



PEAK2026 St. Louis Agenda and Breakout Sessions

Read on to learn about the PEAK2026 St. Louis agenda and breakout sessions!

For the most up to date information during PEAK2026 St. Louis, please refer to the PEAK2026 app or the help desk onsite.

**Wednesday,
March 25**

**Thursday,
March 26**

**Friday,
March 27**

Morning

7:00 a.m.–
12:00 p.m.
Central Time

Peer Network Volunteer
Leader Retreat (invitation
only)

Understanding Grantee
Financial Health and
Sustainability in a Changing
Landscape for Advanced
Grants Professionals

User Group Sessions

Speed Networking

Exhibitor Meet and Greet
Activity

Wellness Activity

Breakfast with Pop-Up
Roundtables

Breakout Block #3

All Chapter Meetings

Select Peer Network
Meetings

Wellness Activity
Breakfast with Pop-Up
Roundtables

Select Peer Network
Meetings

PEAK Board Alumni and
Director Breakfast (invitation
only)

Breakout Block #5

Closing Keynote

Afternoon

12:00 p.m.–
6:00 p.m.
Central Time

PEAK2026 starts!

Opening Keynote and
Lunch

Breakout Block #1

Breakout Block #2

Annual Membership
Meeting Lunch and
Keynote

Breakout Block #4

Select Peer Network
Meetings

Speed Networking

Exhibitor Meet and Greet
Activity

Evening

6:00 p.m.–
9:00 p.m.
Central Time

Networking Receptions

Networking Receptions

Dine-arounds

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Driving Equity and Inclusion

Beyond the Check: How BCYF's Dual Approach Advances Equity

What does it take to move philanthropy beyond writing checks and toward advancing true equity? At the Baltimore Children & Youth Fund (BCYF), we know that funding alone cannot dismantle the barriers faced by grassroots, BIPOC-led organizations. Our dual approach—pairing direct grants with our year-round professional learning and capacity-building suite, the learning lab—ensures that organizations receive both the resources and the tools they need to sustain, scale, and thrive.

The impact is clear. In the first 12 months of the learning lab, grant compliance rates among participating organizations rose from 32% to 90%. An evaluation by the University of Maryland also found 91% of participants were extremely satisfied with BCYF programming, particularly the learning lab, citing the exceptional quality of speakers, relevance of content, and opportunities for collaboration. Further, 95% strongly agreed the program advanced their knowledge and skills, and 91% strongly agreed it fostered meaningful collaboration and dialogue. Importantly, participation in the learning lab is voluntary, not mandatory—yet 91% of BCYF grantee organizations elect to participate, underscoring its value.

This interactive workshop will share early successes from the learning lab, a capacity-building hub designed in tandem with BCYF's grantmaking. Through a case study, collaborative design challenge, and gallery walk, participants will explore how embedding capacity-building alongside financial investment transforms compliance from a burden into a growth opportunity, strengthens governance, and fosters wellness and sustainability. Over time, this approach is expected to strengthen the ecosystem of grassroots and BIPOC-led organizations, equipping them to sustain operations, expand community impact, and drive structural change across Baltimore's youth-serving sector.

Attendees will:

- Understand how coupling grants with capacity building advances equity.
- Explore BCYF's learning lab as a case study for ecosystem building.
- Practice designing dual investment strategies that integrate wellness and technical supports.
- Take home tools and frameworks for equity-centered grantmaking.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Driving Equity and Inclusion

In a World... Grants Management Disaster Movie

What happens when the perfect storm hits grants management? In an age of polycrisis—where political, economic, environmental, and technological pressures converge—grants managers are often the quiet heroes holding philanthropy together. This interactive workshop turns that reality into a live “disaster movie.” Participants will experience short improv scenes of cascading crises: a sudden compliance overhaul, a grantee collapse, a data breach, or an AI tool gone sideways. Each scenario ends with audience voting on how the “hero” should respond, surfacing the tradeoffs between compliance, equity, and innovation.

Drawing inspiration from Proximate’s “It’s Time to Rewrite the Job Description,” this session reframes grants management as a leadership practice that spans three domains: compliance and reporting, risk and equity, and technology and AI stewardship. Through humor, collaboration, and reflection, participants will practice real-time decision-making, identify resilience strategies, and explore what it means to lead ethically in an era of compounding uncertainty. Expect insight, laughter, and a renewed appreciation for the art and humanity of grants management.

Attendees will:

- strengthen their ability to make real-time decisions under pressure, balancing compliance, equity, and innovation
- gain strategies to manage risk, foster resilience, and lead adaptively through uncertainty
- explore the responsible use of AI and technology to support equitable, values-driven grantmaking

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Driving Equity and Inclusion

Let's Talk Disability Inclusion: At Work, Around the Community, and In Philanthropy

Join us at this session to learn about disability statistics, the state of disability in philanthropy in the US and globally, how the Disability Rights Fund and Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation (MEAF) supports disability inclusion, and how you can find your own path to fostering inclusion. With ample time to talk with your colleagues about these topics you will bring back tools/resources to help you on your journey to support people with disabilities in your communities.

Attendees will learn about:

- the state of disability in philanthropy, tools/resources for driving inclusion and equity in their work
- accommodation and accessibility resources, methods to improve inclusive events/activities
- ways colleagues are elevating the importance of including people with disabilities

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Driving Equity and Inclusion

Small Hinges, Big Doors - Frontline Philanthropy Leaders as Architects of Equitable Board Governance

Foundation governance is the strategic rudder of philanthropy, but it often remains the most resistant system to change. Grants professionals, who champion data integrity, values, and equitable practices, are uniquely positioned to be the internal change agents driving this transformation.

This interactive workshop, led by GEO and exemplary foundation leaders—including CEO Bethany Johnson-Javois and a trustee from the St. Louis-based Deaconess Foundation and Executive Director of the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation Gabriela Alcalde —moves beyond theory to focus on concrete, actionable governance practices. We will explore how to clarify the board's generative and strategic roles and identify the "small hinges" of process change that unlock bolder, mission-aligned grantmaking. Join us to learn how to leverage your unique position to influence board culture and process, narrowing the power gap and advancing justice from the grants seat. Attendees will leave with a practical action plan for influencing the most senior levels of their organization.

Attendees will:

- Understand the context of equitable, transformative governance and hear stories from two foundations.
- Differentiate between the fiduciary, strategic, and generative roles of a board.
- Identify 3-5 high-leverage "small hinges"(practices/tools) a grants professional can introduce to shift board culture.
- Develop a personal action plan for advocating for one specific governance change or place of influence participants might try rooted in PEAK Principles.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Driving Equity and Inclusion

Standing Together: How Philanthropy Can Unite to Protect and Advance Racial Justice

In a time of increasing legal, social, and political challenges for movements and organizations centering racial justice, philanthropy can find new ways to come together to support their communities in meeting these challenges head-on.

