversation.

1:45 – 3:00

Integrated Approach to Homeowner Rehab Panel

IP

PP

Anna Fischer – Public Policy Associates, Alan Fox – Ingham County, Gustavo Perez – Kent County Community Action, and Heather Zygmuntowicz – City of Detroit
Stone Theater

There is an urgent need in Michigan for the rehabilitation of owner-occupied homes to ensure the health and safety of residents and sustainability of current housing stock. The current homeowner rehab programs are administered across a few state government departments, as well as in nonprofit, community, philanthropic, and private organizations. And while there are some collaborations among Michigan state government, local governments, and private organizations for homeowner rehab there is a strong need to identify opportunities for current programs to be more coordinated, accessible, and efficient.

1:30 – 5:00

Leadership Development Institute Final Sessions – Prairies 5

LD

Final sessions for the 2025/2026 cohort only.

3:00 – 3:30

Sponsored Break

Pre-KAC

Take a break from learning to network with your peers, visit sponsors and exhibitors, and recharge with some yummy snacks.

Breaks sponsored by Capital Access and Yeo & Yeo CPAs & Advisors



3:30 – 4:45

“Mission, Management, and Measurable Impact” Aligning the Community Action Operating System

LD

Joe Garcia – Joseph Garcia Consulting

Glens 1

This session focuses on the practical realities leaders are navigating today, including financial reports that don't fully inform decisions, leadership teams operating in reactive mode, and boards that want to help but are not always aligned in their role. Rather than offering theory, this session introduces a clear and practical framework for aligning mission, funding, operations, and governance into a cohesive operating system. Participants will leave with a structured way to assess where alignment is breaking down in their own organization and what to address first. Designed specifically for Community Action Agencies, this session reflects the scale, funding complexity, and community impact unique to the CAA network.

Increasing Housing Access for Justice Involved Individuals

IP

Sophie Ordway – Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity and Whitney Wardell – Neighborhoods Inc. of Battle Creek

Glens 2

The session will discuss how this specific policy tool is being used to increase housing access and foster a conversation about additional solutions. Whitney Wardell, President and CEO of Neighborhoods Inc. of Battle Creek will provide an in-depth look at how NIBC operationalizes the coordinated entry system to ensure equitable access to housing specifically for those impacted by the justice system, while also leveraging innovative approaches through the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's Housing Access for Justice-Involved Individuals (HAJII) Pilot. The conversation will encourage participation from all attendees, including requesting input on a list of barriers to housing and solutions that are community-specific and community-led. The session facilitators will ask attendees to commit to at least one action related to increasing housing access in their community.

Strengthening What Works: Leveraging Great Start to Quality to Support Your Program

PP

Christy Opsommer – Early Childhood Investment Corporation

Glens 3

Join leaders from Great Start to Quality (GSQ) and the Early Childhood Investment Corporation for an interactive, solutions-focused conversation designed with you in mind. This session goes beyond the basics—GSQ staff want to hear directly from you. Together, we'll explore how programs are currently engaging with GSQ, identify real-world barriers to participation, and openly address common myths that may be standing in the way. Expect honest dialogue, myth-busting clarity, and actionable strategies to make quality improvement work smarter—not harder—for your program. Come ready to share, question, and collaborate as we strengthen quality together.

3:30 – 4:45

The Butterfly Effect of Good Leadership: Small Decisions That Shape Tomorrow

LD

Sarah Davis – OTBP Consulting

Prairies 6

Transformation does not happen through grand gestures or strategic slogans. It happens through small, everyday leadership decisions that are often overlooked, rushed, or avoided. How leaders communicate, set boundaries, handle conflict, and make ethical choices quietly shapes culture, trust, and long-term outcomes. This session explores how seemingly minor leadership decisions create ripple effects that either strengthen or undermine an organization's future. Participants will examine how individual responsibility and shared accountability work together to create sustainable change and why transforming tomorrow together requires consistency, clarity, and courage today.

ROMA for Boards

BF

Jeremy Biddle and Ben Gulker – Bureau of Community Action & Economic Opportunity

Prairies 4

This session will provide Board Members with an introduction to ROMA principles and what the Board's role is in the implementation of ROMA practice.

Let's Make Some Noise! 17 Sure-Fire Marketing Ideas for Community Action Agencies

OE

Laura Huth Rhoades – do good Consulting

Stone Theater

This high-energy session will give you and your team the tips and tools you need to boost your agency's visibility, to reach the right people, and to turn your whole team – staff, board, and volunteers – into marketing superstars—all without breaking the bank or taking loads of time.

