

Transforming Tomorrow *Together*



2026 MCA Summer Conference Preliminary Program

Radisson Plaza Hotel

Kalamazoo, MI

July 27 – 30, 2026

Conference Schedule

Monday

July 27 | 2026

Pre-Conference

10:30 - 11:30 AM	MCA Finance Committee
12:00 - 1:00 PM	MCA Board of Directors
1:00 - 1:30 PM	Lunch
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 - 10:00 PM	Directors Dinner

Tuesday

July 28 | 2026

6:30 - 7:00 AM	Wellness Activity (TBD)
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 - 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:45 - 3:00 PM	Breakout Sessions
3:00 - 3:30 PM	Break
3:30 - 4:45 PM	Breakout Sessions
<i>Dinner on your own</i>	
7:00 - 9:00 PM	Networking Mixer

Schedule subject to change

Wednesday

July 29 | 2026

6:30 - 7:00 AM	Wellness Activity (TBD)
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 - 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:45 - 3:00 PM	Breakout Sessions
3:00 - 3:30 PM	Break
3:30 - 4:45 PM	Breakout Sessions
6:00 - 9:00 PM	LDI Graduation / Dinner 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
12:30 - 12:45 PM	Closing/

Featured Speakers

Bridget Hilton

Dr. Sabrina Jackson

Dan Kildee

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change as speakers and session content continues to be confirmed.

Special Sessions and Activities

Pre-registration Required

Give Back and Connect

Brown Bag Decorating for Sack Suppers

Kids Food Basket

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!

Community Care: Park Beautification

Bronson Park

Step outside, soak up some sunshine, and make a difference! Join fellow attendees for a feel-good outing at Bronson Park—just a short walk from the Radisson—where you can 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.

Tools and materials will be provided on site.

Care Kits

Care Collective of Southwest Michigan

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. Nearly 100% of the products distributed by Care Collective are repackaged in some way! To create a consistent and reliable experience for menstruators, we produce monthly menstruation kits in two different varieties: pads and tampons. Volunteers will help produce tampon kits: counting out products, bagging them up, and labelling them so they can be distributed. These kits will be sent all across the county to various public schools, colleges, and community centers!

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—perfect for brightening up your garden or houseplants. Prefer a more chill vibe? Grab some markers and bring pre-designed coasters to life, or let your imagination run wild and create your own masterpiece. It's the perfect mix of connection, creativity, and calm!

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Refresh and Recharge

Sound Bath Session

Ignite Studios

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. Whether you're looking to de-stress, reset, or just enjoy a peaceful moment, this session offers the perfect opportunity to relax, recharge, and reconnect.

Somatic Release

Blush Salon

This session offers gentle, guided movement paired with grounding techniques designed to help you release tension, quiet your mind, and reconnect with your body. You'll activate your body's natural "rest and digest" state, leaving you feeling calm, clear, and centered. Walk away refreshed with reduced stress, improved focus, and a renewed sense of balance—ready to take on the rest of your conference with clarity and ease.

Connect and Learn

A Walk in the Park: Civil Dialogue in Motion

Grau Interpersonal Communication

Join us and experience an unusual way to have difficult conversations. Learn an approach to dialogue applicable to any challenging conversation across divides; whether board or staff disagreements, community conflicts, issue-based political divides, even family or romantic disputes. Principles of civil dialogue are used to address opposing views on challenging topics in a non-threatening 2-person interaction. This conversational technique was developed by Robert Sachs, a board member of the Worldwide Civility Council and author of the book *The Path of Civility: Perfecting Lessons of a President by Applying the Wisdom of a Buddha*. Members of the International Listening Association have used it with great success. Now, you can too.

Storytelling for Impact

Bellwether Public Relations

This one gets people out of lecture mode and into participation mode. 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.

Best for: Experienced CAA staff who learn by doing and will engage more deeply when the content connects to their real work.

Preliminary Agenda

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Breakout Sessions

The Benefits Balancing Act: Managing Rising Costs While Supporting Employees

Rose Street Advisors

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.

Attendees will leave this session equipped with tools and strategies to ensure their organizations stay competitive and continue to embody the spirit of hope and self-sufficiency, ultimately fostering stronger, more resilient communities.

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

Rising Consulting Company

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.

From Surviving to Thriving: Building a Trauma Informed Organizational Culture

Community Action Agency

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.

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

EightCAP, Inc.

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.

Preliminary Agenda

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Breakout Sessions

Beyond the Myths: NEMCSA Poverty Education

Northeast Michigan
Community Service Agency

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

K. Cain Consulting, LLC.

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

KConnect

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.

