

Sewa Forum| 2026



From Service to Impact

Building Stronger Communities Through
Volunteerism, Opportunity and Action



2
Days

4
Themes

17+
Experts

4
Pillars

What is Sewa Forum 2026?

The United States possesses one of the world's strongest ecosystems of volunteerism, philanthropy, and civic participation. In 2024, charitable giving reached nearly \$593 billion, underscoring the enduring culture of generosity that supports communities nationwide. Yet beyond financial contributions, volunteers serve as critical social infrastructure across sectors, enabling organisations and communities to address increasingly complex societal challenges.

Volunteerism today extends far beyond traditional service. Volunteers mentor youth, tutor students, provide healthcare services, support disaster relief, combat food insecurity, and deliver digital literacy and workforce development programmes. Equally important is the often-invisible backbone of volunteerism: professionals who manage events, build partnerships, conduct research, oversee communications, mobilise resources, analyse data, develop technology solutions, and strengthen nonprofit operations.

Why now?

Despite this strong ecosystem, significant challenges persist. Nonprofits face rising operational pressures, donor fatigue, and volunteer retention difficulties. Young people continue to experience unequal access to mentorship, career pathways, and digital skills. Healthcare disparities remain pronounced, with nearly one in five Americans living in areas facing primary care workforce shortages. At the same time, rapid advances in artificial intelligence are creating both opportunities and governance challenges for mission-driven organisations.

These issues are deeply interconnected and cannot be addressed by any single institution alone. They require collaboration across nonprofit, education, healthcare, technology, philanthropy, and public policy ecosystems.

Sewa Forum 2026 convened leaders, practitioners, researchers, funders, and community organisations to reimagine volunteerism as a strategic force for social impact.

The Forum explored how volunteer-driven ecosystems can strengthen nonprofit sustainability, expand youth opportunities, improve healthcare access, and responsibly leverage innovation to build more resilient and equitable communities.



The Forum Journey

Two Days. Four Conversations. One Shared Purpose.

The Forum brought together 17+ experts across nonprofit leadership, volunteer engagement, education, workforce development, healthcare, philanthropy, technology and community service.

Day 1



SERVICE

01

From Volunteers to Impact

Strengthening Fundraising Resilience and Nonprofit Sustainability

Volunteer engagement is not simply about increasing numbers. It is about creating meaningful participation, authentic relationships and stronger pathways for people to contribute and lead.



EDUCATION

02

From Potential to Pathways

Youth Empowerment, Job Readiness, and Digital Opportunity

What does it take to connect young people not only with skills, but with mentorship, networks, experience and real pathways to opportunity?

Day 2



WELLBEING

03

From Volunteers to Impact

Medical Volunteerism, Healthcare Access, and Community-Based Care in America

How can volunteerism and community partnerships help bridge gaps between healthcare systems and the people they serve?



ACTION SYSTEMS

04

Reimagining Service Systems in the Age of AI

The Future of Nonprofit Management

How can nonprofits use technology and AI to strengthen capacity while protecting human judgement, trust, privacy and accountability?



Takeaway

Across four conversations, the Forum examined what it takes to move from individual acts of service towards stronger systems of community impact.



01 SERVICE

From Volunteers to Impact

Strengthening Fundraising Resilience and Nonprofit Sustainability

Volunteerism is often where community action begins. But sustaining that action requires more than recruiting people for individual activities. Organisations need structures that create meaningful roles, build trust, recognise contribution and give volunteers pathways to remain engaged.

What We Heard



“ Volunteer engagement lasts when strong systems make people feel prepared, valued, and connected to the work and it requires staff, systems, technology, funding, and expertise. ”

Allison Zuel

Network and Volunteer Engagement Manager, America's Service Commission

“ Inclusive volunteerism requires more than recruiting diverse people. It means rethinking systems, removing barriers, building trust, and creating a culture where everyone feels welcomed, represented, and valued. ”

Niila Hebert

Executive Director, Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement



“ National service works best when funding follows genuine community needs and strengthens an organization's mission rather than shaping the mission around available funding. ”

Kate Scheuritzel

Director of Programs, Serve Connecticut



Session Takeaway

Volunteer engagement is not simply about increasing numbers. It is about creating meaningful participation, authentic relationships and stronger pathways for people to contribute and lead.