6:00 – 10:00 Dinner and Evening Activities

Arcadia Ballroom

Generously Sponsored by



Congratulations

to the New 2026 Michigan Certified Community Action Professionals (CCAP), Leadership Development Institute Graduates, and Emerging Leaders

2026 Certified Community Action Professionals

<i>Jamie Berry</i>	Capital Area Community Services
<i>Joseph Cooke</i>	Macomb Community Action
<i>Melissa Davis</i>	Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency
<i>Veronica Echevarria</i>	Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency
<i>Kathryn Flanery</i>	Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency
<i>Erica Goldston</i>	Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency
<i>Hiba Haidous</i>	Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency
<i>Erica Heaney</i>	Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency
<i>Karen Hofmann</i>	Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency
<i>Courtney Iobe</i>	Community Action Agency of South Central Michigan
<i>Jonas Lowe</i>	Monroe County Opportunity Program
<i>Alisha McGhee</i>	Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency
<i>Shama Mounzer</i>	Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency
<i>Elizabeth Sargent</i>	Macomb Community Action
<i>Kay Simmons</i>	Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency
<i>Chelsea Tatroe</i>	Capital Area Community Services
<i>Linda VanderWaal</i>	Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

2026 Leadership Development Institute Graduates

Leonardo Almanza

Haidar Alsalik

Teresa Baker

Sally Beltz

Ashley Berry

Diane Bucco

Stevana Dalgard

Mike Decker

Kim DiFrancesco

Jessica Espinosa

Stacie Feltis

Katlyn Franks

Lydia Gervase

Ally Halbert

Andrea Hall

Jesse Heath

Valerie Housour

Sarah Jansen

Shannon Keirnan

Sara Lamb

Alaina Maiani

Patricia Mariotti

Stephannie Marquette

Denise Moore

Tina Phillips

Corrine Price

Karina Roberts

Stephanie Robison

Catie Schmidt

Stacy Schuster

Jenny Turner

Beth Wackerle

Kent County Community Action

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

Community Action

Community Action

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac Community Action Agency

Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac Community Action Agency

Community Action Agency

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac Community Action Agency

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Mid Michigan Community Action Agency

Community Action

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Mid Michigan Community Action Agency

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac Community Action Agency

Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac Community Action Agency

Blue Water Community Action

Mid Michigan Community Action Agency

Community Action

Community Action

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

Community Action

Mid Michigan Community Action Agency

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

2026 Emerging Leaders

Cortney Armstrong

Holly Baker

Devon Barnard

Melissa Brewer

Donna Bunin

Heather Burley

Jamie Carsten

Steve Coleman

Stephannie Conroy

Kristipher Daniel

Elizabeth Gaytan

Audrey Gekeler

Courtney Gerard

Jamila Gilkie

Sana Hafeez

Timothy Higgins

Sophia Honkanen

Amanda Huether

Nicole Kennedy

Keila Knott

Dana Maddux

Nicole Mansfield

Emily Marek

Dianna Medendorp

Alex Michael

Angela Mosley

Tammie Ramirez

Kaylan Rauch

Denae Scheidler

Madison Shamel

Lauren Snyder

Christine Taylor

Meghan Winterstein

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

EightCAP, Inc.

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Mid Michigan Community Action Agency

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Community Action

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

Mid Michigan Community Action Agency

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Community Action

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

Community Action

Washtenaw County Office of Community & Economic Development

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Monroe County Opportunity Program

Community Action

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency

Community Action

EightCAP, Inc.

Community Action

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Sessions

Thursday | July 30

7:30– 8:30 Breakfast

Sponsored by FHL Bank Indianapolis

Arcadia Ballroom

8:30– 9:30

General Session

Arcadia Ballroom

The Power of We: Transforming Tomorrow Together

Dr. Sabrina Jackson

Michigan Community Action represents an unstoppable force for good, spanning 27 agencies across all 83 counties—but true transformation ultimately happens through ****people****. In this high-energy keynote, Dr. Sabrina Jackson explores the human element of change, challenging agency staff, board members, and partners to break down silos, leverage diverse behavioral strengths, and protect their personal reservoirs from burnout. Get ready to laugh, reflect, refill your cup, and step boldly into the future with actionable tools to connect deeper across county lines. Tomorrow is waiting, Michigan—let's go transform it together!



