



WTA SPRING EDUCATIONAL FORUM
 APRIL 12-15, 2026 • NEW ORLEANS

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS (as of 02.26.2026)

Sunday April 12, 2026	
10:45a Meet in Hotel Lobby 1:00p TPC Louisiana	Bus Departs for TPC Louisiana – Home of the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. (Transportation departs Royal Sonesta at 11:00a.) WTA Spring Golf Tournament Shotgun Start (Transportation will pick up for return to Royal Sonesta after the Tournament is over.) <i>Sponsors: Aldrich CPAs + Advisors (Lunch); Olsen Thielen CPAs & Advisors (Golf Balls); Hylan (Golf Prizes); and Baker Tilly (Transportation)</i>
4:00p – 7:00p Foyer/Evangeline Suite	Table-Top Exhibits Set-Up
7:00p – 9:00p Foyer	WTA Registration
8:00p – 9:00p Foyer/Evangeline Suite	Jazzed for the Journey Welcome Reception is exclusively for Full and Social registered attendees. Unregistered guests will not be permitted to attend. If you wish to bring a guest, you can purchase a Social Registration during check-in. <i>Sponsored by MP NexLevel, NECA and Pinion-TCA</i>

Monday April 13, 2026	
7:00a – 2:00p Foyer/Evangeline Suite	WTA Registration Table-Top Exhibits Breaks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WTA Foundation Raffle tickets are available for purchase at WTA’s Registration Desk through Wednesday morning. Swing by the Registration Desk – great items are on display and up for grabs! All proceeds benefit WTA’s scholarship program. Winners will be drawn during the Closing Session on Wednesday morning. You need not be present to win.
8:00a – 4:00p Esplanade	RUS Meetings By Appointment – Check with WTA’s Registration Desk for Appointments
8:00a – 3:00p Grand Ballroom 8:00a – 8:15a 8:15a – 9:15a 9:15a – 9:45a Foyer/Evangeline Suite 9:45a – 10:15a 10:15a – 11:45a	DAY 1: GENERAL SESSIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance – <i>Jack Keen (WNMT), WTA Board Member, Emeritus</i> Welcoming Remarks – <i>WTA President Matt Johnson (Shawnee Communications)</i> Keynote Speaker – <i>Marc Morial, President, National Urban League and former Mayor of New Orleans</i> <i>Sponsored by CoBank</i> Table-Top Exhibits and Morning Coffee Break <i>Sponsored by CostQuest</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Featured Speaker – <i>Commissioner Olivia Trusty (Federal Communications Commission)</i> (Remarks and Audience Q&A Session) WTA’s Public Policy Committee Update – From Washington to the Big Easy, <i>PPC Co-Chairs Evelyn Jerden (LICT) and Mark Gailey (Totah</i>

<p>11:45a – 1:00p Courtyard and R'evolution</p> <p>1:00p – 2:00p</p> <p>2:00p – 3:00p</p>	<p>Communications), along with WTA staff, break down what's happening in DC and how WTA is shaping federal policy so WTA members can continue delivering modern communications to the communities they serve.</p> <p>General Session Luncheon – Sponsored by Smartoptics <i>This luncheon is a private luncheon for Full Registrations Only!</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>It's Not If, It's When: Navigating Cyber Ransom Negotiations Cyber and AI-related ransom attacks are increasingly complex and high stakes. Stephanie Court (7Sigma) will moderate a panel that includes Christian Hansen (Baker Tilly), Dee Herman (Herman & Whiteaker, LLC) and Jason Kotler (CyberSteward) – a seasoned cyber ransom negotiator. The panelists will share firsthand insights into how ransomware incidents unfold, what to expect during an active attack, and how negotiations are conducted in real time. You will learn key considerations for minimizing risk, downtime, and financial impact, along with best practices for preparation, response, and critical decision-making when facing a cyber or AI-related ransomware incident.</p> <p>So, BEAD Happened – Now What? Staying Compliant and Competitive After BEAD Awards Winning a BEAD subgrant is only the beginning. CostQuest's Rachelle Medalia and Brian Allenby will examine what ISPs must do after award selection to remain compliant and competitive in a rapidly evolving market. Topics to be covered include post-award compliance obligations such as environmental and permitting requirements, Buy America procurement rules, cybersecurity and supply chain risk management, and stringent reporting and audit standards. The discussion will also explore how BEAD funding and current financial market conditions are reshaping competition, wireline and mobile convergence, and long-term network and collateral value. Attendees will leave with a practical roadmap for maintaining compliance, protecting investment value, and navigating the post-BEAD landscape with confidence.</p>
<p>3:00p</p>	<p>DAY 1: GENERAL SESSIONS ADJOURN</p>
<p>3:15p – 5:00p LTBD</p>	<p>WTA Board of Directors Meeting</p>
<p>8:00p – 10:00p Jazz Playhouse & Courtyard</p>	<p>Dessert & Jazz After Dark Sponsored by NOKIA and KGPCo. Ticket and name badges are REQUIRED for entry (included with Full and Social Registrations and provided in registration packets). Individual tickets will not be available for purchase at the door. Unregistered guests will not be permitted to attend.</p>

