



PACOG's mission is to
improve and strengthen
intergovernmental
cooperation in Pennsylvania

Cooperation

Collaboration

Communication



PACOG.com

2026 Annual PACOG Conference

"We're Better Together"

**September 1 –
September 2**





Welcome from the Chair PACOG Board of Directors

To our attendees, guests, and colleagues—welcome!

Something special happens when local government leaders, innovators, and professionals gather in one room: ideas travel fast, connections stick, and good work gets better. That's exactly what we've built this year's conference around — a bold lineup of speakers, hands-on workshops, and plenty of room to meet the people solving the same problems that you face.

A heartfelt thank you to our speakers, who bring their knowledge, skill, and hard-won experience to the stage. We are fortunate to learn from them.

An equally big “shout out” to our sponsors and exhibitors — this conference simply would not happen without you. Please stop by the exhibit booths; there's real value waiting there.

And don't forget to check out our website, <https://pacog.com> — a member directory, a list of services, and a growing library of resources for COG programs awaits you there. Share your best practices and your COG's story to help other COGs connect with your experiences. Cooperation, collaboration, and communication are what this association is all about.

Whether you came to learn, connect, or share what you know, we hope the 2026 PACOG Conference is time exceptionally well spent — and a step toward a brighter future for our Councils of Governments and intergovernmental cooperation.

Thank you for being part of it. I look forward to meeting each of you. Welcome, and enjoy the conference!

Best,

An Lewis

An Lewis

Chair, PACOG Board of Directors



2026 PACOG Membership

Board of Directors

An Lewis, Chair, Steel Rivers COG
Amanda Settelmaier, Vice-Chair, Turtle Creek Valley COG
Gary Myers, Treasurer, Capital Region COG
Jill Boozer, Board Member, Mercer County Region COG
Patrick Conners, Board Member, South Hills Area COG
Ben Estell, Board Member, Centre Region COG
Lance Prator, Board Member, Slate Belt COG

Our Member Councils of Government

Adams County COG	Allegheny Valley North COG
Butler County COG	Cambria-Somerset COG
Capital Region COG	Centre Region COG
Char-West COG	Erie Area COG
Foot Hills COG	French Creek COG
Indiana-Westmoreland COG	Mercer County Regional COG
Moshannon Valley COG	Mount Penn Preserve COG
North Hills COG	Quaker Valley COG
Slate Belt COG	South Hills Area COG
Steel Rivers COG	Southwestern Butler COG
Sullivan County COG	Turtle Creek Valley COG
Warren County Co-Op COG	Wyoming County COG

PACOG Management Team

Grass Root Solutions

Deborah Grass, Owner and Project Manager
Tricia Levander, Financial Consultant



2026 PACOG Membership



Affiliate Members

Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council
Delaware Valley Trust
Local Government Academy

Associate Members

Acrisure
Berkheimer Associates
Cohen Law Group
Grass Root Solutions
Maher Duessel
PLGIT – PFM
Vadar Systems



We wish to extend a heartfelt thank-you to our Affiliate and Associate members for their continued support and involvement in the PACOG organization. The resources, support, and educational opportunities provided by PACOG for its members would not be possible without your support. Your generosity is very much appreciated.



2026 PACOG Annual Conference Program

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Time Slot	Topic	Description
9:00am		Exhibitor Booth Set-Up
11:00am	Registration for Conference	Check In
11:30am	Opening Luncheon - Coaly Ballroom Sponsored by "Visit Monroeville"	Welcome An Lewis, Chairperson, PACOG
12:30pm	Welcome to State College	Tom Fountaine, Manager State College Borough
12:40pm	Legislative Update: What's Up in Harrisburg?	Kris Gazsi, Assistant Director Local Government Commission
1:00pm - 2:00pm	Create the Organization You Want to Lead	Nancy Hess, NJ Hess Associates, PCC Local <i>Nancy Hess will guide participants through a discussion on how to shape an organization with clear purpose, strong leadership practices, and a culture that supports meaningful results. The session will help COG leaders think strategically about aligning people, priorities, and governance to create the organization they want to lead.</i>
2:00pm	Cookie Break - Sponsored by "Dailey Operations Consulting"	
2:15pm - 3:15pm	Trash Talk: Managing Waste Costs in Uncertain Times	Jason Dailey, Dailey Operations Consulting; Les Moore, Sanico; Michelle Harkins, QVCOG <i>Join this timely discussion focused on how COGs can help municipalities manage waste removal costs by coordinating shared contracts, improving economies of scale, and reducing duplicate administrative expenses. Hear from an industry leader about ways to structure the service for the highest efficiency and the best service results for residents</i>
3:15pm - 4:30pm	Speed Networking - Let's Get Together!	Tim Hindes, TrailBlaze Creative, Eric Macadangdang, Co-Hub <i>This fun and lively session will give participants a structured way to quickly exchange shared insights, surface common challenges, and identify opportunities for collaboration across the COG community.</i>
4:30pm - 5:00pm	Down Time - Hotel Check In	
5:00pm	Opening Reception - 1855 Room Sponsored by "Delaware Valley Trust"	<i>Enjoy a relaxing event with your friends and colleagues in the historic 1855 Room</i>
6:30pm	Dinner on Your Own	Explore State College!



