



## 2026 Winter Conference

### LEADERSHIP TRACK

**Your facilitators:** *Larry Woods, Director, Visit Boerne*  
*Craig Davis, President & CEO, Visit Dallas*

### AGENDA

#### Thursday, January 29

**8:00 a.m. Breakfast**

**8:45 a.m. Welcome to the 2026 Winter Master Class Conference!  
Opening Remarks then head to your tracks**

**9:00 a.m. Talk Budget to Me Part 2: Defending Dollars, Demonstrating Impact**

*When we introduced Talk Budget to Me at our annual conference in September, the response was clear and enthusiastic - attendees wanted more practical guidance, more examples, and more opportunities to tackle real budget challenges. This follow up session delivers exactly that, expanding the conversation with actionable insights.*

DMOs must be prepared to more clearly build, defend, and communicate the value of their DMO budgets. This dynamic session blends expert presentation with real world panel discussions and examples. Moderated by Scott Joslove, President and CEO of the Texas Hotel and Lodging Association, this session features Julie Hart, owner and CEO of CFO by Design, who will provide firsthand examples and insights on the budget process, along with panel member feedback on budget process best practices from destination organization CEOs. Bring your questions and your own experiences as this will be an interactive problem-solving session.

## **Key Takeaways**

- Proven approaches to building realistic and defensible tourism budgets
- Tools and data that strengthen budget requests and funding discussions
- Effective strategies for defending DMO funding with city leadership
- Best practices for communicating clearly the ROI of your programs

**10:30 a.m.                      Break**

**11:00 a.m.                      Fostering Organizational Culture Alignment.**

Led by two highly respected tourism industry experts, this session takes a practical look at the leadership challenges shaping today's organizations. Topics include aligning personal and organizational values, fostering professional maturity, and addressing internal tensions before they impact retention. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to build trust, strengthen culture, and keep top talent engaged.

*Presented by Jennifer Johnson, Vice President of People and Culture, Visit Dallas, and Meg Winchester, Vice President, SE Director, Fired Up! Culture*

**NOON                              Lunch**

**1:00 p.m.                      Fostering Organizational Culture Alignment continues....**

**3:00 p.m.                      Break**

**3:15 p.m.                      Fireside Chat: Communicating Value, Building Trust, and Keeping Local Leadership Engaged**

What does city leadership really want to hear from their destination organization, and how often should they hear it? In this candid fireside chat, Larry Woods, Director of Visit Boerne, and Boerne City Ben Thatcher join moderator Craig Davis, CEO of Visit Dallas, for a practical conversation about building strong, lasting relationships between DMOs and local government.

This session pulls back the curtain on how to communicate with local elected officials and city managers in ways that build trust, strengthen alignment, and clearly demonstrate impact.

Attendees will walk away with practical insights they can apply immediately to strengthen relationships, improve messaging, and ensure city leadership understands the value of destination marketing.

**4:00 p.m.                    Shirt Sleeves Sessions**

Join us for open, peer driven conversations focused on the topics that matter most. Shirt sleeves sessions are designed for candid dialogue, shared problem solving, and discussion around challenges that may not be fully explored elsewhere in the program. Come ready to exchange ideas, learn from one another, and talk honestly about what is keeping you up at night.

***ENJOY EXPLORING BOERNE ON YOUR OWN!***

**Friday, January 30**

**8:00 a.m.                    Breakfast**

**8:45 a.m.                    Welcome to Day 2! Morning Remarks**

**9:00 a.m.                    The Strategic Planning Playbook, What to Build, Who to Involve, and How to Begin**

A strong strategic plan is more than a document, it is a roadmap that guides decisions, aligns stakeholders, and keeps your organization moving forward with purpose. This session will explore why strategic planning matters, what a solid plan includes, and how to turn ideas and data into a clear, actionable direction for your destination organization.

Participants will walk through the essential elements of an effective strategic plan, including defining priorities, identifying the right data to inform decisions, and determining how to clearly communicate the plan internally and externally. Real world examples will be shared, along with practical guidance on how to get started using a basic planning outline.

The session will also cover who should be involved in the planning process, from board members and staff to key stakeholders and business community leaders, and how to engage them in meaningful ways. Whether you are building a strategic plan from the ground up or looking to strengthen an existing one, this session will help you move your plan forward with clarity and confidence. If you already have a strategic plan, bring it. If you do not, you will leave with the tools to begin.

*Facilitated by Matt Clement, Madden Media, Larry Woods, Visit Boerne and Craig Davis, Visit Dallas*

**10:15 a.m.                    Break**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Strategic Planning workshop continues.....**

**NOON**

**Conference Ends**