



Pre-registration is required, no walk-ins will be accepted.  
Register by [clicking here](#).

Full Conference Member Registration – \$650.00 (for members who register by June 30, 2024).  
Full Conference NON-MEMBER Registration – \$750.00 (for non-members who register before June 30, 2024).

**All fees must be paid by Thursday, August 1**

The NIOA accepts check and credit cards for conference fees. Purchase orders are **not** accepted. There are no refunds or transfers or changes after August 1.

The Sheraton Sand Key is the host hotel but is **SOLD OUT**.

Rooms are still available at the Marriott Suites across the street. The room rate is \$169, plus taxes. [Click here to make your reservation.](#)

There are also additional rooms available at the Residence Inn and Spring Hill Suites, both less than a 5-minute drive from the conference hotel, for \$145 a night, plus taxes. [Click here to make your reservation.](#)

The NIOA will provide breakfast Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Lunch and dinner are on your own.

Conference dress is business casual. *No shorts or flip flops, please!*

# 2024 NIOA Training Conference Agenda

## Day 1 - Sunday, August 25

- 8:30am-4:00pm** Conference Check-in
- 1:00-2:30pm** **The Art of Strategic Communication**  
**Christopher Cook, NIOA Past President, White Settlement TX Police**  
Find your technique to conquer tough situations through a systematic method to approach incidents and messaging with a strategic mindset. Master the art of soundbites and key messages. Learn how to do a better job in telling your organization's story using social media, videos, audio podcasts, web content, blogs, agency apps, reports, publications, and so much more. As a benefit to being a member of the NIOA, attendees will receive a free digital download of *The Art of Strategic Communication*, which encapsulates best practices for governmental communicators.
- 2:30-2:45pm** Break
- 2:45-4:00pm** **Strategic Communications: A Holistic Approach to Crisis Response**  
**Judy Pal, NIOA Past President, 10-8 Communications**  
In this fast-paced session learn about crisis communication concepts, keys to success, what to consider before, during and after a crisis, as well as your goals and objectives during a crisis.
- 4:00-5:00pm** Regional Meetings
- 6:30-7:30pm** President's Reception

## Day 2 - Monday, August 26

- 7:30-8:30am** Breakfast (provided by NIOA)
- 8:30-9:00am** Opening Ceremonies
- 9:00-10:30am** **The Kansas City Super Bowl Parade Shooting**  
**Jake Becchina, Kansas City MO Police Dept.**  
On February 14 a joyous Superbowl victory celebration in downtown Kansas City attended by hundreds of thousands of people turned chaotic when the sounds of gunfire rang out in the crowd. One person was killed and more than 20 were injured in an incident that immediately captured local, national and international attention. Captain Becchina, Commander of the KCPD Media Relations Unit, will lead a presentation on his team's strategies in the aftermath of the shooting.
- 10:30-10:45am** Break (*Region 1 and 10 Photos*)
- 10:45-11:45am** **PIO Power Play: Strengthening Communications through Collaboration**  
**Ryan L. Whittington, Ocean City MD Fire / Ashley Miller, Ocean City MD Police**  
PIOs never seem to have enough resources or personnel. This session will offer concrete examples, policies, and a comprehensive framework, empowering attendees to build collaborative teams and achieve excellence in public information management. See how we transformed our agency from a single PIO to a Communications Team.
- 11:45am-12:00pm** VP Candidate Introductions
- 12:00-1:30pm** Lunch (on your own)
- 1:30-2:15pm** Sponsor and Vendor Introductions
- 2:15-3:30pm** **Canva Unleashed: Elevating Your Brand with Creative Mastery**  
**Anndrea Harris, Whooann Creative Studios**  
Embark on a journey into the dynamic realm of Canva, where creativity knows no bounds. Attendees will gain insights into the untapped potential of Canva as a dynamic creative powerhouse. They will discover unique features, explore AI boundaries, and learn the latest hacks and tricks that can revolutionize their marketing strategies. By the end of the presentation, participants will take away actionable knowledge on leveraging Canva for brand cohesion, achieving visual excellence, and optimizing efficiency in design endeavors. This session promises to unlock the secrets that will empower attendees to transform their marketing game through the unrivaled capabilities of Canva.
- 3:30-3:45pm** Break (*Region 8 and 9 Photos*)
- 3:45-5:00pm** **Fighting Back from Alleged Abuse**  
**Christian Hancock, Jacksonville FL Sheriff's Office**  
When cellphone video of an arrest in progress by officers from the Jacksonville FL Sheriff's Office went viral in September 2023, leading to uproar by persons in the community, leaders in the Sheriff's office developed a plan to counter the criticism. JSO PIO Officer Christian Hancock will discuss the agency's transparency after it was suddenly attacked.

