



2026 Registration Guide

AUGUST 13, 2026

HILTON GARDEN INN - WEST DES MOINES
205 S 64TH STREET
WEST DES MOINES, IA



Schedule



The Director Development Conference is designed specifically for Board Directors and General Managers/CEOs. The focus of the conference is strengthening board performance and fostering outstanding leadership.

This year's program offers a mix of presentations and small-group discussions. Participants will gain a solid grounding in essential topics and have valuable opportunities to network with peers from across the state.

8:30 AM Registration and Breakfast

9:00 AM Welcome

Dave Duncan, CEO, Iowa Communications Alliance

State & Federal Policies and Programs Impacting Your Revenues and Expenses

Dave Duncan, CEO, Iowa Communications Alliance

Dave Duncan will set the stage for the day's strategic discussions and conversations with a brief, high-level overview of USF developments and federal funding changes on the horizon. He will also touch on other federal and state regulatory and industry developments that impact your company's bottom-line profitability.

9:20 AM Healthy Alignment: Building a High-Trust Partnership Between the Board and the General Manager

Shirley Bloomfield, President, Shirley Connected LLC and Retired CEO of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Healthy alignment between a board and its GM/CEO is one of the most important drivers of organizational success, especially in today's rapidly changing broadband and cooperative/small company environment. This session will explore what a strong board-General Manager partnership looks like in practice, including clear governance roles, effective communication, mutual accountability, and shared strategic focus. Participants will examine best practices for board self-evaluations, GM/CEO evaluations, and establishing healthy expectations that strengthen trust while avoiding role confusion and support the building of stronger leadership alignment, improved decision-making, and positioning for long-term success.

10:30 AM Break

10:45 AM Attracting and Retaining Quality Board Members: Building an Engaged, Future-Ready Board

Nicole Hackman, Vantage Point Solutions

Recruiting strong board members — and keeping them engaged over time — is becoming more challenging for communications providers facing increased competition, regulatory demands, and evolving customer expectations. This session explores practical, real world strategies for identifying, recruiting, and retaining high quality board members who bring both strategic insight and meaningful engagement to the table. Attendees will learn how to move beyond “who's willing to serve” toward a more intentional, skills based recruitment approach, while also setting clear expectations that prevent burnout and disengagement.

Participants will leave with actionable tools to strengthen board composition, improve participation, and create a board culture that supports both good governance and sustainable growth.

11:30 AM Roundtable Discussion for Cooperatives

11:30 AM Roundtable Discussion for Commercial Companies

These sessions are designed as a time for attendees to connect with their peers, share ideas, discuss challenges, opportunities, and whatever else is top-of-mind. Understanding some of the unique qualities between Cooperatives and Commercial Companies, we will divide attendees into these two smaller groups for these sessions.

12:20 PM Lunch

12:50 PM Board Best Practices – Idea Sharing Session

Facilitated by Tammy Wheeler, Farmers Mutual Communications

As attendees finish lunch, we will take a few minutes to share best practices. This session will require audience participation as we tap into the knowledge and experience of those in the room. Attendees are asked to think of an example of a board procedure, policy, or practice that works well for the board on which they serve and be ready to join the conversation.

1:15 PM The Value Marketing Delivers in Today's Ultra-Competitive Environment

Douglas Pals, Minburn Communications

What should a strategic marketing plan look like for your communications company? And why do you need one and how do we implement and measure progress? As a board member, you'll leave this session with answers to those questions and more. Please bring your specific questions to this session and you'll leave with next steps you can take.

2:00 PM Break

2:15 PM Leveraging Benchmarking Data to Forecast Telecom Industry Trends

Todd Thorson, Forvis Mazars

In today's rapidly evolving telecommunications landscape, the ability to anticipate change is a critical competitive advantage. This session will explore how organizations can harness the power of benchmarking data to move beyond retrospective analysis and into forward-looking strategic insight.

Participants will gain a deeper understanding of how historical performance metrics—spanning financial performance, operational efficiency, customer growth, and network investments—can be transformed into meaningful projections of future industry trends. By examining patterns across multiple years of benchmarking data, we will identify key indicators that signal shifts in market dynamics, emerging technologies, and evolving customer expectations.

Through real-world examples and practical frameworks, this session will demonstrate how telecom leaders can:

- Interpret benchmark trends to uncover hidden opportunities and risks
- Compare performance against peers to identify strategic gaps
- Translate historical insights into actionable forecasts
- Align business planning with anticipated industry movements

Whether you are focused on growth strategy, operational excellence, or long-term investment planning, this session will provide valuable tools and perspectives to help you make more informed, data-driven decisions.

3:00 PM Where Do We Go From Here?

Tom Conry, FMCTC; Heath Mallory, Wiatel; Mike Olsen, La Motte and Andrew Telephone Company

As broadband expansion opportunities begin to slow, companies are looking ahead to new avenues for growth and long-term sustainability. This panel will explore how their boards evaluate diversification opportunities, engage in strategic planning discussions, and make informed decisions about future ventures. Panelists will discuss past and potential diversification efforts and highlight key lessons learned through their experiences.

3:45 PM Closing Remarks

Mike Olsen, ICA Director Development Conference Committee Chair

Register Online

www.iacommunicationsall.org/director_development_2026

Online registration allows the option to be invoiced or to pay online.

REGISTRATION FEE

\$285 – ICA Member – through August 6
\$305 – ICA Member – after August 6, including onsite

Attend as a group and save! For every 3 paid attendees from the same member company, the 4th individual can attend for free. We encourage your company to register as a group – including the CEO/General Manager and Directors.

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY

All cancellations must be received by August 6, 2026 to receive a full refund. Cancellations must be emailed to melissa@iacommunicationsall.com. No refunds will be made for requests received after that time. Substitutions will be allowed.

ACCOMMODATIONS

ICA has a block of rooms at the Hilton Garden Inn at a rate of \$149 plus tax per night. [Go online](#) or call 515-223-0571 to reserve your room. The cut-off date for the room block is July 26, 2026.

CONSENT TO USE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES

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