

## 2026 Poverty Matters Workshop Sessions

\*Workshops Subject to Change

**Workshop Session Title:** The Mission Aligned Data Driven Approach to Organizational Excellence

**Workshop Session Description:** The Mission Aligned, Data Driven Approach was designed to help organizations integrate well established business processes, such as Lean, Six Sigma, Data Driven Decision Making, PMP, and Hoshin Kanri into the ROMA Cycle. Participants will explore how organizations define success, identify gaps between purpose and practice, and use meaningful data to strengthen decision-making and community impact.

**Workshop Speaker:** Shawn Howell

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** SA Howell, LLC

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Guiding Justice-Impacted Individuals Towards Opportunity and Community

**Workshop Session Description:** Project Proven (Western Technical College's Re-Entry Services) is a comprehensive support and transition program dedicated to helping individuals currently or formerly incarcerated successfully reintegrate into their communities. The program partners with local jails in La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Jackson Counties to deliver educational services (such as GED/HSED), career readiness training, employment assistance, and life-skills development. Through offerings like Wellness Club, Job Club, Leadership Group, Tech Club, and community recreation initiatives, Project Proven fosters personal growth, builds professional competency, and strengthens support networks. By bridging incarceration to opportunity, Project Proven aims to reduce recidivism, empower justice-impacted individuals, and facilitate sustained success in education, employment, and community life.

**Workshop Speaker:** Colin Walsh

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Western Technical College

**Workshop Speaker:** Mac Kiel

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** Western Technical College

**Workshop Session Title:** Direct Service to Lived Experience: Roles in Homelessness Policy Advocacy

**Workshop Session Description:** This session examines how policy around housing and homelessness can be influenced by both direct service and lived experience. While many policies aim to address poverty, housing instability, and economic opportunity, individuals most impacted are often engaged too late—or in ways that do not influence decision-making. Drawing from experience across direct service roles and system-level advocacy within the Dane County Continuum of Care, this session will explore where current advocacy in homelessness efforts fall short, as well as opportunities for perspective shift when individuals move across roles—from navigating systems to influencing them. Participants will gain insight into: \* How advocacy is currently practiced within direct service settings (using example of Dane County Education and Advocacy Committee) \* Where gaps exist between intention, engagement, and impact \* The difference between participation and shared decision-making (using example of Dane County Lived Experience Council) \* Strategies for strengthening advocacy by more meaningfully integrating lived homelessness expertise Through real examples and guided discussion, participants will reflect on their own organizational practices and identify opportunities to better align service delivery, community voice, and system-level decision-making to promote more effective and equitable outcomes in housing and homelessness policy.

**Workshop Speaker:** Madelyn Peppard

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** The Road Home Dane County

**Workshop Speaker:** Aurelius Leslie

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** Lived Experience Council of Dane County

**Workshop Session Title:** Addressing Homelessness and Poverty for Domestic Violence Survivors Through Housing First

**Workshop Session Description:** The threat of homelessness for domestic violence (DV) survivors remains a serious issue that demands a holistic response. Survivors need access to financial resources, safety planning, and affordable housing to achieve long-term stability for themselves and their families. However, traditional support systems, such as shelters, are often unable to provide the long-term assistance needed by DV survivors

including access to continuous stable housing and flexible financial assistance. In response to these gaps, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) implemented Wisconsin's Domestic Violence Housing First (WI-DVHF) Pilot Program. Adapted from Housing First philosophy, the WI-DVHF program is designed to help survivors find and maintain safe and stable housing and relies on three key pillars: mobile advocacy, flexible financial assistance, and trauma-informed care. Across Wisconsin, nine DV service providers participated in the WI-DVHF pilot and were provided funding from the American Rescue Plan for the provision of direct client support as well as indirect services. To assess the impact of the pilot program, a comprehensive evaluation was designed by a research team from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Denver. The evaluation involved a mixed-methods, longitudinal evaluation of all nine DV sites participating in the pilot program. Preliminary findings from this evaluation indicate that the DVHF model is associated with a number of positive outcomes for survivors. For example, DVHF recipients demonstrated reduced exposure to violence, reduced posttraumatic stress symptoms, and increased housing stability for them and their children. Additionally, program recipient's reported greater school attendance among their children. This workshop will examine the WI-DVHF pilot program as a case study in trauma-informed, housing-focused intervention for DV survivors. Topics will include an overview of the DVHF model and its three core pillars, findings from the longitudinal mixed-methods evaluation, and implications for program design and policy. Participants can expect to leave with a conceptual understanding of the DVHF framework and its distinguishing features relative to conventional shelter-based models, familiarity with key evaluation outcomes across domains of housing stability, safety, and family wellbeing, and practical insights into the role of flexible financial assistance and trauma-informed care in supporting DV survivors at risk of homelessness. The workshop further aims to facilitate dialogue among policymakers, advocates, and researchers on strategies for scaling and sustaining housing-first approaches within DV service systems.

