

2026 Southern Impact Conference Descriptions

Session Title:	Session Description:	Key Topics:
<p>Roll for Revenue: The Audit & Fundraising Adventure (990 Edition)</p>	<p>Welcome, brave adventurer. Do you feel like 990s and audit reports are written in a strange, ancient language? Join us as you level up your nonprofit financial know-how without needing a decoder ring. Join your guides, we travel together through the twists and turns of nonprofit financial documents to reveal the clues hidden within.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where to find the 990’s best “loot drops” for fundraisers (and what the stats actually mean) • Audit 101: what the audit covers, how to read the auditor’s opinion, and how to navigate the notes like a pro 	<p>Grant Writing, Donor Prospecting, Executives, Major Gifts</p>
<p>Confessions of a Federal Grant Reviewer: What the Scoring Rubric Won't Tell You</p>	<p>Every year, competitive federal grants are won and lost not on the merits of a program, but on how well the proposal speaks the language of the reviewer — and most fundraising professionals never get to hear directly from the other side of the table. In this candid, insider session, Shavonn Richardson, MBA, GPC, draws on her experience as a former federal grant reviewer and corporate grantmaker to reveal the unwritten rules that separate funded applications from the rejected pile, including how review panels actually score, what triggers reviewer fatigue, and the structural mistakes that cost organizations hard-won points. Attendees will leave with a practical framework for writing federal grant proposals that anticipate reviewer behavior, align narrative to rubric.</p>	<p>Grant Writing</p>
<p>Powerful Stories, Protected People: The Ethical Client Testimonial Playbook</p>	<p>Client stories are some of the most powerful tools in fundraising but also carry responsibility. This session explores how to create compelling testimonial stories while protecting the people at the center of them. Through a case study with Wellspring Living, who will join to share their perspective, we’ll walk through practical and ethical approaches from story development to interviewing to sharing with your audiences. Attendees will leave with a clear, repeatable framework for telling stories that are both impactful and safe.</p>	<p>Marketing & Comms, Storytelling, Ethics</p>

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<p>Using Ethical Fundraising Principles to Grow Your Leadership Skills</p>	<p>Ethics is more than following the rules – policy, pay, public trust, etc...but what does it really mean to be an ethical fundraiser? We explore some of the basics like the AFP Code of Ethical Standards and dive deeper to include the responsibility leaders have in the practice of ethical fundraising. Through practical tips and lived experience, we'll show leaders how to make meaningful and lasting change through the principles of IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity, access).</p>	<p>Ethics, Executives, Leadership Principles</p>
<p>The Beatles Guide to Fundraising!</p>	<p>An engaging and interactive session that will inspire development professionals through the timeless words and messages of the world's most beloved storytellers—Paul, John, George, and Ringo!</p> <p>Attendees will hear familiar tunes and lyrics reimagined in a new context: how to strengthen donor relations and stewardship efforts. Attendees will also discover how the lessons woven into these classic songs can help them connect more deeply, communicate more effectively, and make a greater impact on those who support the mission of the agencies they represent.</p>	<p>Major Gifts, Annual Giving, Donor Relations, Revenue Generation</p>
<p>Are you ready to build a major gift program?</p>	<p>Individual donors who invest significantly in your organization improve financial sustainability, increase unrestricted funding, and contribute to a diverse stream of revenue sources. With the reduction in federal funding and competition for institutional donors higher than ever, organizations that invest in major giving programs will experience less fundraising volatility. In this session, we'll outline the key components to starting and maintaining a successful major gifts program - no matter the organization's size or budget.</p>	<p>Major Gifts, Donor Relations, Revenue Generation</p>
<p>The Comeback Circle: Using Intimate Gatherings to Reclaim and Reignite Donor Giving</p>	<p>In an era where donor retention is declining, organizations can no longer afford to let relationships fade. The Comeback Circle introduces a practical, experience-driven approach to re-engaging lapsed donors and strengthening existing connections through intentional, small-scale gatherings. This session will show how to design intimate experiences that rebuild trust, deepen relationships, and naturally lead to renewed giving. Participants will learn how to identify the right audiences, structure meaningful</p>	<p>Major Gifts, Donor Relations, Revenue Generation</p>

