PRE-CONFERENCE SET-UP

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2026

CARL C. MORGAN CONVENTION CENTER
211 Washington St, Selma, AL 36703

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM **RESOURCE TABLE SET UP**

Resource Providers: We have tables reserved for you to set up at your convenience between these hours. If you have questions or would like to set up a resource table, please reach out to Carter Thomas, carter.thomas@commerce.alabama.gov or 334.676.0103.

Thank you for your support of the Commerce RurAL Summit!

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2026

HARRIS TECHNOLOGY HUB
401 Washington St, Marion, AL 36756

1:00 PM	**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**	**Carter Thomas** **Donald Bennett**
1:15 PM - 2:00 PM	**BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE BY LEVERAGING STATE & FEDERAL RESOURCES** • History of the Harris Technology Hub • Finding and Using State & Federal Resources • Strategic Planning & Looking to the Future	**Donald Bennett**
2:00 PM - 3:00 PM	**WALKING TOUR OF DOWNTOWN MARION**	
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM	**MARION MILITARY INSTITUTE CAMPUS TOUR**	
4:00 PM	**ADJOURN**	

401 Washington St, Marion, AL 36756

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2026

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7:45 - 8:30 AM	**BREAKFAST & NETWORKING**	
8:30 - 9:00 AM	**WELCOME & VIDEO MESSAGE FROM GOVERNOR IVEY**	**Jim Searcy**
9:00- 9:30 AM	**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE ADDRESS**	**Sec. Ellen McNair**
9:30 - 10:30 AM	**OUR STATE, OUR LIVES: ALABAMA WELLBEING SURVEY** Auburn University's Rural Partnership Institute will share the findings of their statewide wellbeing survey.	**Dr. Mykel Taylor** **Dr. Kelli Russell**
10:30- 10:45 AM	**BREAK**	
10:45 - 11:30 AM	**4 R's OF RETAIL - PANEL** A panel of seasoned rural economic developers will discuss their experience and best practices for retail recruitment.	**Holle Smith** **Ansley Emfinger** **Tanya Maloney** **Moderator: Jim Searcy**
11:30 - 12:30 PM	**LUNCH & NETWORKING WITH RESOURCES**	
12:30 - 1:30 PM	**FuelAL - TALENT RETENTION IN RURAL ALABAMA - PANEL** EDPA's Jasmine Williams will speak with two rural communities about their FuelAL experience. You will also hear from two students who went through the program this past summer.	**Brenda Tuck** **Angie Miller** **Moderator: Jasmine Williams**
1:30 - 2:00 PM	**AIDT/COMMERCE UPDATES**	**Kevin Taylor**
2:00 - 2:15 PM	**BREAK**	
2:15 - 3:15 PM	**RURAL INNOVATION: BUILD ON WHAT YOU HAVE, ATTRACT WHAT'S NEXT - INNOVATE ALABAMA**	**Mary Beth Grant** **Karri Green** **Hope Brassell**
3:15 - 4:00 PM	**OPEN DISCUSSION ABOUT RURAL ALABAMA** An open forum to discuss opportunities and challenges you face in your community. Come prepared with any concerns, questions, success stories, and best practices. Everyone is encouraged to participate!	
4:00 PM	**ADJOURN/CONFERENCE CLOSE**	