2026 PACOG Annual Conference Program

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

Time Slot	Topic	Description
7:30am	Breakfast - Coaly Ballroom	Sponsored by "CDB Law"
8:00am	Business Meeting - Eleventh Board Room	Members Meeting - Election of Officers
8:45am	Focus On: State Initiatives for Supporting Intergovernmental Cooperation	Rick Vilello, PA-DCED Deputy Secretary
9:15am - 10:15am	Regional Public Safety Services COGs Leading the Way	Terri Cunkle, DCED; Ben Estell, Centre Region COG; Chris Rearick, SW Butler COG Paul Lalley, Attorney, CDB Law
	<i>Regional public safety services can reduce duplication, improve readiness, and make specialized services more affordable and reliable for local governments. But what are the legal challenges and barriers that could create pitfalls for a regional approach? COGs across the state are working to lead this initiative. BONUS: Learn about the technical assistance that is available from DCED.</i>	
10:15am	Energy Break - Sponsored by "Grass Root Solutions"	
10:30am - 11:30am	Declining CableTV Revenue? COGs to the Rescue	Dan Cohen, Attorney, Cohen Law Patrick Conners, SHACOG
	<i>As cable franchise fee revenue declines, local governments need to be creative. Hear from the experts about key approaches to increase franchise fee revenue including redefining "gross revenue", assessing fees on wireless and fiber companies, and establishing protections for your rights-of-way. Equally important will be a discussion about regional approaches through your COG to increase your negotiating leverage with your cable company and reduce the cost of franchise renewal.</i>	
11:30am - 12:30pm	Collaborative Solutions for Financial Management & Billing Services	Amanda Settelmaier, TCVCOG Natalie Merola, TCVCOG Terri Cunkle PA-DCED
	<i>Local government operations are vulnerable to fraud because many municipalities operate with small staffs, limited financial expertise, and weak segregation of duties. COGs can help reduce this risk by providing shared financial management services that give municipalities access to professional accounting capacity, standardized procedures, independent review, and stronger oversight. Join our panelists in a discussion about how COGs can provide these services while generating revenue for long-term stability and sustainability.</i>	
12:30pm	Closing Comments	An Lewis, PACOG Chairperson, SRCOG "We Are Better Together"

Our Speakers



Dan Cohen

Dan Cohen is an attorney with the Cohen Law Group, a law firm located in Pittsburgh that specializes in representing local governments in cable, wireless, and broadband matters. For over 27 years, the Cohen Law Group has assisted over 500 local governments in six states in these matters. Dan is the former Co-Chair of the Legal & Policy Committee of the National Assoc. of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA), which is the national organization that advocates for local governments on telecom issues. Dan graduated from Yale University and from Stanford Law School.



Patrick Conners

Patrick Conners is an accomplished public administrator and nonprofit executive with extensive experience supporting local government organizations, fostering regional collaboration, and advancing innovative public service initiatives. As Executive Director of the South Hills Area Council of Governments (SHACOG), he works closely with 23 member municipalities along with their supporting public agencies as well as private and nonprofit partners to strengthen intergovernmental cooperation, secure grant funding, improve infrastructure, and deliver cost-effective shared services that enhance the quality of life throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania.



Terri Cunkle

Terri Cunkle has over 15 years' experience in local government and serves as the North Central Local Government Policy Specialist with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Governor's Center for Local Government Services. Terri formerly served as administrator for a second-class township and as a DCED peer-to-peer. Terri's "hands on" experience and knowledge aid in her relatability and understanding of the issues faced daily by local governments.



Jason Dailey

Jason Dailey is the owner of Dailey Operation Consulting LLC, providing consulting services to municipalities and authorities throughout Pennsylvania. He has more than 25 years of local government experience, including serving as Utilities Director and Public Works Director for Cranberry Township and Township Manager for West Deer and Crescent Townships. Jason holds an undergraduate degree from Waynesburg College and an M.B.A. from Point Park University and is an instructor and consultant for several Pennsylvania municipal organizations. He is the recent Past President of the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA) and stays actively involved in the organization.