<p>Tuesday April 14, 2026</p>	
<p>6:45a – 7:45a Fleur de Lis A Fleur de Lis B</p>	<p>WTA Committee Breakfast Meetings – Committee Members Only Scholarship Committee Meeting Tribal Affairs Committee Meeting</p>
<p>7:00a – 3:00p Foyer/Evangeline Suite</p>	<p>WTA Registration Table-Top Exhibits Breaks (Closed During Lunch)</p>
<p>8:00a – 4:00p Esplanade</p>	<p>RUS Meetings By Appointment – Check with WTA's Registration Desk for Appointments</p>
<p>8:00a – 4:00p Grand Ballroom 8:00a – 8:45a</p>	<p>DAY 2: GENERAL SESSIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Together at the Table: Carriers, Policy, & the Future of Rural Support</p>

<p>8:45a – 9:30a</p> <p>9:30a – 10:00a Foyer/Evangeline Suite</p> <p>10:00a – 10:45a</p> <p>10:45a – 11:45a</p> <p>11:45a</p>	<p>Rural broadband support programs are at a critical juncture as policy reform efforts, increased oversight, and funding uncertainty reshape the Universal Service Fund (USF) and intersect with new federal and state broadband grant programs. WTA members serving high-cost, remote communities face growing compliance, reporting, and post-award demands obligations while continuing to invest in resilient broadband networks. Celia Lewis (JSI) will bring together a panel of rural carriers, policy experts, and industry practitioners to discuss emerging policy trends, lessons learned, and practical strategies for sustaining rural support programs and managing post-award and grant compliance requirements. The session focuses on real-world impacts to carrier operations and emphasizes collaboration and proactive engagement to protect rural broadband investments and the communities they serve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Through Uncertainty: Macroeconomic Forces Shaping Rural Broadband Economist Sam Kem (NCSC/CFC) will share insights from a lender actively financing rural broadband projects, connecting today’s macroeconomic conditions to the challenges facing small, rural providers. Attendees will gain an understanding into how the interest rate environment, evolving inflation dynamics, labor and construction cost volatility, and shifting capital markets influence how broadband projects are evaluated, financed, and sustained—while continuing to support the mission of delivering affordable, advanced broadband in rural America. <p>Table-Top Exhibits and Morning Coffee Break Sponsored by Chickasaw Telephone Company</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping More of What You Earn: Advanced Tax & Wealth Strategies for Telecom Executives and Owners Ryan Johnson (Aldrich CPAs + Advisors, LLP) discusses how proactive, integrated planning can reduce taxes, improve cash flow, protect assets, and align business decisions with long-term personal and family wealth goals. The session explores how compensation, real estate, retirement planning, entity structure, and estate planning work together to shape tax outcomes, highlighting common misalignments that create unnecessary taxes or risk. Attendees will leave with practical guidance on aligning tax strategy with growth, reinvestment, and exit or succession planning—identifying what requires early action and what can be implemented over time. State Telecom Executives Panel Colleen Jamison (Jamison Law, LLC) will moderate a panel of state telecommunications association executives who will share insights on emerging challenges, BEAD-related developments, and evolving broadband policy from their respective states. Attendees will gain a comparative perspective on how policies, priorities, and implementation approaches differ across states and what those differences mean for providers.
<p>11:45a – 1:15p Grand Ballroom</p>	<p>Adjourn for Lunch on Your Own</p> <p>WTA Public Policy Committee Luncheon Meeting <i>This meeting is open to WTA broadband and committee members only.</i> Sponsored by Monte R. Lee & Company</p>
<p>1:30p – 4:00p Grand Ballroom</p>	<p>DAY 2: GENERAL SESSIONS CONTINUE</p>

