GCPA
Gulf Coast Power Association

1st Annual

EMPOWERING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS Leadership Conference

2026

NOV 12-13
HYATT LOST PINES RESORT
CEDAR CREEK, TX

WHERE RISING LEADERS BECOME INDUSTRY LEADERS

1st Annual

EMPOWERING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS Leadership Conference 2026

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Where Rising Leaders Become Industry Leaders

The Gulf Coast Power Association's inaugural emPOWERing Leadership Conference brings together current and aspiring leaders from across the energy sector for a day and a half of transformative learning, skill development, and meaningful networking.

Designed for young professionals and emerging leaders, the conference delivers practical, actionable insights to accelerate your career. Whether you're stepping into your first leadership role, preparing for advancement, or building the skills to lead in an evolving industry, you'll leave with the tools, connections, and confidence to succeed.

What You'll Experience

- **Expert-Led Sessions** on industry issues and core leadership competencies — strategic thinking, effective communication, executive presence, and leading through change
- **Industry Insights** from senior executives who've built successful careers in energy
- **Peer Networking** with emerging professionals from utilities, generators, regulators, and energy companies
- **Mentorship Connections** with experienced leaders committed to developing the next generation

Who Should Attend

Professionals at every career stage who are serious about growing as leaders, from recent graduates to mid-career professionals ready to accelerate. Engineers, analysts, project managers, regulatory specialists, attorneys, business professionals: if you're building a career in energy, this conference is for you.

Register Now

THE LOST PINES EXPERIENCE

Set in the scenic Texas Hill Country, the Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa offers the ideal retreat for focused learning and authentic relationship-building away from daily distractions, where real conversations happen.

GCPA Thanks Our Sponsors

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To discuss your participation as a sponsor or exhibitor, contact Mary Armstrong, Deputy Executive Director, at 281.460.3054 or marmstrong@gulfcoastpower.org

Schedule Overview

Thursday, November 12

- 12:00 PM – Registration opens
- 1:00 PM – Conference welcome
- 1:10 PM – 5:15 PM – Sessions
- 5:30 PM – 8:00 PM – Welcome Reception, Cocktail Buffet & Live Music

Friday, November 13

- 8:00 AM – Registration & Continental Breakfast
- 9:00 AM – Conference welcome
- 9:10 AM – 3:45 PM – Sessions & Keynote

Hotel Information

Join us at the Hyatt Lost Pines Resort in Cedar Creek, Texas – only 20 miles from Austin and a short drive from the Austin Airport. King rooms are available for check-in on Thursday, November 12th at the special rate of $299 per night before fees and taxes. Extend your stay through Friday, November 13th for the same low rate - limited number of rooms available!

RESERVE YOUR ROOM NOW - CLICK HERE

Room Block and Special Rate Expires Monday, October 12th

Continuing Education Credit Information

PEs: As part of the Continuing Education Program requirements for Professional Engineers in Texas, each licensed engineer is required to earn 15 hours per year of Professional Development Hours (PDH). Attendees may earn up to 2.25 hours of credit by attending all eligible sessions: Day 1 Vignette, Session II, and Session III.

CPAs: GCPA is a Board Registered CPE Sponsor with the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy. This registration does not constitute an endorsement by the Board as to the quality of our CPE program. Attendees may earn up to 2.70 hours of credit by attending all eligible sessions: Day 1 Vignette, Session II, and Session III.

Agenda — Thursday, November 12 Industry Foundations: The Grid

1:00 PM	**GCPA President's Welcome to Day 1**	**Barbara Clemenhagen,** Executive Director, GCPA
1:10 PM	**Session I - Breaking Into Energy** There's no single path into the electric power industry. The panelists on this session took very different ones. This isn't a case study; it's personal. Each panelist shares the real story of how they broke into energy, the turns their careers took along the way, and the lessons they'd pass on to someone just starting out. Whether you're weighing a first move into the industry or plotting your next one, this is an honest, unscripted look at how people actually get here.	Moderator: **Eric Goff**, Goff Policy Panelists: **Stacie Bennett,** LS Power **Anne Liu**, Aurora Energy Research **Bill Moore,** Butler Snow **Gary Simer,** NextEra
2:00 PM	**Vignette - A Day in the Life of a Grid Operator** One operator. One shift. Real decisions in real time. A firsthand look at what it actually feels like to help keep the lights on for 27 million Texans. The quiet stretches, the split-second calls, and the days that turn out to be anything but routine.	**Jimmy Hartman,** Head of Real-Time Operations, ERCOT
2:15 PM	**NETWORKING BREAK**	
2:45 PM	**Session II - ERCOT Market Design: What's Next for the Grid** Where ERCOT's market design has been, where it's headed, and what that means for the future of the grid. This session covers the fundamentals: the energy-only market, nodal pricing, and ancillary services and then connects them to the infrastructure race playing out right now, as a historic 200+ GW interconnection queue of large-load requests, driven largely by data centers and AI, tests how fast Texas can build. From RTC+B's launch to the new Batch Study process for large-load interconnection, panelists unpack how decisions made in the ERCOT stakeholder process shape which projects get built and previews what's likely headed for legislative debate as bills are filed in the coming weeks.	Moderator: **Beth Garza,** RStreet Panelists: **John Russ Hubbard,** O'Melveny **Chris Matos,** Google **Werner Roth,** PUCT **Bryan Sams,** Constellation
3:45 PM	**NETWORKING BREAK**	
4:15 PM	**Session III - The Business of Energy: Investment, Value & the Next Decade** Where is capital flowing in the electric power industry right now, and why? This panel digs into the business side of energy — investment signals, value creation, and the shifting generation mix — through the eyes of leaders navigating deals, mergers, and demand growth in real time, including the fast-changing pull of AI and data centers. Panelists span retail, real estate/ title, generation, and renewables development, and will each answer the same sharp question: what's keeping you up at night, and where does your company see value in the next ten years? A forward-looking close to Day One.	Moderator: **Mark Egan,** Energy Evolution Advisors Panelists: **Monica Batra-Shrader,** NRG **Brian Chen,** Stewart Title **Gideon Powell,** Cholla Inc. **Jennifer Schmitt,** Rhythm
5:15 PM	**Day One Closing Remarks**	**Barbara Clemenhagen,** Executive Director, GCPA
5:30 PM	**Welcome Reception, Cocktail Buffet & Live Music — The Barn**	