Our Speakers



Ben Estell

Benjamin Estell is the Executive Director of the Centre Region Council of Governments in Pennsylvania, where he leads a multi-municipal system of shared services, regional planning, parks and recreation, library services, code administration, and public safety collaboration. His career began in East Liverpool, Ohio, where he navigated the challenges of visible public leadership in a community under intense economic and political pressure. He later served as Borough Manager in Dormont, PA, working to restore organizational stability, rebuild staff confidence, and re-establish functional governance. Ben's work is grounded in the belief that managing public institutions requires not only technical skill, but emotional durability and intentional support systems—both inside the organization and at home. He focuses on leadership practices that sustain people, culture, and the long arc of public service.



Tom Fountaine

Thomas J. Fountaine II, has more than 46 years of local government management experience. Since 2003, Tom has served as the State College Borough Manager. He is responsible for overseeing all operating departments and serves as the Chief Executive Officer for State College. Tom is heavily involved in professional organizations, including the International City/County Management Association, the Association for Pennsylvania Municipal Management, the International Town-Gown Association, the Pennsylvania Municipal League, the National League of Cities, and the Alliance for Innovation. He also serves as the Borough's representative on the PennPRIME Insurance Board. Tom has a Bachelor of Science in Public Administration from Indiana University and has also worked as an adjunct professor at Mount Aloysius College in the Public Administration Department.



Kris Gazsi

Kris Gazsi is the Assistant Director and Legal Counsel for the Pennsylvania Local Government Commission. The Commission is a bicameral, bipartisan legislative service agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly that serves as a specialized local government resource for legislators, caucus staff, committee staff and constituents on inquiries, issues and legislation, providing objective expertise in many facets of local government. Kris has worked for the Commission for 13 years and encountered a variety of local government issues in Pennsylvania and found a particular interest in the areas of fiscal distress and constitutional law. When he's off the clock, Kris enjoys cycling, the art of pizza making, and spending time with his wife, rambunctious children and very naughty hound dog.



Michelle Harkins

Michelle Harkins serves as Executive Director of the Quaker Valley Council of Governments (QVCOG), representing 17 municipalities in Allegheny County. She leads regional infrastructure projects, joint purchasing, and grant management, with recent experience in multi-municipal waste procurements. Prior to supporting Pennsylvania local governments, Michelle oversaw an Urban Renewal Agency (URA) in Billings, Montana.

Our Speakers



Nancy Hess

Nancy Hess has been designing human resource systems for local governments for over 35 years in organization development and human resources. Her distinctive competency is tapping into the internal strengths of an organization and partnering with clients to engage people in the process of change. She hosts the podcast **PCC Local Time** which features municipal managers, academics, and professionals and publishes **MuniSquare** on Substack. Nancy completed her master's degree in Management, Labor and Human Resources at Ohio State University. She taught classes in the Department of Management at Bloomsburg University for over ten years including Strategic Compensation, Human Resource Management, Labor Relations and Organization Behavior.



Tim Hinde

Tim Hinde is a visionary leader at the intersection of creativity, community, and social impact. He is the CEO of TrailBlaze Creative, an award-winning team delivering marketing, creative, and strategic capacity solutions to organizations across North America who share a passion for community-building. He's worked for more than 20 years in economic development think tanks, government affairs firms, national and regional nonprofits, and startup tech companies building expertise that is rooted in his blue-collar Pittsburgh roots and his commitment to advancing messages through creativity and community-building. Recognized for his ability to strengthen communities in times of disruption, Tim has recently led impactful campaigns following disruptions in East Palestine, OH, and Memphis.



Paul Lalley

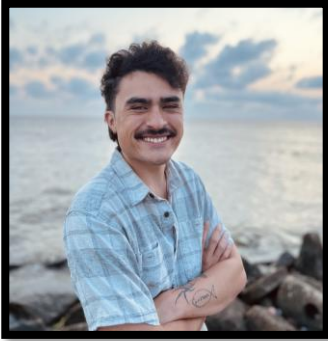
Paul Lalley is a shareholder with Campbell Durrant, P.C., where he handles labor and employment issues for public sector clients. Paul has argued cases involving local governmental issues before the PA Supreme Court, the Commonwealth Court of PA, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. He has represented municipal clients in state and federal court in cases involving employment and constitutional claims, as well as in proceedings before the EEOC, the PHRC, the PLRB, and the NLRB. He has conducted personnel training for public school administrators and municipal managers. Paul received his Bachelor's Degree in History at the University of Pennsylvania in 1993 and his Juris Doctorate degree from The Dickinson School of Law in 1996.



