

CALAFCO 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 21 – 23, 2026
SACRAMENTO, CA

THE LONG VIEW

LOOKING BACK.
THINKING FORWARD.

CALAFCO.org

SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

WEDNESDAY – OCTOBER 21, 2026

8:00 a.m.	Mobile Workshop – Tour: Sacramento History Museum and Presentations on the Importance of Flood Control
10:30 a.m.	What is LAFCO?: The Game Show
1:30 p.m.	Conference Opening
2:00 p.m.	Beyond Growth: What's Next for LAFCO?
3:15 p.m.	Refreshment Break with Sponsors
3:45 p.m.	Balancing Competing Priorities: Housing, Agriculture, Infrastructure, and the LAFCO Perspective
5:15 p.m.	Welcome Reception
6:45 p.m.	Dinner on Your Own

THURSDAY – OCTOBER 22, 2026

7:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00 a.m.	Regional Caucuses and Elections
9:15 a.m.	CALAFCO Annual Business Meeting
10:15 a.m.	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
	1) What Your Reports Are Really Saying: And the Questions You Should Be Asking
	2) California Public Utilities Commission 101: Where State Regulation and LAFCO Intersect
	3) Legal Counsel Roundtable
12:00 p.m.	Lunch and Keynote Address
2:00 p.m.	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
	1) Strategic Public Engagement: A Plan for Any Scenario
	2) Fire Services Under Pressure: What Should LAFCOs Be Watching?
3:15 p.m.	Refreshment Break with Sponsors
3:45 p.m.	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
	1) Telling It Straight: Delivering Tough News About a Project Concept
	2) Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities: What Have We Learned?
6:00 p.m.	Reception with Sponsors
6:30 p.m.	CALAFCO Awards Banquet

FRIDAY – OCTOBER 23, 2026

7:15 a.m.	Breakfast
7:30 a.m.	CALAFCO Board of Directors Meeting and Breakfast
9:00 a.m.	AI and Local Government: What LAFCO Leaders Need to Know
10:30 a.m.	Legislative Update: What LAFCOs Should Be Watching
11:30 a.m.	Closing Remarks and Conference Adjournment

WELCOME

TO THE 2026 CALAFCO CONFERENCE!



Message from the Chair of the Board

Welcome to the 2026 CALAFCO Annual Conference!

Every Annual Conference is an opportunity to strengthen our professional connections and share the knowledge and experiences that help us better serve our communities. No two LAFCOs face the same challenges, but each has valuable perspectives and lessons to share. CALAFCO provides a network where we can exchange ideas, solve problems, mentor one another, and strengthen the practice of local governance.

I hope you make the most of this year's conference and find plenty of opportunities to learn, connect, and build relationships with colleagues from across California. Thank you for the time, expertise, and public service you bring to your communities. I look forward to continuing to build a stronger CALAFCO with you. Enjoy the conference!

Wendy Root Askew, *Chair*
Monterey County Supervisor – District 4, Monterey LAFCO Commissioner, Chair, *CALAFCO Board of Directors*

Welcome from the Conference Chair



Serving as Chair of the Conference Planning Committee for this year's Annual Conference has, once again, been a rewarding experience. I am inspired by the new and seasoned volunteers who step up with the shared goal of making each year "the best conference yet."

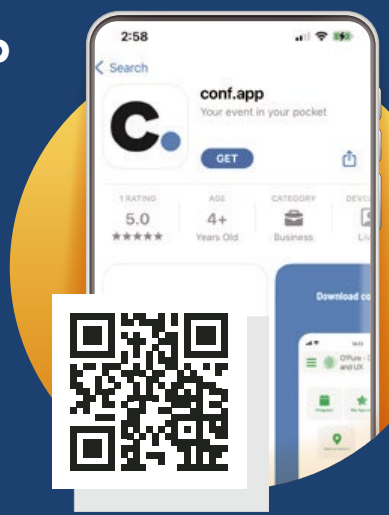
Pulling a session together is not always easy, but members consistently answer the call. I encourage everyone to step out of their comfort zone and onto the stage. You do not need to be a seasoned speaker to share a lesson that benefits colleagues statewide.

Thank you to every committee member, moderator, and speaker who made this year's conference a success. I look forward to seeing new faces on the stage next year.

