



2025 Annual Conference

Cooperation

Collaboration

Communication

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

September 30 - October 1
State College, PA



Welcome from the Chair PACOG Board of Directors

To Our attendees, guests, and colleagues—welcome!

We are thrilled to have you join us for this exciting event, where local government leaders, innovators, and professionals come together to share insights, explore new ideas, and foster collaboration. This year's conference promises to be an inspiring and enriching experience, with a diverse lineup of speakers, engaging workshops, and ample networking opportunities.

We wish to especially thank our incredible speakers for their willingness to share their knowledge, skills, and experience with us. We feel extremely lucky to have such qualified individuals as part of the conference experience.

We would also like to thank our sponsorships and exhibitors without whom this conference could not happen. We encourage you to visit the exhibit booths to pick up some valuable information.

We would also like to invite you to check out our newly designed website - <https://pacog.com/> There you will find a directory of our members, a list of services, as well as a library of resources for various COG programs. We invite you to share your best practices and information about your COG's programs which is what our great association is all about cooperation, collaboration and communication.

Whether you are here to learn, connect, or share your expertise, we hope you find the 2025 PACOG Conference to be a valuable and memorable experience. Let's make the most of our time together and work towards a brighter future for our Councils of Governments and intergovernmental cooperation.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible event. I look forward to meeting with everyone. Welcome once again and enjoy the conference!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'An Lewis'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

An Lewis
Chair, PACOG Board of Directors

PACOG Membership

Board of Directors

An Lewis, Chair, Steel Rivers COG
Gary Myers, Vice-Chair, Capital Region COG
Amanda Settelmaier, Secretary-Treasurer, Turtle Creek Valley COG
Ben Estell, Board Member, Centre Region COG
John McHugh, Board Member

Our Member Councils of Government

Adams County COG	Butler County COG
Capital Region COG	Centre Region COG
Char-West COG	Erie Area 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
Steel Rivers COG	Sullivan County COG
Turtle Creek Valley COG	Warren County Co-Op COG
Wyoming County COG	

PACOG Management Team

Local Government Academy

Joy Ruff, Executive Director
Conner Plunkett, Assistant Director
Olivia Policicchio, Program Manager
Christian LeClaire, Community Projects Assistant

Grass Root Solutions

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

2025 Annual Conference Program Schedule

Tuesday, September 30, 2025

- 9:00 AM** **Exhibitor Set Up**
- 11:30 AM** **Registration & Networking**
- 11:30 AM** **Lunch Reception** *Sponsored by Visit Monroeville*
- 12:30 PM** **COGs Role in Strengthening Intergovernmental Cooperation**
Keynote Speaker: Rick Vilello, Pennsylvania DCED, Deputy Secretary, Community Affairs and Development
- 1:00 PM** **COGs Leading the Fight Against Blight**
An Lewis, Steel Rivers COG / Tri-COG Land Bank
Winnie Branton, Branton Strategies
In 2013, 3 COGS representing 40 communities came together to explore the fiscal impact of blight. The result was the creation of one of the most successful land banks in the Commonwealth.
- 1:45 PM** **Break** *Sponsored by Strassburger, McKenna, Gutnick and Gefsky*
- 2:00 PM** **Director's Forum**
Ben Estell, Centre Region COG
Gary Myers, Capital Region COG
Lee Olsen, Vice-Chairperson, MP3COG
Tracy McKee, Executive Director, Char-West COG
How can COGs become a more reliable resource for local governments everywhere? Join in a discussion of topics that are important for the long-term health and sustainability of COGs.
- 2:45 PM** **Board Management for Success**
Richard Miller, Esq., Campbell Durrant, PC
What are the responsibilities and authority of board members? How can COGs improve board engagement? Hear from an expert about board dynamics and how to manage for success.
- 3:30 PM** **Break and Hotel Check-In**
- 5:00 PM** **Opening Reception** *Sponsored by Campbell Durrant, PC*
- 6:30 PM** **Dinner On Your Own – Explore State College!**

Thank you
Sponsors!



Thank you
Exhibitors!



