



PROFESSIONAL FACE TO FACE FUNDRAISING ASSOCIATION

2026 PFFA SUMMER WORK GROUP

July 21- 22, 2026

Location: Doctors Without Borders | 40 Rector Street, 16th Floor New York, NY 10006

SPONSORS & HOST | AGENDA | SPEAKER BIOS

PFFA Work Groups are exclusive gatherings for PFFA members and invited guests, designed to foster meaningful discussion, knowledge sharing, and professional growth. Convened three times each year, these events bring together face-to-face fundraising leaders, managers, agencies, consultants, and supporting partners to explore current challenges, emerging trends, and proven strategies from across the sector.

Through candid conversations, collaborative learning, and real-world case studies, attendees gain practical insights, fresh perspectives, and valuable connections that can strengthen fundraising programs and advance organizational goals. Whether you're looking to improve donor acquisition, retention, stewardship, operations, or leadership, Work Groups provide opportunities to learn directly from experienced practitioners and peers facing similar opportunities and challenges.

Thank you for supporting the PFFA and our shared commitment to advancing ethical, sustainable, and effective face-to-face fundraising across the United States.

.

OUR 2026 SUMMER WORK GROUP SPONSORS

Special thanks to the Summer Work Group Ascenta and Elemental Fundraising. Your support makes the Work Group possible – thank you.



Ascenta provides direct sales, customer acquisition and donor acquisition services to leading commercial and non-profit organizations. Their focus is on developing highly customized strategies for our clients that create new and lasting relationships.

They mobilize teams across the country to serve as extensions of our clients' organizations, powering hundreds of sales and fundraising professionals who engage in millions of conversations each year on behalf of our partners. These Brand Ambassadors deliver carefully developed messages and cultivate relationships on behalf of our clients. Their friendly faces are seen throughout cities and communities, at businesses and local events.

Ascenta is a founding member of the PFFA and their CEO, Sarah Flis, was nominated by her peers to serve on the PFFA Board of Directors.



Elemental Fundraising is an agency dedicated to the best face-to-face fundraising, built on a foundation of grassroots excellence and meaningful donor engagement. With years of experience in field strategies, fundraising innovation, and campaign management, we bring a unique perspective to the industry.

Our approach focuses on simplicity and purpose, ensuring that every interaction feels natural and impactful, just like the causes we represent. Our proudest achievements stem from partnerships with charities and our proven ability to grow their supporter base effectively and sustainably.

PRE-CONFERENCE AGENDA

Tuesday | July 21, 2026

Location: MSF/Doctors Without Borders | 40 Rector Street, 16th Floor New York, NY 10006

12:00-12:30 **NPO Lunch and Networking**

12:30 – 3:30 **Reveal Day – 2026 PFFA Benchmark, Stewardship & Retention Survey**
– exclusive NPO session for participating nonprofit organizations - hybrid

3:30 – 4:30 **Member Breakout Discussion Peer Groups**- hybrid

- Breakout room 1: Monrovia - for PFAs and main conference
- Breakout room 2: Library - for NPOs
- Breakout room 3: Aweil - for Affiliates

5:15 and 5:45 **Governor's Island Ferry departure times** 🚢

(DON'T FORGET TO PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS – not the NYC ferry)

6:00-8:30 **Pre-Work Group Networking Event**

Governor's Island | Taco Vista | 125 Carder Rd, New York, NY 10004

Join us for a sunset viewing of the Manhattan skyline with fresh off-the-grill taco bar, frosty margaritas, wine, beer, mixed drinks & soft drinks. Think tiki bar, picnic tables, sand and lounge chairs on the water with the view of the Manhattan skyline. This is a casual event – consider the sand when selecting your shoes 🩴

PFFA SUMMER WORK GROUP AGENDA

Wednesday | July 22, 2026

Emcee: Sarah Flis, President, Ascenta Group

Administration & Support:

Meredith Garofalo, Member Services Associate, PFFA

Gavin Nelson, Territory Coordinator

Sherry Bell, Senior Consultant and Advisor to the Board

8:30-9:00 **Coffee time + networking**

9:00-10:00 ***PFFA Team Annual Review: Your Year in Review July 2025-June 2026***

Meredith Garofalo, Member Services Coordinator

Gavin Nelson, Territory Coordinator

This session will take a deep dive into the annual stats from Member Service logs as well as the Site Clash Register and the Master Territory Planner. We will look at trends compared to 2025 and the trajectory for F2F in the U.S. based on anonymized member data.