Recognizing this, the Association of Black Foundation Executives, Hispanics in Philanthropy, Asian American / Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, and Native Americans in Philanthropy came together to launch the Racial Equity Advancement and Defense Initiative (READI) Legal Support Fund housed at the Tides Foundation.

This session explores a collaborative fund designed to meet the urgent legal, communications, and security needs of nonprofits advancing racial justice in their communities. Participants will learn how shared infrastructure, flexible funding, and technical assistance can help philanthropy respond swiftly and effectively to moments of crisis.

Join this interactive workshop to hear how philanthropic partners have organized and aligned on their priorities to provide responsive support to sustain racial justice work in today's environment.

This workshop will be an informative presentation to share how collaborative funder efforts and collective grantmaking can intervene in an emerging need of legal and cybersecurity defense in the nonprofit ecosystem. Philanthropy leaders will have a chance to hear about the Tides and READI partnership and ask any questions that relate to their own grantmaking, technical assistance, or pooled fund governance.

Attendees will learn:

- How funders can collaborate effectively through shared infrastructure and intermediaries: how they get organized, how they address challenges, and the impact collaboration has had.
- About the challenges that organizations centering racial justice are facing in the current environment and innovative ways to support their legal, security, and communications needs.
- How to identify and respond to community needs both financially and with support beyond the grant.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Driving Equity and Inclusion

The Transparency Tightrope: Navigating Data Practices in a Shifting Landscape

In today's shifting landscape, funders face growing pressure to balance transparency with safety. As scrutiny intensifies and data-sharing becomes more complex, grantmakers are reevaluating how they communicate their values, talk about partnerships, and report impact, especially when equity is at the core of their work. This session brings together a diverse panel of grantmaking leaders from across the philanthropic spectrum to share how they're adapting data practices to remain value-driven while managing risk for themselves and their partners.

Moderated by Foundant, the panel will explore strategies and policies for managing data in ways that promote responsible transparency. Panelists will share examples of how they've evolved workflows, language, and publishing protocols to reflect their equity commitments without compromising safety.

Attendees will gain practical insights into how funders are approaching data transparency in ways that reflect their values, protect their communities, and clarify who owns and controls the data they share.

Attendees will:

- Understand how different funders are adapting data practices to reflect values while managing risk
- Explore strategies for aligning transparency with safety and clarity around data ownership
- Build on the collective expertise and open questions in the room to inspire shared learning and dialogue.
- Leave with tools and frameworks to guide thoughtful data-sharing decisions

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Driving Equity and Inclusion

We've stated our values, now what? A use case on acting in alignment with principles

Commitment. Trust. Equity. We've articulated our values as an organization. We've printed those values on websites, t-shirts, and the walls of our building. We sprinkle them into communications with grantees via emails and site visit conversations. But how are we using those values to shape our decision making? Values in action are principles! Come grapple with the regular application of values as decision making principles across a variety of everyday philanthropic scenarios in this interactive session.

Missouri Foundation for Health's Food Justice Initiative launched in January 2023 with a press release announcing a 20-year commitment to changing the emergency food system, the safety net system, and the local sustainable food system to promote racial and health equity. Almost immediately came the questions about what we were going to fund and how. Even though the team wanted to dive in and start funding solutions, we instead spent the first eight months listening and clarifying our principles to guide the investments and actions we would make.

Our principles are a guidance system for every aspect of our philanthropic practice, from how we structure RFAs, to the way we review applications, and our approach to building relationships. We're not perfect at this process but have learned many lessons along the way about what principles-based practice makes possible and are excited to share.

Attendees will:

- Understand the importance of principles to guide how we structure RFAs, review applications, evaluate grantees and ourselves, and approach grantee relationships
- Explore skill sets, team practices, and organizational supports necessary to integrate principles into the fabric of the programmatic and operational work of a foundation
- Explore how principled actions are received by grantees and can facilitate practices and processes that advance equity

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Driving Equity and Inclusion

Power Shift: How Youth-Possible Philanthropy™ Is Reimagining Grantmaking

What new possibilities emerge when philanthropy shares real decision-making power with resilient youth most impacted by inequity—so they can change the systems that shape their futures—especially now, amid a historic intergenerational wealth transfer? This interactive workshop introduces Youth-Possible Philanthropy™ (YPP)—a framework designed to help foundations operationalize youth leadership and power-sharing in grantmaking practices.

Through real-world case examples and hands-on tools, participants will learn how to embed youth co-decision-making into their work. Key tools include the Power-Shift Checklist, the Youth Possibility Charter, and the Youth-Defined Metrics Canvas—all designed to help funders shift power, define roles, and measure success through a youth-centered lens. Case examples from the Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation's Community Experts Team and AJL Foundation's Community Grantmaking Committee will illustrate how youth and young adults can be real partners in decision-making, driving systems change and improving outcomes. Participants will leave with a 30/60/90-day roadmap to implement one co-decision practice in their own workflows. Grounded in Youth-Possible Philanthropy™, a peer-reviewed framework published in *The Foundation Review* (Vol. 17, Issue 1, 2025), this session will empower funders to move from inclusion to shared power with historically marginalized (resilient) youth.

After this session, attendees will:

- Map YPP's six components to their grant cycle;
- Diagnose power gaps using a Power-Shift Checklist;
- Design a Youth Possibility Charter (roles, decision rights, compensation, supports);
- Define youth-centered indicators with a Youth-Defined Metrics Canvas;
- Commit to a 30/60/90-day pilot to embed one co-decision practice.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Grants Professional Toolkit

A Look at Philanthropy's BURN Book: An unserious take with serious takeaways

Get in, St. Louis-ers, we're going to PEAK2026! From the greatest people you will ever meet—Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Allison Gister, Director of Grants & Knowledge Management, and Richelle Pittella, Senior Manager of Grant Operations & Knowledge Management—comes this tongue-in-cheek Spark Talk on tearing up philanthropy's BURN Book: the whispered rules in our field that want to tell us how to act, work, and succeed in our careers.

This session will unpack why we're so obsessed with specialists (deep experts in one domain or skillset) and argue that if philanthropy was a lunch table, generalists (those with a broad range of skills and knowledge) can and must sit with us. Richelle and Allison are "pushers" who will challenge you to think beyond technology to solve problems, embrace iteration, and realize that the norms dominating our field are just plastic: fake and moldable. How many takeaways will you get from this session? The limit does not exist!

