Fall 2026 News letter

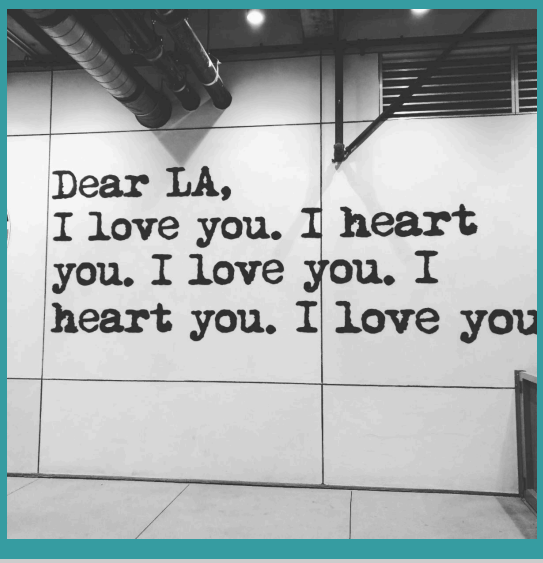


Change Lab®

Greetings for the season. As we all head into chillier days and winter looms (literally and metaphorically), I am reminded of Shakespeare's Richard III speech about the winter of our discontent and the unhappiness of war finally bringing a "bright, happy time of peace."

May the time ahead show us the path to happier times once again.





We hope you will enjoy some of the fruits of our recent labor and the tips, and topics we care about.

Nancy Brimhall and Team

WHAT MAKES A GREAT NONPROFIT BOARD MEMBER?

So Simple Yet So Hard

1. Firstly, take a moment to **assess your current board** (see our free board self-assessment **here**.)

2. **Find the holes and the skills**, talents, introductions, advocacy, and generosity that you need to support your organization at the finest level. Aspire to be a board

that sets themselves on fire with excitement and support for what your organization can do!

3. Make sure they are **action-oriented**. Nothing worse that a board that likes to tell you what to do and never does anything themselves (see #2).

4. Find those that **understand their role is one of service**. Avoid anyone who is looking for customers for their business, fully understands that like anything that they are committed to doing well, their board service requires effort and time commitment.

a. That means share a **realistic estimation of preparation for meetings**, attending meetings, committee work, event attendance, strategic planning effort, and identification/cultivation/solicitation of support.

b. Make sure you have **a strong orientation plan** to get them integrated and up to speed.

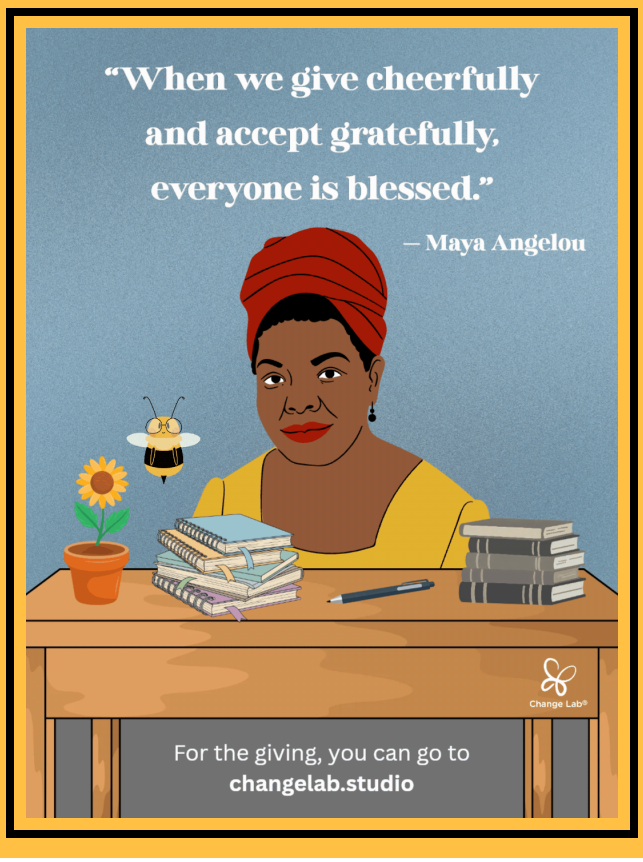
c. Before you do anything, make sure they are **solicited for their own board gift** and what your expectations are and that they will meet them.