10:00-10:30 ***donorCentrics Collaborative Benchmarking: Key Insights on the Future of Recurring Giving***

Catherine Ross, Strategic Consultant, Blackbaud

donorCentrics® Collaborative Benchmarking is a specialized analytics and peer-collaboration program by Blackbaud that helps nonprofits evaluate their fundraising performance against industry peers. Its annual Sustainer Summit provides deep-dive data into what is driving long-term growth and stability in recurring giving programs.

10:30-10:45 ***Break & Snack Bar***

10:45-12:00 ***The Sustainer Journey: Building Better Outcomes Through Shared Conversations***

Facilitators: Meredith Garofalo (online), Giovana Brayman, Ken Petterson, John Lindsay, Elishia Peña

A World Café experience where participants choose three of four discussion stations, share challenges and successes, and build on the collective wisdom of their peers.

Join an interactive World Café designed to explore the full donor journey—from acquisition and stewardship to operations and cross-team collaboration. Participants will choose three of four discussion stations—The Front Line, The Donor Experience, The Engine Room, and Connecting the Dots—and engage in facilitated peer discussions on the topics that matter most to their work.

As groups rotate, each conversation builds on the insights of previous participants, creating a dynamic exchange of ideas, practical solutions, and shared learning. By the end of the session, attendees will leave with fresh perspectives, actionable takeaways, and a deeper understanding of how every team contributes to long-term donor success.

12:00-1:15 Lunch catered by Migrant Kitchen, and networking

Join us for a fresh and flavorful lunch featuring a variety of options to satisfy every palate. Start with creamy hummus served with fresh vegetables, vibrant grilled street corn, aromatic turmeric rice, and a crisp fattoush salad with house-made lemon ginger and sumac pomegranate dressings.

Entrée selections include chipotle chicken, za'atar salmon, and crispy cauliflower, offering delicious choices for meat lovers and vegetarians alike. For those craving a comforting classic, a rich and creamy mac & cheese rounds out the menu.

Whether you're looking for something light, hearty, vegetarian, or protein-packed, there's something for everyone to enjoy. 📷

1:15-2:30 What Drives Sustainer Success? Key Findings from the PFFA Benchmarking Study

Join us for a data-driven look at the factors influencing donor retention, value, and long-term program performance. Drawing on

member data from 2023-2025, this session highlights key trends, top-performing practices, and actionable insights to help organizations strengthen their sustainer programs.

2:30-2:45 **Break**

2:45-3:30 ***The Retention Lab***

Tina Meyer, IFAW, Director of New Donor Engagement
Sandra Miao, AVP of Membership Programs, National Wildlife Federation
Georgi Ryan, Sustainer Giving Manager, MSF/Doctors Without Borders

Join Tina Meyer (IFAW), Sandra Miao (National Wildlife Federation), and Georgi Ryan (MSF/Doctors Without Borders) for a behind-the-scenes look at three innovative sustainer retention experiments. Learn how each idea was developed, how it was implemented, and what early lessons are emerging. From a donor gift inspired by the global IFAW network, to a thoughtful letter sent to donors who choose to cancel, to a new incentive program recognizing sustainers who remain active, this session will explore the power of testing, learning, and continuous improvement in donor engagement. Whether these pilots are already underway or just launching, attendees will gain practical inspiration for their own retention strategies.

3:30-3:45 **Break & Snack Bar**

3:45-4:45 ***Voices from the Field***

Grassroots Team – Steve Rufo, CEO
New Canvassing Experience – Gabby Baker, Minneapolis Office Director
Ascenta – Colleen Cotter, Owner Support
Elemental Fundraising – Abraham Frazier, National Trainer

4:45-5:00 ***Take the Work Group Survey – Work Group Closing***

5:30-7:30 **Bon Voyage – Work Group Send Off** at the **White Horse Tavern**, 567 Hudson St, New York, NY 10014. This event is unsponsored.