Learning objectives:

- Identify the characteristics of generalists and appreciate the equal role they play in addressing the complexities of philanthropic operations with multiple functions and diverse teams.
- Explore whether unspoken norms in your organization and across the field impact the way you approach your work and understand how to address them.
- Learn to reframe what becomes barriers to success, like fear of failure, reliance on technology to solve adaptive problems, and outsourcing strategic thinking.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Grants Professional Toolkit

Beyond the Agenda: Secrets to Leading Meetings that Matter

Whether you're convening grantees, presenting at a board meeting, or leading your weekly team huddle, how you facilitate can make the difference between a meeting that energizes and one that could have been an email. In this interactive session, participants will learn practical tools, modalities, and frameworks to design gatherings that build trust, spark engagement, and drive meaningful outcomes. Whether you're leading a team meeting or a large-scale convening, you'll leave with actionable techniques to make every gathering more inclusive, intentional, and impactful.

Attendees will:

- Learn practical tools, modalities, and frameworks to strengthen facilitation skills.
- Gain strategies to design meetings that foster trust, engagement, and meaningful outcomes.
- Build confidence in their leadership presence.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Grants Professional Toolkit

Data with Heart: Feedback-Driven Funding in Practice

Amidst a merger, constrained resources, and a rapidly shifting federal landscape, United Way for Southeastern Michigan recently transformed its community investment strategy from a dispersed model with multiple program-specific funds to three integrated grant opportunities designed to complement one another and give organizations the ability to choose where they best align.

In this session, attendees will learn how United Way navigated this complex transition and gain practical strategies for thoughtful planning and authentic engagement with a diverse set of stakeholders—including staff, organizational and board leadership, and nonprofit partners—each with unique perspectives, concerns, and priorities.

Using United Way’s reimagined funding strategy as a case study, topics will include: How to build a stewardship model that moves beyond a one-way transactional relationship between funder and grantee to a relationship grounded in reciprocity and shared commitment.

How data can be used throughout the grant lifecycle to set funding priorities, support continuous learning, and facilitate meaningful feedback loops with grantees through interactive “data parties.”

How to layer support beyond the grant, including capacity building, integration, and collaboration strategies that strengthen nonprofit partner’s readiness to participate in a more coordinated network or care.

By the end of this session, attendees will be able to:

- Identify key steps for engaging diverse stakeholders throughout a complex organizational change process.
- Apply strategies for using data throughout the grant lifecycle to inform funding priorities, promote learning, and create feedback loops with grantees.
- Explain how to design a stewardship model that fosters reciprocity between funders and grantees and leverages support beyond the grant to build an integrated network of care.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Grants Professional Toolkit

How Small Changes Can Support Responsive Grantmaking

Explore how small changes and process improvements to your due diligence, grant agreement, grant agreement processes, and grants management system can allow your organization to move quickly from intention to action. Speakers will share the changes they undertook that made it possible to move an unexpected \$500,000 in funds in 2025, with grants processed in under 10 days on average. Speakers will also share how they brought a risk-averse leadership team onboard with these changes while implementing administrative improvements that didn't require oversight from senior leadership or approval from programmatic staff. Then, participants will have the opportunity to brainstorm small changes and process improvements that they can undertake to make their grantmaking more responsive.

Attendees will learn about:

- Carrying out operational changes that can be made while being sensitive to and maintaining boundaries with programmatic departments
- Updating and right-sizing processes, structures, and grants management system administration to be more responsive for time-sensitive grantmaking
- Debunking some of the myths that exist around what philanthropic institutions need from grantees
- Feeling encouraged to forge ahead with small steps that over time can result in more equitable, less burdensome grantmaking

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Grants Professional Toolkit

Navigate Disruption: Equip Your Grants Management with a Continuity Plan

As a grants manager, your grantees and your colleagues rely on you to ensure timely processing of requests and payments. But what happens when you can't be there? What if a family member becomes ill and you need to take unplanned leave, or you get a once in a life-time opportunity to take a sabbatical to New Zealand? How would your organization or team cope if a key staffer leaves unexpectedly, if a major project was assigned to you, or if a natural disaster strikes? Ensuring continuity of operations and support internally and externally is essential, especially for those who serve as the sole grantmaker in their organization.

This interactive session covers the fundamentals of continuity planning for grants management, why it matters, and a workshop to get you started. Real-world case studies will illustrate the step-by-step process of developing a contingency plan, including key scenarios, roles, and practical strategies for maintaining operations. Attendees will work in groups to begin drafting a continuity plan tailored to their own roles or teams, using a simple structure and guided prompts. The session concludes with Q&A and resource sharing, empowering participants to strengthen resilience and take actionable steps.

Attendees will:

- Understand the core components and value of a grants management business continuity plan
- Identify key risks and scenarios relevant to your role
- Begin drafting a continuity plan using a practical framework
- Learn strategies for engaging colleagues and securing leadership buy-in

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Grants Professional Toolkit

Navigating International Grantmaking: Data and Direct Giving Strategies with Equivalency Determination and Expenditure Responsibility

Join us for a collaborative workshop designed to empower grantmakers with insights and strategies for international grantmaking. We'll kick off with an overview of global grantmaking, including fresh data on U.S. foundation giving and key trends shaping cross-border philanthropy. Explore practical options for making global grants, from working with intermediaries to navigating direct giving approaches like Equivalency Determination and Expenditure Responsibility.

The session will address high-level compliance and legal basics, highlighting regulatory challenges and country-specific developments that affect grantmaking decisions. Participants will gain an understanding of the current policy landscape, including recent updates and implications for global giving. Additionally, we will address common concerns and misconceptions about cross-border giving, offering case studies and best practices to illuminate the path forward for both new and experienced funders.

Through interactive group exercises, you'll have the opportunity to apply new knowledge, tackle real-world scenarios, and connect with peers facing similar challenges. Whether you're new to international grantmaking or seeking new perspectives on your strategies, this session promises actionable insights and practical takeaways for effective global philanthropy.

Attendees will gain:

- a deeper understanding of current trends and policy updates in international grantmaking
- practical skills for navigating compliance and legal requirements
- enhanced capacity to implement effective direct giving strategies using tools like Equivalency Determination (or Expenditure Responsibility)

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Grants Professional Toolkit

Proposal and Report Exchange Lab

When's the last time you had an objective look at your grant proposal and report templates? Whether you review them regularly, or haven't updated them in years, this interactive session offers fresh eyes and new perspectives to ensure that your forms are effectively centering equity and trust-based practices.