5. **Keep them learning** and make sure they want to learn and are committed to staying informed and current. Share articles, periodic VIP updates, program updates, make personal calls and check-ins to them, bring them in on conversations where their opinion and ideas count!

6. Lastly, they must be **an astute problem-solver**, comfortable with group resolution processes, and solving problems in a positive and effective way.



Some words of wisdom - *clip and save*



Did you say marketing?.... ... Indeed we just created some great info for you. Check it out.



You are going to want to have this little gem. All you have to do is download it here. It's yours. Free.

Interview with Pamela Ravare-Jones, DBA

Professor of Marketing and Management, College of Business, Southern University and A & M College, Baton Rouge, LA

Dr. Ravare-Jones is a extraordinary community volunteer and board leader for several key organizations in Louisiana, including LORI (Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants), Volunteers of America, and Junior Achievement. Her unique perspective helps to understand why the South is potentially poised to become the epicenter of interest as we focus on the unique challenges and opportunities its rich history of nonprofit work and community engagement teaches us. We are delighted to have a moment to speak with her.

In her own words, "my perspective comes from sitting at the intersection of nonprofit governance, higher education. business leadership, and community engagement. Whether I am serving in a boardroom or teaching students in a classroom, my focus is ultimately the same: creating sustainable pathways that help individuals and communities thrive."

Q*: What are you seeing as the greatest challenges today for nonprofits in the Baton Rouge/New Orleans area?*



A: The central challenge for nonprofits today is not simply meeting rising community needs; it is in building organizations that can sustain their work, collaborate effectively, and demonstrate measurable impact over time.

Serving on boards and working with organizations I have seen community needs from multiple perspectives - from immigrant and refugee families, to individuals and families needing social services, to young people seeking financial literacy, career exposure, entrepreneurship education, and pathways to economic mobility.

These challenges are deeply interconnected. Housing instability affects education. Transportation affects employment. Mental health affects family stability. Poverty affects access to opportunity. Nonprofits are increasingly being asked to address complex, overlapping problems, often with limited funding, staffing, and infrastructure.

That is why sustainability must be understood as more than financial stability. A sustainable nonprofit has a clear mission, strong leadership and governance, diversified resources, effective partnerships, and the ability to show that its work is producing meaningful results.

Organizations must be able to answer three fundamental questions: *What problem are we uniquely positioned to solve? Who must we collaborate*

with to address the broader system around that problem? And, how will we measure and sustain the impact of our work?

The nonprofits best positioned for the future will be those that resist working in isolation, build partnerships across sectors, use resources strategically, and remain accountable for outcomes-not simply activities. Sustainability, collaboration, and measurable impact are no longer priorities; they are the foundation of effective nonprofit leadership.

Q: *Do you have any tips on how an organization might increase new donors? Maybe you have seen some great new energy and ideas brewing that we might all learn from?*

A: While I wish I could point to a wave of groundbreaking ideas, the nonprofit sector remains in a period of considerable uncertainty and disruption. Many organizations are still assessing the implications of reduced government support, increased competition for philanthropic dollars, and changing funder priorities.

One encouraging development, however, is the renewed emphasis on strategic collaboration. Local nonprofits that previously relied heavily on national funding are reassessing their operating models and identifying community needs. Rather than competing independently for increasingly limited resources, these organizations are beginning to align their expertise, infrastructure, and relationships to strengthen their collective impact. This collaborative approach can create more compelling funding proposals and demonstrate to prospective donors that organizations are committed to responsible stewardship and measurable community outcomes.

To attract new donors, nonprofits must also become more intentional about communicating their impact. This requires more than presenting statistics. Organizations should combine credible data with compelling stories that clearly illustrate how their work changes lives, inviting prospective donors to visit programs, engage with participants, and witness the organization's impact firsthand can create a much stronger connection than a traditional funding request alone.

At the same time, greater transparency and engagement are needed from the funding community. Many nonprofits receive little to no meaningful feedback regarding why their proposal was not funded. Funders could strengthen the sector by clearly communicating their priorities, providing constructive feedback, and creating incentives for organizations to collaborate rather than compete unnecessarily.

