

2025 AFP Greater Austin One Day Conference: Morning Keynote

Roger D. Ali, Global Chair of the Association of
Fundraising Professionals (AFP)

Association of Fundraising Professionals



Roger D. Ali is a seasoned professional with deep and broad experience as a fundraising executive, administrator, and consultant, committed to the industry and the discipline.

Roger is a major gifts strategist with a proven track record of leading teams and comprehensive fundraising and marketing programs to raise \$150 million+, including several capital and endowment campaigns.

He is a Past Chair of the AFP Foundation for Philanthropy Canada; past President of the AFP Golden Horseshoe Chapter, where he was awarded the Recipient of Outstanding Leadership Award in 2017, and past Board Member and past Congress Chair of the AFP Toronto Chapter.

The Current Landscape

Government policy shifts

Economic volatility

Technology advances

Changing donor behavior



**Digital
Transformation in
Fundraising**

**Donor Expectations:
Transparency and
Impact**

**Generational Shifts in
Donor Behavior**

**The Role of
Technology**

MISSION | The Association of Fundraising Professionals empowers individuals and organizations to practice ethical fundraising through professional education, networking, research and advocacy.

VISION | To stimulate a world of generosity and positive social good through fundraising best practice.



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

1. Extraordinary member experience aligned with IDEA principles
2. Elevated member satisfaction at chapter and Global level
3. Increased member engagement
4. Full integration of IDEA principles within chapters
5. Portfolio growth driven by IDEA-based programming
6. Increased program participation
7. Long-term sustainability of programs
8. Improved resource accessibility for underrepresented groups
9. Heightened impact through strategic partnerships
10. Inclusive representation of all stakeholder voices
11. Recognition of fundraising as ethical profession
12. Increase in volunteer participation, reflecting commitment to IDEA

1. Elevate Member Experience

- 1.1 Local engagement reimagined and streamlined
- 1.2 Global-chapter synergy to strengthen value proposition
- 1.3 Leading-edge communications strategy
- 1.4 Leadership access for all

1.5 IDEA integration in chapter operations

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

2. Revolutionize Education & Professional Development

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

- 2.1 Agile infrastructure for content
- 2.2 Optimal learning channels
- 2.3 AFP as career catalyst

2.4 IDEA scaled for long-term impact

3. Enhance Global Reach & Impact

- 3.1 Strategic partnerships for targeted influence
- 3.2 Political advocacy
- 3.3 Public profile of the profession
- 3.4 Ethics leadership for profession

3.5 Robust infrastructure for IDEA advancement

Priority 1: Elevate Member Experience

Strengthen the AFP member experience through elevated consistency, connection, and IDEA commitment across the organization

Objectives

1.1 Local Engagement Reimagined and Streamlined

- Empower AFP chapters to reimagine and deliver a dynamic, locally resonant member experience. Strengthen connections, streamline processes, and fortify chapters as powerful engagement hubs that embody IDEA principles.
- Strengthen AFP's resourcing to provide better member experiences.

1.2 Global-Chapter Synergy to Strengthen Value Proposition

- Innovate functional frameworks for chapter operations and Global-chapter relationships, ensuring benefits reflect and champion IDEA principles.
- Develop a sustainable business model, addressing gaps, to drive member satisfaction to unprecedented heights.

1.3 Leading-Edge Communications Strategy

- Craft a dynamic, segmented communications strategy, to nurture higher awareness and easier access to member benefits.
- Drive transparency organization-wide, fostering a culture of inclusivity and engagement.

1.4 Leadership Access for All

- Broaden and enhance access to leadership and volunteer roles at both chapter and global levels, positioning AFP as the premier avenue for professional growth for all individuals.

1.5 IDEA Integration in Chapter Operations

- Expand resources, training, and connections for chapters to help them better embed IDEA into their organizational fabric and execute or amplify key initiatives.

Outcomes

1. Extraordinary member experience aligned with IDEA principles

2. Elevated member satisfaction at chapter and Global level

3. Increased member engagement

4. Full integration of IDEA principles within chapters



Priority #2: Revolutionize Education & Professional Development

Leverage AFP's strengths to ensure that all education and professional development offerings are current, relevant, IDEA-informed, and of the highest quality

Objectives

2.1 Agile Infrastructure for Content

- Establish an agile infrastructure to swiftly produce relevant, multilingual content and programming responsive to social and economic trends, positioning AFP as the vanguard in meeting ever-changing challenges.

2.2 Optimal Learning Channels

- Revamp and optimize channels for education and professional development delivery at both chapter and Global tiers, ensuring accessibility for all.

2.3 AFP as Career Catalyst

- Position AFP engagement as the proven pathway for career advancement through AFP's Leadership Development opportunities — equipping members to navigate bold challenges and seize opportunities in an evolving landscape.

2.4 IDEA Scaled for Long-term Impact

- Scale up IDEA initiatives to provide long-term leadership development pathways for underrepresented groups in the philanthropy sector, with emphasis on formal and informal mentoring and championship.