Shannon Costa
Executive Officer, Butte LAFCO Executive Officer, Board Member, CALAFCO Board of Directors

CALAFCO Event App

1. ***Download conf.app from the App Store or Google Play***
2. ***Scan the QR code (to the right) to load the event on the app, or type the event URL into your phone***
   https://conf.app/event/96636410-cadf-4b1a-ae83-0f14034a05d3
3. ***Tap the event to open***



Proud to Support CALAFCO and the Important Work of LAFCOs Across California

With decades of experience advising LAFCOs and public agencies, BBK understands the legal and policy challenges that shape local government organization and reorganization. We are proud to support CALAFCO and its work to connect, educate and strengthen LAFCOs throughout California.



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SCHEDULE PRE-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | **Mobile Workshop**

Sacramento's history and development have long been shaped by water. This mobile workshop will explore how the city responded to devastating nineteenth-century floods and how decisions made then continue to influence land use, development, flood protection, water supply, and regional planning today.

PRESENTERS: *Scott Brown, District Manager, Reclamation District No. 1000; Lisa Kaplan, Sacramento City Councilmember and Sacramento LAFCO Commissioner; José C. Henríquez, Executive Officer, Sacramento LAFCO*

1 CM Credit

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | **What is LAFCO?: The Game Show** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

Step up to the challenge in this fast-paced, Jeopardy-style game show covering LAFCO fundamentals, history, powers and responsibilities, terminology, and a few surprises along the way. Contestants will face off while audience members can play along, test their knowledge, and maybe learn a thing or two. Come ready to play, learn, and put your LAFCO expertise to the test. Bragging rights are very much on the table.

PRESENTERS: *Paula de Sousa, Partner, Best Best & Krieger LLP and CALAFCO General Counsel; Joe Serrano, Executive Officer, Santa Cruz LAFCO; and Shane Stark, Commissioner, Santa Barbara LAFCO*

1:30 p.m. – 1:50 p.m. | **Conference Opening** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

Join CALAFCO as we officially open the 2026 Annual Conference in Sacramento. CALAFCO Chair Wendy Root Askew will open the conference, followed by a welcome from Sacramento LAFCO Chair Chris Little and Sacramento County Board of Supervisors Chair Rosario Rodriguez. The opening program will also include the presentation of colors by the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office and the City of Sacramento Police Department.

2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. | **Beyond Growth: What's Next for LAFCO?** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

For decades, LAFCOs have helped communities manage growth, coordinate services, and promote orderly development. As California faces changing demographic and economic conditions, many regions are experiencing slower population growth, aging infrastructure, workforce shortages, and increasing challenges to the long-term sustainability of local government services. This session will explore what these shifts mean for LAFCOs and the communities they serve. Through statewide trends and local examples, panelists will examine the evolving role of LAFCOs in service sustainability, regional collaboration, special district governance, infrastructure planning, and other emerging issues facing local government.

MODERATOR: *JD Hightower, Executive Officer, San Joaquin LAFCO*

PRESENTERS: *Dr. Thomas Pogue, Executive Director, Center for Business and Policy Research, University of the Pacific; Jim Simon, Principal and President, RSG; and Bernadette Austin, CEO, CivicWell*

1.25 CM Credits

3:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. | **Refreshment Break with Sponsors** *Location: Grand Nave Foyer*

3:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | **Balancing Competing Priorities: Housing, Agriculture, Infrastructure, and the LAFCO Perspective** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

Few LAFCO decisions involve a single consideration. Proposals may bring together the need for housing, agricultural land preservation, infrastructure and water availability, economic development, and a community's long-term plans for growth and services. Using examples from across California, this session will explore how LAFCOs evaluate proposals when important public interests compete. Panelists will discuss the questions commissioners and staff should consider, how short-term needs can be weighed against long-term impacts, and how LAFCO's unique perspective can contribute to thoughtful and well-informed decisions when there is no simple answer.

