





2025 Women in Public Service Conference Agenda November 14, 2025

"Rising Together: Women Championing Women in Public Service"
In a time when women's leadership in government and nonprofit sectors is more essential than ever, this year's conference is both a celebration and a call to action. We're not just advancing our own careers—we're building pathways for others to rise alongside us. Together, we'll challenge the myth of scarcity, reject competition disguised as progress, and claim our role as sponsors, allies, and amplifiers of one another's success.

Through thought-provoking keynotes, honest peer conversations, and hands-on workshops, we'll explore how to navigate visibility, power, and purpose—from self-advocacy without apology to intentional mentorship and coalition-building across roles and identities. Whether you're just beginning your journey or leading at the highest levels, this conference is your space to reflect, rise, and reach back.

Because no woman should rise alone—and when we lift together, we all go further.

7:30-8:00 Drew Fine Arts Lobby	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Please be seated and ready to start at 8:00 so we can keep our morning speakers on time.
8:00-8:15 Sundin Hall	Welcome!	Kris Norman, Professor and Director of Public Administration Programs, Hamline School of Business
8:15-9:00 Sundin Hall	Keynote: Permission to Dominate Your Success Liz M Lopez Executive Career and Business Coach	Permission to Dominate Your Success is a powerful call for women to stop shrinking and start owning their brilliance, even in systems not built for them. It introduces seven practical "permissions" that help women reclaim visibility, set boundaries, and lead with

		conviction in high-pressure, male-dominated environments. This session blends mindset shifts with actionable tools to help participants navigate uncertainty with clarity and shape what comes next in their careers and lives.
9:00-9:45 Sundin Hall	Panel/Keynote: Lifting as We Rise: The Power of Sponsorship, Allyship, and Mentorship Moderators: Anietie Okon and Katie Kline Panelists: Dr. Chris Black-Hughes, Ph.D., LICSW, Associate Professor, Minnesota State University, Mankato Samia Abdel-Kerim, MS, MLS(ASCP)CM, Assistant Professor and Clinical Coordinator, Northwestern Health Sciences University	This panel will focus on how women can both support and advance one another through mentorship- not just as a form of support, but as a critical tool for advancement. We'll explore how mentorship can either open doors or unintentionally reinforce barriers, and how, as we move further along in our own professional journeys, we can become more intentional about lifting others as we rise.
9:45-10:00 Sundin Hall	Awards Ceremony Lifetime Achievement Award- Tina Burnside Civil Rights Attorney Sara Cwayna Public Safety Education Specialist Rising Star Award Angela Sebranek Supervisor – Economic Supports, Hennepin County	Rising Star Nomination Form Lifetime Achievement Nomination Form

10:20-11:50 Anderson 304/305	Breakout Session 1 The Power of Difference: Embracing Neurodiversity in the Workplace	Did you know that over 20% of our workforce is neurodivergent and this number is woefully understated. Many adults have not been tested for neurodivergence and suffer in silence.
	Trish Perry, Results Coach	Most supervisors are not trained on neurodivergence and this diversity gets overlooked. Neurodivergent employees are expected to adapt to a Neurotypical workplace. Neurodivergent employees bring many talents to the workplace that are often overlooked and underappreciated.
		This event will feature neurodivergent employees who will share their unique perspectives on what neurodivergence means to them and their experiences navigating a predominantly neurotypical workplace.
		This will be an interactive experience with the audience adding insights and having a conversation with the panelists.
Anderson 112	Breakout Session 2 Can People of Color truly experience Psychological Safety in the U.S. Workplac Andrea Perez-Maikkula	Pescription: Can People of color truly experience psychological safety in the U.S. workplace? The short answer is no. For years, employees have been encouraged to bring their whole, authentic selves to work. Thought leaders, LinkedIn articles, and workplace policies have promoted this idea

	Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging at the Minnesota State Retirement System Jerad Green Founder & Consultant, Quixotic Solutions LLC	incessantly. Psychological safety has been touted as the solution to workplace woes, but, for some reason, something always felt off - to me, to us, to people of color participating in the U.S. workforce. It felt like a trap. Like waiting for the other shoe to drop. Our speakers will introduce the emergent concept, Psychological Agency, as a way to create a container where people who hold non-dominant culture identities can (1) exist within the system without losing their sense of self and (2) reimagine what our workplace experience can be.
Anderson 111	Breakout Session 3 From Curiosity to Confidence: Navigating Generative AI Together Moderators: Summer Harrison and Cassandra Cole Speakers: Sara Ring, Continuing Education Librarian - University of Minnesota Elissah Becknell, Branch Manager; Ramsey County Library - New Brighton	The generative AI landscape continues to grow—and the pace isn't slowing down. Over the last year, tools have become more powerful and more integrated into the applications and platforms we use, and more present in our work. With these advances come new opportunities for efficiency and creativity—but also fresh challenges around ethics, privacy, accuracy, and equity. In this session, presenters will go beyond the basics of what we shared last year, delving into what's new in generative AI tools and how it's reshaping our work and the communities we serve. We'll continue to explore the practical ways public services staff can use AI for writing, research, planning, and problem-solving, while also spotlighting any new risks and questions that have emerged over the past
Sundin Hall	Breakout 4	year. Come ready to experiment, ask questions, and share your own examples of how AI is (or isn't!) helping in your work. Together, we'll dive deeper into what's changed, what's next, and how humans can stay at the center of this evolving technology. Panelists in this breakout session will center on the

