



CONSORTIUM OF UNIVERSITY PUBLIC
SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS



UAA Institute of Social
and Economic Research
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE



2026

CUPSO

**PUBLIC SERVICE
ON THE FRONTIER**

**MAY 18-20, 2026
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA**



WELCOME TO CUPS O

And welcome to Alaska.
We're happy to host you at the University of
Alaska Anchorage as we celebrate 65 years of
the **Institute of Social and Economic Research.**

2026 SPONSORS



MONDAY - MAY 18

8:30–9:15 a.m.

CUPS O Business Meeting

The Den

CUPS O Institute/Center Directors and School Deans (or their appointed proxies) should plan to attend CUPS O's annual business meeting. Among the agenda items will be the annual election of officers.

9:30–11:45 a.m.

Opening Roundtable for Center/Institute Directors and School Deans

The Den

Higher Ed at the Inflection Point: This opening roundtable will provide a chance for leaders of public service organizations (PSOs) to connect around challenges and opportunities. We will also consider together how PSOs can help their universities use the challenges facing higher ed—declining public trust, questions about value, shifting government funding, and looming demographic declines—as an inflection point to adapt, improve, or right-size.

This discussion will be led by **Phil Dean**, Chief Economist and Research Director at the University of Utah's Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute and former Utah State Budget Director. Drawing on examples from Gardner's applied policy work, the conversation will explore how CUPS O members are uniquely positioned to help bridge the gap between universities, policymakers, and the public.

Facilitators: Ashley Labosier (CUPS O) and Phil Dean (Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, University of Utah)

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10–11:45 a.m.

Opening Roundtable for CUPSO Staff

Student Union Cafeteria

Join colleagues from university public service centers for a facilitated peer-share session that will help you connect with staff at other organizations whose day-to-day work most closely aligns with your own. You will begin in role-aligned groups, reflecting on where you are from, where you work, and how local people, histories, cultures, and conditions shape your work. Then, after reviewing the conference agenda, you will regroup around the topics you most want to learn about, creating space for cross-organizational conversation, idea-sharing, and connection on common geography and interests.

Facilitator: Rebecca Van Wyck (Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage)

11:45 a.m.–1 p.m.

Lunch

Student Union Cafeteria

1–2:30 p.m.

Welcome and Opening Plenary

Student Union Cafeteria

Understanding Alaska's Indigenous Context: Alaska is home to over 150,000 Indigenous people, 229 federally recognized tribes, 12 regional Native corporations, and 225 Native village corporations. In addition, there are Native nonprofits, health consortia, and other entities across the state. The legal and political status of tribes and corporations continues to evolve, as do challenges and opportunities facing Indigenous communities and residents. This panel features leaders from an array of Indigenous organizations sharing Alaska's unique Indigenous governance, economic, and social structures.

Facilitator: Diane Hirshberg (Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage)

Panelists: Aaron Leggett (President, Native Village of Eklutna), Pearl Brower (President and Chief Executive Officer, Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation), Sheri Buretta (Chairman of the Board, Chugach Alaska Corporation), and Vanessa Hiratsuka (Senior Researcher, Southcentral Foundation)

2:30–2:40 p.m.

Group Photo

Meet in Student Union Cafeteria to walk to location

3–4 p.m.

Lightning Talks: Short presentations followed by a deeper-dive roundtable discussion



Change Management

The Den

Lightning Talk Host: Andrea Whitsett (Morrison Institute, Arizona State University)

Leading Through Change: Riley Center's Role in Supporting AI Adoption

As artificial intelligence reshapes the professional landscape, public service organizations face a critical question: What is our role in helping state, local, and nonprofit partners navigate this shift? This lightning talk outlines how the Riley Center has begun exploring this challenge through three primary domains: leadership training, collaborative learning, and data sharing.