**Workshop Speaker:** Mariel Barnes

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** UW-Madison, La Follette School of Public Affairs

**Workshop Speaker:** Tricia Fancher

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** Wisconsin Rapids Family Center

**Workshop Session Title:** Meet "ALICE", Our Neighbor

**Workshop Session Description:** Who is "ALICE"? ALICE is your neighbor--the folks waiting on you and cleaning up after you in the service industry--cooking for you and making your favorite latte, childcare providers, cashiers, farm workers, personal care aides, housekeepers, delivery drivers, and on and on. ALICE has to work multiple jobs, going without healthcare and childcare. ALICE often does not have reliable transportation but frequently needs to live in a neighboring town because rent is cheaper there but then the car breaks down and there's no transit to get to work. In 2023, according to the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), 11% of Wisconsin households were financially insecure. Yet this measure failed to account for an additional 24% of households that were also experiencing financial hardship. These households are ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed — with income above the FPL, but not enough to afford basic expenses in the county where they live. Between ALICE households and those living in poverty, an estimated 35% of households in Wisconsin were below the ALICE Threshold in 2023 & nearly 40% in Eau Claire County. Households below the Threshold are forced to make impossible choices. You will meet folks living with "ALICE" housing insecurity, our neighbors. Their stories capture the systemic and structural barriers to financial stability. You will learn of local efforts to increase access to housing for this vulnerable demographic. Our core message is, "Without stable shelter, everything else falls apart" ~Mathew Desmond, author of Evicted: Poverty & Profit in the American City

**Workshop Speaker:** Dr. Susan Wolfgram

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** JONAH, Joining Our Neighbors in Advancing Hope

**Workshop Speaker:** Amanda Babb

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** Eau Claire Tenant-Landlord Resource Center

Workshop Speaker: Mara Langreck

**Workshop Session Title:** Increasing Your Mission Impact Through Advocacy

**Workshop Session Description:** The widespread absence of advocacy in the nonprofit sector -- especially among service providing nonprofits --is not fully explained by the lack of training, tools, success stories, and local, regional and national advocacy networks. These have existed for decades. One of the big reasons for the widespread absence of advocacy is that deep conversations about advocacy, especially in boardrooms, never happen. Why is this so and how can this change. This session provides some answers. Now is the time to start the conversation. Advocacy is one of the most effective tools nonprofits and foundations can use to advance their mission and serve their communities. The term “advocacy” includes broader advocacy efforts, legislative lobbying and non-partisan, election-related activities. And the combination of advocacy and direct services can dramatically increase the mission impact of any nonprofit. Advocacy is all about your organization’s work and what it will take to advance it. **Session Topics:** \*What is advocacy and why do nonprofits need to engage in such advocacy efforts? \*What the law allows tax exempt nonprofits to do \*Barriers to nonprofit engaging in advocacy and how to overcome them \*Beginning the conversation about advocacy with your board \*Specific roles that board and staff members can play \*Examples of service provider nonprofits that have made the decision to engage in advocacy \*Overview of organizations and proven resources that can help **Key Takeaways:** \*Leave with a toolkit of activities, tools, practices, and case studies for exploring where advocacy fits in their nonprofit, making decisions regarding advocacy, and taking first steps to building internal organizational capacity to engage in advocacy. \*Discover natural entry points for advocacy that already exist in nonprofits \*Learn about ways to engage in advocacy without adding to staffing and budget

**Workshop Speaker:** Frank Martinelli

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** The Center for Public Skills Training

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Shifting Provider-Client Dependency To Client Empowerment

**Workshop Session Description:** Supporting individuals and families experiencing poverty is meaningful and often challenging work. Helping clients take ownership of their circumstances can be difficult and over time, this can contribute to frustration, stress and burnout for those in helping roles. This interactive workshop provides practical strategies to shift from dependency to empowerment, allowing clients to take greater responsibility while maintaining a supportive, respectful relationship. Participants will be introduced to the Five Foundation Blocks of Empowerment and learn how to use effective, reflective questions to encourage independence, build confidence and foster interdependence. By strengthening these skills, professionals can improve client engagement, reduce emotional strain and create more sustainable, impactful outcomes in their work.

