



NASCSP 2026 Annual Training Conference

CSBG Core Conference Agenda

September 23 - 25, 2026

Wednesday, September 23rd

7:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. **Breakfast**

8:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. **Opening Plenary**

The strength of our network has always been built from the ground up thanks to decades of federal, state, and local partnerships dedicated to reducing poverty and advancing energy equity in communities across the country. Our opening plenary honors that foundation while looking ahead. Join NASCSP leadership and special guests from the Houston community as they welcome attendees to the city, along with our federal partners from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Community Services (OCS) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), who will share their vision, priorities, and what's next for the CSBG and Weatherization networks. From the roots of where we've been to the reach of where we're going...this is how we kick things off.

PRESENTERS: **Dr. Robinne Alexander, M.B.A., Th.D.**, Group Sales Specialist and Brand Ambassador, American Automobile Association; **Keishaa Austin**, Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovations, U.S. Department of Energy (invited); **Corine Frank**, Acting Director, Office of Community Services, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; **Melanie Sanford**, Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and NASCSP Board President; **Cheryl Williams**, Executive Director, NASCSP

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **Networking Break**

Take a moment to connect and recharge during our networking break. This is your chance to mingle with fellow attendees, exchange ideas, and build valuable professional relationships. Enjoy refreshments and engage in stimulating conversations that could spark new collaborations and opportunities.

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **CONCURRENT SESSIONS:**

Annual Business Meeting (MEMBERS ONLY)

Join us for NASCSP's Annual Business Meeting, where members will receive key updates on organizational priorities, board activities, strategic initiatives, and financials. This meeting is an opportunity for members to engage with leadership, participate in decision-making processes, and help shape the direction of the association. Your voice and vote matter, so don't miss this critical session.

Strategic Restructuring from a CAA Perspective

This session will explore how states can support agencies considering strategic restructuring as a pathway to long-term sustainability and greater community impact. Building on work underway to develop practical tools and resources, the discussion invites participants to examine the range of options agencies may consider, what those choices can mean for organizations and the communities they serve, and how states can encourage thoughtful planning and decision-making. Through facilitated conversation, participants will take a broader, CAA-centered view of possibilities, key considerations, and state-level supports that can help agencies navigate change with clarity and purpose, leaving with a clearer picture of how to position strategic restructuring support within their state networks.

PRESENTER: **Maribeth Schneber-Rhemrev**, *Director, Organizational Capacity Building, National Community Action Partnership*

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Lunch (On Your Own)

2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

CSBG State Monitoring and Oversight: From Compliance to Continuous Improvement – Part I

Join the Office of Community Services (OCS) for updates on current CSBG initiatives, priorities, and federal guidance. Effective CSBG administration is more than meeting compliance requirements; it requires strong systems, strategic oversight, and a commitment to continuous improvement. This two-part session will explore key elements of effective state-level CSBG administration, including programmatic oversight, performance management, fiscal accountability, risk-based monitoring assessments, data-informed decision-making, targeted training and technical assistance and foundational CSBG operational guidance. Participants will have the opportunity to hear directly from OCS and gain insight into upcoming developments affecting CSBG State Offices.

PRESENTERS: **Verna P. Best**, *Program Operations Branch Chief*, **Roneika Carr**, *Program Specialist, Office of Community Services, Division of Community Assistance, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

3:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Networking Break

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3:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

CSBG State Monitoring and Oversight: From Compliance to Continuous Improvement – Part II

Effective CSBG administration is more than meeting compliance requirements; it requires strong systems, strategic oversight, and a commitment to continuous improvement. This session continues CSBG State Monitoring and Oversight: From Compliance to Continuous Improvement - Part I, providing additional time

for updates, discussion, and participant questions. Participants will gain an understanding of practical strategies for strengthening state level oversight, supporting eligible entities, and developing a higher-performing CSBG network.

PRESENTERS: **Verna P. Best**, *Program Operations Branch Chief*,
Roneika Carr, *Program Specialist, Office of Community Services, Division of Community Assistance, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

Thursday, September 24th

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS:

CSBG Member Planning and Action

CSBG Member Planning and Action is devoted to in-depth peer exchanges facilitated by your elected NASCSP regional representatives, covering critical topics in CSBG operations and administration. This session is reserved for **NASCSP members only**.

Exploring Data: Using AI to Enhance Your Work

The ROMA cycle generates data at every phase that must be analyzed to identify areas of practice needing to be strengthened, maintained, or eliminated. This session explores how AI can streamline the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. We will explore what questions you would like AI to help you answer and how to prepare your data for AI analysis. Finally, we will discuss the importance of verifying the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated responses.

PRESENTER: **Carey Gibson**, *Deputy Director, Association of Nationally Certified ROMA Professionals*

10:15 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Networking Break

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10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS:

CSBG Joint Member Planning and Action

This workshop will focus on in-depth exchanges, facilitated by NASCSP's regional representatives, covering critical CSBG topics including T/TA assessment and delivery, Annual Reporting, and others. This session is designed as a joint State Office/State Association collaborative discussion.