Presenter: Shelby Shumard (Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities, College of Charleston)

Federal-State Nexus: Insights for Policymakers

As federal policies shift and spending priorities are reevaluated, it's more important than ever for state and local leaders to access summary briefs covering the scope and scale of their state's economic relationship with the federal government. To aid Utah's decision-makers, the Gardner Institute produced a series of publications examining key aspects of the Utah/federal government nexus. These briefs provide data and insights on 13 critical topics. This lightning talk will share how these briefs and the videos that accompanied them were used by policymakers and community leaders in early 2025.

Presenter: Jennifer Robinson (Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, University of Utah)

When Big Change Feels Constant

How do university-based public service organizations weather constant change in our own circumstances? This lightning talk begins with how to determine whether you are in the normal “churn” of change, or whether a particular inflection point (or set of changes) is, in fact, a paradigm shift. The talk will focus on challenges to leaning in strategically and how to invest strategically and fiscally at a time when uncertainty rules. It will also address the tension between being nimble versus maintaining strategic and mission integrity.

Presenter: Stephen Bird (Carsey School of Public Policy, University of New Hampshire)

Education

Student Union Cafeteria - South

Lightning Talk Host: Sarah Rendon (John C. Stennis Institute of Government, Mississippi State University)

Strengthening Educational Equity and Instructional Quality

This lightning talk highlights two applied policy research initiatives conducted in partnership with Delaware state agencies to strengthen educational equity and instructional quality across diverse learning contexts. While distinct in population and context—one focused on statewide curriculum alignment and the other on education within secure residential settings—both projects share a common framework: collaborative, cross-institutional research designed to address complex, real-world policy challenges. Each initiative required coordination across university teams, state agencies, and impacted stakeholders; rigorous qualitative and quantitative inquiry; and the development of practical recommendations that moved from report to implementation.

Presenters: Haley Q. Burnes and Kelly Sherretz (Institute for Public Administration, University of Delaware)

Rallying Around Reading

Third grade reading proficiency is a quiet crisis—an issue that impacts all facets of society and yet rarely gets the attention that it deserves. The Wichita Collective Impact (WCI) effort, led by the Public Policy and Management Center with other community organizations, has been a three-year effort to move this issue forward. Learn about our journey to use what we do best – data integration, building coalitions, and navigating politics (yep, even in student reading)—to chart a course forward. This lightning talk will share the wins, the losses, and the lessons learned.

Presenter: Misty Bruckner (Public Policy and Management Center, Wichita State University)

NextGen Leaders for Public Service: Does it Increase Student Interest in Public Service?

The Schaefer Center for Public Policy launched its NextGen initiative in 2022 to inspire University of Baltimore students from all majors to pursue public service careers. Since then, students in the program’s paid internships have contributed over 103,000 public service hours in more than 630 placements. This lightning talk will present early evaluation findings on how the program shapes students’ views of public service and strengthens their professional skills, with results disaggregated by key student demographics, when possible.

Presenter: Sarah Ficene (Schaefer Center For Public Policy, University of Baltimore)

Partnerships That Inform Policy

Student Union Cafeteria - North

Lightning Talk Host: Macel Ely (Naifeh Center for Effective Leadership, IPS, University of Tennessee)

Empowering Communities to Save Lives

Over the next 15 years, local governments will receive billions of dollars from opioid settlement agreements that come with strict requirements to ensure funds address the opioid crisis. The Institute for Public Service’s SMART Initiative (Substance Misuse and Addiction Resource for Tennessee) supports communities in managing these resources responsibly. As the technical assistance partner to the Tennessee Opioid Abatement Council, SMART is leading statewide implementation under a \$2.4 million contract. By equipping county leaders with the tools and accountability structures needed to steward funds effectively, SMART strengthens collaboration, expands access to critical services, and helps ensure settlement dollars save lives across Tennessee.

Presenter: Jennifer Tourville (Institute for Public Service SMART Initiative, University of Tennessee)

Getting to “Yes” on Affordable Housing Policy

For the first time since data collection began, housing costs in Arizona exceed the national average. Housing prices outpacing income, supply chain disruptions, low vacancy rates, and record levels of evictions and homelessness all contribute to a statewide housing crisis. In 2024, the Arizona Research Center for Housing and Economic Solutions (ARCHES) polled 850 likely voters in Maricopa County on their experiences with the housing market. The poll used an experimental design to test how language usage shapes housing policy support. The results offer insights for fostering constructive community dialogue and avoiding terms that shut down dialogue around housing solutions.

