

Annual Conference Agenda

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2026

7:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Registration Desk Open

8:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Pre-Con Workshop: So You're Going to Be a City/County Manager (Pre-registration required)

Speakers: Charles Anderson, City Manager, City of Apalachicola; Carlos Baia, City Manager, City of Temple Terrace; Desiree Casanova, Assistant to the County Administrator, Sarasota County; Emily Colon, Partner, The Southern Group; Deric Feacher, City Manager, City of Daytona Beach, Ron Ferris, City Manager, City of Palm Beach Gardens; Catherine Givens, City Manager, City of Coral Springs; Rob Hernandez, Deputy City Manager, City of Lakeland; Javarious Jackson, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Cincinnati, Ohio; Lori LaVerriere, Deputy City Manager, City of Palm Beach Gardens; Cathy Pearson, Assistant County Administrator, Pasco County; Jill Silver board, Deputy County Administrator/Chief of Staff, Pinellas County; Doug Thomas, Executive Vice President Recruitment & Leadership Development, Strategic Government Resources; Eric Williams, City Manager, City of Inverness

Whether you're just beginning your career in public service or you're a seasoned professional with city or county management ambitions, this session at the FCCMA Annual Conference is a must. Becoming a City/County Manager may already be your dream job—or it may be a path you haven't yet considered. So what does it really take to get there? Career journeys into the profession vary widely, from private-sector leaders who transition into public service to dedicated public servants who set their sights early on becoming City/County Managers. This engaging half-day program brings together experienced local government leaders to provide an inside look at the evolving, complex, and impactful world of city and county management.

Through dynamic panels, candid conversations, and hands-on scenario exercises, participants will move beyond theory to explore what the job truly entails. From navigating budgets and council relationships to managing political pressure, public scrutiny, and community expectations, attendees will gain practical insight into the skills, judgment, and resilience required to succeed. Whether you are exploring the profession or actively preparing for the next step, this session offers both inspiration and a realistic roadmap for pursuing a leadership role in local government.

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Board of Directors Meeting

1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Pre-Con Workshop: Ethics for the Modern Manager: Legal Frameworks and Frontline Realities (Pre-registration required)

Moderator: Randy Mora, Attorney, Trask Daigneault

This session will provide a strong foundation for an ongoing and broader discussion of ethics. This will focus on the statutes and rules governing city and county managers as stewards of public trust. Join us for an engaging and informative session on ethics.

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Florida ICMA Student Chapter Roundtable

The Florida ICMA Student Chapter Roundtable hosted by the USF ICMA Student Chapter provides an opportunity for student leaders, faculty advisors, and local government professionals to connect and discuss the future of public service in Florida. The session will begin with a video message from David Lang of the International City/County Management Association, followed by a discussion among student chapter representatives about their activities, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration. Participants will also hear remarks from John Boehm of the Florida City and County Management Association, who will share insights on professional engagement and career pathways in local government. The session will conclude with a final discussion and closing reflections on strengthening connections among Florida's ICMA student chapters. This is a great opportunity to network, learn about professional development opportunities and advantages of ICMA Student Chapters, and discuss strategies that ICMA Student Chapters can utilize for success for your home institution.

5:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.

Connect, Collaborate and Caffeinate: Speed Networking for Local Management Professionals

Calling ALL attendees! If you're new to FCCMA, just new to the conference or would just like to network with members you may not know, join us for this unique networking session. Get to know more people, including our current board members, and learn about the association via a series of speed rounds designed to make the conversation easy and fun.

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Exhibit Hall Open

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

President's Welcome Reception

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2026

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Registration Desk Open

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Continental Breakfast in the Exhibit Hall

8:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Exhibit Hall Open

9:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Opening General Session: How to Lead with Love Through Loss and Life's Lows

Speaker: Dr. Scott Andrews, County Manager, Dona Ana County, NM

10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Refreshment Break in the Exhibit Hall

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions:

Session 1: Trust by Design: Leading Public Conversations in an Age of AI, Misinformation & Uncertainty

Speaker: Katrina Hill, Public Affairs & Communication Director, City of Winter Haven

Public trust is rarely built in the hardest moments. It is built in consistent, everyday ones. In today's environment of AI-generated content, spoof accounts, emerging platforms, rapidly forming online communities, and emotionally charged policy debate, local governments must think differently about how they lead public conversations — especially when budgets, taxes, and services move into the spotlight. This session uses municipal budget discussions as a real-world case study, while advancing a broader thesis: trust must be intentionally designed long before controversy arises. Attendees will leave with actionable frameworks to:

