CFA | CALIFORNIA FAIRS ALLIANCE

# FAIR GROUNDS

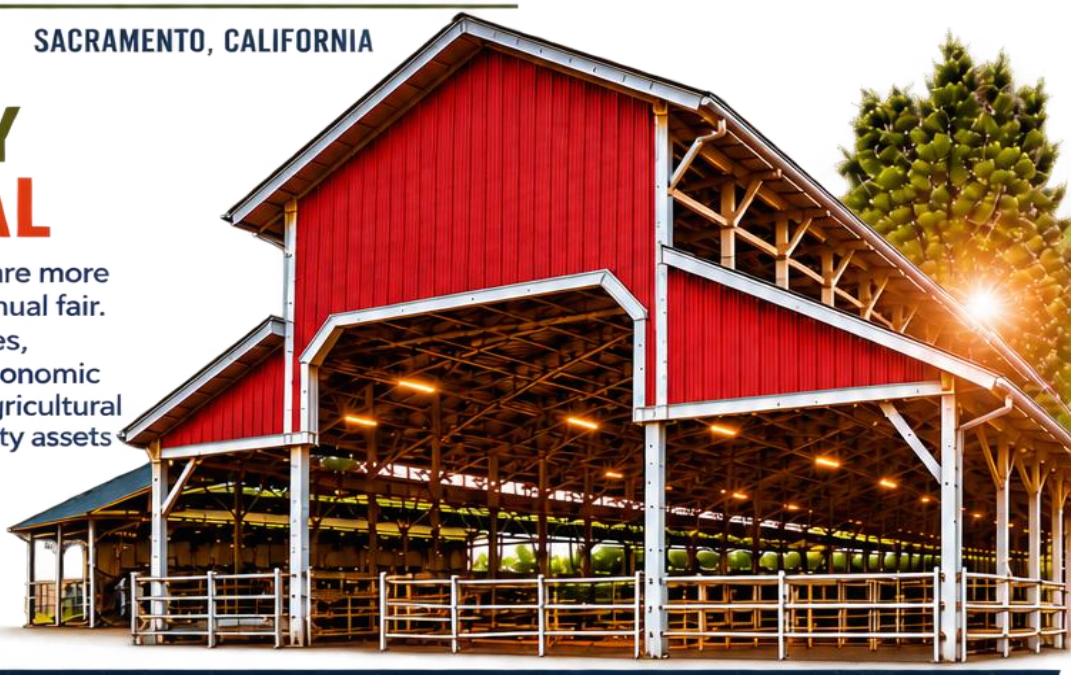
ONE PLACE.
EVERY PURPOSE.
ALL YEAR LONG.

## 2026 CFA MANAGERS CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 2–4, 2026 | SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

## EVERYDAY ESSENTIAL

California's fairgrounds are more than the home of the annual fair. They are gathering places, emergency resources, economic drivers, event centers, agricultural showcases, and community assets that serve Californians throughout the year.



**EVERYDAY ESSENTIAL**

ONE PLACE. EVERY PURPOSE. ALL YEAR LONG.

# Monday NOVEMBER 2

**10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

## CEO Orientation to WFA and CFA

*WFA and CFA Leadership, Advocacy Team, and* Experienced *Managers*

**New to fair management? Start here!**
This welcoming orientation is designed to help new and newer California fair managers get connected, understand the industry, and build a network of colleagues and resources from day one. Participants will receive an introduction to the Western Fairs Association (WFA) and California Fairs Alliance (CFA), learn how each organization supports California fairs, and gain a better understanding of the resources, advocacy, education, and professional network available to them.

WFA and CFA leadership, advocacy representatives, and experienced fair managers will share practical insight into navigating the California fair industry, answer questions, and offer perspectives that only come from experience.

Most importantly, this session creates a dedicated space for new managers to gather, ask questions, share experiences, meet their peers, and start Managers Conference with new connections and a network of colleagues to learn from throughout the conference—and beyond.

Perfect for: New CEOs, fair managers, interim managers, and managers who have recently transitioned into leadership roles.

**Planning to attend? Please RSVP!** Lunch will be provided for all orientation participants who RSVP in advance. Let us know you will be joining us so we can save you a seat—and lunch!