I would also encourage funders to look beyond the "usual suspects." Although larger, well-established charitable organizations may have greater visibility and more sophisticated development operations, smaller community-based organizations may be producing equally strong, or even

more direct results. Funding decisions should therefore be guided by demonstrated outcomes, community trust, organization capacity, and the ability to address the community's most urgent needs.

During this historic contraction in government support, funders have an important opportunity to convene community forums, roundtable discussions, and listening sessions. These conversations would allow nonprofit leaders, donors, and residents to better understand emerging needs and align philanthropic investments accordingly. Ultimately, increasing the donor base will require stronger storytelling, authentic relationship-building, collaborative partnerships, and a more inclusive approach to determining which organizations are best positioned to deliver meaningful and sustainable community impact.

"THE CHALLENGES FACING OUR COMMUNITIES ARE TOO INTERCONNECTED FOR ANY ONE INSTITUTION OR SECTOR TO SOLVE ALONE."

Q: I noticed that conversations are emerging that the South is positioned now to be the new epicenter for attention in the US. How do you respond to that?

A: I believe the South represents one of America's greatest opportunities and it is an important conversation around workforce development, technology, economic mobility, demographic changes and the future of communities that is all happening at the same time.

These conversations have existed over the past eight years or more from what I have seen but I would caution approaching the South from the concept of a deficit perspective. It has a large social capital, deep entrepreneur experience, nonprofit leaders that have excelled in this arena and important community assets are already here.

At Southern University I see the extraordinary potential in our exposure to the full range of knowledge contained in the entrepreneurship, marketing, leadership networks that we utilize to engage our students. We are developing future executives and entrepreneur leadership and it's exciting.

But the South still needs attention and resources to work on impediments to improvement. The South definitely deserves it’s time to bring its national rankings up in many sectors and truly hold a candle to what it can do.

Q: What would you say are some observations that you want to share about how to help keep our neighbors, family, students, and our community mentally and physically healthy these days? Do you have any thoughts you could share with us?

A: Today's students are navigating an environment dramatically different from the one many of us experienced.

In addition to traditional academic and financial pressures, they face social media, constant connectivity, artificial intelligence, economic uncertainty, and rapidly changing expectations about careers.

From my experiences at the University of Texas, Dallas, and now at Southern University, one them remains consistent: students want to know that their education will lead somewhere.

Higher education, therefore, must develop more than academic knowledge. We must develop critical thinking, communication, emotional intelligence, leadership, professionalism, adaptability, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and the responsible use of technology.

And mentorship remains essential.

"SOMETIMES STRENGTHENING A COMMUNITY BEGINS WITH SOMETHING VERY SIMPLE: NOTICING WHO IS MISSING AND CHECKING ON THEM."

Q: In your work within a university what differences are you seeing in the youth of today? What challenges do you think they face?

A: Collectively, certainly students that are struggling are not something that we haven't seen before; it's just at such a magnitude now. It is at a heightened level. Social media has played a tremendous part. Mental and physical health has been damaged. When a community can help support better mental health, it really begins with community connections.

When you live in an incredibly connected technological society, but people can still feel profoundly isolated, and so many kids seem to struggle with being socially introverted, what can any of us do to help?

I think the simplest thing we can do is to notice one another again. For me, when I don't see a neighbor any more or notice that a colleague's behavior changed, or an older adult in the community who seems to be

more of a drifter now, then the work that we have to do to bring people back in begins.

Without normalizing professional support in these times when people continue to suffer and tragically the next step can be the one we read about where they shoot in schools and churches and traumatize little kids in a classroom. I think strengthening the community begins with something very simple -- noticing who is missing and checking on them.

Today's kids are coming out of Covid and need our support to reintroduce them to a world that we ask them to take as normal and for some then to come to college and connect with people when ai can support disconnection with humans and social media can be competitive and illusionary. It's very difficult for many.

Thank you for your insightfulness and we are grateful for our time talking with you.