Outcomes

5. Portfolio growth
driven by IDEA-based
programming

6. Increased program
participation

7. Long term
sustainability of
programs

8. Improved resource
accessibility for
underrepresented
groups



Priority #3: Enhance Global Reach & Impact

Position AFP as a respected and collaborative global voice for fundraising excellence driven by IDEA principles

Objectives

3.1 Strategic Partnerships for Targeted Influence

- Explore partnerships across sectors and borders, while directing AFP investments towards its core audience.
- Cultivate collaborations that foster inclusivity, nurture innovation, and drive meaningful results.

3.2 Political Advocacy

- Engage in bold, legislative advocacy in the US and Canada to protect the interests of the fundraising community
- Provide cutting-edge data, insights, and reports that fundraising professionals can leverage for grassroots efforts.

3.3 Public Profile and Visibility of the Profession

- Address critical workforce challenges within the profession, supporting the talent pipeline
- Market to decision makers including CEOs and Board members

3.4 Ethics Leadership

- Enhance AFP's stature as a leader in ethics and raise the bar on ethical fundraising.

3.5 Robust Infrastructure for IDEA Advancement

- Ensure that all AFP programs and initiatives, as well as governance, chapter and volunteer structures are equipped to continuously uplift and advance IDEA.

Outcomes

9. Heightened impact through strategic partnerships

10. Strengthened legislative advocacy capacity to remain responsive to evolving policy issues

11. Increased recognition of fundraising as an ethical profession

12. Increased volunteer participation in advocacy, reflecting all stakeholder voices



Advocacy
efforts

IDEA &
belonging
focus

AI and
Chapter
initiatives &
resources

Stronger
leadership
alignment

The Universal
Charitable
Deduction
Victory

Small Donors
Matter

Your Voice
Counts



Wins for Giving

Universal Charitable Deduction Restored: Permanent implementation for non-itemizers, creating new giving incentives for millions of Americans.

Charitable Act Provisions Included: Boosted giving by \$74B during COVID.

Enhanced Giving Limits: 60% AGI limit for cash gifts made permanent.



Sector Challenges

New 0.5% AGI Floor for Itemizers: Potential negative impact on smaller and in-kind gifts, creating hurdles for everyday donors.

35% Cap on Itemized Charitable Deductions: Significant threat to major gifts and transformational philanthropy.

1% Corporate Giving Floor: May discourage charitable support from small and mid-sized businesses struggling to reach threshold.

Recent AFP Advocacy Wins

- Mobilized support for the Charitable Act
- Coordinated effective action alerts engaging thousands
- Annual Lobby Week bringing nonprofit voices directly to policymakers

The Power of Storytelling

- Personal narratives about your organization's impact help legislators understand the real-world implications of policy decisions

Chapters as Influential Messengers

- Local AFP chapters serve as powerful advocates for sector health and donor impact within their communities and congressional districts

IDEA Initiatives at AFP:

- Focus on **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA)**.
- Building a profession where everyone feels **respected, valued, and empowered**.
- Promoting **diversity in leadership** roles and **donor engagement**.

AFP's Belonging Statement

- Everyone is invited to bring their **whole selves** to the table.
- **AFP's Workplan** includes:
 - **Training & Education** to raise awareness about inclusion in fundraising.
 - **Representation & Leadership** to ensure diverse perspectives in decision-making.
 - **Access & Opportunity** for marginalized voices to lead within the sector.

Work on Belonging

- Focus on **creating a culture of belonging** with the Global Board.
- Co-developed a public statement on Belonging.
- Engaged the board in reflection and learning throughout the year
- Belonging ensures that **donors, staff, volunteers, and communities** feel valued and connected to the mission.



The Impact of AI on Fundraising

AI-Powered Donor Insights

- **Predictive analytics**
- **Personalized experiences**

Automation and Efficiency

- **AI-driven chatbots**
- **Fundraising automation tools**

AI for Event Planning and Fundraising Campaigns

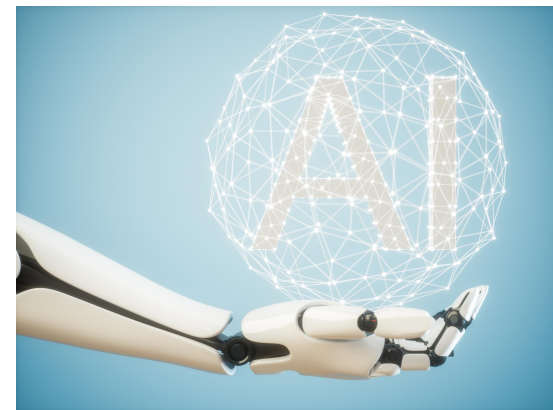
- **AI tools can analyze historical data from past events**
- **Dynamic pricing models**

Improved Donor Retention

- **AI-powered sentiment analysis**

Ethical Considerations of AI in Fundraising

- **Data Privacy and Security**
- **Bias and Discrimination**
- **Transparency in AI Decision-Making**
- **Over-reliance on AI**
- **Ethical Use of AI for Fundraising**



AFP's AI Agent: NOVA

- NOVA is AFP's new AI-powered concierge agent, launched in beta on the AFP Global website.
 - The name NOVA symbolizes 'new' and reflects energy and Northern Virginia, AFP's HQ location.
- Current Capabilities:
 - Public-facing support for general inquiries about fundraising, membership, events, and resources.
 - Trained on structured AFP content.
 - Redirects to AFP staff when unable to answer a question
- Upcoming Enhancements:
 - October 2025: Member-specific features- 2026: AI-driven donor nudging and behavioral analysis for engagement.
- Strategic Vision:
 - Multi-agent architecture for public engagement, member support, and fundraising.
 - Foundational AI infrastructure to elevate member experience and streamline operations.

