

2026 Tentative AGENDA
ALABAMA GOVERNOR’S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM
July 12-15
#26AGCTRenShoals
www.alabamagovernorsconference.com
Tourism Strikes the Perfect Chord!

Saturday, July 11

Refer to the Activities Tab on the AGCT website for all options

Sunday, July 12

11:00 AM

Committees Arrive and Set Up Begins
Sheffield/Ford City/Singing River

11:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Silent Auction Set-Up **Singing River**
Wine Pull Set-Up **Shoals Atrium**

Monday, July 13

9:00 AM

Set-Up for Trade Show/Silent Auction/ Wine Pull/Photo Booth, and Alabama Distillers Guild
Singing River/Shoals Prefunction

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Registration **Registration Desk**
Coffee and Soft Drinks **Shoals Atrium**
Sponsored by Florence Coca-Cola Bottling Company and Royal Cup Coffee and Tea

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Alabama Travel Council Annual Meeting & Alabama Tourism Partnership Update (open to all registrants)
Shoals ABC

11:30 AM - 12:15 PM

Grab and Go Light Lunch
Sponsored by AJC Ads | Access Atlanta Travel
Shoals Atrium/Shoals ABC

Grab and Go will close at 12:20. The Opening General Session begins PROMPTLY at 12:30

12:30 PM – 4:15 PM

Opening General Session **Shoals ABC**

experience and win the hearts and minds of tourists, visitors, and guests for a lifetime.

4:30 PM – 5:30 PM **Opening Reception in the Trade Show/Silent Auction**
Sponsored by Alabama Living **(Cash Bar)**
Singing River

Alabama Distillers Guild Spirits Tasting
Shoals Prefunction

6:30 PM – 7:00 PM **Cocktails/Cash Bar** **Shoals Atrium**

7:00 PM **Alabama Tourism Department Awards Banquet**
Masters of Ceremonies, Lee Sentell, Director, Alabama
Tourism Department and Judy Hood, Chairwoman,
Muscle Shoals Music Foundation Board **Shoals ABC**

9:15 PM **Dessert and Coffee in the Trade Show**
Sponsored by 2027 Hotel Host – The Grand Hotel Golf
Resort & Spa; and City Host – Eastern Shore Chamber
of Commerce **Singing River**

Tuesday, July 14

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM **Registration** **Registration Desk**

Beverages **Shoals Atrium**
Sponsored by Florence Coca-Cola Bottling Company
and Royal Cup Coffee and Tea

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM **Breakfast in the Trade Show and Silent Auction**
Sponsored by **Singing River**

9:15 AM **General Session** **Shoals ABC**

9:15 AM – 9:20 AM **Marvelous Mark Teaser**

9:20 AM – 10:05 AM ***Building the Tourism Workforce of Tomorrow***
Speaker: Dr. Vic Wilson

10:10 AM – 10:55 AM ***From Stadium Seats to City Streets: The Sports Tourism***
Surge
Speaker: John David, President & CEO
Sports Events & Tourism Association

11:00 AM **Announcement of Tourism Breakout Session**

11:10 AM – 12:00 PM

Breakout Sessions

I – *The Power of Influence: Advocacy is Leadership*

**Panelists: Kim Adams, Attorney at Law, and
Governmental Advisor to ATP; and Tami Reist,
President & CEO, Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist
Assn. Shoals D**

**II – *Beyond the Map: Shaping Destinations That Inspire*
Moderator: Kim Lawson, Renaissance Shoals Resort &
Spa**

**Panelists: Brian Murphy, Director, Florence Arts &
Museums; Sue Pilkilton, Executive Director, Ivy Green,
Birthplace of Helen Keller, and Nancy Pinion, Director,
Jesse Owens Museum Florence**

III – *Trails, Rivers & Parks: Nature-Based Tourism*

**Panelists: Chris Blankenship, Commissioner, Alabama
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and
Matthew Capps, Director, Alabama State Parks
Muscle Shoals**

**IV – *Alabama Tourism Department: Updates,
Opportunities & How to Get Involved* Shoals E**

Moderator: Grey Brennan, Deputy Director

Timekeeper: Jade Cox, Assistant to the Deputy Director

Topics and Speakers:

**PR and Social Media - Mary Ella Cauthen and Brooklyn
Lundy**

**Sales/Trade Shows/International - Laura Hicks, Andy
Facer and Janin Nachtweh**

Website and Research - Pam Smith

**Welcome Centers - Trisa Collier and Welcome Center
Managers**

Brand USA – Dani Campana and Angie Austin

**Join members of the ATD for an informative and
interactive breakout session. Hear directly from the
team about the latest developments across their
divisions, exciting new initiatives, and what's on the
horizon for promoting Alabama as a premier travel
destination.**

**Discover practical ways you can get involved — whether
you're a destination marketer, attraction operator,**

hotelier, or industry partner — including how to align your efforts with statewide tourism goals.

