



Meeting the Moment? Philanthropic Support for Child Advocacy Organizations & Networks

A Funder-to-Funder Conversation

September 16, 2025 | 12:30–2 pm ET/9:30–11 am PT

Panelist Bios

MODERATOR



Kelly Finn Strömer

Managing Director, Operations & People

Exponent Philanthropy

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Kelly Finn Strömer wears many hats at Exponent. She is responsible for overseeing the organization's operations, finance, equity, human resources, and marketing functions.

Kelly has over two decades of global experience from the military, corporate, and nonprofit sectors. As a Strategy & Growth Consultant, she advised hundreds of veteran-serving nonprofits from startup through sustainability in areas of strategic planning, fundraising, DEI, board management, and operational excellence. She holds a BA from Villanova University and an MBA from The George Washington University.

Kelly is a Navy veteran, a Navy veteran spouse, a lifelong advocate for the military-connected community, and mom to three baseball-loving boys.

PANELISTS



Matthew L. Evans

Vice President of Advocacy and External Relations

United Philanthropy Forum

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As Vice President of Advocacy & External Relations for United Philanthropy Forum, Matthew L. Evans leads the organization's comprehensive external engagement strategy, integrating policy advocacy, strategic communications, and partnership development to advance philanthropy's impact for the common good. With more than 17 years of experience in public policy, advocacy, and external affairs,

he has been instrumental in expanding the Forum's influence and establishing it as a leading voice for the philanthropic sector.

Before joining the Forum, Matthew served as the inaugural Director of Public Policy and Special Projects at the Southeastern Council of Foundations (now Philanthropy Southeast), where he pioneered the organization's legislative and regulatory advocacy efforts. His career, shaped mostly in Washington, D.C. has included direct experience working with elected officials, corporations, and national associations, developing deep expertise in strategic advocacy and stakeholder engagement.

A recognized leader in the field, Matthew currently serves as Vice Chairman of the Nonprofit VOTE Board of Directors and is a member of the organization's Leadership Council. He also contributes his expertise to the Funders' Committee Census Initiative Leadership Team and the Charitable Giving Coalition Steering Committee. His previous service includes public policy committees for Independent Sector and the Council on Foundations.

In 2023, Matthew's leadership in philanthropy was recognized when he was named the recipient of ABFE's James A. Joseph Philanthropic Emerging Leader Award, which acknowledges and encourages the accomplishments and contributions of "dynamic game-changers on the rise in the philanthropic sector." He holds an Executive Certificate in Philanthropic Leadership from Georgetown University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Tennessee State University, an HBCU in Nashville.



Melen Hagos

Chief of Staff

Greater Washington Community Foundation

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Melen joined the Greater Washington Community Foundation in 2017 and has spent nearly a decade working at the intersection of strategy, program development, and operations in philanthropy. She has led impactful grantmaking efforts, strengthened funding collaboratives, and played a pivotal role in launching major initiatives including the Community Resilience Initiative, The Resilience Fund, and the COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund.

Currently serving as Chief of Staff to the CEO, Melen drives strategic priorities and special projects, manages organizational communications on behalf of the CEO, and liaises with the Board of Trustees, staff, and community partners. In this role, she ensures organizational alignment, facilitates decision-making, and coordinates efforts that advance the Foundation's mission and long-term goals.

Melen brings more than 10 years of experience spanning philanthropy, program development, communications, and fundraising. Before joining the Foundation, she held positions at the Brookings Institution, focusing on international education initiatives, and completed fellowships with She Should Run, a nonprofit working to elect female candidates to public office.

She was selected in 2017 for the Leadership Center for Excellence's Young Professionals Program and, in 2022, joined the board of Young, Black, and Giving Back, a nonprofit that builds capacity and funding for Black-led and Black-benefiting organizations. Melen holds a B.A. in International Development with minors in African and Middle Eastern Studies from James Madison University and completed a

certificate in Nonprofit Leadership and Management at the University of Maryland, College Park in May 2025, where she also served as a Do Good Fellow.



Jenna Wachtmann

Vice President

The Ball Brothers Foundation

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Jenna Wachtmann joined the Ball Brothers Foundation staff in 2014 after working in fundraising and program development for social service agencies in St. Louis and Indianapolis. She also completed an internship with the U.S. Department of State, Office of Innovation. She is a graduate of Abilene Christian University. She holds both a certificate in nonprofit management from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at IUPUI and an executive master of arts degree in philanthropic studies from the IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. As vice president, Jenna supports the foundation's president and CEO in strategy development, communications, and day-to-day management of operations. She also works directly with the foundation's grantees. She is an alum of the Exponent Philanthropy Next Generation Fellows Program. She currently serves on various boards including: Exponent Philanthropy and Indiana Philanthropy Alliance.



Elliot Weinbaum

Chief Philanthropy Officer

William Penn Foundation

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Elliot leads the Foundation's grantmaking, working with the Program Team to ensure impactful, equitable, and transparent funding that expands access and opportunities in our region.

Previously, Elliot served as the Director of our education program for almost nine years, leading our efforts to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children in Philadelphia.

Prior to joining the Foundation in 2013, Elliot was an Associate Commissioner at the U.S. Department of Education, where he oversaw the federally funded Regional Educational Laboratories and the What Works Clearinghouse. He also spent more than a decade at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, where he was a researcher and member of the faculty. While at Penn, he studied the impacts of federal and state policies on the work of teachers and administrators.

A product of Philadelphia's public schools, Elliot received his Ph.D. in education policy from the University of Pennsylvania and his B.A. from Yale University. Elliot is an Eisenhower Fellow, having studied education policy and improvement efforts in cities across China.