During this session, we'll share best practices in designing accessible, equitable grant materials that reduce burden while gathering essential information. Then, you'll take part in several rounds of peer feedback, where participants will bring their own proposal and reporting templates to workshop collaboratively with other funders. You'll identify confusing language, unnecessary requirements, and opportunities to reduce grantee burden and embed trust-based principles into your processes.

Through structured feedback exchanges and group reflection, you'll discover what resonates across different funding contexts, from question design to inclusive language choices. Leave with concrete revisions for your forms, a list of equity-focused design principles, and insights from fellow funders navigating similar challenges in making their grantmaking more accessible and streamlined.

Participants in this session are requested to have electronic copies of proposal and report forms available for sharing by email or bring hard copies of their forms (1 each).

By attending this session, participants will deepen their knowledge in the following areas:

- Best practices for designing proposals and reporting forms.
- Streamlining templates to reduce grantee burden and improve equity.
- Using live peer feedback to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement.

Actionable strategies for updating your organization's documents.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Grants Professional Toolkit

Reframing Financial Due Diligence: Part 1 and Part 2

Grantmakers can often articulate resonant, relevant values that guide their grantmaking practices, but then struggle to incorporate those same values within their framework for financial due diligence. Incorporating considerations for equity, this two-part series will explore building an approach to assessing a grantee's financial health that is values-aligned, encourages more nuanced conversations between grantmakers and grantees, and strengthens relationships. Given a changed funding landscape and operating environment for nonprofits, this series will also address how to use this more nuanced understanding of financial health to support grantees in challenging times.

In this two-part series, attendees can expect to:

- Unpack the purposes of financial due diligence, with an eye toward a grantee-centered and trust-based approach
- Deepen fluency in core financial management concepts
- Understand approaches to financial due diligence that bolster both equity and efficiency
- Prepare for internal conversations around risk and funding models
- Approach the dialogue around a grantee's financial health from a place of learning and support
- Discuss strategies funders have considered or adopted to support their grantees as they confront increased scrutiny and business model stress

Attendees will leave the series with practical knowledge they can take back to their organizations:

- Financial and strategic actions many nonprofits are taking in the current environment
- What is meant by financial health and indicator to assess it
- How to operationalize trust-based principles within a financial health analysis
- Emerging grantmaking approaches to support grantees in the current environment
- Sample questions to help understand a grantee's current financial needs

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Grants Professional Toolkit

So You're Looking for a New Grants Management System? Start Here.

Stop navigating the Grants Management System (GMS) search feeling overwhelmed. Instead of immediately diving into vendor research, scheduling demos, and comparing features, learn the critical, often-missed preparatory steps that lead to a seamless and stress-free selection.

In this candid workshop, Marguerite Casey Foundation's team will dissect the structured process we executed when choosing our new GMS. We will show you how to define your core organizational needs, assemble a high-impact project team with the right stakeholders, establish clear project goals, refine your existing grantmaking processes, and finally manage vendor demos and conduct objective evaluations. We will also detail how we used A Consumers Guide to Grants Management Systems for Public and Private Foundations as a roadmap. Walk away with a practical framework and guide, empowering you to select the right GMS with confidence.

Participants will:

- Define the core organizational needs and strategic 'why' required to scope a successful Grants Management System (GMS) project.
- Establish the key criteria needed for evaluating and engaging GMS vendors, including leveraging the PEAK Consumers Guide.
- Assemble a high-impact project team and refine existing grantmaking processes to ensure alignment and readiness for GMS implementation.
- Implement a clear, measurable process for managing vendor demonstrations and conducting objective evaluations.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Harnessing Data and Technology

Bringing AI into Your Foundation: Practical Strategies for Responsible Adoption

AI tools promise to transform foundation operations, but the path from pilot to practice raises critical questions: How do we ensure data security and grantee confidentiality? What governance frameworks support responsible AI use? How do we build organizational capacity and trust around new technology?

This panel brings together foundation leaders and AI experts who have navigated these challenges firsthand. Hear practical strategies for establishing AI governance policies, addressing security and transparency concerns, managing change across teams, and building internal capacity for responsible AI adoption.

Panelists will share real implementation experiences, including what works, what doesn't, and how they're securing buy-in across their organizations. We'll address the operational realities foundations face: integrating AI into existing workflows, training staff, measuring success, and maintaining the human-centered approach that defines effective grantmaking.

Attendees will leave with actionable frameworks for responsible AI implementation, strategies for addressing common organizational concerns, and practical next steps for piloting AI tools that enhance rather than replace the strategic work of foundation teams.

Attendees will learn about:

- AI governance frameworks that ensure grantee confidentiality while enabling responsible AI adoption aligned with foundation values
- Implementing practical workflows that reduce manual grant analysis and free teams to focus on strategic relationship-building and impact assessment
- Building organizational buy-in across leadership, IT, and program teams by addressing security concerns and demonstrating measurable ROI from day one

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Harnessing Data and Technology

Data Viz for Impact: Designing Grant Dashboards that Drive Action

Join this session to explore how data visualization can transform grantmaking by turning raw data and complex processes into easy-to-understand information with clear, actionable insights. Through two real-world examples using common tools like Power BI, Power Automate, and SharePoint, participants will learn how to choose key metrics for reporting and how to assess existing data for maximizing impact. The session will highlight various methods for change management, incorporating user feedback, communicating insights that drive strategic decisions and policy changes. Participants will have an interactive opportunity to work through their own data as an example and reflect on their experiences with others at their table. Whether you're just starting with data visualization or looking to enhance your current reporting, this session will offer practical guidance and inspiration.

Attendees will learn how and when to:

- Use data visualization, its value in grantmaking, and choosing key metrics for reporting
- Transform raw data and processes into understandable, actionable reports
- Incorporate user feedback into a data project and implement best change management practices
- Use data to uncover insights, gaps, or trends in grantmaking processes, and to communicate those insights for strategic decisions and policy changes

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Harnessing Data and Technology

Defending the Sector: Using data, technology, and advocacy to protect transparency

As misinformation spreads, philanthropy faces a growing challenge: how to maintain transparency and trust when the information that powers accountability is at risk. Data isn't just a tool for efficiency; it's a safeguard for equity, credibility, and informed decision-making across the sector.

In this session, Candid's Aleda Gagarin, Vice President of Influence, and Cathleen Clerkin, PhD, Associate Vice President of Research, join Matthew Evans, Vice President of Advocacy & External Relations for United Philanthropy Forum, to explore how data, technology, and advocacy can work together to defend the sector's legitimacy and impact. They will discuss strategies for combatting misinformation, shaping effective public narratives, and using evidence to strengthen philanthropy's role as a trusted partner in civil society. Attendees will leave with practical ways to safeguard transparency, adapt to a tightening data landscape, and engage in advocacy that reinforces the sector's collective strength.