This is your chance to ask questions, share ideas, and leave with clear action steps to maximize your partnership with Alabama Tourism in the months ahead.

12:15 PM – 1:45 PM

Scholarship Luncheon

Shoals ABC

Sponsored by: Alabama Association of Destination Marketing Organizations (AADMO) and Compass Media

Master of Ceremonies, Kelsey Rush, President AADMO, and Dustin Gontarski, President, Compass Media

Presentation of 2026 Tourism Industry Scholarships and the John Wild Memorial Endowed Scholarship by 2026 Chairwomen of the Scholarship Committee, Christy Baranovics and Pam Swanner

2:00 PM – 2:45 PM

Breakout Sessions

V – Predicting Adventure: AI Knows Where to Go Next

Speaker: Randa Hovater, Founder, Tripp & Co. LLC

Shoals D

VI – Funding Your Future – Navigating Tourism Grants

Speaker: Bethany Oliver, Founder, B Hive Consulting

Florence

VII – Destination Marketing Research

Speaker: Greg Fuson, Director of Research, Destination Marketing Research

Muscle Shoals

VIII – Alabama Tourism Department: Updates, Opportunities & How to Get Involved

Shoals E

Moderator: Grey Brennan, Deputy Director

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3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

General Session

Shoals ABC

Panel Discussions

3:00 PM – 3:45 PM

Topic: *Behind the Hits: How Music Tourism Drives Economic Growth*

Moderator: Ryan Murphy, President and General Manager, Huntsville Venue Group/The Orion Amphitheater

Panelists: Judy Hood, Chairwoman, Muscle Shoals Music Foundation Board

Rodney Hall, President, FAME Studios

John Paul White, UNA Instructor and Grammy Winning Recording Artist

3:45 PM – 4:30 PM

Topic: *Placemaking – How Local Style Shapes the Tourist Experience*

Moderator: Kimberly DeLape, Director, Children's Museum of the Shoals and theStudio Magazine

Panelists: Olivia Terenzio, Director of Programs, Project Threadways

Billy Reid, Founder/Owner/Fashion Designer, *Billy Reid*

Robert Rausch, Artist/Photographer and Professor of Art at UNA

4:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Topic: *Building Alabama's Infrastructure to Enhance Tourism Opportunities*

Alabama tourism relies on strong infrastructure statewide. Senator Britt is committed to driving various types of infrastructure investment from the Tennessee Valley to the Alabama Gulf Coast and will provide brief updates on efforts currently underway.

Speaker: Senator Katie Britt's State Director, Dana Hall McCain Shoals ABC

5:15 PM – 6:30 PM

**Reception in the Trade Show/Silent Auction (Cash Bar) and Final Bidding for the Silent Auction
Sponsored by OWA Parks & Resort Singing River**

Alabama Distillers Guild Spirits Tasting

7:00 PM

Buses Depart for the Street Party on Historic Mobile Plaza

Sponsored by Visit The Shoals, Renaissance Shoals Resort & Spa, and Florence Downtown Alliance

The Shoals is known for our musical heritage and we're STILL making hits here! We'll showcase our local talent with a special **Street Party** on historic Mobile Plaza in downtown Florence. With food stations and specialty bars throughout, guests can wander into the local shops, Graffiti Alley, adjacent park and free arcade.

Wednesday, July 15

8:30 AM - 9:30 AM

**Breakfast in the Trade Show Singing River
Sponsored by Wind Creek Hospitality**

9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

**Refreshments Shoals Atrium
Sponsored by Florence Coca-Cola Bottling Company and Royal Cup Coffee and Tea**

9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

**Conference Finale: Shoals ABC
Fostering Team Alignment to Achieve Big, Unreasonable Dreams
Speaker: Marvellous Mark
Mark is a keynote speaker, experience creator, and expert in human-centered leadership, culture, and performance. Known for transforming traditional meetings into high-energy interactive experiences, Mark blends music, storytelling, humor, and audience participation to create memorable moments that inspire teams to connect, engage, and perform at a higher level**

11:00 AM

Silent Auction Payment at Convention Registration Desk

Revised 06/10/2026