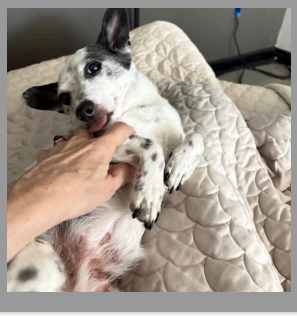


Want to Better Understand Corporate Sponsorships?

We've prepared a great summary for you. Here you will learn what sponsorships are all about, what companies want in return, what different kinds of sponsorship there are, how to find a sponsor and much more. All yours. Our gift.

Oh, and we share insights about what your collateral promo piece should look like, some soliciting tips, and a sample sponsorship level summary and what you might send a sponsor to review.

Here's the link to the full booklet



Thinking About Using Claude to Create A Website?

Yup, here's what we learned (it's not as simple as you think):

1. **Wow, does it sound appealing** when you read all about how simple it is.

2. **Nope, it's not.**

3. Why not? Well, it's about the prompts. That little thing that takes you hours, days and lots of hits or misses. **Time consuming.** It sure is.

4. **You feel elated when you get through all of that.** Like the genius you always thought you were and AI helps to make you sure that you feel you are (and with ChatGPT as your closest, nicest, and most supportive friend,) you head into Claude website ready to master creating a new website.

5. **Here's where it goes wrong**……see #3

6. **How to make it work?** Really define what your goal is. Just like working with any web designer, the content and tolerance for "the look" are all on you. There is no shortcut.

7. **Be prepared to spend hours on the content**, searching out websites you like and uploading them and telling Claude what you like and don't like about your samples.

8. Yes, Ai can write for you, but **it will always need heavy editing** as your website has to look and feel and talk like your organization. No way around that. Again, be prepared for the time.

9. **Do all of the writing, prep, images etc. BEFORE you get started** with Claude because it will just keep asking you for that. And, it will keep asking you for your feedback on what it does produce.

10. **Get all of your copy and design approvals** from the higher-ups BEFORE you start working with Claude. It's impossibly hard to change things once you are in the thick of it.

11. **And, good luck**. If you like a challenge, this is the one for you.

And, no that is not "Claude" in a cute dog costume. It's a real visiting dog some months back named Cersei that we never wanted to give back.



We just created an electronic greeting *flip* card to send to a donor (for a minimum donation) for one of our clients and fell in love with the idea. We designed nine different images, full personalization and wow.

If you want the same for your organization, let us know at info@changelab.studio. We'll be happy to do the work to make it happen.

Check out the sample by clicking here. And, if you are interested in their wonderful work and want to donate $25 or more, follow the donate button on their website and you can see it in action at www.ohana-village.org.



And, now.... LIVE training.

Here's what some of the attendees said when we were first piloting the course content:

"I was surprised how much I got out of the 'Communication Mashup' session because I have no impact on our direct mail program, but it was so good. I could see how it affected our major gifts program! This session could easily be hours long, it was that good." (Jule Meyer, Oxfam America Major Gift Officer),

"Nancy and Peter are fabulous presenters. Liked the casual atmosphere, combined with a fast pace.", (Anon.),

".....every board should go through this process." (Linda Davidson, Esq., Board Member), and more.

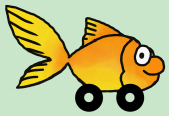
This is a truly unique, interactive experience. Learning at it's very, very best. Here's the link.