	Allyship in Elective Office Moderators: Mary Ly and Mónica Romero 1. Heidi Garrido, Hopkins Council Member 2. Paula Cole, Richfield School Board 3. Amáda Márquez Simula, Mayor of Columbia Heights	experiences, challenges, and accomplishments of three elected women officials, offering dynamic perspectives on leadership, governance, and policymaking from their diverse viewpoints.
11:50-12:45 Anderson forum	Lunch	
1:00-2:30 Sundin Hall	Breakout 5 Navigating the Now, Not the Normal Peggy Kendall Professor, Author, Consultant	The world didn't snap back to "normal"—and neither did work. This interactive workshop explores what it means to lead, adapt, and thrive in a workplace still evolving. Whether you're remote, hybrid, or on-site, we'll unpack how to navigate ongoing change with clarity, connection, and resilience. Leave with practical tools to support yourself and your team through uncertainty. It's not about going back—it's about moving forward with intention.
Anderson 304/305	Breakout 6 The Neurodivergent Challenge: Masking, Motivation, and Energy Management Trish Perry, Results Coach	This session unpacks the hidden costs of masking at work, why motivation looks different for neurodivergent brains, and how daily energy can be better managed. Both employees and leaders will gain tools to reduce the drain, support authenticity, and build more inclusive, productive workplaces.

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Anderson 112	Breakout session 7	Martial arts is more than physical discipline—it is a
	homes Newsishon and Thomas he Mantial Autor A	holistic practice that nurtures the mind, body, and
	Inner Nourishment Through Martial Arts: A	spirit. As a form of self-care, it offers a powerful
	Path to Self-Care	way to reconnect with oneself, cultivate resilience,
		and foster inner peace.
	Adrian Stockman, Hong De Wu Guan martial arts	1. Mindful Movement:
	instructor.	Each technique, stance, and breath in martial arts
		is an invitation to be present. The focus required to
		execute movements with precision quiets mental
		chatter, grounding the practitioner in the here and
		now. This mindfulness becomes a moving
		meditation, reducing stress and enhancing
		emotional clarity.
		2. Emotional Release and Regulation:
		Through controlled physical exertion, martial arts
		provide a safe outlet for releasing pent-up
		emotions like anger, frustration, or anxiety. The
		discipline also teaches emotional
		regulation—responding rather than reacting—by
		instilling patience, humility, and respect.
		3. Confidence and Empowerment:
		Learning to defend oneself builds a deep sense of
		personal power. With each mastered technique,
		practitioners gain confidence not just in their
		physical abilities, but in their capacity to face life's
		challenges with courage and composure.
		4. Community and Belonging:
		Training often takes place in a supportive
		environment where mutual respect and shared
		growth are central. This sense of community
		nourishes the soul, reminding individuals that they
		are not alone on their journey.
		5. Harmony of Body and Spirit:
		Martial arts traditions often emphasize
		balance—between strength and softness, action
		and stillness. This balance fosters a deeper

		connection to one's inner self, promoting healing, self-awareness, and a sense of wholeness.
Anderson 111	Listen, Explore, Resolve: Managing Conflict with the Public Presenters: Aimee Gourlay, Collaboration Services Manager, League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Elise Chambers, Director of Alternative Dispute Resolution, MN Department of Human Rights Jenny Starr, Owner & Mediator, Starr Legal Solutions	From public-service experts in the mediation field, learn three practical skills you can use now to de-escalate conflict: 3-Level Listening, Exploring Before Solving and Asking Questions to Understand. You will also discover the stages of mediation, explore real-world applications of mediation in public service, and take-home mediation resources to strengthen your work.
2:50-3:30 Sundin Hall	Closing Plenary– Rise, Reflect, Reach Back: The Inner Work of Collective Liberation Molly Raymond Principal Consultant, Facilitator, and Speaker, Willow Within Consulting &Leadership Development and Change Manager, City of Minneapolis.	As we close our time together, this final session is an invitation to turn inward before we step forward. Too often, public service celebrates selflessness without asking what it costs. In our efforts to lift others, many of us have lost connection to our own needs, voices, and healing. We'll name the hidden barriers—like codependency, over-functioning, and collapsing complexity—that quietly undermine our power and presence. Together, we'll reframe what it means to champion others by practicing allyship that respects autonomy, and self-advocacy that honors our wholeness.

		Through story, reflection, and a collective call to action, we'll explore how to: - Shift from service-as-sacrifice to service-as-liberation - Balance helping others with honoring ourselves - Begin with intersectionality as the foundation, not the footnote - Set boundaries that sustain—not shrink—our leadership - Champion without rescuing - Rise together, rooted in truth This is not the end—but the next lift. Let's rise. Let's reflect. Let's reach back after reaching in.
3:30-4:00 Sundin Hall Lobby	Closing reception	