



CHAMBER
PROFESSIONALS
OF OHIO



2026 CPO WINTER CONFERENCE

JANUARY 27-29, 2026

PRESENTED BY:



SOUTHERN OHIO CHAMBER ALLIANCE

Agenda

Tuesday, January 27

6:00-8:00 P.M. – Kick-off Mixer *(330 Bar & Grill at Double Tree by Hilton Canton Downtown)*

Join us for the pre-conference kick-off mixer at the 330 Bar & Grill inside the Double Tree by Hilton Canton Downtown. D'oeuvres/Cash Bar/Networking

Wednesday, January 28

7:00-8:00 A.M. – Final exhibitors set-up *(Hallway outside of the Nash conference room)*

8:00 A.M. – Registration and Continental Breakfast *(The Nash)*

8:30 A.M. – Welcome *(The Nash)*

- Matt Owen, Executive Director, **Chamber Professionals of Ohio**
- Cherie Nelson, Executive Director, **New Albany Chamber of Commerce (2026 CPO Board Chair)**
- Jeff Dafler, President & CEO, **Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce**

9:00 A.M. – General Session: “True vs. Truth” *(The Nash)*

A practical session on separating assumptions from facts so you can reduce stress, gain clarity, and approach conversations with greater confidence.

- Chuck Huggins, Chief Operating Officer, Business Coach, Facilitator and Leadership Coach, **Aileron**

9:45 A.M. – Networking Break / Vendor Visit

10:00 A.M. – Breakout Sessions (Choose One)

- **Leveraging Partnerships/Relationships** *(The Nash)*
 - Discover how strategic collaboration can amplify your chamber's influence. This session explores the value of partnering with regional and neighboring chambers, economic development organizations, CVBs, local, county and state government agencies.
 - Matt Owen, Executive Director, **Chamber Professionals of Ohio**
- **Energizing Economies: The Strategic Role of Chambers** *(The Gold Jacket Lounge)*
 - For years, energy was just a line item on a budget. Today, it is the engine of Ohio's economic future. From attracting major tech investments to ensuring local manufacturers stay competitive, the reliability and cost of power will define the winners and losers of the next decade. This session cuts through the noise to focus on what matters to Ohio businesses: reliability, affordability, and growth.
 - Logan O'Neill (IOM, OhioCED), Midwest Regional Director, **Chamber for Innovation and Clean Energy**

10:45 A.M. – Networking Break / Vendor Visit

11:00 A.M. – Breakout Sessions (Choose One)

- **A Modern Playbook for Membership Growth** *(The Nash)*
 - Take a fresh look at how chambers can strengthen every stage of the membership journey. This session will explore a modern approach to attracting and retaining members, including how aligning marketing and membership functions and a focus on onboarding can transform acquisition and retention.
 - Darla Brown, Vice President of Marketing & Membership Strategy, **Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce**
- **Using AI for Content, Efficiency & Member Engagement** *(The Gold Jacket Lounge)*
 - Discover practical ways chambers can use AI to streamline operations, improve communication, and enhance member value. This session explores real examples of AI-powered content creation, workflow automation, and engagement strategies that save time, boost productivity, and strengthen relationships with members.
 - Jack Spiller, Client Success EVP, **AI Owl**

11:45 A.M. – Lunch Buffet with “All Things Chamber” *(The Nash)*

- Savannah Hufford, Executive Director, **Pickaway County Chamber of Commerce**

12:00 P.M. – Keynote: Horizon 2035: How External Forces Shape Chambers and Communities *(The Nash)*

Work is never done in a vacuum, and forward-thinking chamber leaders and staff look for ways to understand the factors that shape the world in which we operate. ACCE's Horizon 2035 is designed to keep you a step ahead by highlighting key future-facing influences.

- Amy Shields, Executive Director, ACCE Foundation and Vice President/Programs, **Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives**

1:00 P.M. – Vendor Spotlight *(The Nash)*

This vendor spotlight session provides our vendors with an opportunity to come up to the podium and highlight their products and services to the attendees. We encourage attendees to take time and visit our vendors throughout the conference. They all provide valuable services and benefits for your chamber.

1:45 P.M. – General Session: From Relevant to Impact *(The Nash)*

- Matt Appenzeller, President & CEO, **Southern Ohio Chamber Alliance**

Agenda Continued

2:30 P.M. – Networking Break / Vendor Visit

2:45 P.M. – Institute for Organization Management (IOM) *(The Nash)*

- Kathi Roetter (IOM, CPO-AP), Executive Director, **Troy Area Chamber of Commerce**

2:50 P.M. – General Session: Legislative Update with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce *(The Nash)*

- Kevin Courtois, Vice President Government Affairs, Great Lakes Region, **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

3:30 P.M. – General Session: CEO Forum – Powered by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce *(The Nash)*

- Robert Shenton, Executive Director, **CEO Forum, Ohio Chamber of Commerce**

4:00 P.M. – Break to Prepare for the CPO Annual Awards Dinner

5:30 P.M. – Cocktail Hour & Reception *(The Nash)*

6:30 P.M. – CPO Annual Meeting & Awards Dinner *(The Nash)*

Join us as we share the progress and future of CPO. We will be honoring the Professionals of the Year and Outstanding Chambers of the Year. We will also be honoring our Legacy Award recipients. Enjoy a cocktail hour followed by dinner and networking. This is casual business dress but you can dress up if you'd like!