9:45– 11:00

The Power of Authentic Storytelling: Building Trust, Visibility, and Community

Veronica McGibney – LeadHer Magazine

Glens 1

This interactive session will explore how leaders can uncover and communicate the deeper story behind their work in order to strengthen visibility, increase engagement, and inspire support. Participants will learn how to identify the core story of their organization, why authentic messaging builds stronger community trust, and how storytelling can help transform outreach, partnerships, and engagement. This session will include guided exercises that help participants begin crafting their organization's "Why Story" and explore practical ways it can be used in marketing, fundraising, and community building.

9:45– 11:00

From Crisis to Capacity: Building Resilient Community Action Agencies

LD

Joni Woods – Journey Coaching

Glens 2

This interactive workshop will explore practical strategies for strengthening organizational capacity and resilience while maintaining a focus on community impact. Participants will examine real-world challenges faced by Community Action agencies, discuss effective approaches for managing change and preventing staff burnout, and identify ways to foster stronger internal cultures and partnerships.

Beyond Posting: How to Build a Marketing Engine That Drives Visibility, Engagement, and Results

OE

Amanda Bergeron and Frances Ommani – Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

Glens 3

In this interactive workshop, presenters from NEMCSA will share the systems and strategies that helped grow their agency's online presence to an average of 100,000 views per month, while also strengthening internal communication and cross-department collaboration. This session moves beyond simply “posting on social media.” Participants will learn how to build a structured marketing system that supports mission-driven work across programs and leadership teams.

What We Normalize Today Becomes Tomorrow’s Culture

LD

Sarah Davis and Ashley Davis – OTBP Consulting

Prairies 6

This session examines how everyday leadership responses to conflict, performance, communication, and boundaries create long-term cultural consequences. Participants will explore how normalization happens, why it is so difficult to disrupt, and how shared responsibility plays a critical role in shaping healthier, more intentional cultures. Drawing on real-world leadership and HR consulting experience, this session challenges participants to move beyond intention and examine the patterns they may be unintentionally reinforcing.

Courageous Communication: A Leader’s Guide to Difficult Conversations

LD

Maria Madrigal – Shine Early Learning

Prairies 5

Difficult conversations are an inevitable part of leadership—yet many educators, supervisors, and program leaders find them challenging to navigate with confidence and care. This interactive session equips participants with a practical, empathy-centered framework for approaching conversations that involve strong emotions, differing perspectives, or sensitive cultural and identity-based concerns.

Sessions

Thursday | July 30

9:45 – 11:00

Communication and Effective Leadership

LD

Stormy Trotter – The Artifex Group

Prairies 4

In this presentation, we will delve into strategies outlined in our “Partnership Playbook” to foster collaboration in youth development and community improvement initiatives. Through engaging discussion and practical examples, participants will gain insights into the importance of partnerships, learn how to initiate and pursue a partnership, set SMART goals, build trust and rapport, and evaluate partnerships for continuous improvement.

Michigan’s Housing Story: Shaping the Next Statewide Housing Plan Together

PP

Megan Spitz – MSHDA and Courtney Barthle – ICF

Stone Theater

Michigan is developing its next five-year Statewide Housing Plan — a roadmap that will help guide housing policy, investment, and action across the state. This interactive session invites participants to help shape that work by sharing perspectives, experiences, and emerging priorities connected to housing and prosperity in Michigan communities.

Rather than a traditional presentation, this session is designed as a focused conversation. Participants will engage in facilitated activities and real-time input exercises that surface community insights, identify opportunities and challenges, and help ensure the plan reflects the experiences of people and communities across Michigan. The session will also help strengthen relationships between the Statewide Housing Plan process and regional and local leaders, creating pathways for continued engagement and helping participants identify additional voices and perspectives that should inform the plan moving forward.

Participants do not need housing expertise to contribute — lived experience, community leadership, and regional perspective are all valuable.

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

Pre-KAC

Sponsored by Capital Access and Yeo & Yeo CPAs & Advisors

11:15 – 12:30

From Influence to Impact: Electoral Advocacy for Early Childhood Leaders and the Families They Serve

OE

Olivia Gorczyca – Early Childhood Investment Corporation

Glens 1

The 2026 election season has significant stakes for the state of Michigan and the country. In addition to a gubernatorial race, every seat in Michigan's State legislature is up for reelection, and all of Michigan's congressional delegation is up for reelection absent one U.S. Senate seat. The outcomes of these elections will shape Michigan's early childhood landscape for years to come. And with a critical 2026 election season underway, compounding state budget challenges, and significant federal policy shifts in play, our state must engage in robust mobilization, collaboration, and electoral advocacy strategies to uplift the needs of our state's children and families. This session will provide state and federal landscape context and practical guidance to support the engagement and elevation of family and parent voices in advocacy.

