

2025



STAFF DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

APRIL 22-24
UGA CENTER FOR
CONTINUING
EDUCATION & HOTEL
ATHENS, GA

HOSTED BY:
THE ATHENS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Tuesday, April 22, 2025 – UGA Continuing Education Center & Hotel – Athens, GA

- 2:00pm** **CONFERENCE REGISTRATION OPENS** Pecan Tree Galleria
Please note that hotel rooms may not be available for check-in until 4:00pm.
- 2:00 – 3:00pm** **Welcome to the Chamber Industry Session** Masters Hall
This is a session for any new chamber staff members.
- 3:00 – 4:30pm** **OPENING KEYNOTE SESSION** Masters Hall
Influence and Energy: Driving Success
Chambers have always embraced their role as Community Conveners but that isn't enough in today's climate. Chambers need to embrace their role as Community Influencers in a way that creates a positive, productive and collaborative working environment in our communities. Positive energy is infectious and leaders who radiate positive energy influence actions and drive success. But few of us take the time to identify and utilize our energy as a key component of our leadership and influence style. In this session, you'll learn why your influence is critical to your chamber's success and how to tap into your personal energy to create influence that gets things done.
Casey Steinbacher, Finding Next LLC
- 5:00 – 7:00pm** **WELCOME RECEPTION & DINNER** Magnolia Ballroom
Fun evening reconnecting with your peers! We will also have special tours around UGA that you won't want to miss!
Hosted by the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce

Wednesday, April 23, 2025 – UGA Continuing Education Center & Hotel – Athens, GA

- 8:00 – 9:00am** **BREAKFAST BUFFET** Magnolia Ballroom
No formal presentation during breakfast so you can network together.
- 9:00 – 9:15am** **OFFICIAL CONFERENCE WELCOME** Masters Hall
Sara Ray, President & CEO, Douglas County Chamber & 2025 SDC Chair
David Bradley, President & CEO, Athens Area Chamber
- 9:15 – 10:30am** **GENERAL SESSION** Masters Hall
Repeat or Evolve: Harnessing Your Focus to Ignite Creativity and Innovation
Every day offers us a choice: to stay in the comfort of repetition or to embrace the growth of evolution. In this inspiring and actionable talk, Jes will guide you through the art of noticing, harnessing, and focusing your personal energy to fuel creativity, drive innovation, and stay inspired in a rapidly changing environment. Drawing on insights from leaders like the Former GM of the Dallas Mavericks, the former CEO of the world's largest medical device company, and trailblazing venture capitalists, Jes shares practical strategies and guiding principles to help you channel your energy into meaningful progress. Learn how to turn ordinary days into extraordinary opportunities that are productive, empowering, and deeply fulfilling.
Jes Averhart, Open Roads Strategy

10:30am **BREAK** **Sponsor Area – Pecan Tree Galleria**

10:45 – 11:45am **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

Topic 1 – Advocacy Part 1 **Masters Hall**
Speaker/Panelists TBD

Topic 2 – Ambassador Programs **Room TBD**
Speaker/Panelists TBD

Topic 3 – Non-Dues Revenue Best Practices **Room TBD**
Speaker/Panelists TBD

Noon – 1:30pm **SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON** **Magnolia Ballroom**
We will be presenting our 2025-26 GACCE Scholarships & our Staff Service Awards.

1:30 – 2:30pm **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

Topic 1 – Advocacy Part 2 **Masters Hall**
Speaker/Panelists TBD

Topic 2 – Operations Best Practices **Room TBD**
Speaker/Panelists TBD

Topic 3 – Membership Best Practices **Room TBD**
Speaker/Panelists TBD

2:30pm **EXTENDED BREAK** **Sponsor Area – Pecan Tree Galleria**

3:00 – 4:00pm **60 IDEAS IN 60 MINUTES BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
Come prepared to share your favorite best practices – there will be a prize for the best in each session!

Topic 1 – Events **Masters Hall**
Facilitator TBD

Topic 2 – Communications/Marketing **Room TBD**
Facilitator TBD

Topic 3 – Membership/Operations **Room TBD**
Facilitator TBD

5:00pm **REGIONAL NETWORKING DINNERS** **Local Athens Restaurants**
We want our members to get to know each other better by their regions, so we've asked our Regional GACCE Board Members to host dinners for their regions. These dinners will be Dutch treat. We will start the evening with a reception in the courtyard with our sponsors for a cocktail, then you'll be free to enjoy dinner in Athens!

Thursday, April 24, 2025 – UGA Continuing Education Center & Hotel – Athens, GA

8:00 – 9:00am

BREAKFAST BUFFET

Magnolia Ballroom

“Ask Us Anything” Panel Session with Legacy Award Winners

9:00 – 10:30am

CLOSING WORKSHOP

Dogwood Hall

Wrap Up Whys

Whether you're a veteran or a newbie in the Chamber world, there's never enough time at Chamber conferences to tie all the presentations and conversations together to really focus on how they all matter to your success. We tend to compartmentalize, select the one that resonated the most (or you actually paid attention to) and spend time in the car ride home wondering how to activate once back at the office. In this session, we'll take a little bit of time to recap what we've heard, discuss how it all can fit together, why it matters and who we need to engage back home to ensure it's productive. And since every instance of success requires a celebration dance, we'll discover who amongst us has the BEST...and steal it of course, 'cause that's what we do in this industry!

Casey Steinbacher, Finding Next LLC