Analysis of Data from Multiple Sources to Identify Agency-Level Needs

Many strategic plans in Community Action focus on agency outcomes: strengthening programs, improving internal systems, building staff capacity, upgrading technology, or meeting organizational standards. What often goes

missing is the answer to a simple question: where do the agency's needs come from in the first place? In this session, we'll explore organizational evidence including agency outcome reports, customer satisfaction data, past SWOT assessments, and other capacity findings. You'll practice analyzing real data to identify agency-level needs and learn to move beyond "data for compliance" toward meaningful analysis that drives decision-making.

PRESENTER: **Carey Gibson**, *Deputy Director, Association of Nationally Certified ROMA Professionals*

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS:

State Management Work Group 2.0: Advancing Promising Practices for Rural Communities

This session will highlight the work of the State Management Work Group (SMWG) 2.0 and its efforts to identify state administrative practices that reduce burden and strengthen support for rural Community Action Agencies (CAAs). Participants will hear an update on the initiative, learn about promising practices identified through the project, and explore the tools and resources developed to help State Offices improve efficiency and better serve rural communities.

PRESENTERS: **Kate Blunt**, *Principal, Kate Blunt & Associates*; **Genevieve Fields**, *Workforce Development Manager, Louisiana Workforce Commission*; **Alicia McDaniel**, *CSBG Program Administrator, Delaware Office of Community Services*; **Amy Parker**, *Grants Manager, Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families*; **Karen Quackenbush**, *Program Manager, Housing and Community Development Division, Utah Department of Workforce Services*; **Marc Tremblay**, *Community Service Block Grant Administrator, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services*; **Lindsay Whittin**, *CSBG Program Director, Tennessee Department of Human Services*

Co-Creating the Future: How Pennsylvania Reimagined Training Models for Real Organizational Impact

Explore how the Community Action Association of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development partnered to reimagine training in their state, shifting from a compliance-focused model to a continuous improvement learning system designed for long-term organizational impact. This session will walk through the development process, share early lessons learned, and discuss how other states might apply a similar approach.

PRESENTERS: **Beck Moore**, *CEO, Community Action Association of Pennsylvania*; **Melissa Tabb**, *Deputy Director, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development*

2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Networking Break

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professional relationships. Enjoy refreshments and engage in stimulating conversations that could spark new collaborations and opportunities.

3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

The Art of Winning When it Seems Like All Hope is Lost

Leadership is easy when resources are plentiful, teams are aligned, and the path forward is clear. The true test of leadership comes when funding is uncertain, priorities shift, resources are stretched, and expectations remain high — yet the solutions that worked yesterday no longer seem like enough.

The Art of Winning When It Seems Like All Hope Is Lost is an engaging and practical keynote designed for leaders who are called to deliver results in the most challenging circumstances. Tailored for the community services professionals, this session examines how resilience, strategic thinking, courageous decision-making, and disciplined execution can transform obstacles into opportunities, even when the ground is shifting beneath you.

Through real-world examples, interactive discussion, and practical strategies, participants will be equipped to move from crisis to clarity, from obstacles to options, and from surviving to winning! The goal is not simply to survive difficult seasons; it is to develop the leadership capacity to find a path forward when others believe there isn't one.

PRESENTER: **Dr. Karen Y. Williams**, *International Executive Director, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.*

Friday, September 25th

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

8:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Soft Skills for Hard Conversations

Difficult conversations are an unavoidable part of working with others but navigating them effectively requires more than knowing what to say. This interactive session explores the dynamics that can make conversations difficult, including differing perspectives, underlying interests, emotions, and personal reactions to conflict. Participants will reflect on how they interpret and respond to challenging interactions and explore approaches for building understanding, reducing tension, and moving conversations forward. Through reflection, discussion, and practical application, participants will strengthen interpersonal skills that support active listening, curiosity, constructive dialogue, and conflict resolution. Participants will leave with new perspectives and practical strategies for approaching hard conversations with greater awareness, confidence, and intention.

PRESENTER: **Brandy Boulos**, *Senior Research Analyst, NASCSP*

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Networking Break

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10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

The Connection Countdown: A Speed Networking Experience

The conference may be nearing its finish, but there's still time to make a few meaningful connections. In this fast-paced, game-show-inspired networking experience, participants will race the clock through a series of lively one-on-one rounds designed to spark real conversations. Each round introduces a new challenge, from swapping strategies for stretching limited resources to uncovering potential partnerships you didn't know existed. The rounds move fast, with music, countdowns, surprise prompts, and plenty of energy to keep things moving. You'll meet new colleagues, discover fresh perspectives, and identify connections worth continuing long after the session ends. No preparation required; just bring your business cards and your energy. Come ready to think quickly, share boldly, and grow your NASCSP network one connection at a time.

PRESENTER: Raymond Thomas, *Director of Meetings and Strategic Engagement, NASCSP*

11:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Closing Plenary

Join us as we bring the conference to a close with reflections on key themes, takeaways, and connections made throughout the week. This session will highlight shared insights, celebrate collaborative learning, and look ahead to the work that continues beyond the conference. Participants will leave with renewed energy, strengthened relationships, and a clearer sense of how to carry forward what they have learned into their organizations and communities.