MODERATOR: *Wendy Root Askew, Chair, CALAFCO*

PRESENTERS: *Katie Simmons, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Butte County; Cheryle Hodge, Principal Planner, City of Sacramento; and Maryam Bral, Ph.D., Assistant General Manager, United Water Conservation District*

1.25 CM Credits

5:15 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. | **Semi-hosted Welcome Reception with Appetizers** *Location: Grand Nave Foyer*

After 6:45 p.m. | **Dinner on Your Own**

SCHEDULE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

7:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. | **Breakfast** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | **Regional Caucuses and Elections**

CAUCUS FACILITATORS: *Neelima Palacherla, JD Hightower, Gary Thompson, and Shannon Costa*

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

SCHEDULE

9:15 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. | CALAFCO Annual Business Meeting *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

CALAFCO members will gather for the Annual Business Meeting to hear an update on the Association's work, conduct business, and offer comments and input.

PRESIDING: *Wendy Root Askew, Chair, CALAFCO* | **ASSOCIATION UPDATE:** *Michelle McIntyre, Executive Director, CALAFCO*
ELECTION RESULTS: *José C. Henríquez, Executive Officer, CALAFCO and Sacramento LAFCO*

10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | BREAKOUT SESSIONS

1) What Your Reports Are Really Saying: And the Questions You Should Be Asking *Location: Magnolia*

A good staff report should help decision-makers understand the issue, evaluate the evidence, and focus on what matters most. But lengthy or technical reports can make that difficult. This session will explore how to read staff reports critically, evaluate supporting evidence and analysis, identify missing information, and ask better questions before making decisions. Using practical examples, Alicia Meyer will share tools for getting beyond the words on the page and using staff reports to make informed decisions.

INTRODUCTION: *Shannon Costa, Executive Officer, Butte LAFCO and Board Member, CALAFCO*
PRESENTER: *Alicia Meyer, Senior Internal Auditor*

1.25 CM Credits

2) California Public Utilities Commission 101: Where State Regulation and LAFCO Intersect *Location: Camillia/Gardenia*

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates privately owned utilities throughout the state, while LAFCOs oversee local government boundaries, organization, and service considerations. Although their responsibilities are different, their work can intersect when communities face questions about how essential services are provided. This session will provide an overview of the CPUC's role and examine where state utility regulation and LAFCO responsibilities may come together. Using issues such as struggling private water systems, panelists will discuss the responsibilities of each agency, when coordination may be helpful, and what LAFCO commissioners and staff should understand when regulated utilities become part of a local service or governance discussion.

MODERATOR AND PANELIST: *Joe Serrano, Executive Officer, Santa Cruz LAFCO*
PRESENTERS: *Wilson Tsai, Program and Project Supervisor, Water Division, California Public Utilities Commission; and Jennifer Capitolo, Executive Director, California Water Association*

1.25 CM Credits

3) Legal Counsel Roundtables *Location: Compagno*

Join Clark Alsop and Paula de Sousa for an informal discussion of current and emerging legal issues affecting LAFCOs. This roundtable for LAFCO legal counsel provides a venue for comparing notes, sharing experiences, and discussing the legal issues they are encountering in their work.

FACILITATORS: *Clark Alsop, Partner, Best Best & Krieger LLP; and Paula de Sousa, Partner, Best Best & Krieger LLP and CALAFCO General Counsel*

12:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. | Lunch and Keynote Address: California Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry *Location: Camillia/Gardenia*

California's local governments play an essential role in meeting community needs, shaping regional priorities, and delivering services to residents. Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry brings a unique perspective shaped by her experience in local government, including her service as mayor of Winters, and her leadership in the California State Legislature. In this keynote address, she will share insights on the priorities shaping California's legislative landscape, the relationship between state and local government, and what these developments may mean for local governments and LAFCOs. Attendees will hear from a legislative leader whose experience spans both levels of government and whose work reflects the importance of strong local leadership in building thriving communities.

INTRODUCTION: *José C. Henríquez, Executive Officer, Sacramento LAFCO*
KEYNOTE SPEAKER: *California Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, District 4 (D-Winters)*

2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. | BREAKOUT SESSIONS

1) Strategic Public Engagement: A Plan for Any Scenario *Location: Magnolia*

Significant policy decisions require more than meeting noticing requirements; they call for thoughtful, well-coordinated public engagement. Whitney Szentesi will share how the City of San Luis Obispo prepares elected officials and executive staff to lead these efforts, using tools such as the City's five-step engagement playbook and targeted staff training. The session will cover what effective public engagement looks like, why it matters, and common challenges, with real examples of successful outreach and missed audiences. Participants will explore four guiding principles for strong engagement and practical ways leaders can support better planning, quality, and community connection.

