

# N.D. REC Office Managers and Accountants Association Conference

July 28-30, 2025

The Cooperative Center | NDAREC headquarters  
3201 Nygren Drive NW | Mandan, N.D.

## MONDAY, JULY 28

All times listed are Central Time.

- 12:30 p.m. **Registration**
- 1 p.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**  
Michaela Kathrein Perbix, president | N.D. REC Office Managers and Accountants Association
- 1:15 p.m. **Baddest BA in the West!**  
Kit Gleason, senior field services representative for North Dakota and South Dakota | National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)
- Brush up on your NRECA benefit administration knowledge, be quick on the draw with your cell phone, and you could be crowned the "Baddest BA in the West." We're having a friendly competition to see what you know (or may not know) about administering your NRECA benefit plans. You can earn up to 1,000 points per multiple-choice question by responding with your cell phone. Scores are determined by how quickly you provide the right answer. There will be prizes. So come prepared to play along with us!
- 2:15 p.m. **Building Your Workforce – Trends and Opportunities**  
Desiree Dunham, workforce programs manager | NRECA
- To succeed in today's fast-evolving business landscape, cultivating a resilient and future-ready workforce is more essential than ever. This presentation examines emerging workforce trends and highlights opportunities for cooperatives to enhance their talent pipelines. It offers an overview of workforce resources and practical approaches to building organizational capacity for the future.
- 3:15 p.m. **Refreshment Break**
- 3:30 p.m. **National Information Solutions Cooperative Update**  
Gail Domres, financials member success manager, and John Weber, financials product manager | National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC)
- Gail and John will present a year-in-review highlighting key accomplishments and significant software changes that have enhanced financial operations. They'll explore untapped value within current NISC financial software — showing how to better leverage existing tools for improved efficiency and insight. Finally, look ahead at

ongoing financial initiatives and what they mean for the future, with a focus on continued innovation and strategic growth.

- 4:30 p.m. Adjournment for the day
- 5 p.m. **Meal catered by Laughing Sun Brewing Company**
- 7 p.m. **"Grease" musical production at Sleepy Hollow Theatre & Arts Park**  
2899 E. Divide Ave., Bismarck

Join us for this celebration of 1950s culture with iconic music and dance. We invite you to embrace the 1950s Grease style, including the cool black shades for the guys and cat-eyed sunglasses for the gals. Not mandatory, of course, but just for the fun of it! And groovy! Gates open at 6 p.m. The show starts at 7 p.m. Please bring your own lawn chair or collapsible chair for the show.

## TUESDAY, JULY 29

- 7:30 a.m. **Hot Breakfast Buffet**
- 8 a.m. **BudgetPro Workshop**  
Cody Eaves, principal financial & industry consultant, financial tools and analysis | National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC)
- This workshop session will provide a detailed introduction to the model as well as an in-depth walk-through of each section. Participants will learn the inputs necessary, as well as how the model functions to produce a 12-month operating budget. Cody will also spend considerable time discussing the export functionality of the model and its integration with CFC's Compass forecasting model. The session will include time for Q&A and participant feedback for future CFC model upgrades and development.
- 9:30 a.m. **Refreshment Break**
- 9:45 a.m. **BudgetPro Workshop - continued**
- 12:15 p.m. Lunch
- 12:45 p.m. Depart for Basin Electric Power Cooperative
- 1:15-2:30 p.m. **Tour of Basin Electric Power Cooperative headquarters**  
This tour of Basin Electric's headquarters building will include stops at security and response services, trading and marketing, and communications studios
- 3 p.m. **Refreshment Break**
- 3:15-4:15 p.m. **Artificial Intelligence Foundations and Ethics**  
Lynette Borjeson Painter, PhD, professor of cybersecurity | Bismarck State College

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Artificial intelligence tools have become increasingly more common in the workplace in the past few years. Many challenges exist in using artificial intelligence tools including concerns of data privacy, both for the user, the data, and the people the data represents. The purpose of this presentation includes defining foundational artificial intelligence vocabulary, describing appropriate workplace use, practicing using generative AI tools, and analyzing ethical considerations when using artificial intelligence tools with a focus on personal data privacy.

4:15-4:30 p.m. Announcements and Adjournment

5:30 p.m. **Picnic in the Park and Mini-Golf**  
Shelter #7, Sertoma Park, and Super Slide Amusement Park (inside of Sertoma Park), 500 Riverside Park Road, Bismarck

Even better than a “walk in the park,” it’s a picnic in the park (and BYOB) for everyone! Then there’s mini-golf at the Super Slide Amusement Park to test your putting skills. No pressure, just lots of fun!

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 30

7:30 a.m. **Hot Breakfast Buffet**

8 a.m. **Recapping the 2025 Legislative Session**  
*Zac Smith, communications and government relations director, NDAREC*

This presentation provides a recap of a successful 2025 North Dakota legislative session for cooperatives, highlighting major policy decisions and key legislative debates. Attendees will gain insights into impacts to cooperatives, with a focus

8:45 a.m.

### **Business Meeting**

Michaela Kathrein Perbix, president – presiding

9:15 a.m.

### **Great Ideas Happen Here!**

This time on the agenda is dedicated to creating a collaborative space for knowledge exchange and problem-solving with your peers. Your suggestions for topics, submitted via the electronic survey in April, will also be included. Let’s not forget the roundtable discussion is a great opportunity to “admire and acquire” ideas and best practices!