Presenter: Kristi Eustice (Morrison Institute for Public Policy, Arizona State University)

Helping Missouri Navigate Competing Models for Kinship Care

Federal and state policy prioritizes placing children with kin when they cannot remain with their parents. To support this goal and provide access to federal Title IV-E funds, The Institute of Public Policy and the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) are helping the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS) and five kinship navigator programs (KNPs) select and prepare to replicate a federally-rated Title IV-E program. Because Missouri’s KNPs vary in services, tools, and data systems, the team engaged stakeholders and compared existing models to identify the best fit. They are now working with DSS and the KNPs to assess alignment and prepare for successful statewide implementation.

Presenters: Rachel Dicke (Institute of Public Policy, University of Missouri) and Greg Forehand (HSRI)

4:30–5:30 p.m.

Progressive Walking Tour

Meet in Student Union Cafeteria

Join us for a guided walking tour of UAA featuring local food, art, botany, and just possibly wildlife as we travel the “Spine” of the UAA campus, both indoors and outdoors. We will meander approximately 0.75 miles from the main conference location to the UAA library and then the Alaska Airlines Center where we will gather for our first dinner at the Varsity Sports Grill.

5:30–8 p.m.

Banquet

UAA Alaska Airlines Center

TUESDAY - MAY 19

7:45–8:45 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

Rasmuson Hall Lobby

8:45–10:15 a.m.

Morning Plenary

Rasmuson Hall 101

Public Service Across Alaska: From Urban to Remote: At over 663,000 square miles, Alaska is the largest and most geographically diverse state. Alaska is also demographically, culturally, and economically diverse and dispersed, with communities ranging from villages of less than 100 residents to Anchorage, with almost 300,000 residents. Many communities—like Juneau, the state capitol, and more than 300 predominantly Indigenous communities—are off the “road system” and only accessible by plane or boat. This panel of policymakers and administrators will discuss how public service is delivered across the varying contexts in Alaska and explore lessons that may be helpful to members from other states.

Panelists: Steve Colt, (Alaska Center for Energy and Power, University of Alaska Fairbanks), Erin Reinders (Deputy Director, Alaska Municipal League), Major Cornelius Sims (Alaska State Troopers, Alaska Department of Public Safety), Kristin Reardon (Water/Sanitation, Victims of Crime, and Health Facilities Program Manager, Denali Commission), and Nolan Klouda (Policy Director, Municipality of Anchorage Mayor’s Office)

10:45–11:45 a.m.

Breakout Sessions

Navigating Political Neutrality:

Rasmuson Hall 101

What it Gives Us and What it Costs Us

Political neutrality has long been a core value for many university-based public service centers, yet it can feel increasingly difficult to maintain in a polarized environment. This roundtable invites an open conversation about what neutrality enables, what it limits, and how it shapes our work in applied research, public service programs, and technical assistance. Participants will explore questions such as:

- Is neutrality a real thing in higher education?
- Have perceptions of neutrality shifted over time? If so, how will neutrality look in the future?
- How do you operationalize neutrality in your organization?

Facilitators: Aimee Wall and Lauren Partin (University of North Carolina School of Government)

Designing Training that Builds *Both* Skills and Leaders

Rasmuson Hall 110

Public service leaders are navigating unprecedented complexity, rapid change, and shrinking organizational capacity. While technical training continues to draw strong participation, leadership development opportunities—particularly those grounded in self-awareness, reflection, and adaptive skill-building—often struggle to attract the same audiences. Yet these “soft skills” are precisely what emerging and transitioning leaders need to manage uncertainty and build resilience. This interactive panel will:

- Highlight stories from multiple public service centers of various sizes from across the country as they grapple with this issue.
- Identify strategies for designing, framing, and recruiting for leadership learning opportunities.
- Create space for participants to explore actionable ideas for their own context.

