

the power of
PHILANTHROPY™
2026 Summit

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BLOCH

Kinetic
MIDWEST CENTER
FOR NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP

Key Takeaways



“The most dangerous assumption you can make today is that the future looks like an optimized version of today.”

**NATHAN CHAPPELL,
KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

What if the biggest opportunity facing your organization is not more funding, but learning how to lead in an age of rapid change?

This was the central challenge explored during the **2026 Power of Philanthropy Summit**, hosted by **Kinetic** in partnership with the **Bloch School of Management** at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Nonprofit leaders, fundraisers and changemakers gathered virtually for an energizing conversation about how artificial intelligence is reshaping philanthropy, and how you can use it to deepen human connection, expand impact and stay mission-focused in a changing world.

The 6th Annual Power of Philanthropy Summit invited participants to rethink how AI is transforming the philanthropic landscape.

Featured keynote speaker **Nathan Chappell** and a panel of global leaders in philanthropy and technology shared insights and invited attendees to consider a profound question:

How do we ensure that innovation strengthens, rather than replaces, the human heart of our work?

“AI may allow us to optimize philanthropy, but if we lose the human connection, we lose the point.”

RHODRI DAVIES, PANELIST
WHY PHILANTHROPY MATTERS



A Defining Insight: Culture Before Technology

Nathan Chappell reframed AI, not as a technical challenge, but an opportunity to harness even more creativity and innovation.

For nonprofits, AI transformation is not primarily about data, tools or models. It is about benefits to people, culture and readiness to adapt. Organizations seeing the greatest success are those where a culture of philanthropy leads technology adoption.

Despite widespread AI adoption, only a small percentage of nonprofits are realizing meaningful improvements in mission outcomes. The difference is rarely access to tools. The difference is mindset, strategy and willingness to rethink their work at a foundational level.

Leading organizations are using AI as a tool and catalyst for reinvention, creativity and deeper human connection.

The Human Advantage in an AI Era

Curiosity emerged as the defining human advantage in the age of AI.

While AI can generate and analyze, it cannot wonder, imagine meaningfully or care deeply. That responsibility belongs to people.

Organizations that thrive will intentionally build cultures of curiosity by:

- **Celebrating questions**
- **Creating space for experimentation**
- **Encouraging teams to explore new possibilities**
- **Connecting ideas across disciplines**
- **Taking time to wonder**

Success will belong to organizations that adapt quickly while staying anchored in what's human.



“People don't experience AI as a technical concept. They experience it as a tool to improve their lives, create opportunity and navigate complexity.”

CARLA MEYER, PANELIST | RAFAEL MEZA AYAU FOUNDATION

“AI gives us the opportunity to step back and rethink how we’ve always done things—and design better ways to serve people.”

DONELL HAMMOND, PANELIST | EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION



Rethinking AI and Philanthropy

AI should not replace human connection. It should make more of it possible. When used intentionally, AI can:

- **Reduce administrative burden**
- **Enhance decision-making**
- **Expand access to tools**
- **Personalize engagement at scale**
- **Free staff time for relationships**

However, without thoughtful leadership, AI can erode trust, reinforce inequality and prioritize efficiency over humanity.

The future of philanthropy will be defined not by AI itself, but by how we choose to use it.

A Sector at a Crossroads

The nonprofit sector faces a clear choice: lead or lag.

AI is already showing up as a practical tool in communities. Yet adoption remains uneven, with gaps in strategy, training and access. Leaders must:

- **Align AI with mission and values**
- **Establish ethical guardrails that protect trust and privacy**
- **Train teams responsibly**
- **Ensure communities are part of the solution**

Balancing Efficiency and Humanity

AI introduces a real tension between efficiency and empathy.

It can make work faster, smarter and more scalable. But philanthropy remains deeply human, rooted in relationships and trust.

The greatest risk is not that AI replaces us, but that we stop showing up fully human in our work.

The most effective organizations will use AI to handle routine tasks while doubling down on:

- **Listening**
- **Presence**
- **Gratitude**
- **Trust-building**
- **Authentic relationships**

The Opportunity Ahead

AI is not something *happening* to the nonprofit sector. It is something the sector has the power to shape.

Used responsibly, it can expand impact, strengthen engagement and unlock new possibilities. But that future depends on leaders stepping forward with curiosity, courage and purpose.

The future of philanthropy will not be defined by technology, but by people using it to amplify generosity and drive meaningful change.

“AI is not about replacing what makes us human. It’s about giving us more space to be human.”

“We use AI to offload the things that don’t bring us joy, so we can do more of the things that make us inherently human.”

“If the nonprofit sector is not present in shaping AI, it will not reflect the best of humanity.”

NATHAN CHAPPELL

Practical Next Steps for Your Organization

The [2026 Nonprofit AI Adoption Report](#) referenced during the keynote highlights the behaviors of the small percentage of nonprofits successfully using AI to improve mission outcomes.

Consider these next steps:

- **Establish an AI use policy**
- **Define acceptable staff usage**
- **Align tools with mission priorities**
- **Measure outcomes, not novelty**
- **Start small and scale responsibly**
- **Keep people at the center**

The report offers a practical roadmap for nonprofits seeking to adopt AI responsibly, effectively and in alignment with their values.

It identifies practical, actionable principles such as establishing governance policies, defining acceptable use, aligning AI with the mission and measuring outcomes to help organizations move from experimentation to meaningful impact.

Thank you for being part of this year’s Power of Philanthropy Summit. You can view recordings of the sessions [here](#). We hope the ideas shared inspire meaningful conversations and bold leadership in the year ahead. We look forward to seeing you next year!

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