ATTENDEE BOOKLET



MISSISSIPPI Chat 'N Chew

Building a Stronger Nonprofit Ecosystem Together

October 21–22, 2026

Jackson Medical Mall 350 Conference Center · Jackson, MS

HOSTED BY

Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy

Women's Foundation of Mississippi · Foundation for the Mid South

WELCOME

Pull up a chair.

Across Mississippi, nonprofits are carrying more than their share, and too often the people doing the work and the people funding it don't get enough time in the same room. Mississippi Chat 'N Chew changes that.

Shaped by the Mississippi Nonprofit Strategy and the statewide listening process behind it, the convening moves from organizational readiness, to collaboration and shared infrastructure, to resource mobilization and direct engagement with funders. Expect practical tools, honest dialogue, and new relationships across regions and issue areas, with a good meal or two along the way.

Who's in the room

Nonprofit leaders
Executive directors, staff, and board members from organizations of every size, including small, grassroots, and emerging groups.

Funders & resource partners
Foundations, corporate giving leaders, CDFIs, public funders, and intermediaries investing in Mississippi.

Day 1 · Workshop Day

Hands-on workshops in leadership and governance, sustainable funding, collaboration, and advocacy and evaluation, plus a Mississippi Nonprofit Strategy chat over lunch and pitch training to get you ready for Day Two.

Day 2 · Roundtable Day

A CEO panel opens the morning. Then funders share their priorities in quick lightning talks, and nonprofit leaders sit down with them in small-group roundtables built for relationships and candid conversation, not formal grant pitches.

WHAT YOU'LL LEAVE WITH

More than notes in a notebook.

- A clear priority for strengthening your governance, finances, workforce, or compliance
- A sharper organizational pitch and a stronger funder-ready story
- Direct connections with philanthropic and resource-development partners
- New relationships with peers across regions and issue areas
- A better handle on shared services, fiscal sponsorship, and intermediary options
- Clear next steps for staying engaged with statewide partners

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Workshop rotations

Each workshop block runs two sessions side by side. Participants rotate after 50 minutes, so you can attend both.

Nonprofit pitch training

Day One closes with pitch training to help you sharpen a clear, two-minute introduction to your organization: your mission, the need, your outcomes, and your ask. Bring it with you to the Day Two roundtables.

Questions to bring to the Day Two roundtables

- What types of support do you provide: project, general operating, multi-year, capacity-building, or technical assistance?
- What makes an organization or collaboration ready for investment?
- How can smaller, grassroots, and emerging organizations access support?
- What reporting expectations should applicants anticipate?

Wednesday, October 21

Jackson Medical Mall 350 Conference Center

DAY 1 · WORKSHOP DAY

8:30–9:30 AM — On-Site Registration, Breakfast & Networking

9:30–9:50 AM — **Welcome & Convening Purpose**

Melanie Powell, Women's Foundation of Mississippi · **Cassio Batteast**, Foundation for the Mid South

10:00–11:50 AM

CONCURRENT · ROTATE AFTER 50 MINUTES

Morning Workshop Sessions

Building Organizational Readiness: Leadership, Governance, and Sustainability
Laneceya Russ-Martin, Women's Foundation of the South
Dr. Sonia Daniels, S. Daniels Consulting

Strengthening Nonprofit Voice: Advocacy, Data, and Impact
Dr. Dominique Bradley, **Christine Koerner**, **Dr. Emily Mortimer** & **Dr. Treshonda Rutledge**, American Institutes for Research

11:50 AM–Noon — Break & Transition to Lunch

12:00–1:45 PM

LUNCH & CONVERSATION

Lunch & Mississippi Nonprofit Strategy Chat

Facilitated by **Jasmine Cleark**, Nova Closet, and **Cassio Batteast**, Foundation for the Mid South

1:45–2:00 PM — Break & Transition to Afternoon Sessions

2:00–3:50 PM

CONCURRENT · ROTATE AFTER 50 MINUTES

Afternoon Workshop Sessions

Beyond the Grant: Building Flexible and Sustainable Funding
Greg Weber, M.A.G.E., Inc.