Attendees will learn how to:

- Use data and technology to identify and counter misinformation about the nonprofit sector.
- Apply advocacy strategies that strengthen philanthropy's credibility and transparency.
- Build cross-sector partnerships that protect equitable access to trusted data.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Harnessing Data and Technology

Everything, Everywhere, All at Once: From Data Overload to Strategic Insight in Grantmaking

Grants professionals are managing everything, everywhere, all at once, juggling CRMs, finance systems, and application portals that don't always communicate. This hands-on workshop helps funders and grants managers connect the dots between their systems without needing to purchase expensive new software or overhaul their tech stack.

Using real examples from foundations and nonprofit partners, participants will learn how to automate everyday grant processes, bridge data silos, and operationalize equity through cleaner, more connected data. The session will highlight affordable no-code tools like Airtable, Zapier, and Looker Studio to show how any team can build a unified grants hub that improves collaboration, transparency, and decision-making.

Attendees will leave with practical templates, a tech-mapping exercise, and a new framework for using data and automation to make equitable grantmaking more human and sustainable.

Attendees will learn how to:

- bridge tech silos
- automate everyday processes
- use data to advance equity

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Harnessing Data and Technology

From Chaos to Clarity: A Diagnostic Data Framework to Systematically Identify, Collect, and Monitor Equitable Grant Outcomes

To achieve principled grantmaking and drive equity, grantmakers must move beyond collecting data on activities and inputs to strategically collecting and measuring equity-related outcomes. This requires a clear, systematic approach to identify, collect, and monitor quantitative and qualitative data that locates priority funding areas and institutes standardized procedures and technology.

Adrianna Rockford, former Deputy Chief Data Officer at FEMA, joins Justin Birdsong, Founder & Principal of Skeleton Key Strategies, to share this proven methodology. We anchor data collection to well-thought-out logic models—tools that articulate specific funding's intended outcomes—tying practices to values and ensuring performance metrics align with organizational mission.

This talk walks through approaches to: integrate change management into every data collection stage; translate technical strategies to engage and empower executive champions; and account for “data-invisible” individuals often missed by traditional methods but crucial to driving mission-based outcomes.

This framework enables you to ethically steward data, create concrete mission-oriented performance metrics, and adapt technology to ensure equitable outcomes are identified, regularly collected, and actively monitored. Ultimately, it will focus your resources on delivering the highest impact to the most vulnerable.

Attendees will:

- gain an understanding of the importance of linking data, procedures, and technology to business outcomes and the usefulness of logic models to ensure equitable outcomes
- learn about quantitative and qualitative data collection methodologies that introduce standardization and enable grantmakers to measure and monitor mission-aligned performance and equity impacts
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PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Harnessing Data and Technology

How Better Questions Can Transform Your Grantmaking Practice

Philanthropy is often rich in answers—but what if the path to greatest impact lies in asking better questions? In this interactive workshop, Siegel Family Endowment will introduce inquiry-driven grantmaking: a practical, iterative approach that centers curiosity and draws on the emerging “Science of Questions” as a foundation for effective and equitable philanthropy.

Participants will explore how re-centering the grantmaking process around inquiry instead of outcomes strengthens learning, evaluation, and authentic collaboration with grantee partners. Drawing on Siegel’s process—including portfolio-level learning questions, grantee-developed hypotheses, tactics for mapping insights across strategies and portfolios, and reflective frameworks (e.g. “What / So What / Now What”)—attendees will learn how to embed inquiry throughout the grant cycle. Through guided exercises and small-group discussions, participants will practice reframing common challenges into learning questions that surface deeper insights, accountability, and adaptability. This session will model how shifting from compliance-based reporting to partnership-based learning can transform traditional metrics into meaning.

By the end, attendees will leave with actionable tools, templates, and reflection practices to integrate inquiry into daily grantmaking, building stronger trust with partners, and advancing more equitable results.

Participants will:

- Understand the principles of inquiry-driven grantmaking.
- Practice incorporating learning questions into grantmaking priorities.
- Gain practical tools (templates, case studies, whitepaper) to embed inquiry across the grant cycle.
- Learn approaches for collaboratively pursuing learning questions and metrics with grantees to advance equity and shared learning.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Harnessing Data and Technology

How to Use a Data-Informed Problem-Solving Approach to Shift the Organizational Culture

The MacArthur Foundation found itself in a common situation: needing to meet its federal compliance requirements while also managing project cash spend in support of the investment strategy. Further, in early 2025, the Foundation announced its commitment to increase the charitable payout to at least 6 percent for 2025 and 2026 and, where possible, to use flexible, trust-based models for its charitable gifts. The Foundation will set it at six—as a floor, not a ceiling, for the next two years. In response, the Grants Financial Reporting Monthly Dashboard Review was created, and the agenda was simple: how do we translate the data into actionable tasks and bridge the knowledge gap between commitments, cash out the door, and operationalize trust-based philanthropy?

Armed with data trend analysis, the group cultivated a safe space to ask tough questions of one another, challenge assumptions, and encourage meaningful behavior change. The goal was to solve a technical, critical calculation, and it became a vehicle for examining the Foundation's operational efficiency and promoting more equitable practices that center the grantee experience.

Join this workshop to learn how the MacArthur Foundation collaborated to build dashboard prototypes, determine which data metrics were most helpful for monitoring, and shift the organizational culture to transform the grantmaking model.

By attending this session, participants will deepen their knowledge in the following areas:

- How to use data visualization tools to encourage actionable behavior change.
- Which data metrics and models are most helpful in forecasting.
- How to translate technical and critical requirements to bridge the information gap between cross-functional teams.
- How to break down departmental silos to create clarity on organizational goals.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Harnessing Data and Technology

Measuring What Matters: Exploration and Rethinking of Reporting Processes

In philanthropic relationships, we talk a lot about power dynamics, and there's perhaps no moment where that becomes more visible than during the reporting process. As a result, funders have been reviewing current reporting processes – both in terms of burden and quality – and considering alternatives to better and more equitably support grantees.

Given the changes CEP has seen in practice in the last five years, this session will revisit what we know about the field's current practices, how reporting is evolving in this current political and policy environment and with the development of new technological tools, and practical implications of making reporting changes aligned with funders' goals and values.

Weaving together CEP research, data from a recent study commissioned by the Grove Foundation about current and alternative reporting processes, and insights from grantmakers themselves, this session will provide grantmakers with new data to inform to their strategies and processes, sample tools and practices, and peer-tested approaches to develop essential competencies in equitable, efficient, and learning-oriented reporting.