7:30 P.M. – Evening Activities

Join us at 330 Bar & Grill at the Double Tree Hotel Canton Downtown for networking and cash bar.

Thursday, January 29

8:00 A.M. – Full Breakfast with Networking *(The Nash)*

8:30 A.M. – General Session: Building a High-Performance Chamber Board *(The Nash)*

- Kathi Roetter (IOM, CPO-AP), Executive Director, **Troy Area Chamber of Commerce**

9:20 A.M. – Breakout Sessions (Choose One)

- **Influence with Intent *(The Nash)***
 - A practical, hands-on session pairing a leading Ohio-based TikTok creator with the Chamber to tell your town's story—authentically, consistently, and measurably. Learn how to identify the right partner, co-create town-focused content, set clear goals, and track impact for local businesses while staying true to the Chamber's voice and goals.
 - Derek Malone, Creator and Influencer, **@SnipingforDom (TikTok)**
- **Metrics, not Myths *(The Gold Jacket Room)***
 - "If you've seen one Chamber, you've seen one!" is a harmful saying that keeps Chambers from knowing how they measure up against their peers. In this session, you'll discover how SOCA is using Data Analysis for Benchmarking, Performance Scorecards, and forecasting tools to help Chambers of Commerce plan better and make better decisions.
 - Matt Appenzeller, President & CEO, **Southern Ohio Chamber Alliance**

10:00 A.M. – Networking Break / Vendor Visit

10:15 A.M. – "Chamber Accreditation" Program Plug *(The Nash)*

- Andrew McAfee, Vice President, **Clermont Chamber of Commerce**

10:20 A.M. – General Session: Strategic Planning That Actually Gets Implemented *(The Nash)*

- **Moderator:** Cindy Holtzheimer, President & CEO, **Northern Ohio Area Chambers of Commerce**

11:15 A.M. – General Session: What Sticks? Rapid Reflection *(The Nash)*

- Matt Owen, Executive Director, **Chamber Professionals of Ohio**

11:30 A.M. – Closing Remarks / Drawings & Prizes *(The Nash)*

- Cherie Nelson, Executive Director, **New Albany Chamber of Commerce (2026 CPO Board Chair)**

Matt Owen

CPO



Matt Owen serves as the Executive Director of the Chamber Professionals of Ohio (CPO), an organization dedicated to training, supporting and empowering chamber professionals across the state.

Before joining CPO, Matt held prominent leadership roles within various chambers of commerce, where he was instrumental in developing innovative programs, strengthening local economies, and building strong networks of collaboration among businesses and community stakeholders.

Matt is passionate about equipping chamber leaders with the tools, knowledge, and support they need to drive meaningful impact in their communities. A lifelong advocate for local business and community vitality, Matt is committed to building connections that create lasting opportunities for chambers and the businesses they serve.

Matt is a U.S. Navy veteran and served on City Council in his hometown of Tipp City, OH from 2014-2017. When he's not working, Matt enjoys fishing and exploring Ohio's vibrant local culture with his family.

Cherie Nelson

New Albany Chamber of Commerce



Cherie Nelson is the Executive Director of the New Albany Chamber of Commerce, where she leads initiatives focused on business growth, community partnerships, and regional economic vitality. With a strong background in organizational leadership, marketing, and stakeholder engagement, Cherie is known for building meaningful connections between businesses, local government, and community organizations to drive thoughtful growth and long-term impact.

She is a founder and past president of the New Albany Women's Network (NAWN) and currently serves on the Explore Licking County Board of Directors and is Chair of the Chamber Professionals of Ohio (CPO) Board of Directors. Cherie holds a B.S. in Business Administration from Central Michigan University and lives in New Albany with her husband Jim. Outside of her work promoting New Albany, Cherie enjoys tennis, biking, traveling, and getting deep into a good book.

Jeff Dafler

Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce



Jeff Dafler is President and CEO of the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce. He leads a dedicated team of professionals serving the Chamber's 1,900 diverse members with valued programs and cultivating economic growth and community vitality across the greater Canton region. Before becoming Chamber President and CEO in January 2024, he served for three years as the organization's Vice President—Economic Development and Public Policy.