Moderator: Eric Walcott (Michigan State University Extension)

Panelists: Misty Bruckner (Public Policy and Management Center, Wichita State), Ashley Kent (Local Government Center, Montana State University), Greg Moody (John Glenn College, Ohio State University)

Strategic Planning Yourself

Rasmuson Hall 316

In our roles leading public management and service organizations, we so often teach others how to do things, but we seem to forget how to do them ourselves, or don't practice what we teach! Time management seems to be one of the leading topics that we struggle with simply because our workloads and demands are such that we put ourselves at the bottom of our priority list. But we cannot pour into others if our cups are empty. In this session, explore ways to strategically plan yourselves to create more Q2 space, organize and prioritize your tasks, and help decide when (and how) to say “yes” and “no” to demands on your time.

Facilitator: Kristi Northcutt (University of Kansas Public Management Center)

11:45 a.m.–1:45 p.m.

Lunch (in The Den) and Poster Showcase (in the Chanshtnu Skybridge)

Join us for our popular poster session to share ideas and connect with colleagues around creative public service research and programming—and to gather ideas you might take back to your own team. This year's Poster Gallery Walk will be held on the Chanshtnu Skybridge, an iconic elevated walkway with views of Chester Creek and, if we're lucky, some local wildlife. Engage with presenters as you move through gallery and participate in our poster scavenger hunt (entries will be eligible for a prize). Be sure to cast your vote for your favorite poster as well—the winning poster receive this year's “People's Choice” award.



1:45–2:45 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

Capacity Management for Public Service Professionals

The Den

University-based public service organizations must constantly balance three competing priorities: advancing the public good; operating as a sustainable business; and attracting, retaining, and developing staff. Without the proper tools, these priorities along with the management of multiple concurrent projects can become reactive, making it difficult to align impactful work commitments with internal limitations. This workshop will focus on building organizational capacity by assisting leaders and project managers to move from reactive to proactive, capacity-informed decision-making. Participants will be introduced to a practical capacity management framework designed to address complex organizational structures using tools you already have at hand.

Facilitators: Christian Holley and James Roberts (Public Policy and Management Center, Wichita State)

**Building Successful Collaborations
Across Multiple States and Institutes**

Student Union Cafeteria - South

This roundtable session draws on a successful collaboration between public service researchers at the University of Wyoming, University of Montana, and Boise State University regarding amenity region growth in the intermountain West, drawing on economic and community data around population growth, tourism visitation, housing affordability, youth out-migration, workforce shortages, and resident sentiment. The roundtable will highlight the benefits and challenges of creating a multi-state, multi-institute collaboration. Participants will explore actionable strategies for developing collaborative and multi-state research that identifies and responds to strategic inflection points in communities they serve to collaboratively promote proactive, data-informed decision making and communication from higher education and local governance.

Facilitators: Vanessa Fry (Idaho Policy Institute, Boise State), Melissa Weddell (Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, University of Montana), and Dan McCoy (WORTH Institute, University of Wyoming)

Deepening Impact Within Your Ecosystem

Student Union Cafeteria - North

University-based public service centers exist to integrate research, practice, and policy to advance societal change, yet many are navigating shifting policy environments, evolving stakeholder expectations, and increasing resource uncertainty. The challenge is not only sustaining the organization, but also clarifying and deepening its impact within the ecosystem it serves. In this roundtable-style workshop, Purdue University's Center for Early Learning (CEL) and Saath Partners will share how CEL used systems thinking to redefine its role within Indiana's early learning ecosystem. Participants will have an opportunity to identify common types of strategic inflection points that affect public service centers; apply a simple systems-thinking approach to map their ecosystem and clarify where their center creates distinctive value; and generate actionable next steps to realign strengths, partnerships, and activities with evolving system needs.

Facilitators: David Purpura and Sarah Eason (Center for Early Learning, Purdue University) and Pallavi Gupta (Saath Partners)



3–4 p.m.