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**12:00 PM – 1:00 PM**

## CEO Orientation Break

For those who participated in the morning CEO Orientation, this hour is yours! Take a break, recharge, have a bite to eat, catch up on emails, or connect informally with colleagues while the rest of the Managers Conference attendees arrive and get settled. We will all come back together at 1:00 PM for the official kickoff of the 2026 Managers Conference!

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**1:00 PM – 1:15 PM**

## Welcome to the 28th Annual Managers Conference!

### Fairgrounds: Everyday Essential

*Laurie Giannini, CFA Chair of the Board, and Cinnamon Howell, Vice Chair of the Board*

Kick off the 28th Annual Managers Conference with an inspiring welcome session. Together, we will set the stage for three days of learning, leadership, collaboration, and planning — celebrating the strength of California's fair industry while looking ahead to the opportunities and challenges that lie before us.

# Monday NOVEMBER 2

**1:15 PM – 2:15 PM** **Fairgrounds as a Year-Round Business**

*Kim Summers, Chief Executive Officer, Placer Valley Tourism and At the Grounds*

Your annual fair may be the biggest event of the year, but your fairgrounds can be working for your organization all twelve months. Explore opportunities to maximize interim events, rentals, partnerships, and other uses of fairground facilities while balancing community service, facility impacts, staffing, and financial return. This session will encourage managers to look strategically at their grounds, identify underutilized assets, evaluate opportunities, and consider how year-round activity can strengthen both revenue and community relevance.

**2:15 PM – 3:45 PM** **From Feed to Fairgrounds: Social Media That Drives Attendance**

*Presented by Tiffany Phillips, CEO of Diamond Digital Marketing Co.*

Social media is more than just promoting your fair. It's about building excitement, engaging your community, and driving attendance. But with constantly changing algorithms, evolving platform features, and endless content options, how do you know where to focus your efforts? This session will break down social media best practices specifically for fairs, helping you understand which platforms deserve your attention, how audiences behave on each, and what types of content and placements are most effective for reaching your goals.

From organic content strategies to paid advertising, we'll explore how to create a more intentional and effective social media campaign leading up to and during your fair. Learn how to develop engaging content, leverage platform-specific features, and build an advertising funnel that moves people from awareness to ticket purchases. We'll also dive into the power of real-time content, including how to capture exciting moments, create FOMO (fear of missing out), and turn what's happening on the fairgrounds into compelling content that motivates people to attend. Whether you're managing social media yourself or working with a marketing team, you'll walk away with practical strategies, actionable ideas, and a clearer understanding of how to make your social media efforts work harder for your fair.

**3:45 PM – 4:00 PM** **BREAK**

**4:00 PM – 5:00 PM** **Interim Rental Contracts: Protecting Your Facility, Liability and Revenue**

*CFSA's Risk Transfer Team*

Your fairgrounds are busy year-round, and every rental event brings both opportunity and risk. A successful event should generate revenue, not unexpected liability. Join CFSA's Risk Transfer Team for an interactive session exploring how strong interim rental agreements, effective contract language, and proven risk transfer strategies can help protect your facility when it is being used by others. Through real-world case studies and practical examples, we'll discuss everything from insurance and liability to deposits, damage, local facility rules, and responsibilities. Learn key contract provisions, common pitfalls, and best practices that help set clear expectations, reduce risk, and protect your fairgrounds before, during, and after an interim event.

**5:30 PM** **Industry Open House: Taste of 1776**

*Hosted by CFSA, CCA, WFA and CFA*

Join CFSA, CCA, WFA, and CFA in the CFSA Office Suite for a fun evening of food, fellowship, and fair family as we celebrate America’s 250th anniversary with a Taste of 1776! Enjoy dishes inspired by the people and places that make up America, featuring favorite entrées prepared by the CFSA team, desserts from CCA, and hors d’oeuvres and beverages hosted by WFA/CFA. Come hungry, connect with colleagues, and enjoy a festive evening celebrating great food, great partnerships, and 250 years of America!

