

Speaker Bios WCMA Winter Conference 2026

Michael Ford

Michael Ford most recently served as the EAA C.R. Meyer Endowed Professor of Public Administration at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UWO) and the Director of the Wisconsin Institute for Citizenship and Civil Dialogue. He has published over 40 peer reviewed articles on public and nonprofit governance, and one peer reviewed book on education policy. In addition to his roles at UWO, he served as an elected member of the Oshkosh Common Council, as a member of the Oshkosh Plan Commission, on the board of Clarity Care Inc., and as an elected member of the Oshkosh Area School District. He also writes monthly columns for the Public Administration Times and the Oshkosh Herald. His work has been featured in a variety of media, including the Washington Post, the Houston Chronicle, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the Associated Press, and Wisconsin Public Radio.

Prior to joining Academia Ford served as a Research Associate and Vice President of Operations for School Choice Wisconsin (2004 – 2011), and Research Director for the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (2011 – 2013). He holds an undergraduate degree in Political Science from Marquette University, a Masters of Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and a Ph.D. in Urban Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Rebecca Grill

Rebecca Grill serves as the City Manager of Oshkosh and is celebrating her first anniversary in the role this week. She has almost three decades of municipal government experience, with a career focused on strengthening operations, modernizing systems, and improving how local government serves its residents.

Prior to joining Oshkosh, Rebecca served as City Administrator for the City of West Allis for 10 years and also served as City Clerk during her final three years. She served the City of Milwaukee for more than 15 years as Deputy City Clerk, License Division Manager, and Public Safety Sergeant for the Housing Authority. In these roles, she managed council and licensing operations, led a major license information system replacement, advanced process

improvements to enhance efficiency and transparency, and implemented a new public safety dispatch center for Housing Authority Public Safety.

Rebecca holds an MBA in Finance and is a Certified Municipal Clerk and Certified Public Manager through both ICMA and the UW-Madison Certified Public Manager Program.

Sandy Matz

Sandy is an Employee Benefits Consultant and has been with Cottingham & Butler for 4 years. Sandy's top priorities include new business development and providing consultative advice regarding employee benefit plans for Public Sector Clients. Sandy is passionate about helping her clients with benefit opportunities while understanding the fiscal restraints of her clients. Prior to joining Cottingham & Butler, Sandy served as the Human Resources Director for the City of Appleton for 23 years.

Sarah Schillerstrom

With a successful career in local government spanning nearly two decades, Sarah quickly rose through the ranks and held multiple positions across various departments, including Public Works, Administrative Services, Human Resources and the Village Manager's Office. During her tenure, she served as the Human Resources Director for almost a decade and concluded her service as the Deputy Village Manager. She started her career as a L.P. Cookingham-Noll Fellow and Budget Analyst with the City of Kansas City, MO.

Sarah founded SRSD Consulting, LLC because she believes public servants deserve a workplace where they have opportunities to grow and develop, are supported by strong leaders, and are valued for their contributions.

SRSD supports public sector organizations in developing and implementing strategies to retain their best people, cultivate strong leadership and future successors, and intentionally create an organizational culture that people want to embrace.

As a certified professional coach, Sarah utilizes a coaching approach and draws on the principles of Energy Leadership™, to identify the root causes and barriers to progress, and guide individuals, teams, and organizations in effecting incremental, consistent, and impactful change.

Brandon Scruggs

As a manager at Baker Tilly, Brandon specializes in serving local government units, bringing extensive experience in budgeting, long-term financial planning, and fiscal strategy. He regularly assists clients with annual budget development and the creation of sustainable, long-range financial plans. Brandon also leads annexation service line efforts, preparing detailed fiscal plans to support community growth initiatives. In addition to his client work, he is actively involved in training government officials through partnerships with AIM and ILMCT. Brandon's expertise in analysis, planning, and public-sector guidance makes him a trusted resource for local governments.

Chris Strom

As a consulting manager on Baker Tilly's public sector advisory team, Christopher is staffed on various types of projects such as, strategic planning, comprehensive planning, organizational/operational reviews, business process reviews, system implementation, and many others. Christopher specializes in multiple aspects of government, joining Baker Tilly with four years of industry experience. During his time before joining the public sector team, Christopher has experience within parks and recreation, public works, information technology, administration, finance, community development, public safety, and capital project planning. Following his education, he has held various positions with the Elmhurst Park District, the Village of Itasca, the DuPage mayors and manager's conference, and the Village of Kenilworth. Aside from his career experience and education, Christopher takes pride in creating trusting professional relationship with the goal of delivering effective results.

Shanon Swaney

Shanon joined Cottingham & Butler's Total Rewards Consulting team as a Compensation Consultant in 2024. In this role, Shanon partners with public sector clients to develop and refine total rewards and compensation strategies that are both competitive and sustainable. She brings a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by public employers and is passionate about helping them attract and retain top talent within increasingly complex labor markets.

Prior to joining Cottingham & Butler, Shanon held HR leadership roles in both education and local government, most recently serving as the Human Resources Director for a municipality

in Wisconsin's Fox Valley region. Her hands-on experience in public sector HR gives her a practical and strategic perspective that informs her consulting work.

Shanon holds a Bachelor of Science in Public Administration and Human Resources Management from the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point and a Master's in Business Management from Western Governors University. She is also a certified SHRM-Certified Professional (SHRM-CP).

Shereen Thor

Shereen Thor is a comedian turned coach who slays with hope and humor. She has shared the stage with greats like Serena Williams, Prince Harry, Pau Gasol, and Les Brown.

She is also the bestselling author of *Revolutionary Woman*, which focuses on inspiring women and people of color to revolutionize how they see themselves to create a more equitable world.

Shereen has been featured in *Forbes*, TEDx, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Insider*, *Medium*, *Spike TV*, *97.1 AMP Radio*, and more.

When she is not working, I enjoy the great outdoors, spending time with her family, coaching or playing soccer, enjoying good food with friends, and leaving her cell phone in the dust for extended periods.

Seth Winterhalter

Seth Winterhalter is the President of HaltingWinter Municipal Solutions, a keynote speaker, leadership coach, and host of *The HaltingWinter Podcast*. With two decades of executive leadership experience and a unique background as a professional orchestral conductor, Seth helps public sector leaders transform burnout, bureaucracy, and broken communication into clarity, collaboration, and culture that create lasting impact.

He has spoken across the country to city and county managers, department heads, and local government professionals for Leagues of Cities and state associations. Seth also leads the *Municipal Leadership Development Circle (MLDC)*, a national leadership program equipping leaders at every level of local government. His work blends storytelling, practical tools, and transformative insight to help municipal leaders thrive in the most complex and often thankless environments.