An Lewis

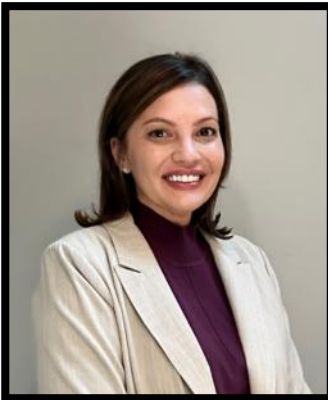
An Lewis is a public administration professional with over 25 years of experience working with local governments. She is currently the Executive Director of Steel Rivers Council of Governments which represents 19 municipalities in Allegheny County's Monongahela Valley. An also serves as the Executive Director of the Tri-COG Land Bank which serves multiple municipalities and school districts across Allegheny County. She has been a leader in the movement to focus on blighted properties and to form a multi-municipal land bank in Allegheny County.

Our Speakers



Eric Macadangdang

Eric Macadangdang serves as the Director of Engagement of the Community Project Hub of Southwestern Pennsylvania (CoHub), a nonprofit technical assistance provider helping municipalities, nonprofits, and community organizations move projects from idea to action. We help communities build readiness, navigate funding opportunities, and move meaningful projects forward. In his role, Eric oversees and manages outreach and engagement efforts in CoHub's 12-county region footprint. Eric is a native to the Pittsburgh region, completing both his undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Pittsburgh. He is on the board of directors of the Oakland Planning and Development and serving on the advisory group of Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh.



Natalie Merola

Natalie Merola serves as Director of Operations for the Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments (TCVCOG), where she oversees shared municipal programs including financial management, utility billing, and "CodeNforce" a collaborative code enforcement platform supporting municipalities across the region. With years of hands-on experience in municipal operations, she focuses on developing practical shared-service solutions, strengthening internal processes, and using technology and collaboration to help municipalities build capacity and operate more efficiently.



Les Moore

Les Moore is the Senior Sales Manager for Sanico, Inc. founded in 1973, to provide commercial and industrial waste and recycling hauling services. Les provides consulting services for waste and recycling, with a focus on commercial and industrial waste. Les brings solid abilities to listen to customers, uncover their needs, and guide their decisions to the best practical solutions. Les attended Purdue University Daniels School of Business for Organizational Leadership. When not lurking around compactors behind local hospitals, grocery stores, and factories, Les enjoys traveling, camping and attending concerts with his wife and their two award-winning musician daughters.



Chris Rearick

Chris Rearick has served as Township Manager in Jackson Township, Butler County since 2011. In his capacity as Manager, he currently acts as Executive Director of the Southwestern Butler Council of Governments, which serves Jackson and Lancaster Townships and Zelienople and Harmony Boroughs. Prior to his time at Jackson, Chris served as Community Development Director for the Municipality of Murrysville for five years and has worked as a staff member and consultant to several municipalities in Southwestern Pennsylvania, continuing to serve as a Zoning Officer for the Quaker Valley COG in Allegheny County. He has appreciated the opportunity to serve in a capacity that has witnessed evolving trust and cooperation amongst neighboring municipalities in a growing region.

Our Speakers



Amanda Settelmaier

Amanda Settelmaier is a public administration professional with 28 years of experience. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments (TCVCOG) which represents 20 municipalities in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Amanda specializes in intergovernmental cooperative efforts; grant writing/administration; and creating multi-municipal tools to mitigate community blight. Amanda received a Liberal Arts degree from St. Vincent College. She went on to receive her graduate degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the Graduate School of Public & International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh.



Richard Vilello

Rick Vilello is the Deputy Secretary for the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Community Affairs and Development. He first joined the PA-DCED in March of 2015 as the Executive Director of the Governor's Center for Local Government Services. He was appointed as Deputy Secretary in February 2017. As Deputy Secretary, Rick oversees the work of the entire deputation including: The Governor's Center for Local Government Services; The Center for Community Enhancement; The Center for Community and Housing Development; The Whole-Home Repairs Office; and The Center for Community Services. Before coming to DCED, Rick served four terms as Mayor of Lock Haven and was previously President of the Pennsylvania Municipal League.

Thank you to Our Sponsors and Exhibitors



Since 1963, **A&H Equipment Co.** has been the leading provider of municipal, truck and environmental solutions in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and now in Ohio. Headquartered in Zelienople, PA, with additional full-service locations in Harrisburg, PA & Independence, OH, we deliver quality products, expert support, and reliable equipment to meet your needs, and our very own A&H Bodies truck equipment upfitter, in Somerset, PA.

