

SOARSUMMIT

Presented by  Appalachian Regional Commission  Appalachian WIRELESS
An East Kentucky Network Company

Download this agenda [here](#).

DAY 1 Wednesday, October 7th, 2026

4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Corbin Arena

Registration Sponsored by  Corbin Kentucky Loves Company

6:00 p.m. Corbin Arena

2026 SOAR Summit Kickoff Sponsored by  Trace Creek Construction

Kick off the SOAR Summit with networking, great food, and drinks.

- Cash bar will be available, sponsored by MakeMyMove

7:00 p.m. Corbin Arena

SOAR Inspires Awards Presented by  KCTCS

DAY 2 Thursday, October 8th, 2026

8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Corbin Arena

Registration Sponsored by  Corbin Kentucky Loves Company

8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Corbin Arena

EKY Experience Exhibit Hall Hours Sponsored by  ARH

8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Corbin Arena

Breakfast Sponsored by  Kentucky Community Foundation  FNB  Volunteers of America MID-STATES  Advent Health

9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Corbin Center

FOCUS Breakout Session

- **Beyond Recruitment: Growing Businesses From Within**
 - **Moderator:**
 - Danna Barnett | Director of Entrepreneurship | SOAR
 - **Panelists:**
 - Brett Traver | Executive Director | Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation
 - Jacob Hannah | CEO | Coalfield Development
 - Rodney Kuhl | Southeastern Kentucky Center Director | Kentucky SBDC
 - Robin Gabbard | President | Mountain Association
- **Beyond the Tool: AI as a Strategic Collaborator for Community Leadership**
 - **Presenter:**
 - Dr. Nathan Hamblin | Dean of the School of Leadership | University of the Cumberlands
- **Building Access to Quality Child Care Through Public-Private Partnerships**
 - **Moderator:**
 - Sarah Fugate | Business Programs Manager | SOAR
 - **Panelists:**
 - Amanda Kelly | Director of Small Business Training | SKED Corporation
 - Michelle Spriggs | Eastern Kentucky Center Director | Kentucky SBDC
 - Kate Dean | Director of Community-Based Partnerships and Strategy | Child Care Aware of Kentucky
 - Karen Thompson | Interim Executive Director | Appalachian Early Childhood Network
- **Making Work Work: Removing Barriers, Building Opportunity**
 - **Moderator:**
 - Barb Gay | Program Manager | EKY Runway | SOAR
 - **Panelists:**
 - Renata Osborne | Human Resources Manager | Martin's Peterbilt
 - Aaron Poynter | Director of the Reentry and Employment Services Branch | Commonwealth of Kentucky
 - Justin Suttles | Director | TENCO Workforce Development

10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Corbin Center

FOCUS Breakout Session

- **Beyond Broadband: Turning Infrastructure into Opportunity**
 - **Moderator:**
 - Chris Boggs | Program Manager | SOAR
 - **Panelists:**
 - Chris Pedersen | Executive Vice President | Connected Nation
 - Hilda Legg | Founder | Legg Strategies
 - Lonnie Lawson | CEO | Center for Rural Development
 - Meghan Sandfoss | Executive Director | Kentucky Office of Broadband Development
- **ICC Launch + Leap: What Happens When a County Invests in Its Own People**
 - **Moderator:**
 - Danna Barnett | Director of Entrepreneurship | SOAR
 - **Panelists:**
 - Mike White | Executive Director | I Clay County
 - Kelcey Moore | Owner | Slab & Cedar Ceramics and The Porch Goose | ICC Leap Alumni
 - Shannon Garrett | Owner | Shannon Marie Art / Pottery's Will | ICC Launch Alumni
- **EKY Remote: Meet Those Who Made the Move**
 - **Moderator:**
 - Latasha Friend | Director | EKY Remote
 - **Panelists:**
 - Ben Ledo | Vice President | MakeMyMove
 - Jacob Roan | Assistant City Manager of Corbin
 - Chelsea Clubb | EKY Remote Mover

TenTalk Session

- **Catalyzing Growth: The Power of 1% Loan**
 - **Speaker:**
 - Jerry Rickett | President | Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation
- **Offering the World Appalachia's Comparative Advantage**
 - **Speaker:**
 - Blake Moss | Founder | Coalfields to Cobblestones
- **Kentucky's Rural Health Transformation: Building Healthier Communities**
 - **Speaker:**
 - Tom Walton | Program Director | Kentucky Rural Health Transformation
- **Beyond Treatment: Building a Recovery Ecosystem**
 - **Speaker:**
 - Dallas Hurley | Associate VP of Policy, Advocacy and Recovery Ready Communities | VOA Mid-States

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Corbin Arena

Lunch Sponsored by  MiSource CHARITABLE FOUNDATION  Columbia Gas of Kentucky

• Enjoy music from the Pike County Central High School Jazz Band during lunch on the KCTCS Stage at the Corbin Arena.