1:30p – 2:15p	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precision Planning: Using Drones and Custom Imagery to Build Smarter Broadband Networks Tired of relying on outdated imagery or struggling to locate new subdivisions and serviceable roads that don't appear on your maps? Jason Fuller (CHR Solutions) will explore how tools such as drones, street-level cameras, and satellite imagery enable providers to capture current, highly accurate data for network planning and deployment. Attendees will learn how custom imagery can be used to map new developments, update service areas, and improve design accuracy, which reduces guesswork and streamlines broadband builds with visuals tailored to their network's specific needs.
2:15p – 3:00p	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI's LLM Model Requirements Jeremy Larson (ReadiTech Engineering) explores the infrastructure needed to support large language models (LLMs), including the data center, equipment, and operational requirements. Attendees will gain insight into the computer resources necessary for an LLM module, the power demands to operate these systems, and the broader implications for the national electrical grid. The discussion will also compare LLM infrastructure to existing supercomputers, providing context on how these advanced AI systems are designed, deployed, and maintained even for something as simple as processing a single ChatGPT request.
3:00p – 4:00p	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating AI Across Your Organization: Transforming Your Operations This session is sponsored by WTA's Associate Member Committee and will explore how rural broadband providers can integrate AI across all facets of their operations, from front-office workflows and vendor software to field deployment and customer engagement. Attendees will gain a high-level understanding of AI fundamentals and how autonomous AI agents can support complex operational tasks, improve decision-making, and enhance member experiences. The discussion will address critical considerations such as data security, privacy, ethical implementation, and organizational change management, including training, communication, and building an internal AI-ready culture. Participants will leave with practical strategies for aligning AI adoption with company values, empowering employees, and leveraging AI to innovate across the entire organization.
4:00p	DAY 2: GENERAL SESSIONS ADJOURN
4:30p – 6:00p Jazz Playhouse & Courtyard	Big Easy Mix and Mingle <i>Sponsored by JSI</i> Full and Social registrations will enjoy a New Orleans-style cocktail reception! <i>Ticket and name badges are REQUIRED for entry</i> (included with Full and Social Registrations and provided in registration packets). <i>Individual tickets will not be available for purchase at the door. Unregistered guests will not be permitted to attend.</i>

Wednesday April 15, 2026	
7:30a – 10:30a Foyer/Evangeline Suite	WTA Registration Table-Top Exhibits Breaks
7:00a – 8:00a Fleur de Lis A Fleur de Lis B	WTA Committee Breakfast Meetings – Committee Members Only Associate Membership Committee Meeting CyberTech Committee Meeting
8:30a – 11:45a Grand Ballroom	DAY 3: GENERAL SESSIONS

<p>8:30a – 9:30a</p> <p>9:30a – 10:00a Foyer/Evangeline Suite</p> <p>10:00a – 10:45a</p> <p>10:45a – 11:30a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winning Digital CX Strategies to Drive Subscriber Loyalty, Increase Revenue, and Reduce OpEx <i>Brandon Johnson (GoCare)</i> and <i>Brian Woody (Union Telephone)</i> examine how leading service providers differentiate through customer experience and not just speed, price, or technology. The session explores best practices for delivering dynamic, omnichannel engagement that meets subscribers where they are, streamlines operations with automation and AI, and improves first-contact resolution. Attendees will learn how to measure customer satisfaction with automated surveys, implement proactive outage communications, and promote digital support tools to boost engagement. The discussion also highlights how embracing digital experiences across the organization can drive efficiency, increase revenue, and strengthen long-term subscriber loyalty. <p>Morning Break and Table-Top Exhibits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RUS Update • Thinking Differently: Dolphins, Dead Plants, and the Dark Side of the Moon Even logical decisions can be limited by hidden assumptions and blind spots. In this session, <i>Jacki Miskimins (VantagePoint)</i> shares five practical strategies to challenge default mental models, stress-test planning, and uncover what’s not immediately visible. Attendees will learn to think beyond the obvious, ask better questions, and spot gaps in understanding all through memorable, actionable examples that can be applied immediately.
<p>11:30a – 11:45a</p>	<p>WTA Foundation Raffle Winners Announced/Closing/Adjourn WTA Spring Educational Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See you at WTA’s 2026 Fall Educational Forum – October 4-7, 2026 – Santa Rosa, CA