

SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

LEADING PHILANTHROPY

What Fundraising & Philanthropy Require Now
REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!



Sessions and Speakers

*Session times and room locations coming soon

Program Title	Description	Presenter	Organization/Company	Title
5 Practical Strategies for Implementing Data-Driven Communications	Have you ever wondered how the most successful nonprofits keep donors engaged, grow support over time, and continually advance their missions? Well, the secrets lie in your donor data. And it's easier than you'd think to start using it to your advantage. In this session, Jesse Park will outline five easy-to-use data-driven strategies nonprofits like the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, the Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance, and others are using to leverage their data and raise more money.	Jesse Park	amplifi	President
		Liz Trout	Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation	Director of Annual Giving
Above the Noise: Using AI + GEO to Drive Awareness, Engagement, and Giving	A practical guide to using AI and Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) to reach the right audiences, increase engagement, and maximize impact with limited resources.	Madeline Jack	Blink Agency	Chief Client & Operating Officer
Before the Ask: Preparing Your Data and CRM for Stronger Appeals	Successful appeals don't start when the letter drops or the email sends, they start months earlier, in your data. This session is designed for fundraisers who are tired of scrambling at appeal time and want practical, realistic ways to prepare now, even without perfect systems, large teams, or clean data. Geared especially toward nonprofit "underdogs" and outliers, this session will walk through how to assess, prioritize, and clean up your data in a way that actually supports fundraising goals, not perfection for perfection's sake. Attendees will learn how to identify what truly matters before an appeal, use their CRM as a strategic tool (instead of a barrier), and make smart, manageable improvements that lead to clearer segmentation, stronger storytelling, and more confident asks. Participants will leave with actionable steps they can implement immediately to reduce last-minute stress, improve appeal performance, and build a stronger foundation for long-term donor engagement, no massive tech overhaul required.	Lisa Franco	Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge	Director of Development
Board Activation for Fundraising: Moving from Bystanders to Builders	Fundraising has changed. Donors are asking for trust, connection, and visible leadership. At the same time, nonprofit leaders are navigating increased pressure, limited capacity, and rising expectations. And yet... many are still trying to fundraise alone. If you are tired of asking "Why won't my board fundraise?" this session shows you how to lead that shift. This session explores what today's philanthropic environment requires and why board participation is essential to meeting those demands. Sonia Saleh introduces a practical, research-informed framework centered on mindset, knowledge, and imperfect action to help leaders move boards from hesitation to participation. Participants will learn how to reduce resistance, clarify expectations, and create a culture where fundraising is shared, supported, and sustainable. This session directly addresses a persistent gap in the sector: moving from expecting boards to expecting them to participate effectively <u>empowering them to participate effectively</u> .	Sonia Saleh	Uplifting Nonprofits	Founder & Creator
		Francine Poppo	School Sisters of Notre Dame Educational Center	Executive Director
Choosing to Be Delulu; and Other Lessons From Founder Mode	Scrappy...opportunistic...innovative...and a little delulu. Do these adjectives sound exciting, or exhausting? How do you balance humanity with ambition? Growth with sustainability? Focus with flexibility? What can an entrepreneurial approach bring to fundraising? This session will feature New Leash on Life USA's growth - sustainably tripling revenue in less than 3 years - as a case study as well as discussion questions to prompt you to rethink the possibilities while acknowledging the current context. Join Marian V. Marchese, Founder & CEO, and Jane Bridwell, VP of Advancement of New Leash on Life USA for an entertaining and thought-provoking session for fundraising leaders who are ready to take their organizations to the next level. Bring your big ideas, your metrics, your curiosity, and your chronically-online jokes.	Jane Bridwell, CFRE	New Leash on Life USA	VP of Advancement
		Marian Marchese	New Leash on Life USA	Founder & CEO
Creating Your Professional Development Plan	Every fundraiser needs a professional development plan (PDP), your personal roadmap for advancing your fundraising career. Your PDP will guide your growth in key areas such as Prospecting, Relationship Building, Planned Giving, and beyond, driving your ongoing learning and development to continually enhance your fundraising practice.	Jack Alotto, MA, CFRE	Fundraising Academy at National University	Trainer/Consultant
From Concept to Countdown: Establishing and Implementing a Giving Day at Your Institution	Giving days have become one of the most powerful tools in the annual giving playbook - but launching one successfully requires far more than picking a date and sending an email. This session walks attendees through the full lifecycle of establishing and implementing a giving day from the ground up, from assessing institutional readiness and securing buy-in, to building challenges, matches, and communications that actually resonate with your community. Whether you're exploring the idea for the first time or preparing to launch, this session offers a practical, honest roadmap for getting it right <u>honest roadmap for getting it right</u> .	Bridget O'Halloran	Malvern Preparatory School	Director of Annual Giving
Get Locked In: Focused Fundraising for Resource-Limited Nonprofits	In small and medium sized nonprofits, we are already stretched thin. Many of you may be operating as a one or two person fundraising team. Others of you may be leading organizations and responsible for all of the development work in addition to your other responsibilities. This workshop will provide practical, real-life guidance to increase your success in fundraising without adding more work to your load.	Kwinn Tucker	Consulting by Kwinn, LLC	Owner
		Richona McKnight	CityTeam-Chester	Executive Director
Grants Are a Team Sport: Building Cross-Departmental Collaboration for Grant Success	If you've ever spent more time chasing down information from other departments than actually writing a grant, this session is for you. Grant work depends on program, finance, and administrative teams, but without clear coordination, it can feel like everyone is working in silos. This session will help you build a more collaborative approach by getting the right people involved, clarifying roles, and creating simple systems to track deadlines and deliverables so nothing falls through the cracks.	Jax Gitzes	Big Brothers Big Sisters Independence	Senior Manager, Grants & Foundations
Great Fundraiser, Now What? Preparing for Leadership in Advancement	Fundraisers are often promoted based on strong fundraising results. As they step into leadership roles, many encounter a new learning curve: managing people, setting expectations, and leading team performance alongside their own portfolios.	Emily Wells	CCS Fundraising	Assistant Vice President
		Julia Barr	CCS Fundraising	Vice President
How the Great Wealth Transfer Will Affect PA, NJ, & DE Nonprofits, and Five Practical Steps to Take Today to Make the Most of It	The "Great Wealth Transfer" is the most important trend shaping the fundraising landscape over the coming decade, as more than \$130 Trillion is passed to heirs and charities by the wealthy Baby Boomer population. This session will focus on how this trend specifically affects nonprofits in the Pennsylvania,	Patrick Schmitt	FreeWill	Co-CEO
		Jack Cashion	FreeWill	VP Partnerships
In Good Company: Three Fundraisers on Career Mistakes, Triumphs, and the Spaces In Between	We are pulling up the comfy chairs to host three brilliant fundraisers, each at different stages of her career, who are in good company with each other—and with you. They'll be swapping stories on career mistakes, unexpected triumphs, and the heavy spaces in between, like navigating sector burnout and leading with diverse perspectives.	Liz Marafino Fiola, MA, MS, CFRE	Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law	Senior Major Gift Officer
		Samantha Hong		
		Javon Robinson, MPA	City Year Philadelphia	Senior Manager of Individual Giving
		Denise Soto, MS, CFRE	Oaks Integrated Care	Chief Development & Communications Officer