Lightning Talks: Short presentations followed by a deeper-dive roundtable discussion

Civic Engagement

The Den

Lightning Talk Host: Kendall Sanders (Stennis Institute, Mississippi State University)

Oregon Trust in Elections Project: Research-Practitioner Partnerships for Civic Engagement

The Oregon Trust in Elections Partnership gathered election administrators and researchers to better understand—and strengthen—public confidence in Oregon’s elections. Working with the UC San Diego Center for Transparent and Trusted Elections, the Elections & Voting Information Center co-designed a research agenda with the Oregon Association of County Clerks, county election offices, and the Secretary of State’s Elections Division. The team fielded a new survey exploring voter knowledge, confidence, and perceptions of election administration, with special attention to urban-rural differences. An experimental component tested election-process videos, which measurably boosted viewers’ confidence in elections.

Presenter: Paul Manson (The Center for Public Service, Portland State University)

Understanding and Assessing Civic Health in Turbulent Times

Civic health reflects the strength of local democracy: how much do people trust each other, show up at public meetings, get involved, and help their neighbors? This lightning talk will highlight ways to amplify civic engagement in the communities you serve and to measure the impact of your initiatives. Based on the work of the Carsey School’s New Hampshire Listens, and its Civic Health Assessment, this talk will address challenges to civic health and demonstrate appropriate techniques for measuring civic health.

Presenters: Mikayla Townsend, Stephen Bird, and Melinda Negron-Gonzales (Carsey School, UNH)

Beyond Research to Building Trust: Focus Groups as Engagement

Focus groups are often criticized as extractive research tools or spaces where communities are asked to share experiences with little immediate benefit to themselves. This lightning talk draws on a partnership between the Walter Rand Institute, Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine, Inspira Health, and the Rutgers School of Nursing to reimagine this model. Catalyzed by trusted community partners, focus groups for this South Jersey-based project not only provided rich qualitative data but became spaces for real-time education, trust building, and action. We explore ethical and methodological considerations for research that prioritizes both rigor and responsiveness.

Presenter: Kiersten Westley Henson (Walter Rand Institute, Rutgers University–Camden)

Data and Evaluation

Student Union Cafeteria - South

Lightning Talk Host: Emily Johnson (Institute of Public Policy, University of Missouri)

Participatory Data Governance: A Shared Commitment to Ethical Use Throughout the Data Lifecycle

We have greater opportunities than ever for complex data about people and places to inform complex policy problems. But how do we ensure that data is used ethically? Participatory data governance is the intentional involvement of people with diverse experiences, expertise, and skill who have shared decision-making about how data are used. In this session, we will share what participatory data governance looks like at the Charlotte Regional Data Trust, discuss the challenges and payoff of establishing meaningful participation across the data lifecycle, and provide steps to implement best practices in your own work.

Presenter: Sydney Idzikowski (Charlotte Regional Data Trust, UNC Charlotte Urban Institute)

From Data Silos to Shared Infrastructure: Building a Regional Data Ecosystem

The Carolinas Regional Explorer is a scalable data and analytics platform built by the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute to support research and policymaking across a diverse 14-county region. By integrating federal, state, local, and administrative data through the Charlotte Regional Data Trust, the Explorer centralizes information that governments, nonprofits, and practitioners can access based on their needs and capacity. This shared infrastructure reduces duplication, lowers technical barriers, and enables consistent yet locally adaptable regional analysis. This lightning talk will highlight lessons learned, governance and partnership models, and how similar data ecosystems can be replicated to strengthen public service capacity nationwide.

Presenter: Liz Morrell (UNC Charlotte Urban Institute)

Structuring an Evaluation from a Failed Research Plan

The Idaho Policy Institute (IPI) was asked to evaluate an NSF grant after the initial evaluator's report was rejected. The big challenge: existing evaluation elements—interviews, surveys, reflections—couldn't be changed. This lightning talk shares how IPI redesigned the evaluation within those constraints, added continuous feedback processes, and worked with faculty across four universities to strengthen their own research practices. The session highlights successes and lessons learned, with broader implications for applied policy work including improving data quality, rebuilding confidence after a negative review, and helping researchers understand the value of qualitative data in community-engaged work.