From Silos to Shared Solutions: Building Stronger Nonprofit Networks
Kristin Hemingway, American Institutes for Research

3:50–4:00 PM — **Day-One Closing & Day-Two Preview**

4:00–5:30 PM

EVENING

Funders Networking Reception & Nonprofit Pitch Training

Funders: join the *From Listening to Investment* discussion series during the workshop blocks. · Day 2 on back

Thursday, October 22

Jackson Medical Mall 350 Conference Center

DAY 2 · ROUNDTABLE DAY

8:00–8:30 AM — Breakfast

8:30–8:45 AM — **Welcome Back & Day-One Reflections**
Ebonee Johnikin, Foundation for the Mid South

9:00–9:50 AM — PANEL
CEO Panel: Building a Stronger Mississippi Nonprofit Ecosystem
Dr. Theresa Horne, JPMorgan Chase · **Gregory Johnson**, Foundation for the Mid South · **Melanie Powell**, Women's Foundation of Mississippi · **Rhea Williams-Bishop**, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Moderated by **Cassio Batteast**, Foundation for the Mid South

10:00–10:15 AM — **Funder Roundtable Orientation**

10:15–10:45 AM — LIGHTNING TALKS
Funder Lightning Presentations
Foundations, intermediaries, CDFIs, and partners share their priorities, processes, and funding types in three minutes each.

10:45–10:55 AM — Roundtable Transition

11:00–12:40 PM — ROUNDTABLES
Funder Roundtables
Meet directly with funders and resource partners in four rotations.

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
11:00–11:20	11:25–11:45	11:50–12:15	12:20–12:40

12:40–1:00 PM — **Final Charge & Adjournment**
Boxed lunches provided.

How the roundtables work

Participating foundations, intermediaries, CDFIs, and partners each host a table. Nonprofit leaders move through four rotations for questions, relationship-building, and guidance on funding readiness. Boxed lunches are provided before you head home.

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

Morning workshops

CAPACITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Building Organizational Readiness: Leadership, Governance, and Sustainability

Laneceya Russ-Martin, Women's Foundation of the South, and **Dr. Sonia Daniels**, S. Daniels Consulting · Morning, 10:00–11:50 AM

Strong organizations require strong leaders, engaged boards, sustainable staff structures, and reliable internal systems. This workshop examines the core elements of organizational readiness, including leadership development, board governance, workforce sustainability, strategic planning, financial management, compliance, and access to technical assistance, and how small, grassroots, and emerging organizations can demonstrate readiness for multi-year investment.

You'll leave with

- A clearer picture of the organizational systems funders often expect to see
- Practical ideas for strengthening board engagement and leadership pipelines
- Strategies to support staff retention, reduce burnout, and preserve institutional knowledge
- A framework for documenting readiness, partnerships, and long-term goals

POLICY, ADVOCACY & EVALUATION

Strengthening Nonprofit Voice: Advocacy, Data, and Impact

Dr. Dominique Bradley, **Christine Koerner**, **Dr. Emily Mortimer** & **Dr. Treshonda Rutledge**, American Institutes for Research · Morning, 10:00–11:50 AM

Nonprofits play an essential role in shaping policy, elevating community voice, and demonstrating impact. This workshop helps participants navigate policy environments, engage decision-makers appropriately, collect and use meaningful data, and practice right-sized evaluation that supports learning and tells a credible story about the communities they serve.

You'll leave with

- A stronger understanding of advocacy readiness and policy engagement
- Practical approaches for building relationships with decision-makers
- Ideas for collecting and using data without overburdening staff
- Tools for combining data and community stories into a clear impact narrative

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

Afternoon workshops

FUNDING & RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Beyond the Grant: Building Flexible and Sustainable Funding

Greg Weber, M.A.G.E., Inc. · Afternoon, 2:00–3:50 PM

Short-term, restricted funding and burdensome applications make it hard for nonprofits to plan ahead. This workshop focuses on communicating the full cost of your work, building stronger budget narratives, diversifying revenue, and pursuing support for core operations, with candid discussion of multi-year funding, general operating support, mini-grants, fiscal sponsorship, and intermediaries.

You'll leave with

- Strategies for communicating needs beyond a single program or grant
- Guidance on budget narratives and funder-ready asks
- A better understanding of general operating, multi-year, and mini-grant support
- Ideas for a more sustainable, diversified funding approach

COLLABORATION & COMMUNITY BUILDING

From Silos to Shared Solutions: Building Stronger Nonprofit Networks

Kristin Hemingway, American Institutes for Research · Afternoon, 2:00–3:50 PM

This workshop explores practical ways to break down organizational and regional silos, strengthen partnerships, and build trust-based relationships among nonprofits, funders, intermediaries, and community stakeholders, from regional convenings and shared grant calendars to collaborative fundraising, peer learning, and collective storytelling.