SPEAKER & FACILITATOR BIOS

GABBY BAKER, DIRECTOR OF MINNEAPOLIS OFFICE, NEW CANVASSING EXPERIENCE

Gabby is a director for NCE in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Before NCE Gabby went to school for public health and was inspired by the overturning of Roe vs Wade to do something about it. Now fundraising for, among others, ACLU and Planned Parenthood is a full circle moment for her. Gabby meets people from all walks of life, sharing the mission on busy streets. For Gabby, fundraising is about more than donations. It's about genuine human connections, listening to people's stories, and helping others see the difference they can make.

SHERRY BELL, FOUNDER & CEO, GROW FUNDRAISING & CONSULTING INC.

Sherry is the Founder and CEO of Grow Fundraising & Consulting Inc., where she helps nonprofit and for-profit organizations strengthen fundraising programs, develop leaders, improve operations, and build the foundations needed for long-term growth. With more than 25 years of experience in fundraising, donor acquisition, strategy, and operations, along with seven years of experience in sales leadership, team development, and organizational growth, she brings a practical and collaborative approach to helping organizations achieve their goals.

Throughout her career, Sherry has worked with more than thirty national and international organizations, supporting a wide range of initiatives including donor acquisition, sustainer growth, stewardship, compliance, quality assurance, leadership development, and operational planning. Through Grow, she provides consulting, interim management, program assessments, training, coaching, and strategic support designed to help organizations improve performance, strengthen teams, and maximize the long-term value of their fundraising investments.

Sherry is particularly passionate about helping organizations create fundraising programs that are built to last, balancing strong fundraising results with positive donor experiences, effective operations, and responsible growth. She believes that organizations achieve more when they invest in their people, embrace continuous improvement, and learn from one another's successes and challenges.

In addition to her consulting work, Sherry has been actively involved in advancing the face-to-face fundraising profession for more than a decade. As one of the founding leaders of the Professional Face-to-Face Fundraising Association (PFFA), she served as the association's inaugural President and helped establish a collaborative forum where nonprofits, agencies, and industry partners can share knowledge, promote professional development, and strengthen standards across the sector. Today, she continues to support the association as a Senior Consultant and Advisor to the Board.

At her core, Sherry is motivated by helping people, organizations, and ideas grow. Whether she is advising a nonprofit, mentoring a fundraising leader, supporting a new market entrant, or contributing to industry-wide initiatives, her focus remains the same: helping organizations build stronger programs, stronger teams, and greater impact.

ASHLEY BLOOM, FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL, ELEVATE IMPACT

With over 20 years of experience in face-to-face fundraising, Ashley has successfully led, managed, trained, and coached teams acquiring hundreds of thousands of recurring donors globally. Starting as canvasser on the streets of New York City, she quickly advanced mastering each role in the face-to-face managerial ladder before becoming Greenpeace International's inhouse Face-to-Face Consultant and Trainer supporting teams across the US, Mexico, India, and Asia-Pacific regions.

For the past decade, she has dedicated her efforts to consulting with a diverse range of NGOs across the United States. Her clients have included prominent global nonprofits as well as mighty and resilient local organizations spanning humanitarian, environmental, and animal justice movements. She collaborates closely with leaders at all levels, from on-the-ground teams to Executive Directors, providing strategic advice, training and support to advance their fundraising, membership building and retention initiatives.

EMILY BRACKEN, DIRECTOR, CEO OF UPSALL INTERNATIONAL'S CONSULTING DIVISION, UPSALL INTERNATIONAL

Emily Bracken is CEO of Upsall International's Consulting Division. Originally from the US and now residing in Madrid, Emily is renowned for her unrivalled global perspective and knowledge of fundraising markets across the world.

Since beginning her career at firms Deloitte and Accenture, Emily has led a wide range of projects across the non-profit sector. From international expansion strategies to building fundraising expertise amongst global board teams, Emily is highly experienced at identifying the pathways to unlock growth for non-profits, large and small.

Emily is a regular speaker and sought after contributor at fundraising conferences across the world.

GIOVANA BRAYMAN, DIRECTOR, SENIOR CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER, ASCENTA

After graduating with a degree in Marketing and Management, I joined Ascenta in 2019 as a Marketing Coordinator. Over the past seven years, I have grown into the role of Senior Client Service Manager, leading client relationships and strategic initiatives for a diverse portfolio of nonprofit organizations.

Throughout my career at Ascenta, I have partnered with charities supporting a wide range of global causes, helping develop and execute face-to-face fundraising programs that drive sustainable growth and meaningful impact. I am passionate about building strong client partnerships, solving complex challenges, and helping nonprofit organizations expand their reach through strategic fundraising programs that connect them with long-term supporters.

