

NLCC 2026

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

AGENDA

Engaged Community

Wednesday, April 22

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| 5:30pm – 7:30pm | Board of Directors Dinner |
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Thursday, April 23

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| 8:00am – 4:00pm | Board of Directors Meeting |
| 1:00pm – 6:30pm | Attendee Registration |
| 4:00pm – 5:00pm | SAE Meeting (Invite Only) |
| 4:30pm – 5:30pm | First-Time Attendee Orientation |
| 5:30pm – 7:30pm | Welcome Reception |

Friday, April 24

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| 7:30am – 8:30am | Continental Breakfast |
| 7:30am – 5:00pm | Attendee Registration |
| 8:30am – 5:00pm | Future Leaders Program |
| 8:30am – 4:30pm | Headshot Lounge Open |
| 8:30am – 9:45am | Welcome/Leadership Journey <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ashley Powell, PhD, RD, SNS, FAND, President-Elect Keynote Address – SPONSORED <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rediscover Your Play |

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| | <p><i>Jeff Harry, Founder & CEO, Rediscover Your Play</i></p> <p>This session explores how shifting from achievement-only mindsets to intentional play can build belonging, spark creativity, increase focus through flow, and strengthen intrinsic motivation, reducing burnout and improving staff retention. Attendees will help their teams identify unique play styles and understand how play fosters belonging and purpose, learn the science of flow and how play boosts focus, productivity, and satisfaction at work, and practice positive psychology techniques that connect employees' roles to their intrinsic motivation.</p> |
| 9:45am – 10:00am | Break |
| 10:00 am – 10:45 am | <p>Curated Education Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>• Robert's Rules 101 <i>Denise R. Irminger, PRP,</i> This introductory session provides a practical overview of Robert's Rules of Order and the key principles that support fair, orderly, and effective meetings. Attendees will learn basic terminology, common motions, voting procedures, and the role of the chair, while gaining a stronger understanding of how parliamentary procedure can help boards and committees conduct business with clarity and confidence.</p> <p>• Treasurer 101: Financial Leadership Essentials for Nonprofit Associations <i>Dan Conge, Vice-President of Client Accounting Services, Support KC</i> This practical session provides a high-level overview of the key responsibilities and foundational knowledge needed for association treasurers in small to mid-sized associations. Participants will gain insights into sound bookkeeping practices, risk management, and the essential financial reports and forms every treasurer should understand. With a focus on real-world scenarios and common challenges, this session will empower current and future leaders to confidently steward their organization's finances and support strong governance.</p> <p>• How State Affiliates Structure Leadership Positions and Share Responsibilities <i>Michele Switzer, Executive Director Maryland School Nutrition Association; Callie Fowler Farish, SNA of OK and AR Executive Director</i> This session explores how state affiliates structure leadership roles, define responsibilities, and distribute work across their</p> |

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| | <p>boards to support effective governance and sustainable volunteer leadership. Using the governance framework of the School Nutrition Association (SNA) as a reference point, participants will examine how common leadership models, such as the President, President-Elect succession structure, officer roles, and board committees, are adapted at the state level to meet the needs of different affiliates. The session will highlight practical approaches to clarifying officer responsibilities, sharing operational and strategic work among board members, and leveraging committees or staff partnerships to support key functions such as conferences, membership engagement, advocacy, and financial oversight. Attendees will also consider how bylaws, policies, and standard operating procedures can help document roles and responsibilities, preserve institutional knowledge, and create smoother leadership transitions from year to year.</p> |
| 10:45am – 11:00am | Break |
| 11:00 am-11:45 am | <p>Curated Education Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Duties and Responsibilities of Non-Profit Boards of Directors and Officers Peter Spanos, Offit Kurman, P.A., Non-profit Boards of Directors must fulfill their leadership responsibilities in an environment of high expectations and ever-intensifying scrutiny from a wide range of stakeholders. SNA’s General Counsel, Peter Spanos of the Taylor English law firm, provides a comprehensive review of the fiduciary obligations imposed on Directors and Officers by law, as well as critical guidance on conflicts of interest, confidentiality, powers exercised by the Board of Directors, guidelines for communications, and legal protections available to Directors and Officers</p> <p>Engaging with your legislators, the critical role of advocacy in school nutrition Elizabeth Campbell, MA, RDN, SNA VP Government Affairs & Media Relations, The communication triangle between the U.S. Congress, USDA and SNA is critically important, necessary, and extremely valuable for ensuring a positive outcome for your advocacy efforts and child nutrition program priorities. SNA’s advocacy path will be highlighted step by step to demonstrate how you can be part of the discussions, the importance of being part of</p> |