You'll leave with

- Ideas for building or strengthening local and regional networks
- Partnership opportunities across issue areas and communities
- Strategies for communication, resource sharing, and collective visibility
- How collaboration positions organizations for larger, longer-term investment

CEO PANEL · DAY 2, 9:00–9:50 AM

Building a Stronger Mississippi Nonprofit Ecosystem

Philanthropic and financial leaders explore how Mississippi can build a stronger, more connected, and better-resourced nonprofit sector.



Dr. Theresa Horne
VP, Community & Business Development, JPMorgan Chase
PANELIST



Gregory Johnson
President & CEO, Foundation for the Mid South
PANELIST



Melanie Powell
CEO, Women's Foundation of Mississippi
PANELIST



Rhea Williams-Bishop
Mississippi & Louisiana Director, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
PANELIST



MODERATOR
Cassio Batteast
Economic Opportunities Program Officer, Foundation for the Mid South

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS

Who you'll hear from



Laneceya Russ-Martin

Program Officer, Women's Foundation of the South

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

Laneceya Russ-Martin is a nonprofit leader and community engagement strategist committed to advancing maternal and child health, supporting survivors of trauma, and building equitable community solutions. As former Executive Director of March for Moms, she drove advocacy, collaboration, and capacity-building for community-based organizations. She serves on the board of Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response and has contributed to health equity work with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast and the Association of Fundraising Professionals.



Dr. Sonia Daniels

CEO, S. Daniels Consulting

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

Dr. Sonia Daniels is the founder and principal of S. Daniels Consulting, a strategy and advisory firm that helps leaders strengthen teams, culture, operations, and leadership to build sustainable organizations. Since 2017, her firm has led more than 30 enterprise-level engagements across the nonprofit, social-impact, government, technology, and education sectors. An organizational capacity strategist, executive coach, and keynote speaker, she champions clarity over complexity and people-first systems.



Greg Weber

CEO, M.A.G.E., Inc.

BEYOND THE GRANT

Greg Weber leads M.A.G.E., Inc., a Conway, Arkansas–based firm dedicated to helping nonprofits grow their impact. At Chat 'N Chew, he'll lead "Beyond the Grant: Building Flexible and Sustainable Funding."

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS · STRENGTHENING NONPROFIT VOICE



Dr. Dominique Bradley

Principal Researcher, American Institutes for Research

STRENGTHENING NONPROFIT VOICE

Dominique Bradley, Ph.D., PMP, is a Principal Researcher at the American Institutes for Research (AIR). She serves as Partnership co-Lead and technical assistance development lead for the Community Schools – Southern Partnership for Advancement, Research and Knowledge (CS-SPARK). Bradley also leads evaluations and translational research projects for community school initiatives across the country. Bradley has contributed to knowledge in the field of community schools by developing theories of key components of implementation to support shared vision, collective leadership, and robust and meaningful evaluation for continuous improvement. She has over 18 years of experience in education research and project management. Her areas of expertise are community schools implementation evaluations, qualitative research methods, improvement science methods, developing and supporting networked improvement communities, supporting and evaluating research-practice partnerships, and teacher retention, preparation and support. Bradley holds a bachelor's in sociology from Southern Oregon University and a master's in sociology and Ph.D. in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.



Christine Koerner

Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research

STRENGTHENING NONPROFIT VOICE

Ms. Christine Koerner is a Technical Assistance Consultant at AIR. Her work focuses on providing implementation-focused technical assistance, systemic approaches to continuous improvement, data collection and analysis support, and evidence-based guidance to coordinators, educators, school leaders, and community partners engaged in education initiatives at the school, district, state, and national levels. Ms. Koerner contributes to applied research and implementation that examine how math, STEM, English language arts, and community school education initiatives operate in real-world settings. A significant component of Koerner's role involves hands-on technical assistance to support data collection and analysis and continuous improvement efforts to help partners navigate complex initiatives and use data to inform decision-making.