**Workshop Speaker:** Dolores Kokinos

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** The Empowerment Principles

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Everyone deserves access to justice: Legal Tune Up Tool & Community Collaboration

**Workshop Session Description:** LIFT disrupts structural discrimination devastating formerly incarcerated, BIPOC, and low-income communities. By democratizing access to legal information and removing barriers to employment, housing, and financial stability, LIFT directly confronts the structural inequities that have excluded BIPOC and low-income communities from financial institutions and economic opportunity. Our LegalTuneUp tool serves those trapped in cycles of poverty caused by legal barriers that prevent economic stability. Participants can take away ideas on how to implement "legal health checks" at their own organizations and how to get involved in our Legal Navigators program that specifically recruits frontline workers serving low-income families, enabling trusted community members to guide neighbors through legal resolution processes. This model builds trust with communities rightfully distrustful of legal systems due to historical racism and exclusion.

**Workshop Speaker:** Erica Nelson

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** LIFT Wisconsin

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Say It Simply- Plain Language Strategies for Verbal Communication

**Workshop Session Description:** Plain language is communication your audience can understand and use the first time they read or hear it. This session will focus on verbal communication. Participants will learn how to improve access to community resources for underserved populations through clear and effective communication. Through verbal strategies around word choice, organization of content, structure, and tone, plain language is a communication style that increases understanding and engagement. Participants will learn practical approaches for clearer, more inclusive verbal communication.

**Workshop Speaker:** Shannon Mason Young

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Wisconsin Literacy, Inc.

**Workshop Speaker:** Kimberly Wild

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Wisconsin Literacy, Inc.

**Workshop Session Title:** Strengthening Community Resilience through Financial Empowerment and Mental Health Support

**Workshop Session Description:** Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin (CAC) Rhiannon Tonies and Tricia Meinholz will present CAC's integrated approach to advancing community resilience by addressing the intersection of financial stability and mental health. Through the Jefferson County Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) and Mental Health First Aid training, CAC equips individuals and communities with tools to achieve both economic security and emotional well-being. FECs provide free, one-on-one financial counseling to help participants reduce debt, improve credit, build savings, and plan for long-term stability. Using a structured coaching model, professionally trained financial counselors support clients in creating actionable financial goals. Nationally, the FEC model has demonstrated measurable success in reducing debt and increasing savings and credit outcomes. The Jefferson County FEC's experience has revealed that financial challenges are often intertwined with mental health needs. To address this, CAC integrates Mental Health First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid, and QPR Suicide Prevention

training—offered at no cost to Wisconsin residents—into its broader service approach. These evidence-based programs equip participants to recognize signs of mental health challenges and respond with appropriate support and referrals. Extensive FEC program data shows that participants improve their financial stability through FEC counseling services, while over 400 individuals trained in mental health awareness in the past five months have strengthened community capacity for early intervention. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how aligning financial empowerment with mental health education creates a more resilient, responsive community. This session will provide an overview of these programs, highlight outcomes, lessons learned, and how to access these services through CAC.

**Workshop Speaker:** Rhiannon Tonies

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Homeowner and Future Homeowner Bill of Rights

**Workshop Session Description:** This session is a continuation of the anti-displacement work the CDA has been a part of for the last 5 years. Displacement has been elevated by residents as posing a risk to Black & Latino homeownership strategies. If recent community conversations have taught us anything, it's that we do not have a consensus on what the causes of displacement are, what policy solutions are available to combat displacement, and how those policy solutions should be prioritized. If our aging neighbors cannot afford their homes, they will be displaced from their neighborhoods. This leaves aging neighbors without stable housing, and neighborhoods lose quality inventory for future generations when investors buy those homes. Communities across the country have helped solve this problem by providing for a lower property tax rate for aging neighbors. For too long in Wisconsin we have been intimidated by our state's Uniformity Clause, but other states have successfully amended their Uniformity Clauses to protect aging neighbors. Join us in an intentional conversation to set a path forward to protect aging neighbors in Wisconsin

**Workshop Speaker:** Johanna M. Jimenez

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Community Development Alliance Inc.

