aim Accelerate Indiana Municipalities | O'NEILL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC SERVICE

MAYORS INSTITUTE

December 3-4, 2026

Bottleworks Hotel
Indianapolis, Indiana

AGENDA

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. **Registration & Breakfast**

9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. **Welcome & Introductions**

9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. **Workshop:** Preparing for 2027: Strengthening Legislative Relationships and Engagement

Join the Aim team for a discussion on strategic legislative engagement ahead of the 2027 session. Learn how city and town managers can build relationships with newly elected legislators, navigate changes in legislative leadership and committees, and stay informed on key issues, including local income tax (LIT) changes and potential property tax legislation. This session will explore practical strategies for communicating municipal priorities, supporting local elected officials, and strengthening engagement throughout the legislative process.

Speakers:
Matt Greller, Chief Executive Officer, Aim
Jenna Bentley, President, Bentley Strategies LLC
Isabel Elliott, Government Affairs Manager, Aim
Amy Krieg, Government Affairs Director, Aim
Campbell Ricci, Policy & Financial Resources Director, Aim

10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. **Workshop**: From Chaos to Control: Preparing Your Community for the Moments That Matter

When an incident occurs, there is little time to determine who is responsible, who has authority to act, or how the municipality should respond. Whether facing a public safety incident, cyberattack, or other unforeseen event, preparation can make the difference between just reacting or effectively managing it. This session will provide municipal leaders with a practical framework for preparing their communities for the unexpected. The presentation will explore strategies for establishing clear policies and lines of authority, defining roles and responsibilities, coordinating internal and external communications, maintaining continuity of operations and leadership, and using training and tabletop exercises to identify gaps before an emergency occurs. Participants will leave with actionable steps they can take back to city or town hall to strengthen preparedness, improve decision-making, and build a more resilient organization.

Presenters:
Dakota Coates, Associate, Ice Miller LLP
Sebastian Smelko, Partner, Ice Miller LLP
Jim Watson, Partner, Ice Miller LLP

11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. **Break**

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. **Workshop:** AI in the Wrong Hands: Protecting Municipalities from Fraud, Impersonation, and Misuse

As artificial intelligence becomes more sophisticated and accessible, municipalities are facing new challenges involving fraud, misinformation, and the misuse of AI-generated content. From an overwhelming volume of AI-generated public records requests to fraudulent invoices featuring official city seals and fake websites impersonating municipal services, these emerging threats can strain staff resources, compromise public trust, and create significant financial and legal risks. This session will explore real-world examples of how AI is being used to target local governments, including the creation of deceptive websites, unauthorized reservation systems, and fraudulent payment requests.

Speaker:
Dave Wood, Mayor, Mishawaka

12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. **Lunch Roundtable Discussion:** Join fellow mayors in an engaging lunch roundtable discussion moderated by Aim's Jennifer Simmons. Attendees are encouraged to participate in an open conversation, learn from their peers, and build valuable connections.

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. **Workshop:** Resilience by Design: Planning for Heat and Flood Risks

How can communities prepare today for the weather challenges of tomorrow? Join the Environmental Resilience Institute for a look at recent modeling on flooding and extreme heat and what the findings could mean for Indiana communities. The session will explore potential flooding and heat impacts and how municipalities can use this information to plan ahead, including considerations for future planning, zoning, infrastructure, and community preparedness.

Presenters:
Dr. Dana Habeeb, Assistant Professor, Luddy School of Informatics, Computing and Engineering, Indiana University
Janet McCabe, Senior Policy Advisor, Environmental Resilience Institute, O'Neill School, Indiana University

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **Workshop:** Owning Your Story: Reputation Management and Public Leadership in Digital Age

In an age where perception can spread faster than facts, managing your community's reputation is more important than ever. This session will explore how municipalities and mayors can build "reputation insurance" through intentional storytelling, strategic digital engagement, and authentic communication. Learn how to proactively tell your community's story, respond effectively when challenges arise, and quickly adapt when the conversation changes.

Presenters:
Deana Haworth, Chief Executive Officer, Hirons
Brandon Smith, Account Director, Public Relations, Hirons

3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. **Break**

3:15 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. **Workshop:** Positioning Your Community for Attracting and Hosting Sporting Events

Sporting events can bring new visitors, investment, and opportunities to communities across Indiana. The Indiana Sports Corporation will be on hand to discuss how municipalities can position themselves to attract and host sporting events. The session will cover the bidding process, facility needs, partnership opportunities, and resources available through Indiana's sports event bid fund.

Presenter:
Patrick Talty, President, Indy Sports Corporation

4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. **Mayors' Idea Exchange:** Bringing EMS In House: Evansville's Story

What does it take to bring EMS services in-house? Mayor Stephanie Terry will explain how and why the City of Evansville made the transition to a city-operated EMS model. Learn about the planning, partnerships, challenges, and key considerations behind the decision, along with lessons other municipalities can take from Evansville's experience.

Presenter:
Stephanie Terry, Mayor, Evansville

4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. **Certifications**

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. **Dinner & Networking**
Sundry & Vice
Bottleworks Hotel – 1st Floor

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. **Breakfast Discussion with Mayor Jeff Phillips**

Join Mayor Phillips for a breakfast discussion on how the City of Rensselaer is investing in employees through onsite leadership training. Hear how the city has provided targeted training for superintendents, frontline supervisors, and administrative staff, making professional development accessible for employees at every level. Mayor Phillips will share Rensselaer's experience and discuss how communities of all sizes can make leadership development a practical part of building a stronger team.

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. **Workshop:** Preparing Your Community for Data Center Development: Opportunities, Readiness, and Public Trust

As hyperscale data center development continues to expand, communities must understand both the opportunities and considerations associated with attracting and supporting these projects. This session will explore the potential economic benefits, including significant capital investment, long-term tax revenue, infrastructure improvements, and community partnerships. Participants will learn how infrastructure readiness, including access to power, water, fiber, and suitable land, influences development decisions and how municipalities can prepare their internal teams to effectively evaluate proposals and work with developers. The discussion will also highlight the importance of transparency, early public engagement, and proactive communication in addressing community concerns, building public trust, and positioning municipalities for successful long-term development.

Presenter:
DLZ Indiana

10:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **Workshop:** Funding City Services under SEA 1 Environment

Funding essential city services in a SEA 1 environment presents new challenges for municipalities. Hear from mayors and financial advisors about how cities are adapting to revenue changes, what trends they are seeing across Indiana, and creative strategies communities are using to make ends meet while continuing to provide essential services.

Presenters:
Scott Mentzer, Mayor, Bluffton
Andy Mouser, Principal, Baker Tilly
Eric Reedy, Founder and Managing Partner, Reedy Financial Group, P.C.

Tim Stricker, Manager, Reedy Financial Group, P.C.
Brandon Sakbun, Mayor, Terre Haute
Richard Strick, Mayor, Huntington

11:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **Closing Remarks & Adjourn**