

the power of  
PHILANTHROPY™

# 2025 Summit

## Key Takeaways

***“Dan Pallotta and the panelists were both motivating and deeply practical, reminding us of the power of bold ideas and the importance of taking risks to address our world’s biggest challenges.”***

The 2025 Power of Philanthropy Summit, co-hosted Feb. 21 by Kinetic and the UMKC Bloch School of Management, was a high-energy, inspiring and thought-provoking event designed to ***unleash your power of philanthropy.***

The Summit featured Dan Pallotta, renowned nonprofit thought leader, author of the book *Uncharitable* and subject of the documentary of the same name. Dan challenged more than 600

registered guests to rethink how they approach nonprofit work and fundraising. Panelists of regional, national and global philanthropic leaders continued the conversation, adding their own experience about communicating big dreams, embracing risk and leading with vision.

Some feedback from participants:

***“Passionate.”***

***“Inspiring.”***

***“Life-changing.”***

***“Wow! Just, wow.”***



## Dan Pallotta

### Highlights

In the “fireside chat” with **Dan Pallotta**, Kinetic CEO **Matt Beem** and President **Karin Cox**, participants were challenged to move beyond traditional philanthropic models. Dan called for a radical shift in how nonprofits think about fundraising and impact, and encouraged shifting from scarcity-driven thinking to bold, innovative and results-focused strategies.

## Change the world.

Real change in philanthropy happens when organizations let go of outdated thinking and embrace bold, disruptive ideas. Playing it safe won't

drive systemic change. Innovate. Dream big. Instead of worrying about what could go wrong, ask, “How great could this be?”

**“People are tired of being asked to do the least they can possibly do for causes that have broken their hearts. They want to be asked to do the most they can do.”**

## Reframe risk.

Fundraising and marketing aren't just expenses—they are ways to fuel future impact. When we shift the conversation from “overhead” to outcomes, nonprofits can grow and help more people. Investing in fundraising IS investing in the mission. Invest in fundraising, talent

**“Dan’s insight and perspective are so refreshing, especially in a time like this when disruption invites us to dream big and embrace new opportunities. I truly appreciate Kinetic and the work you put into making this happen. It was a much-needed light for all of us, and for me, its impact lasted well beyond the hour.”**

and strategy—just like any successful business.

**“[Overhead] in no way covers the costs that actually are incurred to administer a project.”**

## Engage boards and donors with possibility.

People are drawn to big, inspiring visions—not just crisis appeals. Donors and board members stay engaged when they see what's possible, not just what's urgent. Helping donors rethink philanthropy is key. When they focus on long-term impact instead of just cutting costs, real change happens. Smaller, well-curated boards tend to be more effective and committed.

***“Stop boring [your donors and board members] to death with tiny little incremental ideas that don’t excite anyone and are never going to make a difference. [Dream] really big. Have the courage and the audacity to state the dream in your heart. Don’t keep it a secret.”***

## **Cast a dream with deadlines.**

Deadlines, when made public, create urgency and prevent procrastination. They also force organizations to work through problems systematically rather than pushing them aside. Plan the steps necessary to achieve the desired result, then lead. Without leadership directing efforts toward a unified vision, resources are wasted, and progress stalls.

***“Kennedy didn’t just say, ‘Let’s go to the moon someday.’ He said, ‘Before this decade is out.’ That’s the kind of urgency and specificity we need in philanthropy.”***

## **Dream big and share boldly.**

Make your organization exciting. Too many nonprofits focus on what might go wrong rather than what’s possible. Fear of failure stifles innovation, but bold goals inspire action. Dreaming big and creatively is an exciting endeavor. Embrace the courage to take risks. Learn to “fail well.”

***“Nonprofits talk about how bad it can get. For-profits talk about how big they can dream. Courage fuels growth. Life either shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage.”***

## **Dare to address root causes.**

Philanthropy should focus on long-term solutions, not just short-term fixes. The most effective organizations aim for systemic change rather than temporary relief.

***“The organizations that truly transform lives are the ones that declare a vision so big it almost feels impossible—and***

***then work relentlessly to make it real.”***

## **Change the funding model.**

Nonprofits need smarter financial strategies that mirror how businesses grow. Organizations should explore financial tools like debt financing and investments to scale operations and drive long-term impact.

***“Stop funding charitable programs. Start funding revenue streams.”***

## **Create a culture of possibility.**

Organizations need to lean into innovation and possibility instead of letting the fear of failure hold them back. Helping donors understand nonprofit sustainability can shift old mindsets and open new opportunities.

***“If you’re not being laughed at, you’re not thinking big enough.”***

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***“If we leave here today and go back to business as usual, we’ve missed the point. Let’s go build something bold, something transformational.”***

# Panelists

## Highlights



Moderated by Kinetic Chief Growth Officer **Janell Johnson** and Chief Consulting Officer



**Ross Pfannenstiel**, panelists (pictured at left, top to bottom)



**James Bergman** (World Giving Foundation), **Zaki Cooper** (Integra Group), **Nancy Phelps** (JE Dunn Construction and Dunn Family Foundation), **Evan Rhinesmith** (Walton Personal Philanthropy Group), and **NaTika Rowles** (Black Community Fund) were engaged in a dynamic discussion about the future of philanthropy.



### Move beyond the overhead myth.

Panelists agree: The outdated focus on minimizing overhead is stifling nonprofit growth. They would love to see growth, but some may have different ideas. Instead of cutting costs, focus on maximizing impact.



### Set bold, measurable goals.

Setting big, time-bound goals is exciting. Small improvements don't capture the imagination. A plan to achieve bold goals creates momentum and attracts more support.

### Fundraising is an investment.

Fundraising isn't taking money away from the mission: It's what makes the mission possible. Fundraising can be seen as a strategic investment in long-term sustainability.

### Educate donors and change the narrative.

Shift the conversation from cost-cutting to impact. Panelists shared ways to educate donors about why investing in capacity-building is crucial.

### Know your audience.

These ideas are exciting, but they may be challenging. Each donor and funder is in a different place, and you should come to them with impact language. Talk to them like partners.

### Collaboration is the key to systemic change.

Real change happens when donors, volunteers and professionals work together with shared purpose and strategy.

*"Donors are smart, and they want to leave a legacy....[They] are attracted to people who have big ideas."*

**James Bergman**

*"Where possible tell a story. I think people are inspired by great stories."*

**Zaki Cooper**

*"This is your superpower. Not everyone can see the pain and suffering and need in the world and do something about it....You got this. We've got your back."*

**Nancy Phelps**

*"I think the key is making a deep impact on as many people as possible. Even if we can't always go big, every little bit still makes a [difference]."*

**Evan Rhinesmith**

*"We need to see the issue as our competition."*

**NaTika Rowles**