



STRENGTH IN CONNECTIONS

Regional Emerging Multicultural Leadership Experience
November 6th & 7th | YMCA of the USA, Chicago

REMLE supports the professional development of the Y's next generation of multicultural leaders in a way that inspires them and encourages a deeper commitment to the Y Movement. REMLE brings together emerging and established leaders of various backgrounds to share experiences, knowledge, and strategies for personal and professional growth. Join us at YMCA of the USA headquarters for learning and connection!

HOSTED BY:

IL State Alliance of YMCAs
Gateway Region YMCA
McGaw YMCA
YMCA of Metro Chicago
YMCA of Rock River Valley

REGISTRATION FEES:

\$80 thru October 5, 2025

\$95 after October 5, 2025

REGISTER NOW:

<https://illinoisymcas.regfox.com/northern-mid-west-remle>

Scholarships are available from Y-USA to cover the cost of registration. Apply here:
https://yusa.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp



ILLINOIS STATE ALLIANCE OF YMCAS

www.illinoisymcas.org/regional-emle

DETAILS

Early Bird Registration: \$80 thru October 5, 2025
Regular Registration: \$95 October 6–29, 2025
Hotel: The Allegro Royal Sonesta, 171 W Randolph Street, Chicago, IL 60601 • \$209 per night
Book your hotel at the Alliance group rate: <https://book.passkey.com/event/51086904/owner/2493/home>

PRE-CONFERENCE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2025
Mental Health First Aid – Adult – \$50 (max. capacity 30)
Trainers: Antwain L. Bartholomew and Valerie Cahill, YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
8:30am–5pm (lunch provided)
Crown Family YMCA , 1030 W. Van Buren Street, Chicago, IL 60607
REGISTER: <https://illinoisymcas.regfox.com/mental-health-first-aid-adults>



Facilitation Skills – \$50 (max. capacity 8)
Trainer: Elli Grapp, Northern Midwest Learning Center
9:00am–5pm (lunch provided)
Crown Family YMCA , 1030 W. Van Buren Street, Chicago, IL 60607
REGISTER: <https://lcdc.yexchange.org/Catalog/Class/Detail/308513>

AGENDA

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2025
12:00 pm Registration Opens
1:00–2:15 pm Welcome/Opening General Session
2:30–3:30 pm Workshops Round 1
3:30–3:45 pm Break
3:45–4:45 pm Workshops Round 2
6:00–8:00 pm Social at Time Out Market,
916 W Fulton Market, Chicago

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2025
8:30–9:00 am Breakfast
9:00–10:00 am Nichol Higdon, McKnight Foundation
10:00–10:15 am Break
10:15–11:15 am Panel Discussion: Journey to Leadership
11:15–11:30 am Break
11:30 am Closing Comments

PLANNING COMMITTEE

L. Denise Turner, Chair	YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
Courtney Brame	Gateway Region YMCA
Erin Darche	Gateway Region YMCA
Candy Falcon	McGaw YMCA
Melissa Franada	McGaw YMCA
Stephen King	YMCA of Rock River Valley
Michael Monis	YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
Mike Ortiz	North Suburban YMCA
Sylhery Padilla	YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
Joseph Russell	Golden Corridor YMCA
Lavonia Swanson	McGaw YMCA
Megan Vazquez	North Suburban YMCA
<u>Alliance Staff:</u>	
Glenn Haley	CEO
Wendy Bonilla	Director of Alliance Services

GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS

Dr. Lynda Gonzalez–Chavez
Senior Vice President, Chief Global Relations and Community Engagement Officer, YMCA of the USA
Dr. Gonzalez–Chavez manages the Global Relations and Community Engagement (GRACE) Team in serving 18,000 employees at 2,700 YMCA's within the USA, 600,000 volunteers nationally and 119 Y's globally. She leads organizational strategies to ensure all are welcome and engaged across the 10,000 communities the Y serves in the United States and internationally. Dr. Gonzalez–Chavez collaborate with thought leaders throughout the organization to develop, align, and implement frameworks to strengthen our 'For All' mission.

Nichol Higdon, McKnight Foundation
Paths to Progress: Empowering Your Career Journey with the YMCA and Beyond
Exploring Opportunities for Growth and Transformation
Embarking on a new chapter in your professional life can be both exciting and daunting. Whether you aspire to grow within the YMCA or seek fresh opportunities elsewhere, this session offers practical insights, resources, and inspiration to help you navigate your career path with confidence. Discover strategies for skill development, networking, and self-reflection, and learn how to transform change into a steppingstone toward personal and professional fulfillment.

CEO Panel: Journey to Leadership
Featuring multicultural leaders in the YMCA Movement:

Adam Alonso	YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
Laura Floyd	Danville YMCA
Katie Leclair	Greater Joliet Area YMCA
David Parker	Kanakakee YMCA
Monique Parsons	McGaw YMCA
Brent Pentenberg	YMCA of Rock River Valley

SMALL GROUP and ONE-ON-ONE OPPORTUNITIES



Saving for the Future on a Non–Profit Salary – Robert King
Working in the nonprofit sector often means serving with passion while navigating limited financial resources. In this session, Robert King will share practical strategies on how to save, invest, and plan for the future—even on a nonprofit salary. Attendees will learn simple, achievable steps to build financial security, prepare for retirement, and create long-term stability without sacrificing their mission-driven careers.

Limited capacity small group session.