- * Communicate complex issues clearly and neutrally
- * Strengthen institutional credibility across evolving platforms
- * Respond to misinformation without amplifying it
- * Invite feedback in ways that build participation and trust

Session 2: People, Policy, and Purpose: Building a Path for AI in Local Government

Speaker: Christopher D. van der Kaay, Ph.D., Founder/AI Data Strategy Advisor, Castle AI Consulting

This session explores Hardee County's efforts to build a foundation for responsible AI use through clear policy, cross-departmental collaboration, and a commitment to human oversight. It highlights the County's broader work to apply AI within daily operations while strengthening cybersecurity, governance, and staff training. Hardee County staff will also discuss AI implementation in their respective areas and demonstrate practical examples of the ways these tools are supporting departmental work. Attendees will gain insight into the integration of these efforts across county operations and their alignment with broader public service goals. The presentation offers a model other local governments can consider as they develop or refine their own approaches to AI adoption.

Session 3: Using Risk-Based Analysis to Guide Stormwater Planning

Speakers: David Haas, PE, Stormwater Team Leader, American Structure point; Nick Harrison, PE, Vice President, American Structure point; and Elly Soto McKuen, Sr. Project Manager, Public Works Department, City of Bonita Springs

Florida communities face ongoing stormwater challenges, even when major flooding has not occurred recently. This session shows how communities can plan using clear data and community input to reduce future risk. Through a risk analysis case study, attendees will learn that understanding where flooding occurs and the mechanisms behind it can guide local government infrastructure investments and funding decisions.

12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Buffet Lunch in the Exhibit Hall

Join fellow participants and exhibitors in the exhibit hall for networking opportunities and a great lunch. This is included in your registration fee.

12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Past Presidents Meeting

1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Resume Review Appointments

ICMA/FCCMA Senior Advisors have been invited to meet one-on-one with attendees to discuss their individual résumés and the current job market. [Click here to sign up](#). Early reservations are recommended as there may be limited availability on-site.

2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1: From Silos to Synergy: Transforming Leadership through Collaboration

Speakers: Kerry Blood, Talent Manager, Marion County; Amanda Tart, Assistant County Administrator, Marion County; and Carl Zalak, III, District 4 Commissioner, Marion County

Leadership development can increase employee engagement by up to 70%, yet only about 10% of people are natural-born leaders. In this interactive workshop, learn how Marion County transformed its culture by inspiring leadership, reducing silos, and improving communication across departments. Participants will explore practical strategies to build stronger cross-departmental relationships, align goals, and foster collaboration. Attendees will also gain insight into how personality styles (DISC) influence teamwork and communication. The session highlights cost-effective funding resources and provides actionable tools to help county leaders strengthen teamwork, empower employees, and create a more unified, collaborative leadership culture.

Session 2: From Statute to Storm: Executive Readiness in Action

Florida's evolving emergency management framework, including the training and coordination requirements established under 2025 Senate Bill 180, places direct responsibility on executive leadership to ensure communities are prepared before, during, and after a natural storm event. This session will bring together (pending confirmation) a representative from the Florida Division of Emergency Management, a county manager (DCM or department head), and a city manager (ACM or department Head) to discuss how statutory requirements translate into operational readiness in real time. The panel will examine the newly required biennial training expectations, annual hurricane readiness coordination, and executive level accountability, while also highlighting best practices that go beyond minimum compliance, including advanced emergency management certifications and leadership driven preparedness strategies. Attendees will gain practical insight into aligning legal mandates with command level decision making, intergovernmental coordination, and resilient community response.

Session 3: How Branding Helps Smaller Florida Communities Thrive

Speakers: Anita Carter, Managing Director, North Star; Jonathan Evans, City Manager, City of Riveria Beach; Will Ketchum, CEO, North Star; Andrea McCue, City Manager, City of Greenacres; and William "Billy" Poe, City Manager, City of Zephyrhills

Whether they are beside major metros or more remote, smaller communities are often overshadowed and struggle to define themselves. This session features leaders from Greenacres, Zephyrhills, and Riviera Beach sharing how branding amplified their strategic advantages. Each city captured their distinctions and developed their own authentic story. Attendees will learn practical approaches for community engagement, aligning stakeholders and elected officials, and positioning their community to attract jobs, investment and visitors—and build resident pride.

3:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Refreshment break

3:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

General Session – 12 Strong: An Extraordinary Mission of Commitment, Purpose, Heroism and Hope

Speaker: Mark Nutsch, Commander of U.S. Special Forces

Green Beret Mark Nutsch takes audiences behind-the-scenes of the first successful Special Forces campaign that took place in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Nutsch and his team’s powerful story inspired the major motion picture, *12 Strong*, starring Chris Hemsworth as “Mitch Nelson” (Mark Nutsch). The team’s unwavering valor was also fortified by their unique, strategic partnership with their Afghan counterparts. While leveraging guerilla tactics on horseback, his 12-man team successfully outmaneuvered the full military force of the enemy to a historic victory in overthrowing the Taliban. On stage, Mark shares insights on leadership and team dynamics in overcoming insurmountable odds in what was described as “the most important mission of the free world.” Mark also shares his impressive entrepreneurial story, discussing how he and a few of his fellow Green Berets founded American Freedom Distillery and its signature Horse Soldier Bourbon. By applying the lessons they’d learned in the military—deliberate and focused planning, short- and long-term coordination, and maintaining a strategic vision—they were able to grow their business and establish an unforgettable legacy. Audiences walk away empowered to achieve their own personal and professional goals.

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Networking Reception

9:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.

Dessert Reception

Join your colleagues for a late-night reception featuring mouth-watering desserts, games, and great conversation. This is an event you don’t want to miss and is included with your registration fee.

FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2026

7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Registration Desk Open

7:45 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

7:45 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Inspirational Breakfast: Call to Serve (Pre-registration required)

Speaker: Ken Parker, ICMA/FCCMA Senior Advisor Coordinator

Ken Parker, FCCMA's Senior Advisor Coordinator, will discuss his journey to public service and what it means to be called to be a servant leader, sharing the lessons he's learned from more than 50 years of public service.

9:00 a.m. – 5:00p.m

Resume Reviews Appointments

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

General Session

Speaker: Brooks Williams, City Manager, City of Ferris, TX

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Refreshment Break

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Session 1: What to Expect and Plan for as the New City / County Manager

This session will feature experienced City and County Managers from a variety of community sizes and governance contexts, including urban, rural, city, and county environments. Panelists will share practical insights for professionals entering their first manager role or transitioning to a new community. Discussion will explore establishing expectations with elected officials, engaging the executive leadership team, and identifying key priorities before arrival, on day one, and during the first three months. Panelists will also highlight common blind spots and lessons learned. The session will conclude with audience Q&A, offering participants the opportunity to engage directly with seasoned practitioners.

Session 2: Data Centers: Community Survey Findings and Leadership Insights

Speakers: Scott Butler, City Manager, City of Mesa, AZ; Lee Feldman, Senior Advisor, Zencity; and Jonathan Lewis, County Administrator, Sarasota County

Data centers are increasingly dominating the conversation on the news and in our communities. Explore the feedback of Florida residents on this topic – benchmarked against national data – to uncover community concerns, questions, and priorities, and what it all can mean for decision-making. Hear from local government leaders from Mesa, AZ and Sarasota County, who are navigating this conversation firsthand, and leave with insights to drive more informed, community-driven decisions in your own jurisdiction.

Session 3: Economic Development: Beyond Planning

Speakers: Kevin Crowder, Founder, Business Flare; Kim Glas-Castro, Deputy Village Manager, Village of Palm Springs; and George Stokus, Assistant County Administrator, Martin County

Most economic development plans sit on shelves. Follow two Florida communities, Martin County and the Village of Palm Springs, through the full journey from ideation, to planning, to implementation, and to market. Walk away with practical strategies for building political will, achieving community buy-in, and

turning your own plans into adopted incentive toolkits, regulatory changes, new branding, and investment ready sites, with or without a CRA.

12:00 p.m. –1:30 p.m.

Annual Business Luncheon

1:45 p.m. –3:00 p.m.

The 2026 Florida Legislative Session: What Happened, What Matters, and What Comes Next for Local Government

Each legislative session brings new challenges and opportunities for Florida’s local governments. This session will provide a strategic overview of the 2026 Legislative Session, highlighting major issues affecting cities and counties and the policy trends emerging from Tallahassee. Learn what passed, what didn’t, and what may return in 2027—along with practical insights to help managers prepare their organizations and elected officials for the year ahead.

3:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Networking Time

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Spouses’ Gathering

5:45 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Friday Night Social

Join us for a jolly good time at Pirates Dinner Adventure. Cheer for the hero and his princess as they battle an evil pirate and his crew on board a Spanish galleon. Enjoy music, sword fights, and aerial stunts. You might even catch sight of a mermaid or two. The event features a pre-show reception, dinner, and full bar. This is an event for the entire family, but everyone who attends MUST be registered and have a name badge.

Transportation will be provided.

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 2026

8:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Legacy Council Breakfast: “Past, Present, Future: Shaping the Next Era of Local Government Leadership”

A dynamic panel that contrasts the historical context of city/county management with the current and emerging trends. Live polling is used to compare the audience’s perspective with the panel’s insights.