Cooperation Collaboration Communication



2025 Annual Conference

Program Schedule

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

- 7:30 AM** **Breakfast Reception Sponsored by A&H Equipment**
- 8:30 AM** **Annual Meeting and Board of Directors Election of Officers** *(Members Only)*
- 9:00 AM** **Welcome and PACOG Update**
An Lewis, Chair, PACOG Board of Directors
- 9:15 AM** **Marketing COG Services**
Tim Hindes, TrailBlaze Creative
Amanda Settelmaier, Turtle Creek Valley COG
Have a look at cutting-edge marketing tools for highlighting COG programs and services. Participate in an interactive session that positions COGs to communicate their value.
- 10:00 AM** **What's Up in Harrisburg?**
Tree Zuzzio, DCED Policy Office
David Greene, Local Government Commission
Hear about important updates on pending and adopted state legislation that impacts COGs.
- 10:45 AM** **Break** *Sponsored by Strassburger, McKenna, Gutnick and Gefsky*
- 11:00 AM** **Funding, Resources, and Revenue**
Katherine Wyrosdick, Governor's Center for Local Government Services
Terri Cunkle, Governor's Center for Local Government Services
Patrick Conners, Quaker Valley COG
Funding and revenue generation are the life blood of any organization. Learn about what programs are available and how COGs can be eligible applicants.
- 11:45 AM** **Closing Comments**
An Lewis, Chair, PACOG Board of Directors

Cooperation Collaboration Communication

The Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Governments (PACOG) is a voluntary organization of Councils of Governments (COGs) created to foster a cooperative effort in the solution of common municipal problems.

PACOG's mission is to improve and strengthen intergovernmental cooperation in Pennsylvania. We advocate for voluntary partnerships and sharing of knowledge and resources to better serve the needs of all communities.

We also seek to assure that each and every municipal entity retains its own identity.

Thank you Sponsors!



Thank you Exhibitors!



Our Speakers



Winnie Branton

Winnie M. Branton is an attorney, consultant, and President of Branton Strategies LLC. She partners with communities across Pennsylvania to combat blight through land banks, conservatorship, and strategic code enforcement, and is recognized as a leading expert on Pennsylvania land banks. Winnie is also the author of *The Pennsylvania Land Bank Resource Guide* and serves as Solicitor to the Delaware County Controller.



Patrick Conners

Patrick Conners serves as Executive Director of the Quaker Valley Council of Governments, providing strategic leadership to seventeen municipalities through intergovernmental cooperation, shared services, and regional grant administration. With prior experience in municipal management, he brings extensive expertise in community development and planning. Additionally, Patrick actively contributes to many boards and committees and seeks to strengthen local governance through regional partnerships and collaboration. He is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs.



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.



Ben Estell

Ben is the Executive Director for the Centre County Regional COG. He is a champion of cooperative government, committed to advancing collaborative efforts that enhance sustainable growth and equitable zoning practices. His work in Dormont, PA, highlights a dedication to strengthening partnerships across municipalities. Estell's approach fosters shared solutions that balance urban growth with environmental stewardship, making him a key advocate for innovative, community-centered governance in Pennsylvania.

Our Speakers



David Greene

David is the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Local Government Commission, a bipartisan, bicameral legislative service agency that provides research and legislative drafting assistance to Members of the General Assembly on matters affecting municipal government. He first served as Associate Counsel, then Legal Counsel/Assistant Director, and has worked with municipal associations, the Legislative Reference Bureau and other stakeholders on Commission efforts to modernize the Borough Code, the Third Class City Code, and the County Code, as well as other recent projects including the Commission's Assessment Reform and Act 47 task force projects.



Tim Hinder

With a career spanning sales, marketing, strategy, nonprofit administration, communications, and entrepreneurship, Tim has a complete perspective on economic development through a marketing and communications lens. Tim has presented regionally and nationally on topics surrounding social media, marketing, and branding, and has worked with some of the country's top brands throughout his career. As a strategist, he applies qualitative and quantitative data to develop recommendations, action plans, and comprehensive blueprints, focusing on impact and investment. As a creative, Tim builds the tools for implementation, incorporating methodic principles of design and psychology.



An Lewis

An 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



Tracy McKee

Tracy McKee serves as the Executive Director of the Char-West Council of Governments, having joined the organization as an Administrative Assistant in October 2021 and advancing to her current position in January 2024. Her extensive background in County, Township and Borough administration has significantly contributed to her professional accomplishments. In her role as Executive Director, Ms. McKee is responsible for grant writing and strategic management across twelve municipalities in the southwestern suburbs of Pittsburgh. The Council also provides stormwater drain cleaning services to its member municipalities, with additional service coverage extended to six municipalities outside the Char-West COG area, as well as PennDOT.