This conversation is especially timely. As funders navigate growing expectations for transparency, accountability, and the use of new technologies, the purpose and practice of reporting are under renewed scrutiny. This makes it an essential moment to rethink what reporting measures, how it builds trust, and what it reveals about equity and learning.

Attendees will:

- Share findings from CEP's dataset and research on funder reporting processes.
- Gain exposure to practical tools and real-world examples of alternative reporting approaches.
- Participate in dialogue to identify actionable steps to strengthen reporting practices at their organizations.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Harnessing Data and Technology

Peer Exploration: Clarifying the Purpose, Practice, and Skills of Effective Knowledge Work in Philanthropy

“Knowledge work,” framed simply as shared meaning making, continues to grow in importance as a core focus and function of philanthropy and grantmaking. We are increasingly deepening our understanding of how knowledge building approaches are becoming integral not only to our grant related operations but also to our broader organizational strategies and the ways in which we support and work with our partner grantees and communities.

There are a growing number of titles, activities, and roles being assigned to knowledge building within foundations. Regardless of the name, a shared discussion and promising practices are emerging related to the “how” of knowledge work within the sector.

In this session, we will explore the current moment in knowledge building in philanthropy and highlight its importance to grants professionals. Together, the co-presenters will share their experiences with knowledge building in different types of foundation settings. We will embrace vulnerability and transparency as we each share something that we are grappling with, pondering, or developing within our respective roles in philanthropy including key activities involved, opportunities we are exploring, questions we are still asking... and then ask peer participants to do so as well.

Join this session to learn more about knowledge building in the sector and to engage with peers in small group discussion to ask questions, share experiences, and surface key aspects of knowledge practice as it connects to grantmaking and the philanthropic mission.

Participants will be able to:

- Better understand the landscape of “knowledge work” within grantmaking
- Recognize knowledge opportunities and challenges of grants professionals
- Identify effective skills and practices being used by peers across various types and sizes of foundations
- Explore ways knowledge work supports equitable engagement and change
- Build connections to knowledge peers as a community of practice within the grants and knowledge management space

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Reimagining Funding Strategies

From Overwhelmed to Optimized: Practical Solutions for High-Volume Grantmaking in a Changing Political Climate

Political shifts and evolving priorities are creating unprecedented surges in grant applications across multiple portfolios. For grants management professionals, this influx presents a critical challenge: how do we adapt systems for screening and review to handle increased demand without sacrificing equity, compliance, or efficiency?

In this interactive Solutions Sprint, we'll tackle this dilemma head-on through collaborative problem-solving and peer-to-peer learning. Participants will share real-world experiences, explore innovative strategies, and crowdsource practical solutions for managing high-volume cycles. Together, we'll discuss how technology, workflow optimization, and cross-team coordination can help organizations stay agile while maintaining transparency and fairness.

This dynamic format combines the energy of speed networking with targeted problem-solving, giving attendees the chance to network, exchange ideas, and leave with actionable strategies informed by diverse perspectives. Come ready to engage, learn, and co-create solutions that transform today's operational pressures into opportunities for greater impact.

Attendees will:

- Identify common challenges in managing high-volume grant cycles.
- Share and learn practical strategies for adapting screening and review systems.
- Explore technology and workflow solutions that enhance efficiency and equity.
- Leave with actionable, peer-informed ideas to strengthen grants management processes.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Reimagining Funding Strategies

Emergency and Rapid-Response Grantmaking: Balancing Speed, Community Needs, and Accountability

When urgent crises emerge, communities require swift support. But how can funders move quickly while still centering community needs and accountability? This session brings together a diverse panel representing various perspectives from Borealis Philanthropy (an intermediary funder), Iowa West Foundation (a regional foundation), Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies (a large philanthropy), and Feedback Labs (a philanthropy-serving organization). Together, they will explore how institutions of different sizes and structures design and implement emergency and rapid-response grantmaking.

Panelists will share how their organizations adapted policies and streamlined processes to support grantees in moments of acute need. Participants will hear how funders balance speed with responsible stewardship and responsiveness to community voice, and leave with concrete practices they can adapt in their own contexts, whether building a process for the first time or refining existing approaches.

Attendees will:

- Learn how different funders design equitable approaches to emergency and rapid-response grantmaking.
- Explore tools and frameworks that support speed, community needs, and accountability.
- Reflect how the practices can be applicable to their own organizational context.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Reimagining Funding Strategies

From Transaction to Trust: Operationalizing Equity in Grants Management

Grants management—the operational pieces of grantmaking—is often largely invisible to grantees, presenting unnecessary challenges for grantees and compounding the power differential between grantees and funders. This can include anything from what information will be required in a grant proposal to understanding the process for receiving payment after a grant is awarded. Because grantees often have limited access to peer “behind the curtain,” it’s the responsibility of grants management staff to not just keep equity at the forefront of our work, but embed it into the operational pieces of our grantmaking process.

In this session, we’ll share a bit about how Magic Cabinet has operationalized equity within our grants management function, building on our organizational values of trust, equity, and flexibility to remove barriers for our grantees so they can better serve their communities. We’ll also surface challenges faced by session attendees and workshop them in real time, enabling participants to hone in on actionable solutions to introduce or more deeply embed equity into their grantmaking.

Attendees will:

- learn concrete ideas for embedding equity into grantmaking operations
- better understand the importance of leading with trust and flexibility, fostering more open and transparent interactions, and building more authentic partnerships between funders and grantees
- gain a clear idea of what’s within their sphere of influence and what barriers or red tape can be removed to better serve grantees and, ultimately, the community

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Reimagining Funding Strategies

Investing in Democracy: Funders' Guide to Nonpartisan Advocacy During Election Season

This session will help PEAK members prepare for the 2026 election season by understanding how to legally engage in, and support grantees engaging in, nonpartisan election-season advocacy—at both the federal and state levels. Many funders avoid advocacy out of fear of crossing legal lines. By learning the rules, they can confidently deploy their dollars in ways that address root causes of inequities, rather than only symptoms. This is important for funders and philanthropy because supporting election-related activities is an effective way for foundations to strengthen democracy by broadening the civic dialogue and giving a voice to underrepresented communities.

