

2026 IA SHRM State Conference Tracks with Topic Ideas

The theme HR: The Greatest Profession celebrates the creativity, strategy, and people-first leadership that make HR the driving force behind every successful organization. Inspired by the energy and spectacle of The Greatest Showman, this conference highlights how HR professionals bring together talent, culture, innovation, and leadership to create workplaces where people and organizations thrive. Like every unforgettable production, success happens both center stage and behind the scenes, and HR professionals are the ones orchestrating it all.

This conference invites attendees to explore the latest trends, innovative strategies, and best practices shaping the future of work. From attracting top talent and developing leaders to embracing technology, fostering inclusion, and navigating compliance challenges, HR professionals continue to elevate the employee experience and drive organizational success. By building workplaces rooted in connection, creativity, adaptability, and purpose, HR leaders help every individual step into the spotlight and perform at their very best.

Below are this year's tracks, and suggested topic ideas under each one, although we always welcome your creativity and innovation as to what you bring to the conference!

“Casting the Show” – Recruiting and Talent Acquisition

- Creative recruiting strategies in a competitive market
- Building authentic employer brands
- Candidate experience and engagement
- Recruiting across generations and skill levels
- Internship and early talent programs
- Skills-based hiring and workforce flexibility
- AI and technology in recruiting
- Hiring for culture add versus culture fit
- Building talent pipelines for the future

“The Art of Total Rewards” – Benefits and Compensation

- Emerging compensation trends and strategies
- Pay transparency and evolving legislation
- Benefits that support employee wellbeing
- Creative and meaningful recognition programs
- Flexible and personalized benefits offerings
- Communicating benefits effectively
- Compensation benchmarking and market competitiveness
- Financial wellness initiatives
- Retention strategies through total rewards



“Rising Acts” – Workforce Planning, Organizational, and Leadership Development

- Succession planning and future workforce needs
- Leadership development at every level
- Coaching and mentoring programs
- Change management and organizational growth
- Building skills for the future workplace
- Employee development and career pathing
- Performance management and feedback strategies
- Managing hybrid and flexible teams
- Empowering managers to lead effectively

“The Innovation Ring” – Innovation, HR Strategy, and Technology

- HR technology trends and digital transformation
- AI opportunities, risks, and workplace impact
- Data-driven decision making in HR
- Workforce analytics and strategic planning
- Reimagining the employee experience through technology
- Driving organizational innovation and agility
- Future-focused HR leadership strategies
- Building an adaptable workforce
- Using technology to improve communication and collaboration

“The Culture Tent” – Engagement, DEI, Mental Health, and Workplace Culture

- Building inclusive and respectful workplace cultures
- Civility in the workplace
- Employee engagement and connection strategies
- Mental health and wellbeing initiatives
- Managing stress and burnout
- Belonging and psychological safety at work
- Conflict resolution and empathy-driven leadership
- Organizational culture during times of change
- Supporting multigenerational and diverse workforces

“Behind the Curtain” – Policy, Compliance, Employment Law, and Risk

- Updates in employment law and workplace legislation
- Compliance challenges in evolving workplaces
- Workplace investigations and documentation
- AI-related legal and ethical risks
- Pay transparency and leave law updates
- Managing employee relations and workplace conflict
- Risk management and organizational accountability
- Policy development and communication
- Best practices for maintaining compliant workplaces