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	touchpoints, and implement follow-up strategies that convert moments into sustained donor engagement and long-term philanthropic support.	
Quality Data – the Bedrock of Donor Stewardship	<p>Despite the powerful technology built into today’s CRMs, bad data remains one of the biggest challenges with donor databases. That’s a serious problem because your team relies on accurate, reliable information to connect with, engage, and properly steward prospects and donors.</p> <p>In this session, you’ll learn practical best practices for data entry that help maintain consistency and integrity across your database. We’ll explore proven tips and strategies to improve data quality, highlight common pitfalls that can undermine your efforts, and identify red flags that signal deeper issues.</p>	Data, Donor Relations, Stewardship
Mindset Shift: You’re not selling anything	<p>Fundraisers aren’t selling anything. We are connecting the people with the means to make a difference with the people who have the skills to make a difference. Learn how to shift your mindset to be confident in any room and for any ask.</p>	Personal and Professional Development; Storytelling; Donor Relations
Presence with Purpose: Leveraging How You Show Up to Elevate Fundraising Impact	<p>In fundraising, your presence is part of your pitch. This session explores how professional presence, alignment, and nonverbal communication shape trust, credibility, and donor connection. Participants will learn how to intentionally leverage posture, tone, energy, and visual presentation to communicate confidence and purpose—before a single word is spoken. Grounded in the concept of visual capital, this session offers practical tools to align internal mission with external expression, helping fundraisers show up with clarity, authenticity, and influence in every interaction, from donor meetings to major campaigns.</p>	Personal and Professional Development
ADHD and the Fundraising Profession	<p>You write three grant proposals in a day and spiral into Angry Birds at midnight. You hyperfocus for twelve hours, then can't start a single task. You are brilliant, exhausted, and running an ODO (only development officer) department on a nervous system that was never designed for infinite to-do lists. We'll explore what ADHD really looks like in a high-performing fundraising career — especially for Gen X women who were never diagnosed — and build a sustainable,</p>	Personal and Professional Development

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	soul-informed practice that honors how your brain actually works.	
From Plans to Progress: How Nonprofit Teams Execute Priorities with Limited Capacity	Nonprofit teams don't just struggle with getting things done—they often struggle to focus on the right priorities in the first place. Whether it's strategic initiatives, campaigns, or ongoing demands, competing priorities and limited capacity can make it difficult to move the most important work forward. This session introduces a practical approach to managing priorities as projects. Participants will learn how to clarify goals, define scope, assign ownership, and establish simple systems and rhythms to track progress—improving coordination, accountability, and follow-through without adding unnecessary complexity.	Small Shop Friendly, Capacity Building
The Lean Machine: Optimizing Small-Shop Fundraising for Growth	When resources are lean, the most expensive asset an organization has is its time. This session moves beyond the "do more with less" mentality to focus on the specific actions that move the needle on mission and revenue. This session will focus on case studies from three Atlanta-based nonprofits who have traded administrative busy-work for strategic scale. We will dive into the mechanics of leveraging technology to increase automation, adopting smart staffing models like fractional support, and streamlining workflows. Join us to learn how to transition your team from "all hands on deck" to "right hands on the highest-value tasks."	Small-Shop Friendly, Systems, Revenue Generation
Fundraising in Flux: Fundamental Truths and Fresh Strategies for Today's Campaigns	Explore the evolving landscape of fundraising campaigns through real-world observations and actionable insights. This session reveals the enduring principles that anchor successful fundraising, while showcasing innovative, bespoke strategies that respond to today's rapidly changing donor behaviors and digital adoption. Attendees will leave equipped with practical tools and creative approaches to design campaigns that resonate, engage, and deliver results in a dynamic environment.	Capital Campaign, Major Gifts
A \$10M Capital Campaign that Beat the Odds, and the 6	This presentation tells the story of a capital campaign that, by conventional fundraising standards, should not have succeeded, and yet it did. It's the story of an organization with limited capacity, modest visibility,	Capital Campaign, Major Gifts

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<p>Lessons You Need for Success</p>	<p>and organizational constraints – with no Annual Gift program – which should have prevented any conversations about capital campaigns. Yet through diligent strategy and relationship building a foundation for a successful campaign emerged.</p>	
<p>Unblocked: Breaking Down Giving Barriers—Starting in the Boardroom</p>	<p>Fundraising challenges often aren't about strategy. They're about barriers. In this interactive session, we'll unpack the real reasons board members hesitate to give and ask. Participants will explore personal and cultural beliefs about money, understand how those beliefs show up in board dynamics, and walk away with practical tools to shift from avoidance to action. This session blends reflection, real-world scenarios, and actionable frameworks to help fundraisers engage their boards more effectively and unlock greater giving potential.</p>	<p>Board Relations, Executives, Major Gifts</p>
<p>AI @ EOY: how to use generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to raise more money this calendar year end.</p>	<p>As year-end giving season approaches, nonprofits have a unique opportunity to harness the power of generative AI to raise more money, engage donors, and work more efficiently. In this practical workshop, you'll learn how AI tools can help you create compelling appeals, personalize donor communications, generate content faster, identify fundraising opportunities, and strengthen stewardship efforts. Whether you're new to AI or already experimenting with it, you'll leave with actionable strategies, real-world examples, and ethical best practices you can implement immediately.</p>	<p>Technology, Revenue Generation</p>