- Free Webinar catalog (All live webinars will be free in Jan. 2026 to members)
- New Member Orientations
- Affinity Groups-AFP Connect Community
- Job Board
- AFP Daily/Advancing Philanthropy Newsletters
- AFP 360 Career Building Tool
- WII and Emerging Leader Mentorship Programs
- Sample policies & guidelines
- Research and Reports



The Power of Alignment

Trust, communication, partnership
Foundation for strategic growth
Essential for sustainable impact



Dual Perspective

Experience as fundraiser and board
chair
Understanding governance and
frontline realities
Importance of realistic goal-setting

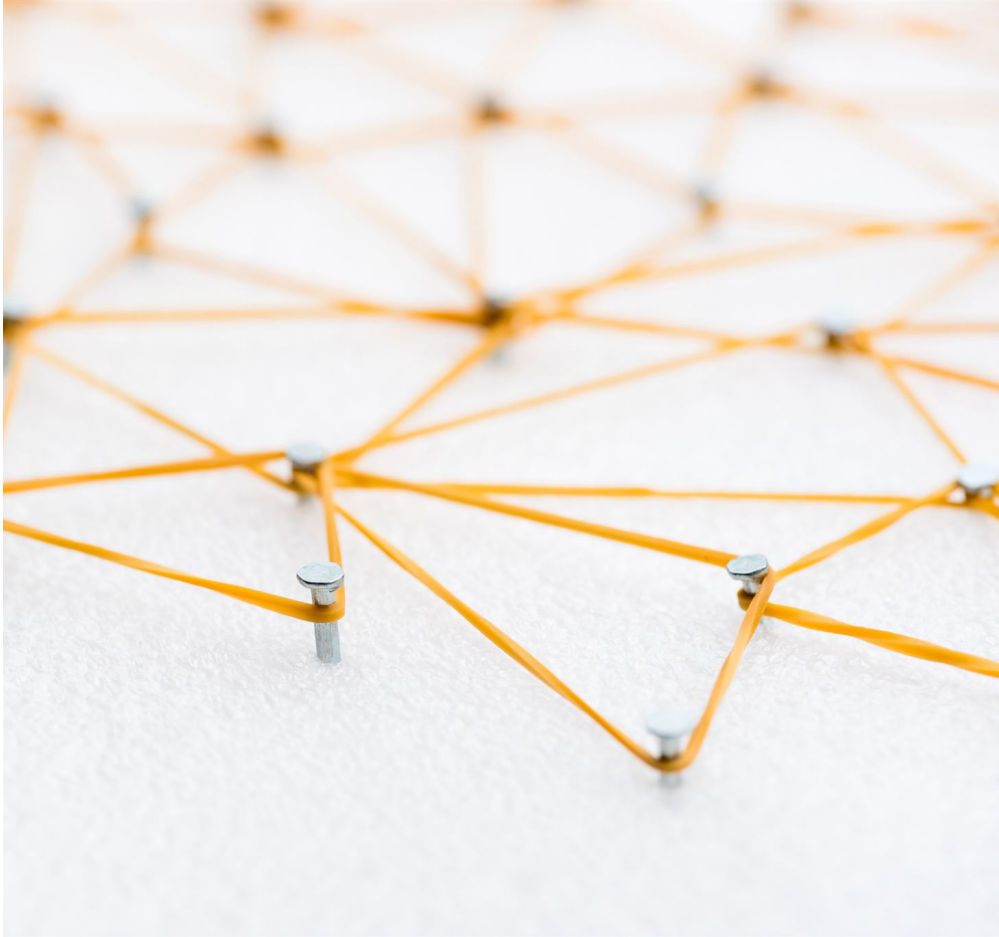


Building Strong Relationships

Proactive, transparent
communication
Share data and realistic
expectations
Invite leadership into the process
Foster collaboration and mutual trust

What does it mean to lead lightly?





5 Light Touches of Leadership

1. Pause before you plunge
2. Let go of fixing. Lean into curiosity
3. Boundaries are acts of service
4. Choose progress over perfection
5. Connect to lead



**COLLECTIVE
STRENGTH**



STAY ENGAGED



**BUILDING A
FUTURE
TOGETHER**

The Impact of Fundraising



THE IMPACT OF FUNDRAISING

Thank You!

Thank you for your dedication
to advancing the **fundraising
profession.**

Roger D. Ali, Chair,
AFP Global Board
(905) 380-5647
AFPChair@afpglobal.org

