



2026 Nebraska Tourism Conference

February 10-12

Embassy Suites Lincoln



Scan the QR Code for more Conference Information!

Wifi: Visit Nebraska Password: embassy2026

Tuesday, February 10

Registration opens at 7:30 a.m.

8-9 a.m. Newcomer Breakfast- *Alumni Room*

9-10:30 a.m. Opening Remarks and Keynote Speaker, *Regents B + C- The Road Less Traveled*, Mike Smith

10:30-11 a.m. Networking Break

11 a.m.-12 p.m. Breakout Sessions

- **Boutique Boom: How Small Hotels Are Shaping Big Hospitality Shifts**, *Alumni Room* – Shane Lonowski, Jarrod McCartney, Shiann Oberling (moderator), Brian Thomas
- **Disruption by Design: Breaking The Rules Inside The Lines**, *Regents A* - Mike Smith
- **The Power of Podcasts in Tourism**, *Regents D + E*- Sheila Jenkinson, Chris Goforth (moderator), Kathryn Nygren, Veronica Casados

12-1 p.m. Lunch, *Atrium*

1-2 p.m. Keynote Speaker, *Regents B + C - 2025 DestinationNEXT Futures Study*, Cassandra Gilbertson

2-3 p.m. General Session, *Regents B + C - The Power of Partnership: Advocacy and Local Leadership in Tourism*, Cassandra Gilbertson (moderator), Josh Moenning, Christa Yoakum, Sara Howard

3-3:15 p.m. Networking Break

3:15-4:15 p.m. Breakout Sessions

- **Everyday Inclusion: Welcoming Neurodivergent Guests**, *Alumni Room* – Kelly Nielsen
- **Time for Community - Best Practices for Community Engagement**, *Regents A* – Chris Adams
- **National Destination Funding Models & Trends including case studies from New Mexico**, *Regents D + E* – Tania Armenta
- **Beyond the Classroom: Walking Tour of Kindler Hotel and Lincoln Commercial Club**, *Registration Table* - Jenn Gjerde and Tracy Murillo

6-8 p.m. Community Night- *Museum of American Speed*

Join us for Community Night at the Museum of American Speed, hosted by Visit Lincoln. An evening to connect, explore, and celebrate Nebraska Tourism. Enjoy complimentary food and

drinks while you experience this iconic museum, packed with legendary cars, history, and stories. Buses will run between the Embassy and Museum of American Speed throughout the evening.

Wednesday, February 11

Registration opens at 8:30 a.m.

9-10:15 a.m. Opening Remarks and Keynote Speaker, *Regents B + C Reframing Accessibility – From Obligation to Opportunity*, Kristy Durso

10:15-10:45 a.m. Networking Break

10:45-11:45 a.m. Breakout Sessions

- **Destination Development Programs**, *Alumni Room* – Jenna Bartja, Faith Overall
- **Sports Tourism – Beyond the Bleachers: Turning Nebraska Events into National Drivers**, *Regents A* – Ana Bellinghausen, Sausha Durkan, Kristyna Engdahl and Avarie Howard
- **Revitalize and Renew: Building Resilient Tourism Futures**, *Regents D + E* – Will Suit, Liz Lovejoy Brown, Veta Jeffery, Rachel Kreikemeier (moderator)

12-1 p.m. Lunch, *Atrium*

1-2 p.m. General Session, *Regents B + C - State Tourism Marketing Updates and Insights*

2-2:15 p.m. Networking Break

2:15-3:15 p.m. Breakout Sessions

- **Hospitality Happens Here: Opening Doors with Red Carpet Service**, *Alumni Room* – Jamie Bright, Kendra Mitchell, Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel
- **The Invisible Concierge: How AI is Answering Your Visitors' Questions (With or Without You)**, *Regents A* – Gray Lawry
- **Crisis Communications: Build a Comprehensive Plan**, *Regents D + E* – Deborah Park, Veronica Casados

3:30 p.m. NETA Member Meeting, *Regents D + E*

6 p.m. Awards Reception, *Regents B + C*

Join us for the 2026 Nebraska Tourism Awards with Love, Nebraska! Celebrate the achievements and contributions of the Nebraska tourism industry! Don your pinks, reds and hearts to share your love of Nebraska. Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be provided for attendees and enjoy entertainment Nebraskan artist, Josh Hoyer!

Thursday, February 12

8 a.m. NETA Breakfast- *Nebraska Capitol Building*

10 a.m. Nebraska Tourism Commission Meeting, *Regents D + E*

11 a.m. SENTC, *Regents A*

11 a.m. Byways Meetings, *Regents B*