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| | <p>the process, and potential downsides if you are not. This session will share resources you can tap into, a timeline of how the regulatory and legislative process works, and pointers on how to establish a relationship with your legislators and USDA so that you are the first person they reach out to with questions on child nutrition. In addition, a new SNA advocacy platform will be unveiled which will provide you with the perfect tool for tracking and monitoring legislation at both the state and federal level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing Conflict in Board Meetings: Practical Scenarios and Parliamentary Guidance <i>Denise R. Irminger, PRP,</i> This session will focus on practical board meeting management through the lens of real-world conflict scenarios. Using examples tailored to common governance challenges, attendees will explore how to navigate difficult situations in meetings, apply parliamentary procedure appropriately, manage debate and decorum, and respond to conflicts in a way that supports fair process and effective board leadership. |
| 11:45am – 12:00pm | Break |
| 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm | <p>Lunch w/ SNA Update</p> <p>Stephanie Dillard, MS, SNS, SNA President, and Patricia Montague, FASAE, CAE, SNA Chief Executive Officer</p> |
| 1:15 pm – 1:45 pm | <p>“Hear from your Peers” Sessions</p> <p>The “Hear from Your Peers” sessions will provide a forum for attendees to share successful practices and knowledge from their state or national leadership experience. They will walk away with strategies for better collaboration while establishing relationships that will transcend the summit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future Leaders – Future Leaders Alumni Panel, <i>Stephanie Dillard, MS, SNS, SNA President; Ashley Powell, PhD, RD, SNS, FAND, President-Elect; Dee’on Bellamy, Employee/Manager Representative, Stephanie Utley, SNA of Kentucky President;</i> (Future Leaders Program Only) Experienced Leaders – The Toll of Being “Always On”, <i>Stephanie Walker-Hynes, M.Ed., SNS, President-Elect Arkansas SNA; Ronda Stacker, President-Elect Mississippi SNA; Tracy Price, President-Elect SNA of Arizona</i> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presiding Leaders – Finding Your People: Building Community in Association Leadership, <i>Cindy Stephens, President Tennessee SNA; Katlyn Lanoue RDN, LD, President-Elect Missouri SNA; Rene Osman, President-Elect Idaho SNA</i> |
| 1:45 pm – 2:00 pm | Break |
| 2:00 pm – 2:45 pm | <p>Curated Education Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Power of Purposeful Leadership <i>Mary Ellen Gilliam, Assistant Director of Child Nutrition</i> The traditional model of the leader who is the smartest person in the room, often driven by power and financial gain isn't appropriate in today's environment. Leaders today must be insightful and purposeful from all aspects. This session, The Power of Purposeful Leadership, explores the #FabFive attributes needed to unleash leaders within your organization who are purposeful, resulting in high performing individuals and an organization. • Leading From the Center: The Inner Nutrition of Leadership - A Playful and Practical Renewal Experience for School Nutrition Leaders <i>Robert Pruitt, Owner, Get Into It With Pruitt</i> This session reframes child nutrition leadership through the lens of “leadership minerals”, the internal nutrients that support clarity, steadiness, decision-making, and purpose (grounding, calm, communication energy, and emotional regulation). Participants step out of the day-to-day to notice what’s happening internally and how depletion from staffing shortages, high-volume service, or emotional overload can lead to fatigue, reactivity, and reduced influence. Using a quick Leadership Mineral Assessment and a practical Center-Out Replenishment Protocol, attendees learn simple micro-practices to restore their internal energy in moments of pressure and lead with greater steadiness; supporting their own well-being, their teams, and the students they serve. • Informational Session & Demo - New Element State Affiliate Portal <i>Laura Maynard, VP, Membership & Credentialing & Dion Dears, Director, Membership & Service Center, SNA</i> In this session, we’ll give an overview and demo of the new Element State Affiliate Portal. Topics covered will include state membership rosters, data export features, state membership dues reports, and other exciting upcoming changes. Come and |

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| | learn about the new improvements coming soon to your SNA State Affiliate Portal. |
| 2:45 pm – 3:00pm | Break |
| 3:00 pm – 3:45 pm | <p>Curated Education Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Strategies for putting together a strong plan of action – <i>Craig Weidel, SNS, MHT., MNLP., CEO, Speaking Dynamic Concepts, LLC.; Sonja Anthony, MS, SNS, Executive Director Alabama School Nutrition Association</i></p> <p>This session provides a step-by-step walkthrough on building a clear and actionable plan. Learn how to set goals, outline strategies, and create a roadmap for success.</p> <p>Leadership is Bananas! <i>Lacy Willey, Child Nutrition Director,</i></p> <p>Get ready to peel back the layers of effective leadership in this energetic and empowering session built around the acronym BANANAS—Bold, Adaptable, Nurturing, Accountable, Navigating, Authentic, and Supportive. Whether you're new to leadership or have many years of experience, these seven traits will help you lead with purpose, resilience, and heart. Participants will explore real-world examples from school food service, reflect on their own leadership style, and engage in interactive activities designed to strengthen team relationships and decision-making. Come prepared to laugh, learn, and leave with practical tools and a leadership checklist you can start using immediately. Let's go BANANAS for leadership!</p> <p>The Amazing Power of Imagination <i>JoAnne Robinett, School Nutrition Specialist,</i></p> <p>Does your state association need an innovation infusion? Could YOU be the person to help move it forward? This interactive session will uncover the top reasons we sometimes lack creativity or end up getting shut down when we try to modernize or streamline. Then, JoAnne will provide tips and show examples for YOU to creatively solve problems while smiling, earning a CEU, and displaying your mad genius qualities!</p> |
| 3:50 pm – 5:00 pm | State Planning Time |
| 3:50 pm – 5:00pm | <p>Introduction To DiSC[®] Profiles (Future Leaders Program Only)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p><i>Harmeet Singh, SNA Senior State Relations Associate (Future Leaders Program Only)</i></p> |