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Corbin Center

FOCUS Workshops

- **From Stereotype to Strategy: The Power of Regional Storytelling**
 - **Facilitator:**
 - Marc Whitt | Director of Media & Strategic Relations | University of Kentucky
- **Nuclear Ready: Positioning Your Community for the Next Generation of Energy Opportunities**
 - **Facilitators:**
 - Cason Carroll | Program Manager | Envoy Public Labs
 - Austin Blanch | Senior Analyst | Envoy Public Labs
 - Sean Schaub | Executive Director | Kentucky Nuclear Energy Development Authority
- **AI in Action: Building Your Organization's First AI Toolkit**
 - **Facilitators:**
 - Dr. Jennifer Mills | Associate Vice President for Academic Innovation and Learning Support and Dr.
 - Alexandria Deaton | Executive Director of Faculty Development | University of the Cumberlands

To learn more about our FOCUS Breakout and Tentalk Sessions, [visit our website](#).

4:00 p.m.  KCTCS Stage @ Corbin Arena

2026 SOAR Summit EKY: In Motion

Opening Plenary

- **National Anthem and My Old Kentucky Home**
 - Cory Harris, SOAR
 - Appalachian Challenge Academy
- **Speakers:**
 - Dr. Reed Adkins | Executive Director | Shaping Our Appalachian Region
 - Suzie Razmus | Mayor | City of Corbin
 - Jennifer Hancock and Terry Gray | I Clay County
 - Angelia Foster | President | Baptist Health Corbin
 - David Melanson | Executive Director for External Affairs | University of Kentucky
- **Featured Speakers:**
 - Lindy Casebier | Secretary | Kentucky Tourism, Arts, and Heritage Cabinet
 - Robert Schena | Chairman, CEO, and Co-Founder | Rajant Corporation
 - Dr. Tim Holt | Chair, School of Aviation | Eastern Kentucky University
 - Erik Hubbard | Founder and Executive Director | Backroads of Appalachia
 - Chancellors from KCTCS colleges across the SOAR region
 - Danielle Harmon | Senior Director of Community, Health, and Impact | Appalachian Regional Healthcare
 - Lindsey Case | Aviation Instructor | Big Sandy Community and Technical College
 - Tony Damron | Executive Vice President and Chief Information Officer | Pikeville Medical Center

6:30 p.m. Downtown Corbin

2026 SOAR Summit Reception Sponsored by  BAPTIST HEALTH®

- Harvey's on Main
- 115 South Main Street | Corbin, KY

DAY 3 Friday, October 9th, 2026

8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Corbin Arena

Registration Sponsored by  Corbin Kentucky Loves Company

8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Corbin Arena

Breakfast Sponsored by  ENVOY PUBLIC LABS  CommonSpirit Saint Joseph Hospital  TEAM KENTUCKY TOURISM, ARTS AND HERITAGE CABINET

9:00 a.m. to Noon  KCTCS Stage @ Corbin Arena

Principal Officer Plenary Session

Presented by  UNIVERSITY OF THE CUMBERLANDS

- **National Anthem, My Old Kentucky Home, and America the Beautiful**
 - Cumberland Voices | University of the Cumberlands
 - University of the Cumberlands ROTC
- **Featured Speakers:**
 - Congressman Hal Rogers | Dean of the US House of Representatives | SOAR Co-Principal Officer
 - Governor Andy Beshear | SOAR Co-Principal Officer
 - *Gayle Manchin | Federal Co-Chair | Appalachian Regional Commission
 - KY Senator Robert Stivers | President | Kentucky Senate
- **Keynote Speaker:**
 - John Sittlides | Geopolitical Strategist | Trilogly Advisors LLC
- **Speakers:**
 - Dr. Quentin Young | President | University of the Cumberlands
 - Dr. Ryan Quarles | President | Kentucky Community and Technical College System
 - *Donovan Blackburn | President and Chief Executive Officer | Pikeville Medical Center
 - Mike Johnson | Chief Executive Officer | Appalachian Wireless
 - Mark Birdwhistell | Senior Vice President for Health Policy | University of Kentucky
 - Dr. Reed Adkins | Executive Director | SOAR
 - Kimberly McCann | Chair | SOAR Executive Board
 - Amanda Clark | Economic and Business Development Manager | Kentucky Power

*Remarks will be delivered via pre-recorded video