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Agenda — Friday, November 13 Leadership Foundations

9:00 AM	**GCPA President's Welcome to Day 2**	**Barbara Clemenhagen,** Executive Director, GCPA
9:10 AM	**Session IV - Managing Up, Down & Across: A Field Guide to Generational Leadership** You may not be managing anyone yet, but you are absolutely being managed, and that's a skill nobody actually teaches you. This session covers both directions: how to lead people older and younger than you, and how to get the most out of a boss whose generation sees work, feedback, and "meaningful work" differently than yours does. Panelists bring perspectives from across generations and functions for a practical, occasionally funny conversation that's immediately useful on Monday morning.	Moderator: **Sarah Andrews,** Oncor Panelists: **Derek Furstenwerth,** CAMS **Juliana Gianni,** Goff Policy **Will McAdams**, McAdams Energy Group
10:10 AM	**Vignette - From Engineering to Leadership** Technical excellence gets you promoted. It doesn't automatically make you a leader. A candid, occasionally messy account of the transition from solving equations to leading people — and what the speaker wishes someone had told them on day one.	**Nitika Mago,** Director, Electric Grid Operations, ERCOT
10:25 AM	**NETWORKING BREAK**	
10:55 AM	**Session V - Negotiating Your Career: Own Your Next Move** Most professionals negotiate only a handful of times in an entire career, which is exactly why most people are bad at it. This session covers compensation conversations, the internal-jump-vs-external-jump decision, negotiating for development opportunities, and how flexibility and hybrid work fit into the deal. Panelists bring perspectives from grid operations, banking, utilities, and distribution companies to a session built around one idea: financial security is the #1 concern for young energy professionals right now, and this is how you negotiate your way to it, on purpose.	Moderator: **Alexandra Williams,** Guidepost Energy Panelists: **Lauren Rodriguez,** El Paso Electric **Ivan Velasquez,** Oncor **Rebecca Zerwas,** ERCOT
11:50 AM	**KEYNOTE - Power, Pressure, and Progress: Lessons from a Career in Energy** Mary Anne shares stories and lessons from her journey in the energy industry, including building teams, managing tough stakeholders, and staying grounded while working through major transitions and big opportunities.	**MaryAnne Brelinsky, President and COO, AlphaGen**
12:10 PM	**LUNCH**	
1:30 PM	**Session VI - How Good Bosses Change Careers** 60% of young energy professionals want more guidance from their managers. Only 40% say they're getting it. This session gets specific about what great bosses actually do differently; the habits, the conversations, the small moves. Giving you the insights to recognize a great one, seek one out, and become one yourself, no matter what your title says today. Panelists will provide a practical, story-driven conversation applicable to everyone in the room regardless of level.	Moderator: **Christian Powell,** PEC Panelists: **Connie Corona,** PUCT **Amanda Frazier,** GVEC **Caitlin Smith,** Jupiter Power

Agenda — Friday, November 13 (Cont.)

2:30 PM **Session VII - Ask Anything: Live Mentoring with Energy's Senior Leaders**

Closing out the emPOWERing Leadership Conference, this session brings together respected leaders from across the Texas energy industry for an unscripted conversation with attendees.

Each panelist will begin by sharing a formative moment from their career: a piece of advice that stuck with them, a risk that paid off, or a lesson learned the hard way. The session then opens to live audience questions submitted via Slido, with panelists responding in real time to whatever attendees want to ask, with no topic off-limits.

Part fireside chat, part masterclass, this candid, high-energy session gives rising energy professionals direct access to the people shaping the industry's future.

Moderator:
Barbara Clemenhagen, GCPA

Panelists:
Hala Ballouz, Electric Power Engineers
Ellen Buck, Oncor Electric Delivery
Phil Wilson, Ascendant Energy

3:30 PM **Day Two Closing Remarks** — **Barbara Clemenhagen,** Executive Director, GCPA

Conference Pricing

CONFERENCE	Early Bird Registration through 9/30	Regular Registration 10/1 - 11/13
GCPA Members	$250	$300
Non-Members	$550	$600

Our registration fee is intentionally low. Low enough that a manager approving the cost can easily fit it into their budget, and low enough that a young professional early in their career can attend without it being a stretch.

Thanks to Our Planning Committee

Sarah Andrews, Oncor
Monica Batra-Shrader, NRG
Connor Beatson, Satoshi Energy
Callie Boggs, Goff Policy
Brooks Clingman, NextEra Energy Transmission
Ian Haley, Trafigura
Blake Holt, LCRA
Marium Nisa, CAMS
Christian Powell, Pedernales Electric Co-op
Rachel Seshan, PUCT
Rebecca Zerwas, ERCOT