MODERATOR: *Rob Fitzroy, Executive Officer, San Luis Obispo LAFCO*
PRESENTER: *Whitney Szentesi, Public Communications Manager, City of San Luis Obispo*

1.25 CM Credits

2) Fire Services Under Pressure: What Should LAFCOs Be Watching? *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

Fire agencies throughout California face rising costs, staffing shortages, aging infrastructure, increasing service demands, and growing expectations for emergency preparedness and wildfire response. While these pressures affect communities differently, they raise important concerns about the long-term sustainability of fire protection services that LAFCOs may need to consider. Panelists will discuss how communities are responding to these challenges and the role LAFCOs can play in recognizing potential service issues. The session will also explore how municipal service reviews, spheres of influence, and other LAFCO tools can help communities evaluate their options and take action before challenges become crises.

MODERATOR: *Amanda Ross, Principal, South Fork Consulting, LLC and CivicBound*
PRESENTERS: *Lewis Broschard, Fire Chief (Retired), Contra Costa Fire Protection District; Joe Serrano, Executive Officer, Santa Cruz LAFCO; Gay Jones, Commissioner, Sacramento LAFCO; and Jeffrey Small, General Manager, Capitol Public Finance Group, LLC*

1.25 CM Credits

SCHEDULE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

3:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.	**Refreshment Break with Sponsors** *Location: Grand Nave Foyer*
3:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

1) Telling It Straight: Delivering Tough News About a Project Concept *Location: Magnolia*

Not every project concept is ready or appropriate for a formal LAFCO application. An early conversation can help potential applicants understand requirements, identify possible obstacles, and consider key legal, financial, operational, and policy issues before investing significant time and resources. This session will explore how LAFCO staff can approach these discussions constructively while providing clear information about potential challenges. Through real-world examples, panelists will discuss managing expectations, communicating difficult messages, and lessons learned from proposals that changed course or never moved forward. Attendees will gain practical approaches for helping applicants understand the LAFCO process and make informed decisions about how to proceed.

MODERATOR: *Rob Fitzroy, Executive Officer, San Luis Obispo LAFCO*

PRESENTERS: *Kai Luoma, Executive Officer, Ventura LAFCO; Adriana Romo, Deputy Executive Officer, Los Angeles LAFCO; José C. Henríquez, Executive Officer, Sacramento LAFCO*

1.25 CM Credits

2) Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities: What Have We Learned? *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

More than a decade after California established requirements for disadvantaged unincorporated communities (DUCs), LAFCOs have gained valuable experience putting those requirements into practice. That experience has raised practical questions about how DUCs are identified, what data and methodologies are used, acreage thresholds, routine annexations, and how the requirements apply across different communities. This session will take a look at what LAFCOs have learned over the past decade. Panelists will share experiences from across the state, discuss what has worked well and where challenges remain, and consider how LAFCO practices, guidance, or state law could evolve to better address these issues.

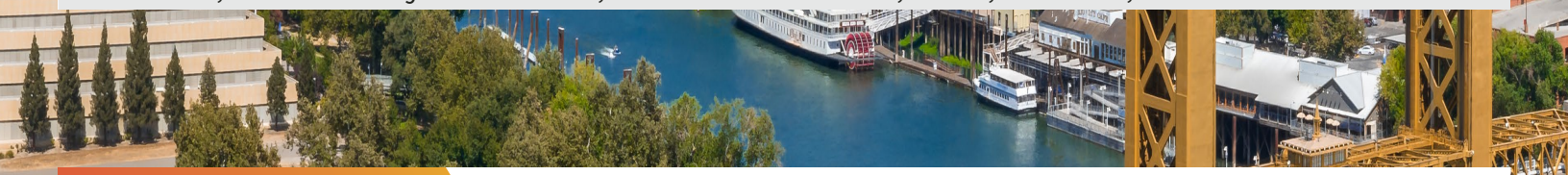
MODERATOR AND PANELIST: *Paul Novak, Executive Officer, Los Angeles LAFCO*

