

**Chamber of Commerce
Executives of Kansas**

**2025
FALL
CONFERENCE**

**NOVEMBER 3-5, 2025
ATCHISON EVENT CENTER
ATCHISON, KS**



Program Schedule

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3

- 1:00 p.m.** CCEKS Board of Directors Meeting | Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce / Santa Fe Depot, 200 S. 10th Street
- 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.** **First Time Attendee and Chamber 101** | Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce / Santa Fe Depot, 200 S. 10th Street
If you are new to the chamber industry or a first-time attendee to the Fall Conference, make plans to attend this training. Learn best practices on running an effective chamber, protecting your organization and taking your chamber to the next level.
- 3:30 p.m.** **Hospitality Room Opens** | Holiday Inn Express – 1st floor
- 4:00 – 4:45 p.m.** **Historical Trolley Tour – Round 1** | Trolley picks up at Santa Fe Depot & Holiday Inn Express
Learn about the history of Atchison on this guided trolley tour. Trolley holds 25 – two tours times available.
- 4:45 – 5:45 p.m.** **Historical Trolley Tour - Round 2** | Trolley picks up at Santa Fe Depot & Holiday Inn Express
- 1:00 –5:00 p.m.** **Exhibitor Setup** | Atchison Event Center
- 3:00 –5:30 p.m.** **Registration** | Santa Fe Depot, 200 S. 10th Street
- 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.** **Opening Night Reception & Dinner** | Santa Fe Depot | 200 S. 10th Street
Enjoy dinner with your chamber peers. Trolley will take you back to hotel or to after dinner entertainment venue. *Sponsored by Locally Atchison and Visit Atchison.*
- After dinner, enjoy indoor golf at The Bunker at Bellevue or stop by the Wine Cellar for live music. Both venues are a short walk from the hotel.
- 8:00 p.m.** **Hospitality Room Opens** | Holiday Inn Express – 1st floor

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

- 7:30 a.m.** **Registration & Exhibitor Setup** | Atchison Event Center
- 8:30 a.m.** **Welcome to CCEKS 2025** | Amberwell Ballroom
- 8:45 a.m.** **General Session** | Amberwell Ballroom
Why Don't Developers Build Something in My Town?
Every community wants to experience re-investment, growth, and progress, but it takes a lot more than a catchy tagline and an optimistic outlook to actually bring projects to life. Justin Pregont is a former city manager turned self-employed real estate developer with over \$35 million of adaptive reuse and historic preservation projects completed throughout rural Kansas, including 110 downtown apartments. Justin will give the audience an insider's perspective on real estate development opportunities in rural Kansas. What makes projects so difficult to deliver? What kind of return on investment do developers make? Are incentives actually necessary? What steps can communities take to attract investment? With everyone talking about needing housing, why are there so many slumlords and so few builders? *Presented by Justin Pregont, Managing Member, Pomeroy Development/Pomeroy Properties*
- 9:30 a.m.** **Break | Exhibitor Showcase**

- 10:00 a.m.** **General Session** | Amberwell Ballroom
Building a Future
Education and workforce development are crucial to the work of chambers of commerce, as they establish a foundation for successful communities and economic development. Building a Future is the Kansas Board of Regents’ strategic plan for the state’s higher education system. It centers the work of Kansas colleges and universities on serving the state and its needs. Built with feedback from numerous stakeholder groups, including students, parents, employers, and business and community leaders, Building a Future was launched in 2020 and focuses its efforts around three pillars - helping Kansas families, supporting Kansas businesses and intentionally advancing economic prosperity in the state. Join fellow Chamber exec Blake Benson, who also serves as this year’s chairman of the Kansas Board of Regents, for an update on how Building a Future is already moving the needle and how Kansas colleges and universities will shape the Kansas economy for years to come. *Presented by Blake Benson, IOM, CCE, President & CEO, Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce and Kansas Board of Regents Higher Education Board Chair*
- 10:45 a.m.** **General Session** | Amberwell Ballroom
Presented by Kylie Mergen, FVP, Community Investment Officer, Director of HCD, FHLBank Topeka
- 11:30 a.m.** **General Session** | Amberwell Ballroom
Kansas State of Affairs
Presented by Colleen Jennison and Eric Stafford IOM, CAE, Vice President, Kansas Chamber
- 12:00 p.m.** **Lunch – Roundtables**
Roundtable discussions by topic that will include membership, ambassadors, board development, leadership programs, events & program, and non-dues revenue.
- 1:00 p.m.** **General Session** | Amberwell Ballroom
Updates and general information on Chamber Solutions Healthcare Program
Presented by Tim Shrout, Gallagher
- General Session** | Amberwell Ballroom
Communication Award Presentations
- 2:00 p.m.** **Break | Exhibitor Showcase**
- 2:30 p.m.** **Breakout Sessions**
- 1. Being the Leading Advocate for Business** | Oak Room
In this session, the Ottawa Area Chamber and Wichita Regional Chamber show how they position the chamber as the leading advocate for business, develop government affairs committees, build a policy agenda that reflects their members’ priorities and strengthen relationships with elected officials. *Presented by Ryland Miller, President & CEO, Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce; and Toni Porter, Vice President of Government Relations & Military Affairs, Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce*