**02**

EDUCATION

From Potential to Pathways

Youth Empowerment, Job Readiness, and Digital Opportunity

Young people do not lack potential. What is often missing are the pathways that allow potential to become opportunity. Education is an important starting point, but young people also need exposure, mentorship, practical experience, professional networks and the confidence to navigate unfamiliar systems.

What We Heard



“ Helping young people move from education to meaningful work requires an interconnected ecosystem of trusted community support, career guidance, work-based opportunities, wraparound services, and equitable digital access rather than any single solution. ”

Evan Feinman

Principal, Feinman Strategic Network



“ Community organisations are the front door for young people, connecting them to trusted support, opportunities, and the wider ecosystem of schools, employers, social services, faith organisations, and community resources. ”

Mamadou Ndiaye

Senior Director, Jobs for the Future



“ Young people need connected pathways to opportunity, supported by the housing, food, transportation, childcare, healthcare, technology, and income resources that enable them to succeed. ”

Monique Miles

Vice President, Aspen Institute



“ Young people often have valuable skills that go unrecognised, and preparing them for work means helping them translate everyday experiences into professional strengths while building the digital skills needed to navigate today's workplace. ”

Alphonso Amos

Executive Director, Urban Alliance



Session Takeaway

The challenge is not simply to equip young people with skills. It is to build the pathways, relationships and opportunities through which those skills can become meaningful futures.

**03**

WELLBEING

Healing Beyond the Clinic

Medical Volunteerism, Healthcare Access, and Community-Based Care in America

Healthcare access does not begin and end inside a clinic. Awareness, trust, affordability, geography, language and the ability to navigate the system can all determine whether people receive care and whether they are able to continue receiving it.

What We Heard



“ Rural health requires community-centred solutions addressing healthcare and the broader conditions that shape wellbeing. ”

Maggie Sauer

Director, Office of Rural Health, NCDHHS

“ Healthcare access depends on more than medical services; it requires understanding community barriers, building trust, protecting privacy, and meeting people where they feel safe and supported. ”

Joan B. Ritter

Assistant Service Chief, Internal Medicine, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center



“ Community-based care combines local knowledge and partnerships to address root causes and connect people to support. ”

Gerald Johnson

Executive Vice President, Bernard J. Tyson Office of Health, American Heart Association

“ Community-based healthcare should be rooted in trust, empowerment, and long-term partnership. ”

Ellen Beck

Founding Director, UC San Diego Student-Run Free Clinic Project



“ Volunteerism is healthcare infrastructure that bridges gaps between the current healthcare system and equitable access. ”

Pranjali Dani

Associate Director, Doctor for Sewa, Sewa International USA

“ Every patient is a unique human being—not merely a case number or clinical milestone. ”

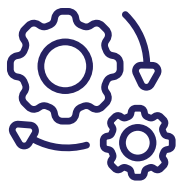
Dr. Pranav Loyalka

President, Houston Chapter, Sewa International USA



Session Takeaway

Better healthcare access requires more than delivering care. It requires trust, continuity, community relationships and systems that help people reach and remain connected to care.

**04**

ACTION SYSTEMS

Reimagining Service Systems in the Age of AI

The Future of Nonprofit Management

Technology is changing how organisations learn, work, communicate and serve. For nonprofits, the opportunity is significant but adoption alone is not the goal. Technology must strengthen organisational capacity without weakening trust, accountability or human connection.