Saturday, April 25

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| 7:30 am – 8:30 am | Continental Breakfast |
| 9:00 am -12:00 pm | Headshot Lounge Open |
| 8:30am – 11:30am | Future Leaders Program |
| 8:30 am – 9:30 am | <p>Keynote Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPAR, Leading so the best ideas, not the biggest egos, win <i>Chris Failla, Founder & Lead Facilitator at See the Human, LLC</i> In this dynamic, interactive session, we'll explore how to build a culture where people feel safe to speak up, disagree, and debate, so the best ideas rise above the loudest voices. Chris Failla introduces a transformative approach to navigating conflict with dignity, curiosity, and creativity, showing how "sparring - not fighting" can strengthen collaboration, deepen trust, and drive innovation. Attendees will learn to distinguish productive disagreement from destructive conflict, apply practical tools to foster trust and teamwork in high-stakes conversations, and transform competition into cooperation so diverse ideas can thrive. |
| 9:30am – 9:45am | Break |
| 9:45 am – 10:30 am | <p>Curated Education Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How your greatest weaknesses can become your greatest strengths <i>Chris Gillespie, Business Development Manager,</i> I grew up with learning disabilities—dyslexia and ADD—and experienced plenty of failures; after enough of them, you either keep going down the same path or you find another way. School often teaches there's only one way to learn, but I was fortunate to have people who made space for me to learn at my own pace and in my own way, which helped me embrace failure as a necessary step forward. That perspective shapes how I support others: when a team member is struggling, I don't assume they're not doing a good job—I ask whether we've done everything we can to help them succeed, whether they need different types of support (audio, video, translated materials), or whether they need more encouragement through genuine recognition and appreciation. Everyone learns differently, and when we make space for that, we build teams that perform better and feel valued and understood. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Association Management Models: Panel Discussion <i>Paulina Van Eeden Hill, CAE, COO, Strategic Association Management; Brandon Monk, Executive Director, SNAPA, SNAI, SNAM; Laura Lynn, SNS, M. Ed, Executive Director GSNA; Craig Weidel, SNS, MHT., MNLP., Executive Director SNA of Arizona</i> This balanced, informational panel will compare two common state association management models: contracting with an Association Management Company (AMC) and operating with a standalone executive director and staff structure. The session is designed to be neutral and practical, focused on governance and operational considerations rather than recommending one approach. Panelists will discuss topics such as board and executive director roles and boundaries, staffing sustainability, leadership transitions and continuity, budgeting and oversight, and lessons learned in building effective systems. Time will be reserved for audience questions and discussion. #BlahBlahBlah: Do You Hear Me? <i>Mary Ellen Gilliam, SNS, Assistant Director of Child Nutrition,</i> This interactive session explores the fundamentals of effective communication in professional settings. Participants will learn how to express ideas clearly, listen actively, and adapt their communication style to different audiences. Through real-world examples and practical strategies, the session will equip attendees with tools to enhance clarity, build trust, and reduce misunderstandings in professional interactions. |
| 10:30am – 10:45am | Break |
| 10:45 am – 11:15 am | <p>“Hear from your Peers” Sessions</p> <p>The “Hear from Your Peers” sessions will provide a forum for attendees to share successful practices and knowledge from their state or national leadership experience. They will walk away with strategies for better collaboration while establishing relationships that will transcend the summit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future Leaders – Reflection on yourself using DiSC[®] Profiles - <i>Harmeet Singh, SNA Senior State Relations Associate (Future Leaders Program Only)</i> Experienced Leaders – Help Develop Your “Why?” - <i>Stephanie Gates, SNS, President SNA of Vermont; Lauren Crowley, SNS, President SNA of New Hampshire</i> Presiding Leaders – Creating SOPs to Strengthen Leadership Transitions- <i>Denise Di’Mare, Executive Director SNA of Connecticut; April Cuddeback, Executive Director SNA of Iowa</i> |

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| 11:30am | Conference Ends |
| 1:00pm – 4:00pm | OPTIONAL – State Planning Time |