PRESENTERS: *Shannon Costa, Executive Officer, Butte LAFCO; Phoebe Seaton, Co-Director, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability*

1.25 CM Credits and 1 Eq. Credit

6:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	**Semi-hosted Reception** *Location: Grand Nave Foyer*
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	**CALAFCO Awards Banquet** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

EMCEES: *Wendy Root Askew, Chair and Conference Planning Committee Co-Chair, CALAFCO; Commissioner, Monterey LAFCO; Virginia Chang Kiraly, Board Director, Conference Planning Committee Member, and Awards Committee Member, CALAFCO; Commissioner, San Mateo LAFCO*



SCHEDULE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23

7:15 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.	**Breakfast** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*
7:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.	**CALAFCO Board of Directors Meeting + Breakfast** *Location: Compagno*
9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	**AI and Local Government: What LAFCO Leaders Need to Know** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

Artificial intelligence is becoming part of local government operations, with agencies using it for research, report preparation, public communication, and other administrative functions. This session will examine the opportunities and challenges AI presents for LAFCOs and local governments, including accuracy, transparency, public records, privacy, accountability, and public trust. Panelists will discuss practical applications and limitations, emerging legal considerations, and agency policies and safeguards. They will also share what public officials and staff should consider as AI becomes more widely used in public agencies.

MODERATOR AND PANELIST: *Jennifer Stephenson, Executive Officer, Calaveras, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, and San Benito LAFCOs*

PRESENTERS: *Joe King, Technical Director, George Mason University Rapid Prototyping Research Center; and Paula de Sousa, Partner, Best Best & Krieger LLP and CALAFCO General Counsel*

1.25 CM Credits

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	**Legislative Update: What LAFCOs Should Be Watching** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

Each year brings new legislation, policy issues, and shifting priorities that can affect LAFCOs and the communities they serve. This session will provide an update on the 2026 legislative session and look beyond individual bills to the broader policy landscape in Sacramento. Drawing on perspectives from the Senate and Assembly Local Government Committees and CALAFCO's Legislative Committee, panelists will discuss key developments at the Capitol, what may be on the horizon, and what they could mean for LAFCOs statewide.

MODERATOR: *Paul Novak, Executive Officer, Los Angeles LAFCO*

PRESENTERS: *Anton Favorini-Csorba, Chief Consultant, Senate Local Government Committee; Jimmy MacDonald, Consultant, Assembly Local Government Committee; Kai Luoma, Executive Officer, Ventura LAFCO; and Geoff Neill, Senior Legislative Advocate, Nielsen Merksamer, LLP*

1 CM Credit

11:30 a.m.	**Raffle, Closing Remarks and Conference Adjournment** *Location: Camellia/Gardenia*

CLOSING REMARKS: *Wendy Root Askew, Chair and Conference Planning Committee Co-Chair, CALAFCO; Commissioner, Monterey LAFCO*

