

AGENDA



2025 CONFERENCE PROGRAM

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2025
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Sessions are subject to change.

REGISTRATION OPENS

7:30 AM

LIGHT BREAKFAST

8:00 AM

**LEADERSHIP AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: CITY
MANAGERS ON LEADERSHIP & GROWTH**

9:00 AM

The conference will kick off with opening remarks from the LGHN Board, followed by a distinguished panel of city leaders and executives. This session will highlight leadership skills, professional development, and the experiences that helped propel their careers forward. **Moderated by** Yvette Mendoza, Capital Improvement Program Manager at City of Austin.

Panelists: Jon Fortune, City of Austin; Erik Walsh, City of San Antonio; Stephanie Reyes, City of San Marcos

**CAREER PROGRESSION: UPSKILLING AND
RESKILLING**

10:45 AM

The panel is designed to educate attendees on how they can empower frontline and administrative employees, and provide the necessary tools for succession planning. The panel of city leaders are ready to share their career experiences and how they navigated their journey to executive leadership. **Moderated by** Jerry Gonzales, Jr., Strategic Partnerships Manager, National University.

Panelists: Maryanne Pina, Career Management Partners; Ron Romero, City of Austin; Kristina Ramirez, City of Harker Heights; Aurora Perkins, City of San Antonio

LUNCH & KEYNOTE SPEAKER

12:00 PM

Rebecca Contreras, President & CEO of AvantGarde LLC, brings over 25 years of leadership experience spanning Texas state government, the White House under President George W. Bush, and now a nationally recognized consulting firm with clients across 26 federal agencies.

A best-selling author and community leader, she will share insights on leading through adversity, reaching new levels (and breaking barriers) in government, balancing family with career, and the path from public service to entrepreneurship.

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FINANCIAL LITERACY

1:15 PM

The panel is designed to empower attendees to learn more about personal finance, preparing for retirement, real-world investing, and tools for public servants at all levels. The panel of financial experts are ready to share their knowledge and answer all your money questions. **Moderated by** Veronica Sandoval, Financial Health Programs Specialist at University Federal Credit Union (UFCU).

Panelists: Gabriela Smith, J.P. Morgan; Catherine Espinosa, Mission Square; Doug Wilson, Mission Square; Veronica Carillo, City of San Antonio retiree

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP: CAREER PROGRESSION & UNTRADITIONAL PATHS

2:30 PM

This session will feature a panel of women leaders discussing pivotal experiences and strategies for career progression and advancement. **Moderated by** Samira, Lopez, HR Consultant, City of Austin.

Panelists: Susana Carbajal, Assistant City Manager, City of Austin; Theresa Alvarez, President & CEO, Rally Austin; Josephine Valencia, Deputy Director, City of San Antonio

WELLNESS THAT WORKS: PHYSICAL AND MENTAL RESILIENCY WHILE WORKING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

3:45 PM

This panel is designed to empower attendees with practical strategies to build resiliency and balance in their professional and personal lives. Panelists will share real-world insights on setting healthy boundaries, managing stress, and prioritizing well-being without guilt. The discussion will also address the stigma around work-life balance and provide realistic takeaways for creating a system that supports both individual wellness and strong leadership. **Moderated by** Jorge Morales, Director at Austin Watershed Protection, City of Austin.

Panelists: Jessie Higgins, Chief Mental Health Officer, City of San Antonio; Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager, City of San Marcos; Leslie Rangel, Founder & CEO, The News Yogi

NETWORKING RECEPTION

5:00 PM