Major Donor Fundraising in the World of AI	Small and mid-size fundraising teams face increasing pressure to diversify their funding streams, particularly through major gifts. Yet many teams lack the time, resources, or expertise to build robust major gift programs. This session addresses that gap by providing participants with best practices in major gift fundraising, from prospect identification to cultivation and solicitation strategies. Attendees will also gain insights into emerging AI tools transforming the field. Through the use of examples, participants will see how AI can enhance prospect research, personalize donor engagement, and ultimately maximize major gift success-even with limited staff capacity.	Elizabeth Hefner, CFRE	Schultz & Williams	Senior Consultant
		Rachael Barrett	Schultz & Williams	Senior Consultant
		Bailey Tracy	Schultz & Williams	Consultant
Major Donor Fundraising in the World of AI	How shifting incentives, emerging technologies, and donor influence are reshaping fundraising leadership.	Barbara O'Reilly, CFRE	Windmill Hill Consulting	Founder and Principal
		Katherine Sprissler-Klein	Windmill Hill Consulting	Senior Consultant
Reclaiming the 'Why': Storytelling as a Tool for Connection, Clarity, and Fundraising Resilience	Reclaiming the 'Why' is an interactive workshop for fundraisers and nonprofit leaders navigating uncertainty and rising demands on their missions. Led by two tenured fundraisers, this session explores how to uncover and articulate the core "why" beneath an organization's programs, outcomes, and funding needs. Participants will examine how effective storytelling moves beyond describing what you do to clarifying purpose, values, and impact-building trust, connection, and investment. Attendees will leave with renewed clarity and confidence in the story they invite donors into.	Amanda Finnell	Aperio Philanthropy	Director, Client Services
		Mike Stefanski	Aperio Philanthropy	President
Rethinking Direct Mail in the Digital Age	In a world flooded with emails, social posts, and online ads, direct mail stands out more than ever. Tangible, trusted, and highly personal, it remains one of the most effective ways to connect with donors. In this session, we'll explore why direct mail continues to deliver strong results in today's digital landscape, and how you can make it work even harder by pairing it with digital touch points. You'll leave with practical ideas and more confidence to create campaigns that reach donors and inspire deeper engagement.	Jeffery James	Spire2 Communications, Inc	Principal
S.C.A.L.E.: Turning Loyal Donors into Major Gift Investors	Most major donors begin as annual donors, yet many organizations treat annual giving and major gifts as separate strategies. This session introduces the S.C.A.L.E. Donor Growth Framework, a five-stage model for intentionally moving donors from loyalty to transformational investment.	Ramon Guzman, Jr.	Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law	Major Gift Officer
The \$5 Million Development Department of One	In October 2024, Sarah Pita became the sole fundraiser at CIDNY, a nearly 50-year-old disability rights organization in New York. Over the next 18 months, using Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity daily, she raised over \$5 million across grants, individual giving, and even a gala. But this isn't a story about AI magically making millions (sorry!). CIDNY has decades of institutional history and infrastructure that made that number possible. What AI did was let one person actually show up for all of it: trying for the "reach" grants as well as the mandatory ones, creating custom instead of generic appeals, and learning new strategies while executing them in real time. Sarah will show you specifically how she did it, taking an honest look at what AI made possible, what it didn't do, and what every underresourced fundraiser should know about using these tools - including the tradeoffs.	Sarah Pita	Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York	Director of Development