11 a.m.

### **Get To Vs. Have To: The Mindshift That Matters**

*Deb Eslinger, Eslinger Consulting, LLC*

One of our greatest personal assets that is often underutilized is our attitude, and we get to choose it daily. Not everything will turn out the way we want it to, and we are often faced with challenges. Learn techniques to shift your perspective so your mindset and attitude work for you in any given situation. In this closing session, Deb will share simple shifts you can put into practice to turn a good day into a great one. When practiced consistently, you will begin to live each day with the attitude of “I get to,” instead of “I have to.”

12:15 p.m.

Adjournment and Grab N’ Go Lunch

## Meet the Guest Presenters



**Gleason**

**Kit Gleason** is the senior field representative for members in North Dakota and South Dakota with the Insurance & Financial Services Department of NRECA. In her role, Kit presents NRECA’s group insurance and pension plans to association members and assists them with plan design, implementation, administration and employee education regarding the co-op’s employee benefit programs.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration (accounting emphasis), from Black Hills State University. Additionally, Kit is an Accredited Investment Fiduciary® and Certified Retirement Plan Professional®.

Kit resides in Sioux Falls, with her husband, Greg, and their dogs Daisy and Zuzu. She enjoys frequent trips to Minneapolis to visit her first and (so far) only granddaughter Vivianna.



**Dunham**

**Desiree Dunham** serves as the workforce programs manager at NRECA, where she drives key initiatives that strengthen workforce strategy both internally and across the electric cooperative network. Passionate about building strong talent pipelines, Desiree plays a central role in advancing NRECA’s workforce solutions, helping members navigate challenges in talent management and organizational development.

She leads several programs, including the National Electric Cooperative Mentoring Program, the Vets Power Us initiative supporting veteran hiring, and the Cooperative Career Center, a vital hub for industry recruitment. Desiree also contributes to the development of INTERACT, NRECA’s annual conference focused on HR, training and workforce leadership.



**Domres**

**Gail Domres** has 32 years of experience in the energy and communications industry, and serving NISC members. She serves as Financials Member Success Manager, leading NISC’s financials support team to provide help desk and critical accounting software support to nearly 900 member-owners using the software across the U.S. and abroad.

Gail received her accounting degree with a computer information system and business administration minor from the University of Mary. A native of Linton, she currently lives in Bismarck with her husband, Todd.



**Weber**

**John Weber** joined NISC in 1997 as a software developer and has served as the lead designer on NISC's financial software. As Financials Product Manager, he currently leads product planning, prioritization and execution from concept to launch. Passionate about creating value through technology, he works closely with members to align product vision with organizational goals and to ensure a seamless user experience.



**Eaves**

**Cody Eaves** joined CFC in early 2025 after spending the last 19 years at a distribution cooperative in Missouri. His positions included member services representative, accountant, controller and chief financial officer. Cody also owns and operates a small tax and consulting firm, serving more than 200 individuals and small businesses.

He is a certified public accountant and holds a master's degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting and management. Cody brings 14 years of experience using BudgetPro. He is also a graduate of NRECA's Management Internship Program and Cooperative Financial Professional Certificate program.



**Painter**

**Lynette Borjeson Painter** teaches artificial intelligence and cybersecurity programs at Bismarck State College. Her educational background includes a PhD in Education, a graduate certificate in Cybersecurity Technology and a master's degree in management with a focus on information technology.

She holds several certifications, including Microsoft's AI-900, ISC2 CC, CIW Database Design Specialist, and CIW Internet Webmaster Specialist. Lynette also speaks at state, regional and national conferences on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and cybersecurity-adjacent topics.



**Eslinger**

**Deb Eslinger** serves as the vice president of operations for EQUIP and Maxwell Leadership Foundation. With extensive experience in leadership development and operations excellence, Deb has served in leadership roles across both nonprofit and business sectors. She is also a Maxwell Leadership certified speaker, trainer and coach. Deb helps teams and organizations enhance strategy, boost productivity, and foster high trust, effective communication and healthy cultures. Deb is based in Bismarck with her husband and two daughters.

## Registration Information

The registration deadline is **July 7**. Please visit the NDAREC website and then click on. <https://www.ndarec.com/ndarec-education-programs>. Your cooperative will be billed for the cost of the meals and refreshment breaks. No advance payment is necessary.

### Hotel Accommodations at the Comfort Inn & Suites, Mandan

For your convenience, we've reserved a block of sleeping rooms for July 28 and 29 at the Comfort Inn & Suites, 1516 27th Street NW. The reserved block is under "NDAREC Office Managers Conference," and the room rate is \$109/night plus tax. The release date is July 6 for our reserved room block

To make your room reservation at the Comfort Inn & Suites, use the booking link below:

<https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/HV47A3>

### Billings & Cancellations

If you need to cancel your registration, please contact Pamela Clark-Stein at least 48 hours in advance of the conference. In the case of a no show, your cooperative will be billed for charges to cover the cost of meals and refreshment breaks.

## Planning Committee

**Michaela Kathrein Perbix**, president, Roughrider Electric

**Tami Aljets**, vice president, Northern Plains Electric

**Wendy Kinn**, secretary, McLean Electric

**Tavi Leier**, benefit trust coordinator & human resources manager, NDAREC

**Pamela Clark-Stein**, director of education & member services, NDAREC



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