

iLEAD

LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

A program of Iowa Travel Industry Partners

February 18, 19, 20, 2026
**Temple of Creative Arts,
Ottumwa, IA**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026

4:45 - 5 PM	Meet in hotel lobby to load transportation
5:30 - 7:30 PM	American Gothic House & Center
Opening Evening Sponsor	<p>A must-see destination for many tourism professionals and a fitting way to begin the iLEAD experience in the Ottumwa area.</p> <p>The evening is designed to encourage collaboration, conversation, and a bit of friendly competition as attendees start building connections before sessions begin.</p> <p>*Appetizers and beverages available the at event. Shopping opportunities in the AGHC gift shop.</p>
7:30 - 8 PM	Load transportation to return to hotel
8 - 9 PM	Dinner at Wissota Chophouse Located inside Cobblestone Inn & Suites - Ottumwa



A Direct Digital Holdings Company

7:30 - 8 PM

Load transportation to return to hotel

8 - 9 PM

Dinner at Wissota Chophouse

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**Thank You Meet Ottumwa for providing
the event transportation**

**Thank You American Gothic House Center for
hosting & planning Wednesday evening.**

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ToCA,
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TRAVEL MEDIA

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

Scan the QR code to access
all of the speaker bios.

8 - 8:30 AM	Registration & Breakfast (light) <i>*The hotel offers a full breakfast if you are seeking.*</i>	
8:30 - 9 AM	Welcome & Icebreakers	
9 - 10:30 AM	Dr. Celina Peerman	Leading Forward
		Change is going to happen yet being change ready is a choice for leaders, organizations, and communities. We'll explore what steps we can take now and how to anticipate what comes next. This interactive session will renew your commitment to effective communication, honoring others' strengths, and seeing this from a new perspective as we navigate these waves of change. Attendees will receive a copy of Dr. Peerman's book, <i>49 Chameleons</i> .
10:30 - 10:45 AM	Break	
10:45 - 11:45 AM	Jackie Pelland	Stop Killing Accountability
		This session tells the story of why the simple concept of accountability is so hard to achieve. You will discover the top ways leaders kill accountability and how you can stop these behaviors from undermining your effectiveness as a leader.

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11:45 AM - 12 PM		Break	
12 - 2 PM	Callista Gould	Five Star Presence: Networking and Dining Skills for Tourism Leaders (session during lunch)	
		Navigating networking and dining events with professionalism and confidence is essential for leaders. In these two sessions, participants will enjoy fun, interactive challenges and learn strategies that draw others in and make lasting impressions. Certified Etiquette Instructor Callista Gould uses humor and true stories of etiquette disasters to make the information stick.	
2 - 2:20 PM		Break	
2:30 - 4 PM	Heather Woody	Emotional Well-Being in the Workplace	
		This session explores emotional well-being in the workplace and how professional and human emotions show up on the job. Attendees will consider ways to navigate emotions during difficult conversations, adapt communication styles, and support emotional well-being across different personalities, including introverts. The discussion will encourage reflection and provide practical considerations that can be applied in a variety of roles and workplace settings.	



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3:50 - 4 PM		Break
4 - 5 PM	Education Committee	Crowdsourced Solutions: Real Challenges, Real Answers
<p>This interactive, peer-driven session creates space for attendees to bring forward real issues they are facing in their community, organization, or attraction. Participants will identify a current challenge, then collaborate by sharing ideas, resources, and next steps through a structured, facilitated exchange. By the end of the session, attendees will leave with fresh perspectives, practical solutions, and actionable insights drawn directly from the collective experience of their peers.</p>		
5:15 - 5:45 PM		Return to Hotel / Free Time
5:45 - 9 PM	<p>Evening of Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5:45 PM - Load Transportation at hotel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Meet in hotel lobby • 6 PM: Dinner @ Amore Italian Restaurant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Amore remains one of the most popular restaurants in Ottumwa thanks to its fresh offerings and classic pizzas. It's not just pizza - even the biggest appetite can be satisfied. • 7:30 PM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Head next door to explore more of downtown Ottumwa. You'll need the password to gain access for an evening of prohibition era entertainment. Join your fellow colleagues for board games and laughter. • 9 PM: Return to hotel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ A shuttle will return to the hotel after dinner for those not wanting to stay out later. 	
  <i>Thank You Meet Ottumwa for providing the event transportation</i>		



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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20



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5:45 - 6 AM	Load Transportation	
6 - 6:45 AM	Morning Yoga <i>Bring your own mat (or even a hotel towel). Clear your mind to start the day fresh before another day of sessions.</i>	
8 - 8:30 AM	Breakfast (light) *The hotel offers a full breakfast if you are seeking.*	
8:30 - 10 AM	Goals That Actually Get S* Done	
		Tourism professionals work in fast-paced, reactive environments where long-term goals are often overshadowed by events, operations, and board demands. This hands-on workshop provides a realistic system for setting meaningful goals, building weekly momentum, and turning day-to-day work into visible professional growth. Participants will create a tourism-specific SMART goal, set up a personal progress-tracking system, and leave with practical tools, a clear action plan, and a stronger understanding of how intentional goal-setting builds leadership credibility and career development.
10 - 10:10 AM	Break	
10:10 - 11:10 AM	Aaryn Frazier-Elliott	TAP: Postsecondary Needs Being Met
		A discussion and explanation of the growing number of TAP programs in Iowa to help an often overlooked portion of our student and public population. How a partnership between schools and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services is helping to bridge the gap to successful postsecondary opportunities for those with IEPs, 504s and any diagnosed disabilities.

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11:10 - 11:15 AM		Break
11:15 AM - 12:45 PM	Ellis Codjoe + Solae Pope-White	Pitch Perfect: What Radio & TV Really Want From Tourism Stories
	<p>In this 90-minute, hands-on media training session, tourism professionals will hear directly from local radio and television journalists about how stories are selected and brought to air. Each speaker will share what catches their attention, how they evaluate pitches, and the best ways destinations and attractions can secure free media coverage in their market. The session will also walk through how to prepare for last-minute live interview requests, including what to have ready, how to stay on message, and common mistakes to avoid. Attendees will leave with insider insights, practical pitching tips, and greater confidence working with media partners when opportunities arise.</p>	
12:45 - 1:15 PM 		Closing + Link to Learning & Lunch <i>Don't Miss the Group Photo!</i> <i>Link to Learning gives attendees time to reflect on their most meaningful takeaways from iLEAD and identify how they will apply them in their work. Participants will write a letter to themselves that serves as a personal reminder to follow through after the event.</i>


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