Berkheimer is a trusted tax administrator in Pennsylvania that specializes in all Pennsylvania Act 32 and Act 50 tax administration services. They are the preferred partner for 32 Tax Collection Districts and provide services to individuals, employers, payroll companies, tax preparers, and governments. The company is committed to providing efficient and effective tax administration services, making it easier for taxpayers to fulfill their local tax obligations.



Campbell Durrant, PC, focuses solely on labor and employment law and has exclusively done so since its founding in May 1998. Cases related to this nuanced and complex field of law are all we handle, day in and day out, meaning that we have the most comprehensive experience and familiarity with these laws and regulations. Whatever your specific circumstances and needs may be, you can trust that we have the proven track record, time-tested skills, and extensive knowledge to help you secure the best possible outcome.

Through their risk-sharing pools, **Delaware Valley Trusts** delivers health, workers' compensation, and property & liability coverage designed specifically to help public entities save money, stay protected, and keep employees healthy and happy. Over the past four decades, we have prioritized long-term financial stability and optimized our programs to provide superior coverage at the lowest responsible cost. Our members enjoy stable rates that defy insurance industry trends, allowing them to budget confidently and with ease. Each Trust's investment income accrues for the benefit of our membership. Member satisfaction is confirmed by our 95% retention rate and a growing enrollment of more than 160 public entities in Pennsylvania and Delaware



Thank you to Our Sponsors and Exhibitors



Dailey Operation Consulting

Jason A. Dailey

Dailey Operation Consulting LLC is a municipal consulting firm specializing in local government management, public works, utilities, organizational assessments, and executive recruitment. The firm partners with municipalities, authorities, and regional organizations to improve operations, enhance service delivery, and provide practical, experience-based solutions to complex challenges. The firm's mission is to strengthen local governments through professional, responsive, and results-driven consulting.

George Ely Associates strives to make purchasing athletic, park and playground equipment as simple as possible for our customers. Check out our Purchasing Options, Grants & Resources page to find the solution that fits your needs.



As a management consulting firm, **Kafferlin Strategies** partners with local government leaders to bring clarity and order to their operations. We roll up our sleeves, work alongside your team, and help align finances, governance, and day-to-day operations so your community can flourish. We partner with local government officials to reframe challenges, refine processes, and reorganize how their institutions operate. By providing thoughtful evaluation, practical training, and effective management services, we help public servants fulfill their calling of stewardship and performance.

HRG assists with the planning, design, and management of communities. The primary focus of our work is people. We start by establishing a local presence and investing in community organizations to better understand their needs. We deliver friendly, responsive service with impeccable quality, professionalism, and care. And we center our employees' growth and well-being in every decision we make as a company.



NPPFA Benefits offers valuable retirement benefits, including efficient savings plans, educational resources, and healthcare funding options tailored for public employees. NPPFA Benefits exclusively provides the education, sales, and marketing for the NPPFA 457(b) Wise Choice for Public Employees Plan, the NPPFA 401(a) Wise Choice for Public Employees Plan, the Retirement Healthcare Funding Plan/115 Trust, and the NPPFA Wise Choice for Educators® 457(b)/403(b) Plan.

Thank you to Our Sponsors and Exhibitors

PLGIT was created in 1982 to meet the short-term investment needs of municipal authorities, local governments, school districts, and other types of governments in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As of December 31, 2024, we serve more than 3,200 public entity investors across the Commonwealth and cooperatively invest more than \$10.8 billion across multiple programs. For more information and important disclosures, refer to www.plgit.com.



TrailBlaze Creative partners with local governments and nonprofits to elevate their voice, engage communities, and drive lasting impact. We specialize in strategic communication, storytelling, and public engagement that helps organizations connect more meaningfully with the people they serve. From campaign development and crisis communication to community outreach and brand storytelling, TrailBlaze brings a collaborative, solutions-driven approach to every partnership. Our team understands the unique challenges and opportunities facing the not-for-profit sector—and we're here to help you navigate them with clarity, creativity, and purpose. Let's shape the future of your community, together.

Located just east of Pittsburgh, PA at the junction of the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Interstate 376, **Monroeville** offers area visitors some distinct advantages when it comes to location, price, and amenities. The City of Pittsburgh and the mountains of the Laurel Highlands are only minutes away. With city attractions including theaters, museums, amusement parks, and a casino, and outdoor activities including hiking, biking, fishing, and rafting, you can spend a day in the country or a night on the town — or both.