Attendees will:

- learn the legal guardrails that apply to funders when engaging in and supporting nonpartisan work during an election-season, including voter engagement and policy advocacy activities
- gain confidence when carrying out and funding public charities to conduct non-partisan voter engagement activities, such as candidate and public education, get-out-the vote efforts, and voter registration

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Reimagining Funding Strategies

Liability or Leverage? Assessing and Managing Risk in Fiscally Sponsored Grantmaking

The nonprofit sector, as a steward of a just civil society rooted in pluralism, freedom, and rule of law, faces growing threats from authoritarian governments. Fiscal sponsors are among the primary targets of these attacks, reflecting the continued rise of intermediaries as essential infrastructure for movement-based social justice work. Adding to the pressures from current government policy and actions are long-standing stresses on fiscal sponsors, stemming from COVID-related funding and chronic under-investment in philanthropy. While use of fiscal sponsorship continues to rise, concerns are growing, not only about the rewards of the model but also the risks involved, many of which are amplified in today's political and economic climate. Sponsors leverage strength in numbers and economies of scale, but also as a result, concentrate and manage different kinds of risks.

As a result, grantmakers that support fiscally sponsored grantmaking are asking questions such as:

- How should we assess the risk of a fiscal sponsor, not just the project?
- What are the various dimensions of risk (e.g., financial concentration, reputational proximity, financial vulnerability) that fiscal sponsors might exhibit, and how might we assess them?
- When do the rewards outweigh the risks, and when do they not?
- How can grantmakers be better partners to both sponsors and projects in evaluating and mitigating risks today?
- How could funders better support good fiscal sponsorship infrastructure for projects?

Attendees will learn about:

- The types of risks that are unique to fiscal sponsorship structures and practices;
- The rewards and benefits that are weighed against these risks;
- How grantmakers can assess various risks involved in fiscally sponsored grants;
- Tools or tactics for how to think about evaluating and mitigating risk and making funding decisions in a complex and inherently high-risk environment.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Reimagining Funding Strategies

Preparing for Politically Motivated Attacks: Protecting Funders and Grantees

Nonprofits and funders are under siege. Politically motivated investigations, subpoenas, and public smear campaigns intimidate, silence, and dismantle organizations advancing crucial work. When the state comes knocking, the stakes are nothing less than your organization's existence. In this session, attorneys from Bolder Advocacy will show how to recognize real threats, reduce legal risk, and fortify your organization and grantees before an attack threatens your operations. We will cover the rules for 501(c)(3) organizations, including lobbying and nonpartisan advocacy, and share practical strategies to strengthen communications, technology, and governance. Participants will leave empowered and confident that they can protect their organization and continue driving impact, even in a hostile environment.

Attendees will:

- Be able to identify politically motivated attacks: what they are, who they come from, common narratives, and when they have legal implications.
- Understand the IRS rules that apply to 501(c)(3)s.
- Learn how their organizations can protect themselves online through cybersecurity and social media best practices and how best to train and prepare staff and grantees.
- Gain confidence to continue their crucial advocacy work.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Reimagining Funding Strategies

Rethinking Grantmaking: How Michigan Replaced Applications with Community Action

What if grant applications weren't the gate—but the invitation? This Spark Talk explores how the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's "Public Spaces, Community Places" grant program reimagined its grant process to center equity, access, and grassroots leadership. Instead of a formal application, eligible community groups launch an eligible and approved civic crowdfunding campaign—demonstrating local support and activating public space improvements in real time.

By shifting from gatekeeping to guidance, this model redistributes power, amplifies community voice, and radically simplifies access to public dollars—especially for historically excluded or under-resourced groups. We'll unpack this bold trust-based approach through a 8-minute case study, then open the floor to peer dialogue. Attendees will engage in facilitated discussion around the role of community validation in grantmaking, how to minimize bureaucratic burden for small-dollar programs, and where they might "cut the red tape" in their own institutions.

Join us to explore how letting go of traditional grant norms can yield more inclusive, transparent, and just results.

Attendees will:

- Learn how one granting agency reimagined its application process using trust-based, community-led fundraising.
- Identify ways to minimize gatekeeping in small grant programs.
- Explore how to use community support as a validation mechanism.
- Reflect on internal opportunities to streamline access and shift power to grantseekers.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Reimagining Funding Strategies

Funding Grassroots Philanthropic Infrastructure: Practical Approaches to Invest in Overlooked and Underfunded Organizations

How can funders meaningfully support grassroots networks, mutual aid groups, and other non-traditional partners that drive local change but are often excluded from flexible funding? This session spotlights GlobalGiving's practical approach to resourcing community-led movements through fiscal sponsorships, flexible funding mechanisms, and deep collaboration with ecosystem-level partners.

Participants will gain insights into the practical considerations of supporting organizations with non-traditional structures, from compliance and due diligence to relationship-based funding and trust-centered practices. The session will include real-world examples from GlobalGiving's partnerships with tens of thousands of partners in 170+ countries and feature one of its local or regional partners, offering a grounded look at community-driven grantmaking in action.

Attendees will:

- learn practical funding practices to support non-traditional partners, including grassroots and mutual aid groups
- explore topics like funding fiscal sponsors and investing in local and regional grassroots grant makers.
- hear firsthand from a unique GlobalGiving community partner, like The Haitian Women's Collective or Mountain BizWorks
- leave with strategies to shift power and resources to locally-led organizations.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Strengthening Organizational Culture and Strategic Leadership

Building Culture in Uncertain Times

Take a deep dive on culture! Join this interactive workshop to learn about easy to implement initiatives at every level of an organization. We'll share our own lessons learned in leveraging influence to build culture. Participants will have an opportunity to share ideas and will leave with actionable ideas to bolster culture, even in tumultuous times.

Participants will:

- Discuss and share intentional culture building activities
- Differentiate culture building at different levels: individual, team, org-wide
- Align internal culture efforts with values
- Leverage influence from wherever you sit in your organization
- Understand the nuance of culture building in remote environments

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Strengthening Organizational Culture and Strategic Leadership

Are We Battle-Ready? Tackling Organizational Strife in a Time of Chaos

It is very hard, if not impossible, to be effective externally when our organizations are experiencing dysregulation and strife internally. Across the sector, grantmakers and grantees alike are navigating internal conflict and competing priorities, on top of a shifting social and political landscape. As a result, what appears as organizational “dysfunction” is actually the strain of trying to lead in values-driven environments under outdated norms and fear.

This session invites grantmakers to understand the current conditions shaping organizational life and learn how to navigate them for the better. We’ll unpack what “organizational dysregulation” means in practice, how it shows up, and what it reveals about our readiness for the challenges ahead. Attendees will leave with concrete ideas for creating the conditions that allow grantmakers to take smarter risks, communicate with clarity, and lead with values in an increasingly complex landscape.