Our Speakers



Richard Miller

Rich is a shareholder practicing in the areas of labor and employment law, municipal law/school law, public sector pension and benefits law, administrative law and appellate law. He graduated from Washington & Jefferson College, with a B.A. in Political Science and Business in 1991. He obtained his J. D. in 1994 from Duquesne University. Rich was admitted to practice in Pennsylvania in 1994 and is admitted to practice before the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Pennsylvania and Allegheny County Bar Associations.



Gary Myers

Gary is a public administration professional with over 40 years experience. The past 8 years he has served as the Executive Director of the Capital Region Council of Governments (CapCOG). CapCOG has 43 municipal members in a five-county area in Central Pa. Gary previously served 22 years as Manager of Susquehanna Township in Dauphin County, retiring in 2016. Gary also served 11 years as Manager of Columbia Borough in Lancaster County. Gary's public service career started with 10 years working for Penn DOT in various administrative positions. Gary is a strong advocate for inter-municipal cooperation, public service, and advancement of costs-saving measures for citizens.



Lee Olsen

Lee is one of the founding Board members of the Mount Penn Preserve Partnership (MP3) COG which was established in 2016 to protect, preserve, and promote the natural beauty and recreational opportunities of the Mount Penn Preserve area in Berks County. Lee has 50+ years of experience in all phases of architecture. He has engaged in a regional practice of architecture, master planning, facility planning and interior design for a range of projects that include commercial, retail, educational, institutional, health care and residential.



Amanda Settelmaier

Amanda 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.

Our Speakers



Richard Vilello

Rick is the Deputy Secretary for DCED Community Affairs and Development. He first joined the Department of Community and Economic Development (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.



Kathy Wyrosdick

Kathy is the Executive Director for the PA DCED Governor's Center for Local Government Services. Kathy is a seasoned professional with a rich background in urban planning and community development. She has been a community planner for over 20 years, working with multiple municipalities across Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, and now Pennsylvania. She previously worked in community planning for Michael Baker International and for the City of Erie. She holds a master's degree in Urban Planning from the University of Michigan and specializes in community revitalization and issues with blighted properties.



Tree Zuzzio

Tree is a Policy Executive & Specialist at the Department of Community and Economic Development, bringing expertise in government policy and economic initiatives. Within the Department of Community and Economic Development, Tree has contributed to creating a favorable business climate in Pennsylvania. Tree's experience includes serving as a Local Government Policy Specialist, contributing to policy formulation and regulatory compliance. Tree's background also includes significant involvement at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. Tree holds a Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor's degree from Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

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.

Acrisure is a financial technology and insurance company headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The company was initially created to acquire insurance companies in the Midwestern United States and has since expanded nationally. In 2022, *Business Insurance* recognized Acrisure as the 6th largest insurance broker in the world.



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.



Thank you to Our Sponsors and Exhibitors



GEA 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.

The Land & Liberty Coalition™ is a growing network of local advocates who believe the future of energy should be shaped by the people who live closest to the land. We are not developers or attorneys; we are farmers, landowners, and community members who support utility-scale renewable energy through informed conversations and grassroots engagement.



Formerly known as IPPFA BENEFITS

The NPPFA 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.

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.



Thank you to Our Sponsors and Exhibitors



TrailBlaze 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.



For more than a century, the attorneys of Strassburger McKenna Gutnick & Gefsky have demonstrated commitment to clients in a variety of ways:

- We provide comprehensive legal services, striving to address any legal need that may arise.
- We focus on obtaining efficient and effective results.
- We protect our clients' interests, fearlessly pursuing justice.
- We handle high-profile matters with discretion.
- We take cases others might consider too challenging.
- We offer creative financial arrangements.
- We adapt for the future, continuously evolving our processes and technology.

The talents and skills of our attorneys are as diverse as our clientele. Some of the areas of experience in our firm include complex business disputes and transactions, media, first amendment, women-owned businesses, trusts and estates, e-discovery, education, unfair trade practices, and real estate.