## Day 3 - Tuesday, August 27

- 7:30-8:30am** Breakfast (provided by NIOA)
- 8:30-9:45am** **Social Media Challenges in 2024 - from Digital Utopia to Dumpster Fire**  
**Yael Bar Tur, former NYPD Director of Social Media**  
Do you feel like social media is changing so quickly it leaves your head spinning? Do you dread hitting the send button on your posts? Do you not know what "getting ratio'd" means and at this point are too afraid to ask? This interactive session will cover the new digital landscape, why it sometimes feels like a battlefield, and how you can best tell your agency's story without stepping on the landmines. Bring your concerns and questions to this interactive session and be ready to take notes as nationally recognized social media expert and crisis communications consultant Yael Bar Tur briefs us on the current landscape and helps us navigate the platforms.
- 9:45-10:00am** Break (*Region 3 and 5 Photos*)
- 10:00-11:00am** **How to Write an Effective Empathy Statement**  
**Larry Hill, Virginia Dept. of Health**  
This session focuses on empathy statements, and the failure of so many agencies, politicians and others in delivering them effectively. Hill explains about what an empathy statement is, how to start writing one, what it should include, and where it should be placed.
- 11:15-11:30am** VP Election
- 11:30am-1:00pm** Lunch (on your own)
- 1:00-1:05pm** Announcement of VP
- 1:05-2:05pm** **Looking Back at the Deadly Lee County Tornado**  
**Rita Smith and Leah Kreiling, Lee County AL Emergency Management**  
In 2019 an EF-4 tornado touched down in Lee County, Alabama, killing 23 people, injuring 90 others and leaving behind mass destruction. Rita Smith and Leah Kreiling from the Lee Co. EMA will discuss the impact and aftermath of dealing with the media and county residents.
- 2:05-2:15pm** Break (*Region 4 Photos*)
- 2:15-3:30pm** **TikTok & Law Enforcement: An Overview**  
**Evan Nicholas, TikTok Law Enforcement Outreach Lead (USA)**  
This presentation provides a comprehensive insight into the platform and its interaction with law enforcement. It introduces TikTok, highlighting its widespread popularity, features, and user interface, including in-app reporting mechanisms for guideline violations. It delves into the categorization of user data by TikTok and its relevance to investigative processes. It will address the types of data TikTok can provide to law enforcement and the necessary requirements for obtaining it, as well as discussing media-reported dangerous trends and challenges.
- 3:30-4:30pm** **Cross-Jurisdictional Cooperation & the Chinese Spy Balloon**  
**Mikayla Moskov, Horry County SC**  
In February 2023, with millions tracking its flight, a Chinese Spy Balloon crossed the skies of Horry County, South Carolina, before it was shot down by US Air Force aircraft just off the coast. What followed were weeks of balloon debris recovery and rumor management that required coordinated, strategic communication across local and federal agencies. Mikayla Moskov from the Horry County Government will delve into the victories, challenges, and partnerships, and how "phoning a friend in the feds" can make all the difference.

**4:30-4:45pm** Break (*Region 6 and 7 Photos*)

**4:45-5:00pm** Networking

**6:30-10:00pm** Karaoke

## Day 4 - Wednesday, August 28

- 7:30-8:30am** Breakfast (provided by NIOA)
- 8:30-9:00am** NIOA Awards
- 9:00-9:15am** Break (*photo opportunity for award winners*)
- 9:15-10:30am** **JIC Insider: Igniting Preparedness with a Simulation Exercise**  
**Allison Hudson, Houston Police Department**  
This session provides a unique opportunity for participants to engage in a hands-on JIC scenario. Participants will navigate a 45-minute exercise with predefined roles and real-world challenges. The session concludes with a collective hotwash, fostering discussion on lessons learned, best practices, and insights gained. This practical and collaborative training aims to enhance skills and strengthen preparedness.
- 10:30-11:30am** **Producing Effective Videos**  
**Brad Perez, Fort Worth Police Department**  
The very first video Officer Perez created for his department's Facebook page went viral with more than one million views. His subsequent videos, directed at recruiting, have received millions more views and have been immensely successful. Brad will share his winning, not so expensive formula, with NIOA attendees.
- 11:30am-1:00pm** Lunch (on your own)
- 1:00-2:00pm** **Crisis Communication Boot Camp**  
**Jennifer Miller, Rockford Gray Communications**  
Most organizations are judged on how they handle a crisis as much as they are judged for the incident itself. It is vital that organizations and their spokespersons understand what will be expected should a crisis arise. This session will give a clear understanding of issues that could constitute a crisis, how the media will likely respond, and the urgent demands placed on spokespersons to engage with audiences.
- 2:00-2:15pm** Break
- 2:15-3:30pm** **Five Days of Fear in Tennessee**  
**Marion O'Briant, Blount County TN Sheriff's Office / Jason Pack, FBI**  
On February 8, 2024, Deputy Greg McCowan of the Blount County TN Sheriff's Office was shot and killed during a traffic stop. A second deputy was also shot and injured. The suspect fled and went into hiding for five days before law enforcement located him and took him into custody. During the intense search, law enforcement from local, state, and federal agencies all worked together to locate him and keep area residents informed during the intense manhunt.
- 3:30-4:30pm** **Staying Healthy and Safe – Wellbeing for Public Communicators**  
**Christine Townsend, The PIO Toolkit**  
This session will take you through an honest series of real-life experiences over a long career as a PIO. Christine Townsend talks about the physical and emotional impact of working on several high-profile, sensitive cases, how she struggled with her high-pressure role and what caused her to finally get help. This session isn't just a list of case studies but provides practical and realistic advice and tools on how to manage the tough job of being a PIO.

**4:30-4:45pm**

Board Swearing-In

**6:30-7:30pm**

Closing Reception