COLLEN COTTER, OWNER SUPPORT, ASCENTA GROUP

I transitioned to face-to-face fundraising in August 2018, bringing ten years of experience in psychology. Under strong mentorship and leadership, I built the expertise and industry knowledge necessary to establish KAI Marketing as an Authorized Provider. Over four years, I successfully grew my own office while developing systems and infrastructure that enabled other owners to pursue similar paths. In August 2025, I joined Ascenta Group as Owner Support Liaison, leveraging my direct experience as an office owner to support new

and established Authorized Providers in strengthening operations, scaling effectively, and achieving sustainable growth.

JIM EMLET, CO-FOUNDER AND PRINCIPLE, INTEGRAL

Jim Emlet is co-founder and principal of Integral. Jim has over 20 years of strategic experience working for and with non-profits and for-profits to develop business models that guide investment decision to maximize revenue. Prior to Integral, Jim was owner of another analytical consulting firm that provided strategic analysis for non-profits as well

as health care organizations. Jim's background is very quantitative – he has a bachelor's degree in applied mathematics from Duke University and a master's degree in Operations Research from The George Washington University. His career path has been primarily consulting work to help organizations leverage the strength of their data. At Integral, Jim works with large national organizations such as National Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife, Mercy Corps, and the ASPCA.

KELLY ENGLAND, FOUNDER & CEO, MULTIPLY STRATEGIES

Kelly England, CEO/Founder of Multiply Strategies, has had the privilege to work with more than sixty national nonprofits and partnered with more than thirty agencies throughout her career. Kelly brings expertise across multiple fundraising channels, sustainer optimization, investment and strategy analytics, and vendor management to her partnerships.

The team of consultants Kelly leads at Multiply Strategies support some of the largest and fastest growing nonprofit organizations via Strategic optimization of sustainer, mid-level, & mass audience segments; Channel launch and management for F2F canvassing & telemarketing; and multiyear strategic planning & case building. With a unique combination of diplomacy, project management expertise, and analytics/fundraising acumen, Kelly and Multiply Strategies help organizations manage change effectively, break down silos, and drive rapid growth.

SARAH FLIS, PRESIDENT, ASCENTA GROUP

Sarah Flis is the President of Ascenta Group and a recognized leader in the face-to-face fundraising industry with nearly 25 years of experience. Beginning her career as a frontline fundraiser, Sarah has worked across nearly every aspect of the industry, including operations, account management, and program development. She began her journey in 2003 in Sydney, Australia, where she helped launch and manage numerous face-to-face fundraising campaigns before supporting program expansion across New Zealand and Southeast Asia. In 2010, Sarah helped lead Ascenta Group's expansion into the United States, where she has since played a key role in building and scaling national fundraising programs focused on quality, compliance, and long-term sustainability.

ABRAHAM FRAZIER, NATIONAL TRAINER, ELEMENTAL FUNDRAISING

Abraham Frazier is Elemental Fundraisings National Trainer. He has been with Elemental since May 2025. With a background in Business and Marketing from the University of North Carolina Wilmington, Abraham brings both strategic insight and real-world experience to our team. Raised in Greensboro, North Carolina, he spent five years training in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, competing in multiple tournaments across the state and developing the discipline and resilience he now channels into his coaching. Beyond the gym, Abraham is passionate about giving back to the community.

MEREDITH GAROFALO, MEMBER SERVICE ASSOCIATE, PFFA

Meredith Garofalo is a fundraising and leadership development professional with more than 14 years of experience in face-to-face fundraising. She began her career as a fundraiser in Los Angeles and steadily advanced through leadership roles, including Team Leader, Director, Head of Leadership Development, and National Fundraising Manager.

Throughout her career, Meredith has had the privilege of representing and fundraising for approximately 15 nonprofit organizations all over the country, helping to secure sustainable support for causes that create meaningful impact. Her expertise extends beyond direct fundraising to developing high-performing teams, coaching emerging leaders, and training both fundraisers

and leadership teams within professional fundraising agencies across the industry.