The Great Unlearning: Why Do Words That Hide Harm Feel 'Right'? Language, Power, and the Fundraising Sector	In fundraising, language is our currency. It's how we tell stories, build donor pipelines, communicate impact, and advance our missions. But too often, that language crafted for grant proposals, donor reports, board presentations, and public communications, conceals more than it reveals. And in doing so, it unknowingly compromises our commitments to equity. You've seen it: "We serve vulnerable populations." "Our mission is to support at-risk youth." "This program focuses on underserved communities." These phrases are everywhere, from donor briefings to strategic plans. Who decided these words were "right", and what do they cost us and the communities, faculty, staff, and students that we serve to keep using them? This timely webinar invites fundraisers, grant writers, communicators, advancement professionals, and philanthropic leaders to interrogate the language we've inherited and unlearn the words that	Maia McGill	Maia McGill Consulting, LLC and Inclusive Philanthropy Institute	Chief Executive Officer/Founder
The State of Nonprofit Fundraising in 2026: From Static Reports to Real-Time Strategy	Donor expectations are rising. Giving behavior is shifting. And the traditional way nonprofits rely on benchmarking is quietly failing them.	Erik Tomalis	Avid	Director of Impact Storytelling
	For years, fundraising benchmarks have been retrospective-telling teams what already happened, long after the moment to act has passed. But fundraising doesn't operate in hindsight. It happens in real time.			
The Very Best Practices in Preparing for Your Next Significant Campaign	A practical, forward-looking session that will equip nonprofit leaders with the essential framework and insights needed to assess their organization's readiness, align their stakeholders, and confidently prepare for a significant campaign in today's increasingly complex fundraising environment.	Kelly Grattan, PhD, MBA, CAP®, CFRE	Schultz & Williams	Executive Vice President
When a Successful Gala Becomes a Strategic Risk	Many nonprofit organizations depend on a single fundraising event that generates significant revenue and visibility. These events often become deeply embedded in organizational culture and identity, even when they carry increasing operational costs, donor fatigue and long-term sustainability risks. This session explores the leadership challenge of retiring a successful fundraising gala before a replacement model is fully proven. Drawing from a real organizational case study, participants will examine how nonprofit leaders evaluate revenue concentration risk, navigate board expectations and manage uncertainty when testing new approaches to fundraising and engagement. Rather than presenting a fixed solution, the session focuses on the decision-making process behind revenue reinvention. Participants will explore how to assess legacy fundraising practices, engage boards in strategic conversations about risk and sustainability and design experiments that allow organizations to test new models while protecting mission and stability.	Darren Sudman	Simon's Heart	CoFounder
When They Say No: Handling Donor Objections Without Losing the Gift	Every fundraiser knows the feeling. You've built the relationship, made the ask - and then the donor hesitates. "Now isn't a great time." "We need to think about it." "That's more than we were planning to give." Most fundraisers freeze. Or worse, they back down completely and walk away from a gift that was closer than they realized. This session is the training most major gift programs never provide: what to do in the moments after a donor pushes back. We'll cover the most common donor objections, and the exact language to respond with confidence, without pressure and without losing the relationship. Attendees will leave with a practical objection-handling framework they can use in their very next	Mary Petersen	Hey Fundraiser!	President
Why Donors Say Yes: Using Neurogiving to Design Events, Deepen Donor Engagement and Raise More Money	Recent research in donor psychology and neuroscience is reshaping how we understand why people give. Based on the work of Cherian Koshy in his new book Neurogiving: The Science of Donor Decision Making, this session brings neuro-giving to life through real-world application. Through examples of a successful milestone fundraising event and effective donor engagement strategies, participants will see how events, stewardship, and annual giving programs can be intentionally designed to align with how donors make decisions. Attendees will leave with practical, ethical strategies to increase donor engagement, retention, and overall fundraising results.	Leslie Bluestone, CFRE, CFRM	Bluestone Fundraising Advisors	Principal
		Amy Mansky, MPH	MANNA	Chief Advancement Officer
		Louisa Kopp	Community College of Philadelphia	Director of Alumni and Donor Engagement