# Tuesday NOVEMBER 3

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| **9:00 AM – 9:05 AM** | **Welcome to Day Two!**<br>*Laurie Giannini, CFA Chair of the Board* |
| **9:05 AM – 10:00 AM** | **Hard-Won Wisdom from Four Fair Leaders**<br>*Facilitated by Melissa Ortiz, CEO of Activate Human Capital Group*<br>*Panelists: Cinnamon Howell, Merced County Spring Fair; Michael Searle, OC Fair & Event Center*<br>*Sadie Ash, Colusa County Fair; Colleen Bojorquez, California Mid-State Fair*<br>Four fair managers on building autonomy, recognition, and ready successors. |
| **10:00 AM – 11:00 AM** | **Recognition: Fertilizer, Not Confetti**<br>*Melissa Ortiz, CEO of Activate Human Capital Group*<br>Recognition is the fertilizer for growth and engagement. It costs almost nothing, and people perform at higher levels when they feel seen and valued. We'll work through the idea that when it comes to recognition, "Specific is Terrific" and help you level up in your ability to give and receive recognition more effectively. |
| **11:00 AM – 11:10 AM** | **BREAK** |
| **11:10 AM – 12:10 PM** | **CFA Year in Review & Legislative Planning: Looking Ahead to 2027–2028**<br>*CFA Chair Laurie Giannini & CFA Legislative Committee*<br>Celebrate the progress made and help shape what comes next for California fairs. CFA Chair Laurie Giannini will kick off the session with a year in review, highlighting CFA's 2026 accomplishments, advocacy efforts, and progress on behalf of California's fair industry. Then, CFA's Legislative Committee will lead an interactive planning discussion for the 2027–2028 Legislative Session—and we want to hear from you! What challenges are facing your fair? Where could legislative action make a difference? What ideas should CFA explore as potential legislative initiatives? Bring your ideas, challenges, and opportunities to the table as we work together to identify priorities and begin building CFA's legislative agenda for the coming session. Your voice matters in shaping what CFA takes forward on behalf of California fairs. |
| **12:10 PM – 1:30 PM** | **CFA Area Networking Lunch & Special Guest Fiona Ma**<br>Join your fellow fair leaders for lunch, conversation, and an update on the work of the California Fairs Alliance. We are pleased to welcome **California State Treasurer Fiona Ma, candidate for Lieutenant Governor**, as our special guest**.** Treasurer Ma will join California fair leaders for lunch and share remarks with attendees. Attendees will sit with their respective CFA Areas, providing an opportunity to connect with fellow Area members, strengthen regional relationships, share what is happening at your fairgrounds, and discuss the opportunities and challenges facing California's fair industry. Come ready to eat, connect, hear from our special guest, and get caught up on the work CFA is doing on behalf of California fairs. |
| **1:30 PM – 2:30 PM** | **Difficult Employees & Difficult Conversations**<br>*Laurie Giannini, Calaveras County Fair*<br>Avoiding a difficult conversation rarely makes the problem disappear—and usually makes the eventual conversation even harder. This session will give fair managers practical strategies for addressing performance problems, attitude issues, workplace conflict, attendance concerns, and other challenging employee situations. Learn how to prepare for difficult conversations, communicate expectations clearly, document appropriately, follow up effectively, and hold employees accountable while maintaining professionalism. The goal isn't to become comfortable with conflict—it's to become confident in handling it. |

# Tuesday NOVEMBER 3

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| **2:30 PM – 3:30 PM** | **Bring Your To-Do List: An AI Workshop for Fair Managers**<br>*Mark O'Shea, Noise New Media*<br>Get an update on the latest in AI and learn how to use it to tackle communications, planning, marketing, policies, reports, and project organization. You'll leave with reusable approaches, stronger questions to ask, and a new lens for how to approach everyday challenges. |
| **3:30 PM – 3:45 PM** | **BREAK** |
| **3:45 PM – 5:15 PM** | **Better Together: Building Strong Industry Partnerships**<br>*Lance Moyer, Butler Amusements; Ryann Newman, Fruit Caboose; Reno Rosser, Flying U Rodeo*<br>Strong fairs are built on strong partnerships. Hear directly from carnival, food, and entertainment partners about what it takes to create successful, sustainable relationships with fairs. This conversation will explore the importance of communication, transparency, mutual respect, and understanding the challenges on both sides. Learn how reciprocal partnerships—where both the fair and its partners are invested in each other's success—can strengthen our events and our industry. |
| **5:30 PM** | **Managers' Night Out – Sacramento**<br>*Explore Sacramento – Dinner & Networking on Your Own*<br>Keep the conversations and connections going after the day's sessions! Gather a few fellow attendees, make some new friends, and plan your own evening out in Sacramento. Whether you are looking for a casual dinner, cocktails, or something a little more adventurous, this is your opportunity to explore the city and enjoy time together outside the conference room.<br>**Looking to stay close?** The Arden area offers plenty of restaurants and casual gathering spots near the hotel.<br>**Explore Midtown or Downtown.** Head into the heart of Sacramento for great restaurants, lively patios, cocktails, and plenty of options for groups looking to make a night of it.<br>**Make a night of it in Old Sacramento!** Old Sacramento Waterfront offers a fun, walkable setting along the river with restaurants, historic saloons, shops, and entertainment. Grab dinner, stroll the waterfront, catch a comedy show, play a round of underground mini golf, or simply explore Sacramento's historic district together. |