Collaborating with AI as a Thinking Partner & Avoiding AI Psychosis

OE

Matthew Anderson – Leadership Coaching for Results

Glens 2

AI isn't going anywhere, and soon it will likely be as inseparable from us as our phones are today. So how do we make this new tool genuinely useful in our work and the communities we serve? In this session, we'll move past simply "using" AI and learn how to collaborate with it as a true thinking partner. We'll also confront the other side of the coin: AI's proven ability to make people believe things that aren't real. Through serious cautionary tales and practical solutions, you'll have a better understanding of how to engage with AI confidently, and you'll be introduced to a new form of literacy, AI Discernment, which protects your mind, your judgment, and your mission from the rising risk of AI Psychosis.

Writing Great Fundraising Letters: 14 Ways to Transform Your Appeals... Inside and Out!

OE

Laura Huth Rhoades – do good Consulting

Glens 3

In this session, award-winning fundraiser Laura Huth-Rhoades of do good Consulting will share 14 tried-and-true techniques to create fundraising appeals – from the inside and out – and that recipients just won't be able to resist. With these easy techniques, a bit of elbow grease, and a long-term vision, you can increase reply rates and see donations – and donation amounts – rise.

Sessions

Thursday | July 30

11:15 – 12:30

Humanizing Your Story Through Video

OE

Paul Schmidt – UnoDeuce Media

Prairies 6

In this session, Paul J. Schmidt — Owner and Creative Video Strategist of UnoDeuce Studio — breaks down how strategic video, intentional messaging, and innovative training tools can sharpen your marketing and deepen member engagement. With more than two decades of experience in media production, Paul brings real-world insight into what it takes to turn your mission into a message that resonates, illustrates it, and inspires your audience.

Being an Inclusive Leader

LD

Gary Abernathy – Marsh McLennan Agency

Prairies 5

Inclusive leadership drives team and organizational success by aligning and activating people and business strategies effectively. Inclusive leaders ensure all team members are treated respectfully while fostering an environment where everyone feels they belong and can contribute their best work. This training prepares managers and leaders by equipping them with practical tools and strategies to build inclusive cultures that drive engagement innovation and business results.

Building Stronger Programs Through Play: Engagement, Relationships, and Positive Behavior

IP

PP

Mike Schulte and Judy Tipton – Playworks Michigan

Stone Theater

Many community-based programs are working to create safe, engaging environments where children can build relationships, stay active, and fully participate. At the same time, staff often navigate challenges with behavior, transitions, and maintaining consistent engagement throughout the day. This interactive session explores how adults can use play intentionally to strengthen program quality and support positive youth outcomes. Participants will learn practical strategies to reduce conflict, support smoother transitions, and create engaging environments that help children stay connected and involved. Participants will engage in simple, energizing activities they can use immediately to build teamwork, confidence, and leadership supporting stronger program culture and more consistent participation.

Meals

TUESDAY, JULY 28

7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast

Sponsored By: Shine Early Learning

Arcadia Ballroom

12:30 – 1:30 Lunch

Sponsored By: Mutual of America

Arcadia Ballroom

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast

Sponsored By: SEMCO Energy Gas Company

Arcadia Ballroom

12:30 – 1:30 Lunch

Sponsored By: Michigan State Housing Development Authority

Arcadia Ballroom

6:00 – 7:00 Dinner

7:00 – 10:00 Graduation & Entertainment

Sponsored By: Fortell

Arcadia Ballroom

Thursday, JULY 30

7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast

Sponsored By: FHL Bank Indianapolis

Arcadia Ballroom

Snack Breaks

Sponsored By: Capital Access and Yeo & Yeo CPAs & Advisors

Pre-function and Pre-KAC

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Click Download.

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2. Tap "Install"

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If the app doesn't open directly to the MCA app click Add and Existing Yapp. If it asks for a Yapp ID enter MCA26Conf. Click the picture like the one to the right.

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Enable notifications so you don't miss any important updates.

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In the attendee list, look for your name.

- If you find your name, tap it and select "This is Me. Use my Profile!"
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You'll be taken to the login page.

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Need Help? Just ask a staff member—we're happy to assist!

*Thank You for Attending
We Hope to See You
Next Year at Crystal Mountain*

Notes

Notes



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