Prior to joining the Canton Regional Chamber team, he founded The Dafler Company, providing strategy, policy, and communication consulting services to help clients navigate an increasingly complex public landscape. He previously worked in corporate leadership roles at The Timken Company and NCR Corporation and served as a U.S. diplomat in postings overseas and in Washington, D.C.

Dafler holds bachelor's degrees in international studies and French from Miami University, along with a master's degree in communication from the University of Dayton. He serves on several community and nonprofit boards, including as chair of the CommQuest Services board.

Chuck Huggins

Aileron



As Aileron's Chief Operating Officer, Chuck is responsible for pushing the organization's products and business model forward through concepting, testing, and implementing new solutions. Previous to Aileron, he founded and sold two businesses, an experience that arms him with an empathy for and understanding of the community Aileron serves.

Chuck has a keen eye for identifying problems and an unrelenting passion for pioneering ideas, and spends much of his time at work experimenting. He's naturally humble, which fuels his experimentation by freeing him from fear that his ideas will fail. And Chuck is hyper-focused on the future; every day he asks himself: "How do we prepare our clients for the future to ensure they're thriving ten years from now?"

Chuck will tell you there's no other way he'd rather spend the weekend than with his wife, son, and daughter. In the summer, you can find them soaking in the sun at Indian Lake, where Chuck occasionally sneaks away to enjoy his favorite hobby: bass fishing.

Logan O'Neill

Chambers for Innovation & Clean Energy



Logan O'Neill joined CICE in 2023 as Midwest Regional Director. In this role, Logan is responsible for outreach to chambers of commerce and economic development organizations, educating them and positioning them to be thought leaders in their communities on the economic benefits of clean energy.

Logan previously served as Executive Director for the Wapakoneta Area Economic Development Council (WAEDC) where he helped shape the economic landscape, built strategic partnerships, and championed initiatives that drove progress. Logan also led the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber as Executive Director. During his tenure, Logan engaged in sharing how clean energy had positively affected the communities he served.

A graduate of Bluffton University in Ohio, Logan earned his IOM from the U.S.

Chamber of Commerce in Madison, WI. Logan also received the Ohio Certified Economic Developer (OhioCED) Certification from the Ohio Economic Development Institute. Logan serves on the Board of Regents for the US Chamber's Institute for Organization Management Midwest site.

Logan lives in west-central Ohio with his wife, Becky, and their two sons and daughter. Logan serves his community as a volunteer firefighter and member of the local school board.

Darla Brown

Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce



Darla Brown is Vice President of Marketing & Membership Strategy for the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, where she leads efforts to drive membership growth, strengthen member value and align marketing with long-term economic development goals. With a background in digital marketing and community engagement, she focuses on practical, results-driven strategies that help businesses connect and grow in a changing marketplace.

Brown holds a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from Bowling Green State University, and her career has spanned news and magazine publishing, digital marketing and organizational leadership. She also supports her family's creative business, Hall of Fame Builder. Brown is actively engaged in the community, serving on the Aultman Hospital Women's Board, the Foundation for Community Betterment at both the national and local levels and the Canton Culture Collective.

Jack Spiller

AI Owl



After receiving his Masters degree in Higher Education from Villanova University, Jack began his career working in various college and university offices including Admissions, Alumni Relations, and Workforce Development. Throughout all these experiences, Jack recognized not only the need for his work to evolve with AI but also the growing need for AI Education, particularly in central Ohio.

Amy Shields

Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives



Amy Shields oversees the professional development programs offered through ACCE and the ACCE Foundation. Amy's team leads signature programs like ACCE's Fellowship and the Certified Chamber Executive program, convenings for chamber executives, and ongoing peer learning opportunities. As the Executive Director of the ACCE Foundation, Amy is focused on growing support for chamber community impact work in the areas of education and talent development, economic mobility and opportunity, and economic and community development.

Prior to joining the ACCE team, Amy was a program manager at Grantmakers for Effective Organizations where she developed publications, conference sessions, digital content, and workshops for grantmakers across the country. Previously, she worked at the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership as the Director of Research and Strategic Initiatives. Amy earned her B.S. in political science and her M.S. in public policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University.

Matt Appenzeller

Southern Ohio Chamber Alliance



Matt Appenzeller is the President & CEO of the Southern Ohio Chamber Alliance; an alliance of 129 Chambers of Commerce that offers health insurance and other benefit programs to Chamber members. He is the Plan Administrator for the SOCA Benefit Plan; a statewide medical plan for small employers.

He previously served as the Executive Director of the Preble County Chamber of Commerce where he led the creation of the Preble County Economic Development Partnership. He was named Preble County Community Leader of the Year in 2012.

He is President of the Board of Trustees for the Ohio Business Week Foundation; a business and entrepreneur camp for high school students at the Ohio University College of Business.

In addition to more than 20 years of sales and management experience, he served 7 years in the U.S. Army. He and his wife, Lauren, reside in Cincinnati.