Presenter: McAllister Hall (Idaho Policy Institute, Boise State University)

Building Capacity and Leadership

Student Union Cafeteria - North

Lightning Talk Host: Lauren Gardner (John C. Stennis Institute of Government, Mississippi State University)

Legislative Leadership Development: Connecting State Legislators with Your Resources

This lightning talk will share specific examples of legislative leadership education that have been provided to the Georgia General Assembly, including New Legislator Orientation, the Biennial Institute, and the Georgia Leadership Institute. It will explore meaningful leadership development content for state legislators, strategies for connecting public service and outreach resources with legislative leadership programs, and effective systems for program evaluation. The roundtable discussion will dive more deeply into how centers can replicate these efforts to strengthen their own state legislatures.

Presenter: Mara Shaw Warrington (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia)

The Domino Effect: Automating Program Evaluation Creates Capacity and Greater Impact

For years, the Missouri Teen Pregnancy Prevention evaluation relied on manual data entry, repetitive reporting, and rigid timelines that left little room for deeper analysis. That changed when we asked: What if more of this could be automated? We redesigned the process using Excel macros, Power BI templates, Python-based automation, and cross-team collaboration to replace time-consuming tasks with scalable systems. The result was not just efficiency but new capacity—space for longitudinal insights, clearer communication with stakeholders, and a modernized approach to managing complex data. A once static process is now a flexible system that enables greater impact.

Presenter: Syrus Duffy (Institute of Public Policy, University of Missouri)

Intergovernmental Services Agreement (IGSA) Framework: An Essential Foundation for Innovation

This lightning talk will showcase innovative projects completed through the Carl Vinson Institute's IGSA framework, with a focus on environmental management, planning, and design. It will also highlight the administrative systems that make IGSA work—from contracting, budgeting, and compliance to risk management and partnerships with contracting offices and legal counsel. Together, these examples illustrate the procedural structures that support efficient project delivery while maintaining strong accountability and transparency.

Presenter: Daniel Wyatt (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia)

4:05 p.m.

Buses to Anchorage Museum

Depart from UAA

4:45–6 p.m.

Anchorage Museum Exploration and Tours

Anchorage Museum

Enjoy exclusive access to the Anchorage Museum, Alaska's largest and most celebrated museum of art, history, culture, and science. Explore acclaimed exhibitions highlighting Alaska Native cultures, the northern environment, and the art and stories of the North. CUPSO attendees can wander the galleries at their own pace or join an optional private tour before transitioning to ISER's 65th anniversary celebration. Experience one of Anchorage's premier cultural landmarks in a private, immersive setting.

6–8 p.m.

ISER 65th Anniversary Celebration

Anchorage Museum

The 2026 CUPSO Annual Conference marks a milestone celebrating ISER's legacy while looking ahead to the future of public service on the frontier. Since 1961 ISER has supported communities, governments, and organizations by advancing understanding of Alaska's economy, populations, and public policy challenges. Join the UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research as they commemorate 65 years of public policy research in Alaska. *Dress code is business casual.*

WEDNESDAY - MAY 20

8–9 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

Rasmuson Hall Lobby

9–10 a.m.

Breakout Sessions

Conflict Resolution for Public Events

Rasmuson Hall 101

Guided by two conflict resolution practitioners, this interactive workshop will focus on managing participants during public events (workshops, meetings, listening sessions, etc.). Participants will explore the psychology of public frustration, recognize the signs of escalating conflict, practice strategies to defuse tension and maintain control during heated discussions, and develop personal confidence in managing confrontational moments. By providing participants the opportunity to reflect on the "meeting from hell," this workshop will explore personal perceptions of conflict, valuable steps in meeting preparation, key meeting roles, and how to set the tone with public participants. Participants will leave equipped to prevent the "meeting from hell."