## NOTES

# Wednesday NOVEMBER 4

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| **9:00 AM – 9:05 AM** | **Managers Conference Welcome to Day 3!**<br>*Laurie Giannini, CFA Chair of the Board*<br>Join us as we kick off the final day of the CFA Managers Conference. We'll reflect on the conversations, connections, and ideas shared over the past two days and set the stage for a strong finish. |
| **9:05 AM – 10:05 AM** | **California Construction Authority**<br>*Brent Jamison, Executive Officer and Donald Haase, Chief Operations Officer*<br>The **CCA team** will share updates on the California Construction Authority, highlight current projects, and provide opportunities for Q&A. Come ready to engage in candid conversations and walk away with deeper insight into construction on California fairgrounds. This informative session is designed to elevate your understanding and keep you up to date on the work shaping our fairgrounds' future. |
| **10:05 AM – 10:15 AM** | **BREAK** |
| **10:15 AM – 11:15 AM** | **Chargebacks: Protecting Your Fair's Revenue**<br>*Tom Mitchell, Deputy Executive Director, California Fair Services Authority*<br>Credit card chargebacks can mean lost revenue, added fees, and plenty of frustration for fairgrounds. From ticket sales and facility rentals to concessions, camping, and other purchases, managers need to understand how chargebacks happen—and what they can do to prevent and successfully respond to them. This session will cover common causes of chargebacks, documentation and recordkeeping, responding to disputes, fraud prevention, and practical steps fairs can take to protect revenue. Learn how stronger policies and processes can help reduce disputes and put your fair in a better position when a chargeback occurs. |
| **11:15 AM – 11:30 AM** | **BREAK** |
| **11:30 AM – 12:30 PM** | **Managing Up: Building a Strong CEO–Board Relationship**<br>*Norb Bartosik, Retired General Manager, Cal Expo; Current Secretary-Treasurer, Mid-West Fairs Association*<br>One of the most important relationships a fair manager manages is the one with their Board. A strong CEO–Board partnership can move an organization forward, while unclear roles, poor communication, or competing expectations can quickly create challenges. This session will explore the line between governance and management, establishing clear expectations, keeping the Board appropriately informed, managing individual board member requests, navigating disagreement, and building trust between the manager and the full Board. Participants will leave with practical strategies for creating a productive partnership while maintaining appropriate roles and responsibilities. |
| **12:30 PM – 1:30 PM** | **CFA Board Meeting & Managers Conference Wrap-Up Lunch**<br>*CFA Board of Directors and CFA Membership*<br>Join us as we close out the 28th Annual CFA Managers Conference with lunch and the CFA Board Meeting. The Board will reflect on conference conversations, provide updates on CFA priorities and industry initiatives, and outline what lies ahead. As part of the meeting we will introduce the 2027–2028 CFA Board of Directors, who will officially take office January 1, 2027. Stay for one final opportunity to connect, share your voice, and wrap up three days of learning, leadership, and collaboration. |

*Thank you for attending the 28th Annual Managers Conference!*

## NOTES

“More than a place. More than an event. Fairgrounds are where communities gather, connect, celebrate, and come together when it matters most. Fairgrounds are Everyday Essential.”

*Laurie Giannini*

*CFA Board Chair*

WFA WESTERN FAIRS ASSOCIATION

CALIFORNIA FAIRS ALLIANCE

CFSA CALIFORNIA FAIR SERVICES AUTHORITY