What We Heard



“ Nonprofits of every size need education to establish safeguards, protect sensitive data, continuously learn, and share challenges and solutions. However, ultimate responsibility for ensuring AI benefits communities lies with those developing these tools and our elected representatives, whose vast resources and influence often outweigh the limited say communities have in how AI is designed, developed, and deployed. ”

Gina D. Cooper Benjamin

Deputy Director, National Digital Inclusion Alliance

“ Meaningful AI adoption begins with mission and community needs, supported by secure technology, trained people, and the recognition that both are essential investments in advancing the mission, not overhead. ”

Amy Sample Ward

CEO, NTEN



“ AI demands a thoughtful approach: nonprofits must understand its environmental and social costs while ensuring adoption translates into meaningful benefits for their teams and communities. ”

Winnie Wu

Founder, CanWorks

“ Nonprofits can create greater impact by collaborating on shared technology, moving AI beyond efficiency, empowering those closest to community challenges to innovate, and using safe spaces to test what they should build, own, and adopt. ”

Lili Gangas

Chief Technology Community Officer, Kapor Center



Session Takeaway

The future of nonprofit technology is not about adopting more tools. It is about building the capacity, governance and judgement to use technology responsibly in service of people.

Leadership Perspectives

Four perspectives. One shared direction.

SERVICE



Srikanth Gundavarapu

President, Sewa International USA

Service becomes lasting when participation becomes belonging.

EDUCATION



Nikhil Jain

VP, Marketing & Fund Development

Our responsibility is not simply to equip young people with skills, but to build the pathways through which those skills can become opportunities.

WELLBEING



Prem Pusuloori

VP, Programs

Better healthcare is not only about treating illness; it is about building communities where people have the knowledge, access and support to live healthier lives.

ACTION SYSTEMS



Dilip Karandikar

VP, Technology

The future of service will not be defined by how much technology we adopt, but by how wisely we use it to serve people.

Across every pillar, the message was consistent: lasting impact depends on the systems and relationships that allow service to continue.

The Way Forward

The discussions across Sewa Forum 2026 point to one common conclusion:

Volunteerism must be treated not as a supplementary activity, but as a core part of the social infrastructure through which communities build trust, opportunity, care and resilience.

The four conversations showed that nonprofit sustainability, youth empowerment, healthcare access and responsible technology adoption are deeply connected. Moving forward requires coordinated action rather than isolated programmes.

01 Strengthen Nonprofit Capacity

Move volunteer engagement beyond episodic participation through clear roles, onboarding, recognition, leadership opportunities and stronger community ownership. Strengthen fundraising through long-term donor relationships, transparency, impact reporting and diversified sources of support.

02 Build Clearer Pathways for Young People

Connect schools, employers, workforce organisations, nonprofits and community organisations around mentorship, internships, apprenticeships, digital readiness and essential workplace skills—especially for underserved and opportunity youth.

03 Strengthen Community-Based Healthcare

Connect medical and non-medical volunteers, charitable clinics, public health institutions and community organisations through stronger referral, navigation, telehealth, mentorship and follow-up systems.

04 Build Responsible Digital Capacity

Invest in staff capability, secure infrastructure and practical governance safeguards. Use AI to create additional mission-focused capacity while protecting sensitive data and retaining human judgement in consequential decisions.

05 Turn Conversation into Collaboration

Develop practitioner working groups, pilot partnerships, shared tools, research and peer learning so that future Forums can build on evidence from implementation, not only discussion.

From Conversation to Action

The value of a forum is not only in the conversations it convenes, but in what those conversations make possible afterwards.

Sewa Forum 2026 brought together people working across different sectors, communities and disciplines around a shared question: **how can service become a stronger foundation for lasting social impact?**

The next step is to keep building the connections.



CONNECT

Bring practitioners, institutions, funders, professionals and communities into continued exchange.



COLLAB

Turn shared priorities into partnerships, pilots and practical initiatives.



LEARN

Document what works and build a shared knowledge base across communities and sectors.



ACT

Carry the Forum's conversations into the institutions and communities where change happens.

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[Website](#)



[Youtube](#)

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Days

4
Thematic
Conversations

17+
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4
SEWA Pillars