Facilitators: Sarah Marshall and Kathy Murphy (Institute for Public Administration, University of Delaware)

Building Stronger Rural Futures

Rasmuson Hall 110

This panel explores effective, evidence-based strategies to strengthen the capacity of rural communities to take action and drive meaningful change. Rural areas continue to navigate persistent challenges, from poverty and limited housing options, healthcare shortages, and aging populations, to lack of a strong pipeline for local leadership and deteriorating infrastructure. In this session, CUPSO members working in rural and frontier states will share how they have partnered with communities to mobilize local assets, elevate local leadership, and cultivate vibrant, desirable rural communities.

Moderator: Bill Tomes (Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities, College of Charleston)

Panelists: Diane Hirshberg (Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage), Heather Stephens (Regional Research Institute, West Virginia University), Dan Clark (Local Government Center, Montana State University), Eric Walcott (Michigan State University Extension)

Leadership: Tapping into Your Core Values

Rasmuson Hall 316

Values-based leadership is essential for building trust, clarity, and integrity in public service organizations, yet how often do we pause and reflect on the values we want to guide our work? This interactive mini-workshop introduces the importance of leading from a foundation of core values and explores how values can shape everyday decisions and behaviors. Participants will engage in a hands-on values-sorting exercise to identify and clarify their own core values and consider how those values show up in their leadership practice. Participants will also explore how to clarify and cultivate shared values to strengthen team culture and align collective effort.

Facilitator: Rick Morse (University of North Carolina School of Government)

10:30–11:30 a.m.

Breakout Sessions

Navigating AI Integration in Local Public Service

Rasmuson Hall 101

Artificial intelligence is rapidly entering the day-to-day work of public service organizations, yet many university-based research centers and institutes are still determining how to advise their partners on responsible and practical adoption. This panel brings together perspectives from executive coaching and workforce training, university leadership and technical research, and AI deployment and systems integration to help CUPSO members think through what thoughtful adoption actually looks like. Panelists will provide CUPSO members with a practical starting point for advising partners on when, where, and how to integrate AI tools in support of their missions.

Moderator: Rebecca Van Wyck (Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage)

Panelists: Shelly Thomas (Building Beta), Kenrick Mock (College of Engineering, University of Alaska Anchorage), and Blythe Easterly (Delve Group)

Leveraging AI to Improve your Communications Game

Rasmuson Hall 110

This session explores practical ways organizations can use generative AI and interactive data tools to enhance communication, accessibility, and decision making. Presenters will showcase how AI-powered resources—such as chatbots trained on organizational publications and websites—can make complex research more discoverable, generate insights into user intent, and inform smarter content strategy. Participants will explore how applied AI can elevate the user experience, strengthen engagement with key audiences, and support more informed policymaking and resource allocation.

Facilitator: Chance Hansen (Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, University of Utah)

11:45 a.m.–12 p.m.

Awards and Wrap-Up

Rasmuson Hall 101

12:30 p.m.

Optional Field Trip to Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC)

One bus will depart from UAA to ANHC. A second bus will take attendees back to the hotels.



2026
CUPSO
PUBLIC SERVICE
ON THE FRONTIER



WIFI

NETWORK: 2026 CUPSO
PASSWORD: PS2Frontier



BUS SCHEDULE

	TIME	DEPARTURE	DESTINATION
MONDAY	7:30 a.m.	SpringHill and Aloft Hotels	UAA
	8:30 a.m.	SpringHill and Aloft Hotels	UAA
	8:15 p.m.	Alaska Airlines Center <i>Two buses</i>	SpringHill and Aloft Hotels
TUESDAY	7:15 a.m.	SpringHill and Aloft hotels <i>One bus for each hotel</i>	UAA
	4 p.m.	UAA <i>Two buses</i>	Anchorage Museum
	8:10 p.m.	Anchorage Museum <i>Two buses</i>	SpringHill and Aloft Hotels
WEDNESDAY	7:45 a.m.	SpringHill and Aloft hotels <i>One bus for each hotel</i>	UAA
	12:30 p.m.	UAA	SpringHill and Aloft hotels
	12:30 p.m.	UAA	Alaska Native Heritage Center
	4 p.m.	Alaska Native Heritage Center	Downtown drop-off, then hotels



View a full Q&A document
for the conference
tinyurl.com/26CUPSOAssist