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Appreciation v. appropriation

**Workshop Session Description:** A facilitated conversation addressing the differences between cultural appropriation and appreciation. There will be various tools used to guide the conversation

**Workshop Speaker:** Kayla Oestreich

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Community Action Inc of Rock and Walworth Counties

**Workshop Speaker:**

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:**

**Workshop Session Title:** Strengthening the Workforce Through Education

**Workshop Session Description:** This presentation shares how the Nursing Skills Grant helped students overcome barriers, stay in school, and complete their nursing degrees. It also reflects on how the systems, coordination, and lessons from this work were applied to other programs, helping drive success beyond the original grant goals. At its heart, this presentation is also about the power of strong partnerships and how working together can create better outcomes for students, programs, and the communities they go on to serve. Take-a-ways include: Practical ideas for reducing barriers to student completion, Strategies that can be replicated across programs,

A stronger framework for building partnerships that support program success

**Workshop Speaker:** Jody Jack-Tranberg

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Couleecap Inc

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Using the Lens of Justice and Trauma to Improve Program Experience

**Workshop Session Description:** At Couleecap, we operate our Homeownership Empowerment Program. This is a program designed to connect clients to the best path to homeownership for them and we focus our efforts on financially vulnerable communities. We will share why we focus on these communities, how we use trauma informed counseling techniques to build rapport, how to create connections within your community, and also what kind of regulation and policy change conversations you can be having with your partners. Structure: Narrative of systematic racism, brief history state of WI and how it is showing up in today's world. Time 90 mins (can be stretched, prefer not to shrink). 1)

Understanding that systemic level

change is possible even with small action steps within housing programs ( 2) Learn what action steps are achievable to start to move level the playing field in your own organization.

3)

Learn what conversations you

can have in your community about system change and regulation barriers. 4) Round table time, group questions (25 mins) a.

What is working where you are?

**Workshop Speaker:** Majel Hein

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Couleecap Inc

**Workshop Speaker:** Aelalacia Holmes

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** Couleecap Inc

**Workshop Session Title:** Transportation: every ride leads to independence.

**Workshop Session Description:** Transportation can be a steppingstone to a person overcoming poverty. 41 million people live in poverty in the United States. More than half do not own a car. This session will talk about how you as an agency can offer free/affordable transportation by thinking outside the box. Applying for grants to help pay for copays, so that riders can take those steps needed to better themselves. It is not just a ride it's their future; it's their independence. Reliable and safe transportation helps riders get to places to look for jobs, housing, medical services, education and food. These are the basic human needs that we all deserve.

**Workshop Speaker:** Bobbi Hegna

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** New Freedom Transportation

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Childcare Incubator Program

**Workshop Session Description:** ADVOCAP's Childcare Incubator Program is a dynamic initiative designed to address the critical shortage of quality childcare in our communities while empowering aspiring childcare providers to launch and sustain successful businesses. Through a comprehensive support model, the program offers participants access to business development training, licensing guidance, mentorship, and startup resources tailored to the unique needs of early childhood care. The incubator not only helps individuals navigate the complex regulatory landscape of childcare but also fosters entrepreneurial growth by connecting them with financial assistance, marketing tools, and peer networks. By removing barriers to entry and promoting high standards of care, ADVOCAP is cultivating a new generation of childcare professionals who are equipped to meet local demand and contribute to economic stability. This program is a cornerstone of ADVOCAP's broader mission to reduce poverty and strengthen families. It reflects our commitment to innovative, community-driven solutions that create lasting impact for children, parents, and providers alike.

**Workshop Speaker:** Tanya Marcoe

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** ADVOCAP, Inc.

**Workshop Speaker:** Kathy Doyle

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** ADVOCAP, Inc.

**Workshop Session Title:** Poverty Informed Practice: 10 Actions to Try Now!

**Workshop Session Description:** The workshop is based on my 2024 book *Poverty Informed Practice in Education: 10 Actions to Try Now!* Participants will learn about poverty as a structural problem vs a character flaw and will learn real tools to do their work more effectively. The session will be interactive and develop initial work plans from strategies in the book

**Workshop Speaker:** Chad Dull

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Poverty Informed Practice LLC

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Integrated Pathways to Stability: Food, Housing, and Health for Families

**Workshop Session Description:** This workshop will highlight UMOS' Community Pathways Program and its family-centered approach to addressing critical community needs in food security, housing stability (including rental, mortgage, and property tax assistance), and access to behavioral and physical health services. Grounded in a holistic service delivery model, the presentation will demonstrate how integrated supports can stabilize families and promote long-term self-sufficiency. Participants will learn how to design and implement coordinated service systems that respond to real-time community needs, leverage cross-sector collaboration, and maximize diverse funding streams. The session will also showcase innovative strategies such as expanded food pantry operations, mobile and pop-up distribution models, and a “no wrong door” approach to service delivery. Attendees can expect practical tools and takeaways, including strategies for building a family-centered service framework, aligning programs within a continuum of care model, strengthening community responsiveness, and incorporating participant success stories to drive program improvement and support sustainable funding efforts.