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José C. Henríquez,
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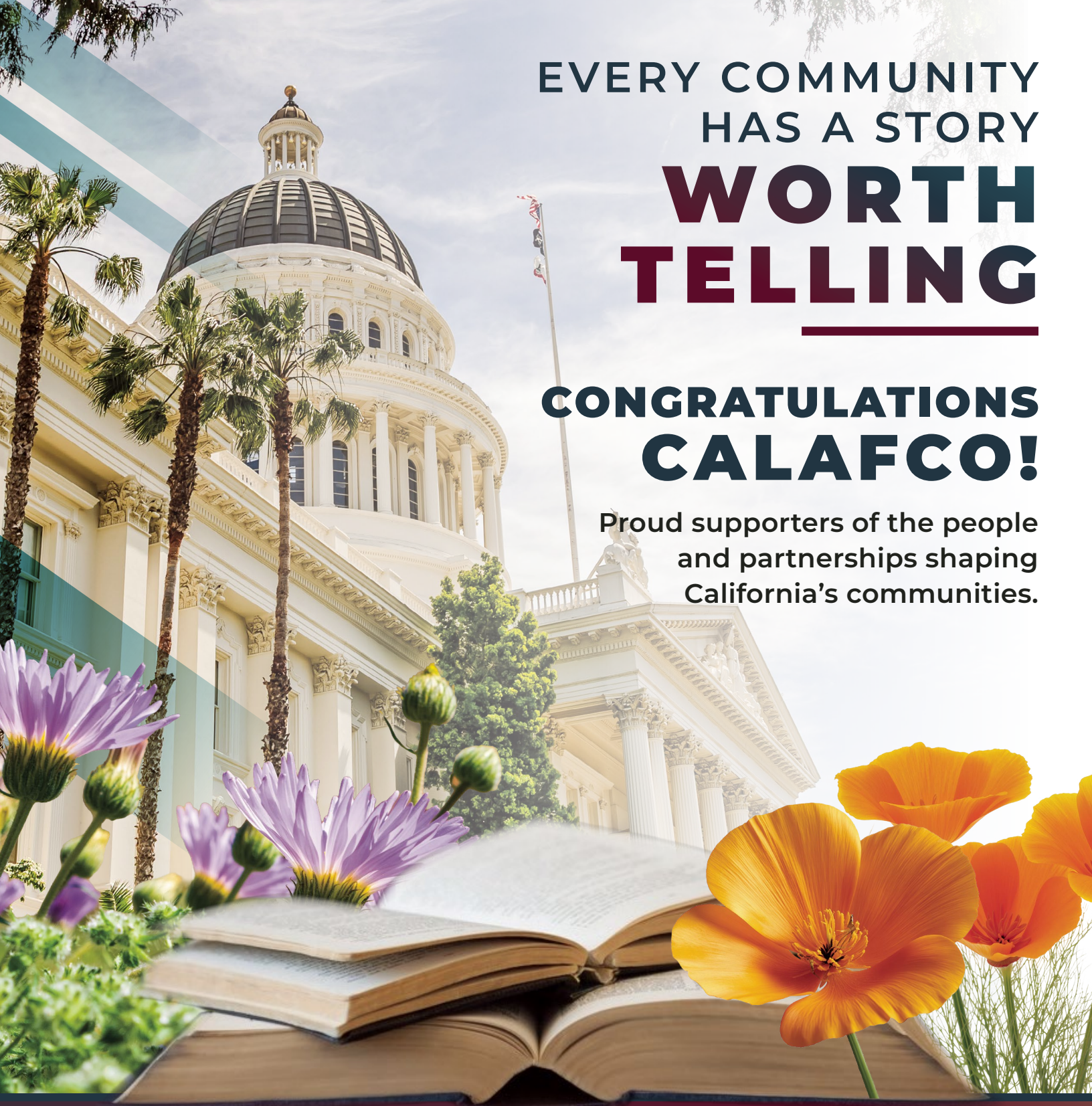
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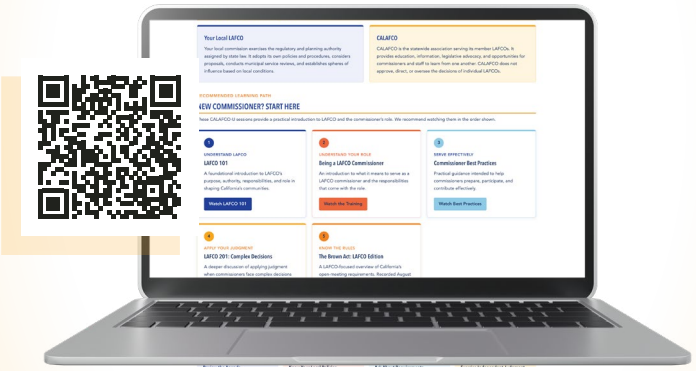
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Log into your member account and visit **calafco.starchapter.com/Commissioner_Toolkit** or scan the QR to get started.

Your Voice Shapes What's Next.

LET'S MAKE THE NEXT CONFERENCE EVEN BETTER!

What did you enjoy? What could be improved? Your feedback helps CALAFCO build on what works, explore new ideas, and create meaningful experiences for California's LAFCO community.

TAKE THE 2026 CALAFCO CONFERENCE SURVEY.

Scan the QR code below and share your experience to help inspire what comes next.



THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE!

Join us Next Year In Pasadena

SEPTEMBER 8-10, 2027

Hosted by CALAFCO and Los Angeles LAFCO
Location to be revealed during the 2026 Conference

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