Meredith was honored to join the Professional Face-to-Face Fundraising Association (PFFA), an organization she has long respected for its role in raising industry standards and driving positive change within the face-to-face fundraising sector. Having witnessed the association's impact throughout her career, she is proud to contribute to its mission and support the continued growth, professionalism, and sustainability of the industry.

JOHN LINDSAY, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT, UNIVERSAL EVENTS

John Lindsay is the Director of Government Engagement for Universal Events, a consulting partner for mission-driven organizations. He focuses on building strategic partnerships and aligning policy to help nonprofits grow sustainably.

Universal Events is centered on community outreach, advocacy, and consulting with nonprofits to spark change in the world. We work tirelessly to strengthen the missions of ethical businesses and nonprofit organizations, ensuring that communities thrive. By managing administrative, fundraising, and marketing elements, we ensure organizations can fully focus on their programs and the people they serve.

John has lived in San Francisco, Boston, Washington DC, and Miami. He currently resides in Manhattan.

GAVIN NELSON, TERRITORY COORDINATOR, PROFESSIONAL FACE-TO-FACE FUNDRAISING ASSOCIATION (PFFA)

Gavin recently joined the PFFA in April 2025 as a part-time Member Territory Coordinator and is a dedicated resource for members for all things territory development, management, coordination, and resolution.

Gavin's primary mission is to ensure member support when teams are in the field in the United States and lead projects for territory preservation, expansion, and the conversion of Google grids to ATMS systems.

Gavin brings experience in grassroots engagement, regional operations, and volunteer coordination, including leadership roles at Americans for Prosperity

and Trust in the Mission PAC. He works closely with PFFA members to ensure consistency and fairness across site access and territory management.

ELISHIA PEÑA, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, ELEMENTAL FUNDRAISING

Elishia is the President and Chief Financial Officer of Elemental Fundraising, where she oversees the systems, operational structures, and training logistics that drive the organization's success. Known as the strategic "brain" behind the team, she develops frameworks that ensure consistency, accountability, and collaboration across departments.

Born and raised in Sweetwater, Tennessee, Elishia earned her bachelor's degree in psychology and human services from Bluefield University in Virginia, where she was also a collegiate soccer player. A devoted Christian and mother to her daughter, Starlie, Elishia's commitment to fundraising is deeply personal. She is passionate about helping organizations create meaningful impact today while contributing to a stronger future for the next generation.

KEN PETTERSON, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER FOUNDATION

Ken Petterson has been an integral part of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Foundation, where he has held the role of Director of Donor Engagement since 2022. With a career spanning over 30 years in the nonprofit sector, Ken has dedicated himself to advancing the mission of organizations that make a meaningful impact in the community. His expertise in donor relations has been pivotal in strengthening the foundation's funding, allowing it to expand its reach and improve services for individuals with autism. Ken's commitment to helping others extends beyond his professional work. For the past 25 years, he has volunteered as a coach for the Special Olympics, where he has inspired and empowered athletes with intellectual disabilities. His passion for sports and inclusivity led him to take on the role of Co-commissioner for the sport of pickleball with Special Olympics Missouri. In this capacity, Ken plays a key role in organizing events and promoting participation, fostering an environment where athletes can thrive and achieve their personal best.

Ken's dedication to both his professional and volunteer roles underscores his unwavering commitment to enriching the lives of those he serves. His leadership and compassion continue to make a significant difference in the lives of individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities.

CATHERINE ROSS, FUNDRAISING ANALYTICS CONSULTANT, BLACKBAUD

Catherine Ross is a fundraising analytics consultant with Blackbaud's donorCentrics team, where she presents trend analysis and helps nonprofits uncover areas of opportunity. She is a seasoned fundraising strategist with a background in data driven growth, individual giving and donor engagement. Prior to Blackbaud, Catherine led annual giving at Villanova Law, where she honed her expertise in direct marketing and strategic advancement.

STEVE RUFO, CEO, GRASSROOTS TEAM

Steve has two decades of experience in grassroots fundraising and community organizing initiatives. Currently leading Grassroots Team, which focuses on sustainable and lasting relationships from the field. Steve has specialized in high quality, high integrity fundraising and organizing from the ground up.

Grassroots Team enlists members for the first time, revisiting, recapturing, and upgrading donors to build a strong and long-term membership base for change making organizations. Since 2019, GT has enlisted tens of thousands of donors for human rights, the environment, and animal rights, the majority of which are still on the file today.