2. Members That Stick: Recruitment & Retention Strategies That Work | Mahogany Room

Membership is the heartbeat of every chamber — but attracting new members and keeping them engaged requires more than a sales pitch and a renewal notice. In this session, you'll hear from two chambers with practical, creative strategies to grow your membership base, increase engagement, and boost retention year after year. *Presented by Tiffany Hall, Vice President Membership, The Chamber, Lawrence Kansas; Leigh Purdy, Vice President of Membership, The Chamber in Hays Kansas*

3:30 p.m.

Break | Exhibitor Showcase

3:45 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

3. Gaining Knowledge on the Finances of the Chamber

Presented by Patsy Porter, CPA, Patsy A. Porter, CPA, PA

4. Membership: Measuring Data for Success | Mahogany Room

This session will relate to your inner geek! Learn how to track and measure performance with membership data from understanding your annual retention rate, cost per member, to reporting the findings to your board. *Presented by Ruth Littlefield IOM CCE, Littlefield Management Solutions, LLC*

6:30 p.m.

Dinner – Servaes Brewery | 118 S. 2nd Street

Just a short walk from the hotel, enjoy dinner and drinks and great conversation. Communication of Excellence Awards, Board of Directors recognition, and update on CCEKS

8:00 p.m.

Hospitality Room Opens | Holiday Inn Express – 1st floor

8:30 p.m.

Haunted House Tours | Trolley picks up at the hotel

Tour three different haunted homes – Sallie McInteer Villa and RA Park Homes

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

9:00 a.m.

General Session

45 Ideas in 45 Minutes | Amberwell Ballroom

The ultimate R & D (rip-off and duplicate) session. Share your best and brightest ideas from membership, events, to revenue...anything goes. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three and presented at the end of the conference.

10:00 a.m.

Break | Exhibitor Showcase

10:30 a.m.

Breakout Sessions

5. AI in Action: Smarter Workflows for Chamber Leaders | Oak Room

Learn practical ways chamber leaders can use AI to save time, improve communications, and strengthen member engagement. Drawing on real examples from chambers and local business organizations, Elizabeth will show how tools like ChatGPT can streamline repetitive tasks, spark creativity for events and campaigns, and simplify communications—allowing directors to spend more time on relationships, advocacy, and strategy. Presented by Elizabeth Turner, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, Amberwell Health

6. HR Best Practices: Avoiding Legal “Hot Water” | Mahogany Room

This presentation will provide an overview of HR responsibilities that involve compliance, recordkeeping, FLSA and recommended hiring practices. *Presented Cindy Volanti SHRM-SCP, Human Resource Manager, City of Prairie Village*

11:30 a.m.

Lunch

12:15 p.m.

General Session | Amberwell Ballroom

Investing in Quality Places: Partnering with Commerce to Strengthen Communities and Businesses

Quality places are the foundation for attracting businesses, talent, and investment. In this session, Assistant Secretary Matt Godinez will share how the Kansas Department of Commerce is advancing housing, community development, and CDBG programs to build thriving communities across the state. Chambers will gain insight into how they can collaborate with Commerce, access resources designed to support business growth and help their communities compete for residents and talent. *Presented by Matt Godinez, Deputy Director, Kansas Department of Commerce*

1:15 p.m.

Conference Wrap-up