

SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

LEADING PHILANTHROPY

What Fundraising & Philanthropy Require Now

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!



Sessions/Agenda

Session Title	Description	Speakers	Location
7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Registration, Exhibitors, and Breakfast Opens		Grand Lobby and South/Center Ballroom	
8:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Opening Remarks			
Opening Remarks	Settle in for an inspiring and informative day learning from and connecting with fundraising peers from across the Greater Philadelphia Region and beyond. AFP-GPC'S president will get the morning started with a hearty welcome and overview of what you can expect to gain.	Liz Marafino Fiola, AFP-GPC President	South/Center Ballroom
9:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. Fireside Chat			
In Good Company: Three Fundraisers on Career Mistakes, Triumphs, and the Spaces In Between	Tired of long keynotes or run-of-the-mill panel discussions? This year, grab some coffee and breakfast and join us for a special conversation at Leading Philanthropy, 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. Come for the breakfast, stay for the career truths, and leave feeling deeply connected to the Greater Philadelphia fundraising community.	<u>Host:</u> Liz Marafino Fiola, Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law; AFP-GPC President <u>Guests:</u> Javon Robinson, MPA, Giving City Year Philadelphia ; AFP-GPC IDEA Committee Co-Chair Denise Soto, MS, CFRE, Oaks Integrated Care	South/Center Ballroom
9:45 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Break with Exhibitors		Grand Lobby	
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. BREAKOUT SESSION 1			
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 & Mike Stefanski Aperio Philanthropy	Brandywine
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	Franklin 2
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.	Bridget O'Halloran Malvern Preparatory School	Franklin 1
Philanthropy in Transition: Policy, Power, AI, and Ethics	A conversation about how shifting incentives, emerging technologies, and donor influence are reshaping fundraising leadership.	Barbara O'Reilly, CRFE & Katherine Sprissler-Klein Windmill Hill Consulting	North Ballroom B

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 may sound "professional" but obscure systemic harm.	Maia McGill <i>Maia McGill Consulting, LLC and Inclusive Philanthropy Institute</i>	Belmont
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, <i>Consulting by Kwinn, LLC</i> & Richona McKnight <i>CityTeam-Chester</i>	Chesapeake
How the Great Wealth Transfer will Affect PA, NJ, & DE Nonprofits, and 5 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, Delaware, and New Jersey. We'll dive into what specific steps will separate nonprofits who fall behind during this moment compared to those who thrive.	Patrick Schmitt FreeWill	North Ballroom A
11:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. Break with Exhibitors			
11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. BREAKOUT SESSION 2			
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 <i>Spire2 Communications, Inc</i>	Belmont
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, CRFE & Marian Marchese <i>New Leash on Life USA</i> <i>*Featuring a visit from one of the New Leash rescue dogs</i>	Chesapeake

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 <i>Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge</i>	North Ballroom B
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 donor conversation.	Mary Petersen <i>Hey Fundraiser!</i>	North Ballroom A
Securing More Employer Matching Gifts and Workplace Funding: Lessons From Lehigh University	Nonprofits today face a dual challenge: donor fatigue is rising, and development teams are stretched thin trying to acquire new revenue streams. However, organizations are often sitting on untapped potential within their existing donor base. An estimated 26 million individuals qualify for a matching gift through their employer, yet 78% of those match-eligible donors are unaware of their matching gift program details. This session provides a blueprint to collaborate and extract major corporate funding from everyday donor interactions. By understanding that modern corporations want to support organizations beyond just writing a check, nonprofits can build a much more comprehensive and lucrative workplace giving strategy. In this session, Stacy DeVivo of Lehigh University and Colleen Carroll from Double the Donation will share a practitioner-led roadmap to educate donors without burdening your team. Lehigh University will share how they transformed their matching gift program through highly visual, multi-channel campaigns like February Match Month and Matching Wednesday. Attendees will see firsthand how targeted donor stories and custom emails led to a \$175,000 increase in matching gift revenue over two years, an increase of 142 matching gifts received and an impressive 62% email open rate. Finally, we will explore how these same strategies and employer data can be used to target volunteer grants, payroll gifts, and corporate sponsorships.	Colleen Carroll <i>Double the Donation</i> & Stacy DeVivo, M.Ed. <i>Lehigh University Development & Alumni Relations</i>	Brandywine

