Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Agenda-at-a-Glance

November 9–11, 2026
Penn Stater Hotel & Conference Center

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8

6 – 7 p.m. Pre-Arrivals Welcome Reception

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

9:30 a.m. PRLA Board of Directors Meeting

noon Annual Meeting of the Membership with Lunch

2 p.m. **MEETING BREAKOUTS**

PRLAEF Board of Directors

Tourism Coalition *(closed session)*

2:15 p.m. **INSIGHT ROUNDTABLES**

Hospitality Operator Exchange: Real Challenges. Shared Solutions.

Compare notes with fellow operators on the challenges, trends, and practices shaping hospitality. Share what's working, ask questions, and take away ideas for your business.

Tourism Exchange: Fresh Ideas. Stronger Connections.

Connect with tourism peers through rotating small-group discussions on finding and reaching the right visitor; winning group, sports, and event business; and getting more from your partnerships. Share insights and explore approaches you can put to work in your destination.

SPIRIT OF HOSPITALITY AWARDS

5 p.m. Reception

6:45 p.m. Awards & Installation Ceremony

8 p.m. Post-awards Reception & Entertainment

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

8:30 a.m. Breakfast with Exhibitors

8:45 a.m. Membership Committee Strategy Meeting *(closed session)*

9:45 a.m. KEYNOTE The Human Advantage: Emotional Intelligence in an AI World

In this fireside chat, Dan Simons of Founding Farmers explores how emotional intelligence and human connection build healthier workplace cultures. Discover ways to strengthen relationships, engage employees, and lead with empathy as technology reshapes work.

11 a.m. **HIGH TOUCH / PEOPLE FIRST BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

Delivering Hospitality that Technology Can't Replace

Explore the leadership behaviors, service practices, and guest interactions that turn everyday hospitality into lasting loyalty. Hear how operators keep human connection at the heart of the experience.

Destination Storytelling: Finding the Stories that Inspire Visits

Discover authentic stories in your destination's businesses, people, and experiences that evoke emotion and inspire visits. Learn how to carry those stories across marketing channels, creating an emotional connection that moves potential visitors from interest to action.

11:45 a.m. Lunch & Hospitality Resources Hot Seat

1:30 p.m. **HIGH TECH / FUTURE READY BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

Everyday AI: Get More Done

Explore accessible AI tools that help you save time, think strategically, and improve everyday work without a major technology investment. Learn where AI can help, where human judgment matters, and how to protect sensitive information.

From Google to AI: Will Travelers Still Find Your Destination?

AI is changing how travelers discover places to visit, stay, and explore. Learn where platforms get their information and how DMOs and hospitality partners can keep their destinations visible, accurate, and easy to recommend.

BUSINESS & GROWTH SESSIONS

Beyond the Post: Getting Your Content Seen, Shared, & Amplified

Learn how to get compelling content in front of the right audience through social media, video, earned media, and creator partnerships. Explore ways to cut through the noise and extend your stories' reach.

Profitability 360: Developing People, Driving Revenue, and Improving Margins

Connect team development, revenue strategy, and operational efficiency to strengthen your bottom line. Explore practical ways to improve culture, guest experience, and financial performance.

3 p.m.

HIGH TECH HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS

AI for Operators: Build it Today. Use it Tomorrow.

Put AI to work on a restaurant management challenge, from creating an assistant for training materials to improving forecasts, shift handoffs, or marketing. Practice giving AI useful context and refining its responses, and leave with at least one workflow you can use the next day. Bring your laptop.

AI for Lodging: Smarter Operations. Better Guest Experiences.

Practice using AI to streamline property operations, improve guest communications, and support marketing decisions. Explore applications such as daily manager briefings, review responses, and guest insights while protecting sensitive information and keeping service personal. Bring your laptop.

AI for Tourism: Turn Ideas into Action

Put AI to work on a tourism project, such as a social campaign, content calendar, press release, grant draft, or research summary. Practice shaping the results to reflect your destination's voice, mission, and goals. Bring your laptop.

BUSINESS & GROWTH SESSIONS

Today's Consumer: What Guests Want and What They Will Pay For

Explore how price, quality, service, convenience, and experiences shape guests' expectations and spending decisions. Hear how operators can respond to changing definitions of value and which shifts may matter most in the year ahead.

Own the Conversation: Building Your DMO's Voice & Influence

Position your DMO as the region's visitor economy expert, destination steward, and integral economic development partner. Learn how to demonstrate tourism's impact, connect it to community priorities, and build relationships that expand your influence beyond marketing.

4 p.m. **From First Impression to Lasting Connection: The Visitor Experience**

Explore how restaurants, hotels, attractions, and tourism partners can bring a destination's identity to life through their own offerings and service rituals. Discover ways to connect guests with the place they came to visit, create memorable experiences, and build lasting loyalty.

4:30 p.m. **Innovation Showcase & Happy Hour with Exhibitors**

Explore products, services, and ideas for your business in a relaxed happy-hour setting. Meet suppliers and potential partners, and compare notes with fellow attendees before heading downtown for the evening.

6:30 p.m. **Women in Hospitality Social**

Unwind with women across hospitality and tourism over charcuterie, cheese, and conversation at The Lobby Bar at Hotel State College. Transportation is provided. Beer and wine drink tickets are included, with time afterward to continue the evening on the College Town Bar & Restaurant Crawl.

6:30 p.m. **College Town Bar & Restaurant Crawl**

Spend the evening exploring downtown State College's bar and restaurant scene with conference friends old and new. Trolley transportation between the Penn Stater and downtown makes it easy to head out and enjoy the town.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

9 a.m. **Breakfast & Tourism Resources Hot Seat**

10 a.m. GENERAL **The Visitor Economy Ahead: What the Numbers are Telling Us**

Tourism Economics examines how the visitor economy is performing in 2026 and what lies ahead for 2027. Gain perspective on the trends shaping the outlook for hospitality and tourism.

11 a.m. **What's Next for Pennsylvania Tourism**

Get an inside look at Visit PA's priorities, state tourism marketing, and emerging audiences and markets. Explore lessons from 2026 and opportunities for local destinations to partner with Visit PA as planning turns to 2027–28.

11:45 a.m. **Inside Visit PA: Ask the Team**

Bring your questions to the Visit PA team for a discussion of tourism strategy, content, research, and partnerships. Learn more about the programs and resources available to destinations throughout the year.

12:15 p.m. **Box Lunch Pickup**

12:45 p.m. **DMO Executives Roundtable**

An in-person DMO Council meeting for executive directors and CEOs to discuss shared priorities and exchange perspectives. Restricted to DMO executive directors and CEOs.