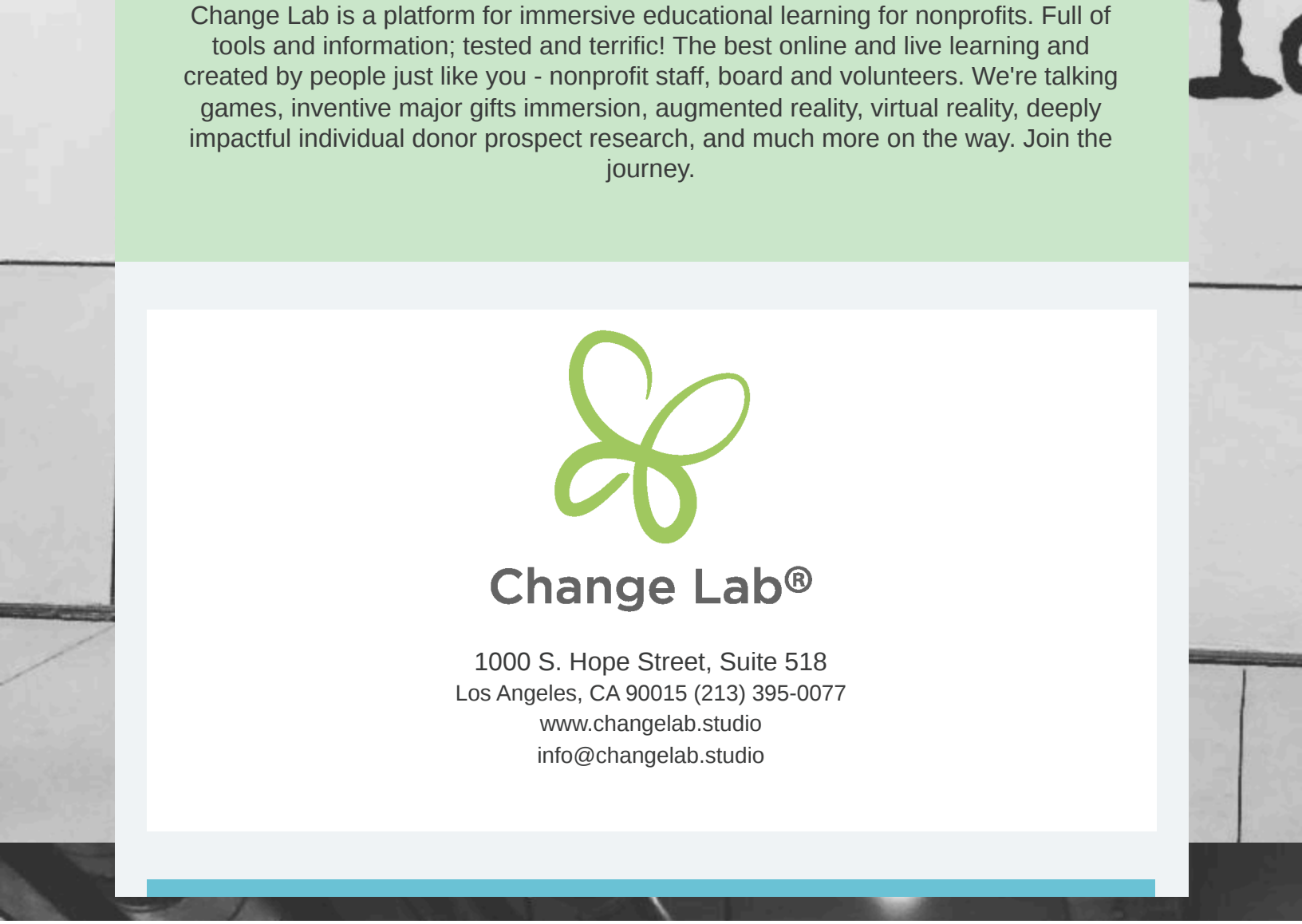
WAIT, WAIT THERE'S MORE.... Late last December we created **"Bee Intelli"**, a deep dive prospect research tool. We agree, we kept it quiet while we worked on making it perfect. It is.

It's quite amazing and honestly better than sliced bread. And, as we always do, we are committed to helping you understand and deploy your resources toward something that will pay off. And, it does!

Now, fully tested, its available to you. It's one of our jewels. Catch it here, including access to a redacted sample fyi.

So, what is "it"? It is a brilliant deep dive into prospect profiling that also includes the steps to get moving! Most of our profiles are 20+ pages long, contain stunningly deep research that augments any basic cut of your full database and allows you to focus on the top prospects in very specific ways. It's the frosting on the cake. This is about focusing and setting the stage for success. There's nothing like it out there. And, as one of our senior nonprofit colleages just shared with me yesterday, "This is impressive."





Change Lab is a platform for immersive educational learning for nonprofits. Full of tools and information; tested and terrific! The best online and live learning and created by people just like you - nonprofit staff, board and volunteers. We're talking games, inventive major gifts immersion, augmented reality, virtual reality, deeply impactful individual donor prospect research, and much more on the way. Join the journey.

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