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS · STRENGTHENING NONPROFIT VOICE



Dr. Treshonda Rutledge

Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research

STRENGTHENING NONPROFIT VOICE

Treshonda Rutledge, Ph.D., is a Technical Assistance Consultant at the American Institutes for Research (AIR). As a project director, researcher, coach, and technical assistance provider, Dr. Rutledge partners with schools, districts, state agencies, community schools, and nonprofit organizations to strengthen outcomes through data-informed decision making, continuous improvement, strategic planning, and capacity-building. She leads and supports initiatives focused on translating research into practice, building cross-sector partnerships, analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, and helping organizations use evidence to identify needs, monitor progress, and implement sustainable improvement efforts. Her work spans education, STEM, attendance and engagement, community partnerships, and systems change, with a particular focus on supporting organizations serving historically marginalized and underserved communities.



Dr. Emily Mortimer

Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research

STRENGTHENING NONPROFIT VOICE

Dr. Emily Mortimer is a researcher and technical assistance provider at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), where she supports communities and education partners in translating research into practical, locally responsive strategies. Her work focuses on community schools, out-of-school time learning, family and community engagement, and cross-sector partnerships that strengthen opportunities for young people. Emily brings more than 20 years of experience across education, STEM learning, nonprofit leadership, research, and community-based initiatives. She holds a Ph.D. in Education and is particularly interested in qualitative research, implementation, and understanding how communities build sustainable systems for learning and engagement.

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS



Dr. Kristin Hemingway

Researcher & Postdoctoral Fellow, American Institutes for Research

FROM SILOS TO SHARED SOLUTIONS

Dr. Kristin Hemingway is a Researcher and Postdoctoral Fellow at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), where she supports research and technical assistance projects focused on education, youth development, family engagement, and community-based systems. Her work includes evidence synthesis, qualitative research, stakeholder engagement, and the development of practitioner-focused resources. Dr. Hemingway brings more than 15 years of experience in program design and implementation, over 18 years of experience working in nonprofit organizations, and more than seven years of experience training nonprofit professionals through her work with the Georgia Center for Nonprofits. She also has over five years of experience supporting research and evaluation efforts in education and youth-serving systems. Dr. Hemingway holds a doctorate from Georgia State University.



Jasmine Cleark

CEO, Nova Closet

LUNCH FACILITATOR · STRATEGY CHAT

Jasmine Cleark is a Jackson-based education and community strategist and nonprofit founder who helps schools and organizations move from vision to execution. As a program officer with the NEA Foundation, she supported Community School strategy across multiple Deep South states. She previously served as an organizational specialist with the Mississippi Association of Educators and as an educator in Mississippi schools.

WELCOME, REMARKS & FACILITATION

Melanie Powell, CEO, Women's Foundation of Mississippi, and **Cassio Batteast**, Economic Opportunities Program Officer, Foundation for the Mid South, open the convening on Day One. Cassio joins Jasmine Cleark to facilitate the lunch strategy chat. **Ebonee Johnikin**, Chief Strategy Officer, Foundation for the Mid South, welcomes everyone back on Day Two.

FOR FUNDERS · DAY 1

From Listening to Investment

While nonprofit participants are in workshops, funders join a dedicated, facilitated discussion series. Together, we'll walk through the Mississippi Nonprofit Strategy, examine the priorities nonprofit leaders raised statewide, and move toward practical commitments for stronger investment, preparing for Day Two conversations with nonprofit partners.

Investing in Organizational Readiness

How funding practices can help organizations build readiness rather than require it before investment.

Investing in Collaboration and Shared Infrastructure

Peer mentoring, learning hubs, shared communications, collaborative fundraising, data tools, fiscal sponsorship, and backbone support.

Creating More Flexible and Sustainable Funding

Multi-year and general operating support, flexible reporting, accessible applications, mini-grants, and pooled funds.

Supporting Advocacy, Evaluation, and Nonprofit Voice

Strengthening policy engagement, evaluation capacity, data use, and community-centered storytelling.

From Discussion to Commitment

What philanthropy can stop, start, and change, and the individual and collective next steps that build trust and momentum.

MISSISSIPPI

Chat 'N Chew

Thank you for pulling up a chair.

Here's to the conversations that started at this table
and the commitments that carry them forward.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy
Women's Foundation of Mississippi
Foundation for the Mid South

Questions? **communications@fndmidsouth.org**