Building a Resilient Nonprofit with Strategic Financial Planning

Maner Costerisan

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.

Preliminary Agenda

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Breakout Sessions

Building Strategic Energy Partnerships

ICF

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.

Strategic Planning with Hoshin Kanri: Turning Strategy into Executable Action

Lean Solutions

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

BHS Insurance

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.

Understanding Intersectionality in the Workplace **PRO Leadership Lab LLC.**

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.

Preliminary Agenda

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Breakout Sessions

Engagement is the Scoreboard, Not the Game Knight Insurance Group

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.

Practical AI Applications for Community Action Agencies on Expanding Capacity ICF

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

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 Lean Solutions

Research and real-world experience consistently show that most transformation efforts fail not because of technical design, but because of people-related challenges. Leaders often underestimate the emotional, behavioral, and cultural elements required for sustainable change.

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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

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

**Northeast Michigan
Community Service Agency**

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

K. Cain Consulting, LLC.

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.

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

**Know Better, Do Better,
LLC.**

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.

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

FHLBank Indianapolis

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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

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

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency

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

Nonprofit Nav

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

Mid Michigan Community Action Agency

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

ICF

Community Action agencies engage residents in many ways—from surveys and listening sessions to resident advisory groups and board participation. Yet organizations often face an important challenge: determining when and how to authentically engage community voices so that community perspectives meaningfully shape research and decision-making. 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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

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

Western Michigan University

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. This session is especially relevant for Community Action Agencies because they work every day with households experiencing poverty, financial instability, and exclusion from mainstream financial services.

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

K. Cain Consulting, LLC.

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

HRM

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.

From Crisis to Collaboration: Expanding Water Access Through Strategic Partnerships

Well Water Trust and Community of Allegan County

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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

Supporting Our Communities Through Change: What Immigration Policy Means to You **Immigration law & Justice Michigan**

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.

Building a Magnetic Employee Value Proposition **Marsh McLennan Agency**

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.

Community Solar 101 - A Tool to Help MI Families Navigate Electricity Price Cost Hikes **Dimension Energy**

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.

How Facilities Can Support Your Mission **IFF and Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency**

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.

MiLEAP, Office of Early Education, Informational Session **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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences - Nonprofit Network How Can We Create a World for All to Thrive

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.

Weatherization Succession & Success Planning: National Community Action Sustaining Workforce, Leadership, and Program Partnership Excellence

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. Does your organization have a plan ready to ensure success and continuity of leadership and operational knowledge in the event of a key staff retirement, a sudden departure, or changing roles? 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.

Integrated Approach to Homeowner Rehab - Public Policy Associates, Panel Ingham County, Kent County Community Action, and City of Detroit

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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

CSBG State Plan: What You Really Need to Know [BCAEO](#)

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.

Let's Make Some Noise! 17 Sure-Fire Marketing Ideas for Community Action Agencies [do good Consulting](#)

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.

The Power of Authentic Storytelling: Building Trust, Visibility, and Community [LeadHer Magazine](#)

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.

From Crisis to Capacity: Building Resilient Community Action Agencies [Journey Coaching](#)

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.

ROMA for Boards [BCAEO](#)

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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

Mission, Management, and Measurable Impact” **Joseph Garcia Consulting** **Aligning the Community Action Operating System**

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 **Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity**

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 **Early Childhood Investment Corporation**

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.

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Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

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

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency

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 **OTBP Consulting**

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 **Shine Early Learning**

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.

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

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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

Collaborating with AI as a Thinking Partner & Avoiding AI Psychosis

Leadership Coaching for Results

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!

do good Consulting

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.

Humanizing Your Story Through Video

UnoDeuce Media

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

Marsh McLennan Agency

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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

Understanding the Implications of H.R. 1 on Medicaid

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

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.

Communication & Effective Leadership-Leading with Intention and Efficacy

The Artifex Group

This session will center on enhancing leadership roles, developing self-awareness and fostering positive team dynamics. It will look at recognizing and understanding communication styles, ways to increase productivity and reduce conflict, exploring differences, as well as developing a more mindful approach in leadership.

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

Playworks Michigan

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.

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

OTBP Consulting

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.

Preliminary Agenda

Information is subject to change

Breakout Sessions

Make Someday Today: Turning Inspiration into Action

Bridget Hilton

This highly interactive workshop helps participants move beyond inspiration and take meaningful action on goals they've been postponing for "someday." Through guided discussions and peer-to-peer conversations, attendees will identify what's most important to them, uncover what's holding them back, learn from one another's experiences, and leave with a clear next step for turning intention into action.

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

Michigan State Housing Development Authority, ICF

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.