



# 2026

## MEDA Spring Conference

Helena, MT | April 7-9



### AGENDA

#### Tuesday, April 7th

- 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. — **MEDA Q2 Board Meeting**  
MBAC - 225 Cruse Avenue, Suite D
- 11:00 a.m. — **Registration Opens**  
Montana Heritage Center - 225 Roberts St
- 12:00 p.m. — **Conference Kick Off & Welcome**  
Christy Cummings-Dawson, MEDA Board President
- 12:15 p.m. — **Lunch Buffet**
- 12:30 p.m. — **KEYNOTE: Helena Success Story: Building Bell Hotel**  
Karli Mosey & AshLy Tubbs, Owners
- 1:30 p.m. — **Networking Break**
- 1:45 p.m. — **State of MEDA**  
Allison Corbyn, MEDA Executive Director
- 2:00 p.m. — **Facilitated Discussion: 2027 Economic Development Policy Issues**  
Eric Seidensticker, MEDA Policy Committee Co-Chair & Policy Committee Members
- 3:00 p.m. — **Break for Tours**  
Tours will be 45 minutes, and attendees will need to choose two of the three options.  
Transportation will not be provided. We encourage attendees to carpool where possible.
- 3:30 p.m. — **TOUR 1 STARTS**  
Options:
  - Archie-Bray Foundation - 2915 Country Club Ave, Helena, MT 59602
  - Helena College - 2300 Airport Road, Helena, MT 59601
  - Heritage Center - 225 Roberts St, Helena, MT 59620
    - Meet at the Big Sky Room

4:30 p.m. — **TOUR 2 STARTS**

Options:

- Helena College - 2300 Airport Road, Helena, MT 59601
- Heritage Center - 225 Roberts St, Helena, MT 59620
  - Meet at the Big Sky Room

5:30 p.m. — **Networking Reception Hosted In Partnership With Edward Jones - Shannon M Daily**

The Holter Museum of Art - 12 E Lawrence St, Helena, MT

## Wednesday, April 8th

7:00 a.m. — **Walking Historic Tour**

Meet in the lobby of the DoubleTree Hotel - 22 N Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601

7:45 a.m. — **Continental Breakfast Opens**

Heritage Center

8:15 a.m. — **Welcome to Helena!**

8:25 a.m. — **Update from Northwestern Energy**

8:40 a.m. — **Panel: The Impact of Tourism on Economic Development**

Dax Scheiffer, Administrator, Montana Travel Association

Cole Mannix, Co-Founder & CEO, Old Salt Co-op

Paul Tuss, Executive Director, Bear Paw Development Corporation

Sarah Calhoun, Founder & Executive Director, Red Ants Pants

9:40 a.m. — **Break**

9:50 a.m. — **Panel: Transformative Community Investment - The Heritage Center**

Terra Burman, Executive Director, Eastern Plains Economic Development

Anthony Houtz, AIA, Design Director

Russ Katherman, Administrator, Dept. of Administration

Molly Kruckenberg, Director, MT Historical Society

Major Robinson, Owner, Redstone Project Development

10:50 a.m. — **Break**

11:00 a.m. — **Breakout 1**

- **Mountain Bluebird Room** - Grants 101
- **Ponderosa Room** - Business Development Building Your Team: Board & Volunteer Engagement
- **Cottonwood Room** - Whisky is for Drinking & Water is for Fighting

12:15 p.m. — **Lunch Buffet**

- 12:30 p.m. — **Keynote: Winning the Talent Wars: National Trends & Practical Strategies for Montana Communities**  
Patience Fairbrother, Senior Vice President, Talent Attraction, DCI
- 1:30 p.m. — **Break**
- 1:45 p.m. — **Breakout 2**
- **Mountain Bluebird Room** - CDBG Economic Development 101
  - **Ponderosa Room** - Advocacy That Works: Communicating Impact and Influencing Outcomes at the Legislature
  - **Cottonwood Room** - Executing on Effective Public Engagement
- 2:50 p.m. — **Breakout 3**
- **Mountain Bluebird Room** -Agritourism: Bridging Montana’s Agriculture and Tourism Economies
  - **Ponderosa Room** - From Feasibility to Implementation: Exploring Pay As You Save (PAYS) in MT
  - **Cottonwood Room** - All Aboard the Future: Enhancing Rail, Expanding Opportunity
- 3:50 p.m. — **Break**
- 4:00 p.m. — **Expanding Opportunities: Montana’s Role in National Defense Innovation Panel**  
Marta Bertoglio, Director, MTDOC  
Marcell Bruski, Ecosystem Marketing Lead, Defense Innovation Onramp Hub MT  
Elle Gahl, CEO & President, Shadow Ridge Analytics  
Al Deibert, Executive Director, Institute of National Security Research and Education at MSU
- 5:30 p.m. — **Networking Reception, Trivia & Trailblazer Speaker Event- Co-Hosted by the Montana Ambassadors**  
Ten Mile Creek Brewery, 48 N Last Chance Gulch

Thursday, April 9th

- 7:45 a.m. — **Hot Breakfast Buffet Opens**
- 8:00 a.m. — **Welcome to Day 3**
- 8:05 a.m. — **406 Jobs and State Workforce Innovation Board Update**  
Tammie Hickey, Executive Director, State Workforce Innovation Board

- 8:30 a.m. ————— **Keynote: Practical Generative AI for EDOs: Effective, Everyday Uses**  
Dr. Dell Gines, Chief Innovation Officer, International Economic  
Development Council
- 9:30 a.m. ————— **Break**
- 9:45 a.m. ————— **Partnering for Small Business Success: Policy, Advocacy & the Path  
Forward**  
Justin Everett, Regional Administrator, SBA Region VIII  
Trent Staggs, Regional Advocate, SBA Region VIII
- 10:45 a.m. ————— **Closing Remarks**
- 11:00 a.m. ————— **Conference Concludes**

*See you in Sidney, MT for the MEDA Fall Conference!  
September 22-24th*



*Scan to learn more about our amazing speakers!*



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