Attendees will:

- Understand what organizational dysregulation looks like and why it matters
- Examine the challenges organizations face in creating cultures where people thrive
- Learn practices and skills that can support effective, equitable, and joyful institution building

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Strengthening Organizational Culture and Strategic Leadership

From Healing Others to Healing Ourselves: Building Cultures of Wellness and Leadership in Philanthropy

Across the social sector, both funders and nonprofits are navigating profound organizational and cultural shifts. This session explores how two foundations are intentionally strengthening their own internal cultures while simultaneously working to disrupt and reimagine the broader work culture of the nonprofit sector. Rooted in lessons learned from investing in our nonprofit partners, collaborating with evaluation partners, and from our own journeys of modeling a culture of care, we will share insights on what it means to align values, well-being, and impact within philanthropy.

Using a Solutions Sprint model, we will present real-world challenges that funders and nonprofit leaders face in cultivating healthy organizational cultures, particularly amid rising burnout and fatigue during times of economic and political uncertainty. Through the use of two Liberating Structures activities, participants will be invited to collaborate and generate innovative, practical strategies to strengthen workplace culture, promote sustainability, and reimagine leadership practices across the funding ecosystem.

Together, we will explore how funders can not only support but embody the change we hope to see, advancing a sector-wide shift toward care, resilience, and shared accountability.

Attendees will:

- Examine how two foundations are strengthening their internal organizational cultures while influencing and modeling cultural change within the nonprofit sector.
- Engage participants in a Solution Sprint activity to co-create innovative strategies for strengthening organizational culture and leadership resilience across the philanthropic ecosystem.
- Feature the perspective of an evaluator on using evaluation as a tool to ground through culture transformation processes.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Strengthening Organizational Culture and Strategic Leadership

How to Uphold your Organizational Values and Culture During Times of Uncertainty

Now more than ever, it's essential to ensure that your organization holds onto its values and culture. In this session, we'll discuss ways to uphold your organization's values in times of change and meaningfully model those values in the workplace. We'll tackle some of the questions that every nonprofit has asked themselves in the last year: What tone do we strike? How do we avoid putting a target on our back? Do we stick firmly to our mission despite potential blowback? How do we properly support our staff? In this workshop, we'll address the nuances of how to respond to those questions by hearing your unique stories and working together to find actionable solutions.

Attendees will

- Gain a greater understanding of how to reconcile a disparity between internal and external actions when it might be necessary to ensure your organization's longevity.
- Learn to lean into - not run from - what makes your organization a unique force for good in the community.
- Explore ways to empower your team through an adaptable and human-centered culture as a means to strengthen your organization's resilience.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Strengthening Organizational Culture and Strategic Leadership

Jedi Mind Tricks for Grant Managers: Influencing Without Authority

Ever feel like a rebel army of one, armed only with spreadsheets, data, and persistence? Ever feel like an Empire of decision makers keeps striking back your ideas? In the world of grants management, success often depends less on positional authority and more on influence—the ability to persuade, align, and inspire action across silos and levels.

In this lively session, participants will learn how to use their “Force” to engage executives and win buy-in from program staff. Through frameworks drawn from organizational psychology and change management—and a healthy dose of Jedi wisdom—attendees will explore the levers of power they already hold, how to expand their sphere of influence, and when to wield each “Jedi mind trick” ethically and effectively. Interactive exercises will help participants map stakeholders and practice influence techniques in real-world scenarios.

Whether you’re a Padawan navigating your first major project or a seasoned Jedi guiding organizational strategy, you’ll leave equipped to turn good ideas into action... and resistance into results.

Attendees will learn to:

- Harness their inner Jedi by mastering the levers of influence without relying on positional authority.
- Chart their galactic map of influence by analyzing key stakeholders and using tools to turn potential blockers into allies.
- Perfect “Jedi mind tricks for good” to secure executive buy-in and move ideas from “a new hope” to successful implementation.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Strengthening Organizational Culture and Strategic Leadership

Own Your Story: Building a Career with Purpose and Influence

Feeling stuck in your career journey? You're not alone, and you're not without options. PEAK Chapter Volunteers from Florida and the Midwest invite grants professionals at all career stages to explore how personal values, professional goals, and transferable skills can guide meaningful career decisions. Through a dynamic mix of fishbowl and whole-group conversations, participants will reflect on where they thrive, connecting that to professional goals and co-creating solutions on how to get closer to your end point, however you define it. Whether you're seeking growth or feeling settled, you'll gain insights from peers at all career stages and leave with actionable strategies to move forward.

This session is designed to spark connection, crowdsource wisdom, and model how to both seek and offer support. We hope to see folks both who are seeking solutions and those who have some to share. Come ready to share, listen, and walk away with fresh perspectives and practical tools.

Participants will learn questions to ask and practices to adopt to accomplish the following:

- How to accurately define your professional value and your personal values as guideposts in your career journey
- How to assess the skills you can gain and the skills you can leverage to reach your professional goals
- How to effectively share your experiences to help others progress in their career journey

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Strengthening Organizational Culture and Strategic Leadership

No Such Thing as Balance: Real Talk about Juggling Careers and Caretaking

Prioritizing professional growth alongside the demands and joys of family life can feel like an impossible juggling act, with “work/life balance” feeling completely out of reach. This session brings together a panel of grants professionals who understand firsthand the challenges of navigating life as caretakers and working parents in this sector, alongside a leadership coach who can also relate. Together, they will share candid stories, lessons learned, and strategies for navigating career paths alongside caregiving responsibilities. Rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions, the conversation will explore ways to reframe challenges, tap into systems of support, set healthier boundaries, and identify what to ask for from employers and the community to make both career and family more sustainable. Designed to be inclusive for those currently in the trenches of caring for children, aging relatives, and/or other family members, as well as those planning for the road ahead, the session aims to create space for honest reflection, tactical advice, and mutual support.

Attendees will:

- Identify strategies to navigate career paths while managing caregiving responsibilities.
- Explore ways to reframe challenges, set boundaries, and access systems of support.
- Recognize what to ask for from employers to make work (and life) feel more sustainable and avoid burn-out.

PEAK2026 St. Louis Breakout Sessions

Track: Strengthening Organizational Culture and Strategic Leadership

Reclaiming Wellness: Addressing Burnout Among Black and Brown Women in the Philanthropic Sector

Black and Brown women make up a significant portion of the philanthropic workforce, often carrying both the professional and personal weight of the very social issues philanthropy seeks to address. This dual burden can lead to exhaustion, burnout, and disassociation from the mission, even for those deeply committed to the work. In this session, we will explore how systemic inequities show up in the philanthropic sector, particularly in relation to wellness and sustainability for women of color.

Participants will:

- engage in dialogue and reflection around strategies to build resilience, set boundaries, and reclaim rest as a necessary component of leadership
- consider both individual practices and organizational responsibilities that support long-term well-being
- leave with practical tools and collective insights to help ensure that Black and Brown women in philanthropy are not only present at the table but are thriving in the work they lead