**Workshop Speaker:** Marjorie Rivera-Torres

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Umos, Inc

**Workshop Speaker:** Gregory Gonzalez-Souchet

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** Umos, Inc

**Workshop Session Title:** Government Relations

**Workshop Session Description:** Coming Soon

**Workshop Speaker:** Dr. Courtney Hayward

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** WISCAP

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Diversified Funding Best Practices - Emily Peterson

**Workshop Session Description:** If one major funding source disappears tomorrow, how many months could your organization continue operating? Learn (Main Message): Diversification reduces risk and strengthens long-term sustainability. Other key messages: Over-reliance on one funding source = vulnerability. Government funding is limited (restricted, reimbursement-based, policy-dependent). Private funding fills critical gaps (flexibility, innovation, capacity). Each funding stream serves a different role. Strong organizations balance multiple revenue sources (like a portfolio). Learn (Main Message): Sustainability require structure. Other key messages: Without systems, fundraising is reactive and inconsistent Essential tools matter: CRM (e.g., Blackbaud Raiser’s Edge or similar). Grant calendar + pipeline tracker Standardization increases efficiency: Core program language. Defined data points & metrics. Internal alignment is critical: Development + Programs + Finance must be coordinated. Systems reduce duplication and save time. No more “reinventing the wheel” for every proposal

**Workshop Speaker:** Emily Peterson

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** WISCAP

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** AI - No Longer a Future Concept - Brian Gaumont

**Workshop Session Description:** AI isn't a tool; it's a mindset As artificial intelligence rapidly transforms the business landscape; it is imperative that organizations proactively equip their talent to operate successfully in this new era. Grounded in behavioral science and essential leadership skills, the experience blends strategic mindset shifts with practical application. NOTE - with the two hours, it will include a behavioral assessment. If the session is one hour, that will not be included.

**Workshop Speaker:** Brian Gaumont

**Workshop Speaker Organization:**

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Navigating External Pressures: Strategies for CAAs to Thrive Amid Federal Shifts

**Workshop Session Description:** The nonprofit landscape is evolving under new federal priorities, and community action agencies face increasing challenges. Current trends from the White House administration—such as favoring organizations with lower administrative costs, heightened scrutiny on grant compliance, and potential cuts to federal programs—pose significant risks to sustainability. This session will equip managers and leaders with a clear understanding of these external pressures and their implications. Participants will explore practical strategies to mitigate risks, strengthen organizational resilience, and adapt to thrive as a modern nonprofit. From optimizing operational efficiency to diversifying funding streams and enhancing advocacy efforts, this training provides actionable insights to help agencies remain impactful in a shifting environment.

**Workshop Speaker:** Wipfli

**Workshop Speaker Organization:**

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Preparing to Be Monitored: Turning Compliance into Confidence

**Workshop Session Description:** Monitoring reviews don't have to feel reactive or disruptive. This session helps agencies shift from last-minute preparation to a proactive, confident approach to monitoring readiness. Designed for board members, executive leaders, and senior staff, the session focuses telling your organization's compliance story.

Participants will explore common monitoring pressure points, expectations around documentation and decision-making, and strategies for aligning policies, practices, and staff roles before a review occurs. The session emphasizes preparation as an ongoing organizational habit, not a one-time event. Attendees will leave with practical insights to reduce stress, improve coordination, and approach monitoring as an opportunity for learning and continuous improvement—not fear.

**Workshop Speaker:** Wipfli

**Workshop Speaker Organization:**

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organizations:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Internal Controls: Segregating Financial Duties in Small Offices

**Workshop Session Description:** Do you consider your accounting department "understaffed"? Do you have a hard time spreading work around to employees to maximize your internal controls? Do you get segregation of duties comment on your management letter every year? If any of this applies to you, then this is the session to attend! During this session, we'll discuss setting up good internal controls, what functions are incompatible, and how to recruit people to help out with the accounting functions.

Workshop Speaker: Wipfli

**Workshop Speaker Organization:**

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** NA

**Workshop Session Title:** Decoding Financial Statements: What to Ask, What to Request, and How to Interpret

**Workshop Session Description:** Understanding financial statements is essential for making informed decisions when sitting on a board of directors. This session will guide participants through the key components of financial statements, the types of reports to request, and the critical questions to ask when reviewing financial data. Designed for professionals who interact with financial information but may not have a formal accounting background, this session will demystify financial reports and empower attendees to engage confidently in financial discussions.

Workshop Speaker: Wipfli

**Workshop Speaker Organization:**

**Workshop Speaker:** NA

**Workshop Speaker Organization:** NA