Flash Consulting with Monique Parsons
Monique is the CEO of the McGaw YMCA and serves as the Chairperson of the YMCA African–American CEO Network (AACN). She has been a driving force behind the Young Men Thriving initiative and the Multicultural Executive Development Institute (MEDI), where she has served as a Coach and formerly as the Dean of Coaches. REMLE attendees will have the opportunity to meet with Monique for short one–on–one sessions. Whether you're dealing with a particular issue at your YMCA or are seeking general career advice, Monique will lend her expertise to help guide you.

WORKSHOP OPTIONS (you will have the opportunity to attend two workshops)



Anchored & Unshaken™: Building the Inner Strength to Lead Through Anything
Adrienne Reynolds
What anchors you when leadership feels heavy? When clarity feels distant, courage is in short supply, and connection seems out of reach? To be a great leader today is more than strategy. Its grounding, self-awareness, and emotional safety to stay steady when navigating change. This immersive workshop invites participants into a reflective and action-oriented experience designed to help leaders reconnect with the voice, values, and vision required to thrive as multicultural changemakers. Using real-life scenarios, reflection, and interactive exercises, you'll explore what it means to be emotionally anchored—so whether you've been shrinking to stay safe or pushing harder to be heard, you can start showing up boldly and lead from a grounded, authentic place.



Building a Resilient Future: Intentionally Diversifying Your Y's Financial Mix and Mastering the Financial Stack – Nichol Higdon
This session delves into the essentials of financial empowerment, equipping your Y with the tools to create a robust and adaptable financial strategy. Uncover the importance of diversifying your income streams and gain practical knowledge for navigating today's complex financial landscape. By mastering the fundamentals of the financial stack, your Y will be prepared to weather uncertainty and build secure and lasting impact for the future.



Employee Mental Health – Who's Responsibility Is It? – Katie O'Malley
Since early 2020, we have collectively moved through a global health crisis with rippling emotional, physical, and cognitive impacts that forever changed the way we work, play, lead, love, parent, and partner. In 2021, 75% of American workers reported experiencing at least one symptom of a mental health condition (up from 59% in 2019) a statistic resulting directly from the trauma caused during the pandemic. With numbers like these, it's imperative we stop viewing employee mental health as an individual issue and instead address it as a retention problem for employers to solve collaboratively with employees.

Achieving a solution requires leaders to understand the impact varying workplace dimensions have on employee mental health and, subsequently, how mental health influences employee engagement and attrition. From a bottom-line perspective, the business case for prioritizing mental health in the workplace is clear, but, for many, the path forward feels hazy.

By engaging in this experiential talk, individual contributors and people leaders will learn how to cultivate a team culture that increases engagement and retention by eliminating practices that derail employee mental health and enact a new toolkit of strategies to improve employee wellbeing and satisfaction in the workplace.



Inclusive Leadership in the Age of "Colorblindness" – Roger Alfredo Moreano
This session will highlight why it is crucial for leaders to understand the importance and impact that our human identities play in the lives of our coworkers, colleagues, neighbors, etc. When we are more aware of the impact of identity, we can become more culturally responsive to the needs of others.

WORKSHOP OPTIONS (you will have the opportunity to attend two workshops)



Leadership in a Changing World: Guiding the Next Generation of Leaders – Robert King
In today's rapidly evolving world, leadership demands more than position or title—it requires adaptability, emotional intelligence, and a commitment to developing others. This engaging session, led by nationally recognized business and community leader Robert King, will equip both established and emerging leaders with the tools to navigate constant change, inspire trust, and influence across generations. Drawing from more than three decades of leadership experience in corporate banking, financial services, and community development, Robert shares proven strategies for identifying and nurturing leadership potential in young adults while strengthening your own ability to lead with clarity and vision. Participants will explore how to build resilience in uncertain times, leverage diverse perspectives for stronger team performance, and create a culture of empowerment that attracts and retains top talent. Whether delivered as a keynote or an interactive workshop, this session provides practical insights and actionable strategies you can apply immediately. Attendees will leave with a renewed sense of purpose and a clear plan to grow as leaders—while raising up the next generation to succeed in an increasingly complex and competitive world.



Organizing with Community – Using our Positions Responsibly – Victor Rivera
Strong community relationships are the foundation for meaningful action. This interactive workshop invites participants to explore what it means to engage with communities responsibly, and how to use our positions to build trust, foster collaboration, and create lasting impact. Together, we will:

- Define community and community engagement.
- Reflect on the meaning and use of power in shaping collective action.
- Examine our roles as advocates, leaders, organizers, planners, and researchers/evaluators.
- Practice a "one-on-one" conversation—an intentional, person-centered tool to deepen trust, uncover shared values, and strengthen community bonds. Participants will leave with practical strategies to engage effectively, elevate diverse voices, and organize with purpose.



Power of Employee Resource Groups: How People Create Authentic Change
Eva Long
Discover how Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can serve as catalysts for meaningful organizational change and long-term impact. In this engaging workshop, we will explore the history of ERGs at the YMCA, walk through the steps for launching effective groups, and share strategies to ensure their growth and sustainability. Participants will gain insights into how ERGs strengthen workplace culture, foster employee connection, and support organizational priorities. Whether you're starting a new ERG or looking to expand existing ones, this session will provide practical tools and inspiration for success.



Supporting Immigrant Communities – Panel Discussion facilitated by Megan Vazquez
U.S. immigration policy continues to spark debate—from welcoming city ordinances to enforcement raids. But how do these policies shape the real-life experiences of navigating the immigration system and daily life?

In this session, panelists will share both personal stories and professional insights into the immigration journey, whether through lived experience or by supporting others. Join the discussion to explore how YMCAs and other community-based organizations can play a vital role in helping everyone build safe, meaningful lives in our communities.