Kevin Courtois

U.S. Chamber of Commerce



Kevin Courtois is vice president of the Great Lakes region in the Government Affairs Division at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. To achieve the U.S. Chamber's public policy goals, Courtois cultivates and maintains legislative, political, media, and grassroots resources in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Courtois leads the Chamber's efforts to strengthen its relationships with members of Congress through member businesses, associations, and local and state chambers of commerce across the region.

Before joining the Chamber, he spent five years in Washington, D.C., working for Sen. Chuck Grassley's (R-IA) Finance Committee during its consideration of the Affordable Care Act. He also served on Sen. Grassley's Judiciary Committee where he handled health policy issues and federal judicial nominations.

While working on Capitol Hill, Courtois attended evening classes at the George Mason University School of Law before completing his last year at Northwestern Law School in Chicago, where he currently resides.

Robert Shenton

CEO Forum, Ohio Chamber of Commerce



I am excited to serve as the Executive Director of the CEO Forum powered by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. I love working with successful business leaders as we establish a peer-to-peer network of middle market companies throughout Ohio. The CEO Forum is partnering with The Ohio State University Fisher College of Business for executive education and the National Center for the Middle Market for knowledge and innovative research on the middle market economy. This is the first center of its kind in the nation dedicated to serving middle market companies.

My 35 year career as a CPA and Partner at Plante Moran was focused on the middle market and serving clients across a broad range of industries including manufacturing, real estate, construction, service and healthcare companies . I have strong relationship and communication skills and I appreciate the opportunity to work with complex business issues in a practical manner, helping people and their organizations achieve success!

Kathi Roetter (IOM CPO-AP) Troy Area Chamber of Commerce



Kathi Roetter is a seasoned professional dedicated to fostering economic growth and community development in the Troy, Ohio area. As the Executive Director of the Troy Area Chamber of Commerce, Kathi brings an enthusiasm and passion for not only building vibrant communities but celebrating them too.

With over 25 years in non-profit management, Kathi has been an integral part of the Troy Area Chamber of Commerce since 2014. In her role, she leads day to day operations as well as strategic initiatives to support local businesses, enhance the area's economic vitality, and strengthen collaborative partnerships within the community.

Kathi is currently serving as the Chairman of the US Chamber's Institute for Organization Management Winter Board of Regents, she is also a 2018 graduate. Kathi was a US Chamber Business Leads Fellow in 2019.

When not serving as a cheerleader for Troy, Kathi and her husband Eric can be found exploring small towns, searching for tacos and craft cocktails.

Derek Malone

Creator/Influencer



Derek and his social media channels focuses on marketing and promoting mom and pop shops, eateries, breweries, bakeries and much more! In just a few years' time we have acquired over 1 million followers on just TikTok alone! Between all our socials we have almost 2 million followers. Monthly we produce 10 million - 30 million views or more on all our platforms. Derek has been on Fox News, 40 plus newspaper articles across the United States, 17 magazines, recently interviewed with the New York Times and approached by 4 major networks. He's recorded with some big names such as Brian Duffy (food network), Joey Chestnut, ESPN, big named musicians, and some professional athletes. He's also appeared in several national television commercials.

Cindy Holzheimer (IOM, CAE) Northern Ohio Area Chambers of Commerce (NOACC)



Cindy Holzheimer has been the President/CEO of the Northern Ohio Area Chambers of Commerce (NOACC) since 2018. Previously, she served as NOACC Board Chair from 2016 to 2018 and as Executive Director of the Beachwood Chamber of Commerce for five years. With over a decade of leadership experience, Cindy is dedicated to empowering chambers and fostering community growth.

The team at NOACC ensures that chambers have top-notch cost-saving benefits for their members. By offering high-quality savings on various business expenses, NOACC has helped businesses save big, while also distributing over \$1.5 million to its chambers since 2018 by way of commissions and sponsorships.

In 2024, NOACC introduced three new partner programs and relaunched a more user-friendly website. In 2025, NOACC welcomed two new board members, is celebrating its 30th anniversary, and is proudly representing 140 chambers of commerce. Additionally, NOACC will be launching a CRM program specifically designed for chambers of commerce and is actively looking to enhance its cost-savings programs.

As an advocate for leadership excellence, Cindy holds the Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation and is a graduate of the Institute of Organizational Management (IOM). Beyond driving growth within the chamber network, Cindy also dedicates her time to mentoring new chamber leaders, helping them learn the ropes and take their organizations to new heights. Cindy's dedication to community outreach and volunteering reflects her passion for fostering growth and unity among chambers and businesses.

Cindy resides in Cuyahoga Falls with her husband Bruce, their beloved dog Maddie, and their feline companion Gracie. Cindy's passion for chamber leadership and community-building shines through in all that she does.

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