From Hesitation to Participation: Moving Boards from fundraising 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. Where is the Board in fundraising? 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. Board members witness the need to fundraise but refrain from taking action because they assume that someone else will step up and clinch the donation. Participants will learn how to reduce resistance, clarify expectations, and create a culture where fundraising is shared, supported, and sustainable. Francine Poppo, an Executive Director, brings forth many of the challenges of board fundraising participation. Using actual scenarios, she shares how the shift board bystanders to builders has empowered each board member to maximize their individual fundraising participation. Sonia Saleh introduces a practical, research-informed framework centered on mindset, knowledge, and imperfect action to help leaders move boards from hesitation to participation. This session directly addresses a persistent gap in the sector: Board fundraising expectations.	Sonia Saleh <i>Uplifting Nonprofits</i> & Francine Poppo <i>School Sisters of Notre Dame Educational Center</i>	Franklin 2
12:15 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. Lunch South/Center Ballroom			
12:15 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. IDEA Lunch & Learn			
Beyond the Acronym: Real Conversations About Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, & Access (IDEA) in Fundraising	What does it really take to build a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible fundraising profession? Join members of AFP-GPC's IDEA Committee and past and current IDEA Fellows for an honest conversation about IDEA in fundraising and philanthropy. Whether you're new to the idea of IDEA, or have been following the committee's efforts for years, this interactive session will highlight current work, and together, we'll explore the experiences that have shaped our careers and perspectives. Through personal stories, shared experiences, and candid discussion, we'll explore the successes, lessons, and opportunities that have emerged through this work. What has IDEA looked like in your work? What successes have you seen? What have you learned along the way? And how can we continue creating a profession where more people feel welcomed, valued, and able to thrive? Come beyond the acronym, share your perspective, and be part of the conversation.	Samantha Hong, AFP-GPC IDEA Committee Co-Chair Morgan Morris, Mercy Career & Technical High School Javon Robinson, MPA, City Year Philadelphia and AFP-GPC IDEA Committee Co-chair Jasmin Velez, Kensington Corridor Trust Alim M. Young, Sr., CFRE, Heights Philadelphia	North Ballroom A
1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. BREAKOUT SESSION 3			
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 <i>Bluestone Fundraising Advisors</i> & Amy Mansky, MPH <i>MANNA</i> & Louisa Kopp <i>Community College of Philadelphia</i>	Belmont
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. <i>Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law</i>	Franklin 2

Reel Change: Using Video Storytelling to Inspire Donor Action	Strong fundraising stories connect donors to real impact. In this session, participants will learn how nonprofits can use video storytelling to bring their mission to life, strengthen donor engagement, and support fundraising efforts. The session will cover how to identify compelling stories, plan videos with clear fundraising goals, and share stories in ways that are ethical, respectful, and inspiring to supporters.	Matthew Reynolds, CNP <i>Rustic Roots</i>	Brandywine
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 no one talks about.	Sarah Pita <i>Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York</i>	Chesapeake
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 <i>Schultz & Williams</i>	North Ballroom A
Board Governance Best Practices	Most nonprofits have boards. Far fewer have boards that are actually working. The gap between a board that exists and a board that governs well is one of the most consequential challenges facing the sector, and one of the least openly discussed. Boards get recruited without clear role expectations. They sit through meeting agendas dominated by committee reports. They want to help with fundraising and don't know how. And the staff who work with them often feel they're managing the board as much as they're working with it. This session will articulate what separates high-performing boards from those that are merely compliant, examine the structural and behavioral governance failures that quietly undermine nonprofit effectiveness, and provide practical frameworks for strengthening board composition, onboarding, meeting design, and performance feedback. The session also addresses what nonprofit leaders most need from their boards and how to build the board-staff partnership structures that make meaningful governance engagement actually possible.	Monika Collins The Foundation for Delaware County & Dottie Schindlinger Diligent Institute	North Ballroom B
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. 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.	Erik Tomalis	Franklin 1
2:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Break with Exhibitors			
Grand Lobby			
2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. BREAKOUT SESSION 4			
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 <u>enhance your fundraising practice.</u>	Jack Alotto, MA, CFRE <i>Fundraising Academy at National University</i>	Franklin 1
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 Heffner, CFRE & Rachael Barrett & Bailey Tracy <i>Schultz & Williams</i>	North Ballroom B

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. We'll explore how you can improve the targeting of your outreach, take personalization strategies to the next level, and build ask strings that feel right for every donor.	Jesse Park amplifi & Liz Trout <i>Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation</i>	Brandywine
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 <i>Simon's Heart</i>	Chesapeake
Sustainers that Stick: Myths, Facts, and Effective Techniques for Sustainer	Are you chasing monthly donors or building a foundation of long-term loyalty? In the rush to grow recurring revenue, many organizations fall into the trap of high-volume acquisition that results in even higher attrition. To build a program that lasts, nonprofits must move beyond "acquisition at any cost" and focus on the strategies that drive true Lifetime Value (LTV). Presented by Direct Marketing Association of Washington (DMAW), this panel will feature nonprofit leaders who have successfully cracked the code on retention-focused acquisition. Through a series of real-world case studies, our experts will debunk common industry myths and share the techniques they used to identify, convert, and keep their most loyal supporters. <u>What We'll Cover:</u> <i>Evidence-Based Acquisition:</i> An honest look at which channels deliver high-volume leads versus high-value donors, backed by performance data from the field. <i>Sustainer Success in Action:</i> Three distinct case studies showcasing how different nonprofit organizations scaled their sustainer programs while maintaining industry-leading retention rates. <i>The Retention-First Mindset:</i> Practical strategies to ensure your acquisition efforts are built for the long haul, focusing on the donors most likely to stay for years, not just months.	TBD	Belmont
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. In this session, participants will be introduced to practical tools for leading fundraising teams, using metrics to manage performance, coaching staff, and navigating difficult conversations. At the same time, the session reframes management as a learnable extension of core fundraising skills, highlighting how strengths in relationship-building, communication, and driving outcomes translate directly into effective leadership.	Emily Wells & Julia Barr <i>CCS Fundraising</i>	Franklin 2
3:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. Closing Remarks and Reception		Grand Lobby	