'From Email to AI: harnessing technology for community action' 2024 - Conference Report

SUMMARY

On the 25th of November, Superhighways held an in-person conference highlighting each of our digital, data and tech workstreams. We were generously hosted by Resource for London, and supported by WCIT Charity, Trust for London, City Bridge Foundation, and the National Lottery Community Fund.

The event featured 12 interactive workshops, a 'Tech Tales' charity showreel, a panel discussion, and various plenaries and quizzes throughout the day. Attendees enjoyed a buffet-style lunch and refreshments. The afternoon was dedicated to artificial intelligence, with the final four workshops and the panel exploring how charities can leverage AI for community benefit. We concluded the day by celebrating Superhighways 25th anniversary with themed cupcakes and giveaway prizes.

ATTENDEES

We were joined by **98 attendees**, excluding our team, from **79 organisations** across London. See our 'who's in the room?' map below.
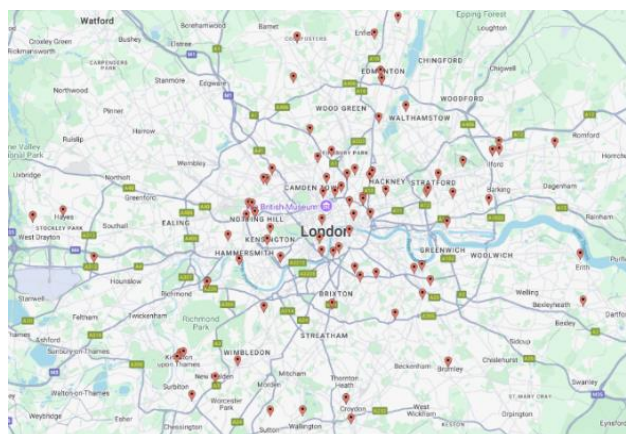
GENERAL FEEDBACK

Feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to network and enjoyed the day's activities.

Some highlights of the day:
- *"All the workshops were informative and thought-provoking, and the day was very well organised."*
- *"Getting to meet other people who work in the London charity space!"*
- *"Meeting the team face-to-face at last! I enjoyed it all,"*
- *"Great speakers who inspired our project planning,"*

Overall, 71% of attendees who provided feedback rated the event as 'Excellent', while 24% rated it as 'Good'.

MORNING WORKSHOPS #1

- [Working through digital change collectively](#) – **Alex Mecklenburg, Dot Project** (Excellent – 89%, Fair – 11%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
- [Five things your website needs to do well in 2025](#) – **Madeleine Sugden, Consultant** (Excellent – 61%, Good – 33%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
- [Do more with your digital fundraising with Great Fundraising ideas](#) – **Howard Lake, Giving X Ltd** (Excellent – 83%, Good – 17%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
- [How to go about developing a simple data strategy](#) – **Madeleine Spinks, Data Orchard** (Excellent – 36%, Good – 49%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
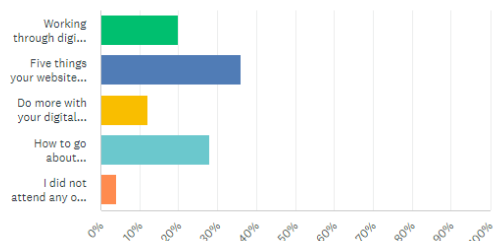
Which of these workshops did you attend?
Answered: 50   Skipped: 1

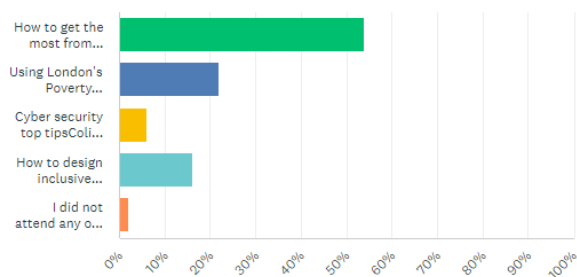From Email to AI: harnessing technology for community action - Evaluation

- *"Alex was very engaging [...] I liked the way it was more focused on people than the operations,"*
- *"It was very practical and gave constructive information on improving your website."*
- *"Thought provoking ideas about how to impact the whole organisation."*
- *"Very welcoming speaker - happy to answer all questions."*

MORNING WORKSHOPS #2

- [How to get the most from social media](#) – **Jade Staiano, Media Trust** (Excellent – 78%, Good – 22%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
- [Using London's Poverty Profile's data for your fundraising and campaigning](#) – **Guy Weir, WPI Economics** (Excellent – 63%, Good – 37%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
- [Cyber security top tips](#) – **Colin Cregan, Nine Htet and Paul Firby, SH Tech Team** (Excellent – 66%, Good – 34%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
- [How to design inclusive online services: key principles for small charities](#) – **David Scurr, CAST** (Excellent – 37%, Good, 63%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)

Which of these workshops did you attend?
Answered: 50   Skipped: 1

From Email to AI: harnessing technology for community action - Evaluation   ▽ (0)

- *"It helped me to identify marketing goals and useful content,"*
- *"Very engaging speaker and felt inspired to get to work."*
- *"Good to put a face to the name as I've not met Paul before. Picked up some new information,"*
- *"Practical ideas, focused on small organisations."*

SUPERHIGHWAYS' STORY AND SMALL CHARITY TECH TALES

Before lunch, we narrated the journey of Superhighways over the last 25 years. We were joined on stage by three small organisations (Bromley Third Sector Enterprise, Precious Counselling and Mentoring CIC, and Streets of Growth) who explained how they applied the digital skills gained from Superhighways' support.

"It was amazing to hear about the Superhighways journey from where it began, where it is now and where it's heading. Great to hear tales of the small charities."

Interesting to learn how Superhighways came about - it really is such an inspiring and important resource for the charity sector."

"I enjoyed the quizzes and hearing from some of the groups SH has helped."

AI PANEL

After lunch, our panel of experts (Tania Duarte, Ian McLintock, Madeleine Spinks, David Scurr, and Grace Perry) discussed topics surrounding AI and its implementation in the charity sector.

> - *"The AI panel was the highlight for me, with good insights, expert comments and engaging."*
> - *"It is so good to know that we need to diversify the way that AI is trained to make it work for our diverse communities!"*
> - *"I think it highlighted the need to consider the ethical issues around AI, and the importance of having an AI policy."*

How would you rate the AI panel discussion?
Answered: 50   Skipped: 1
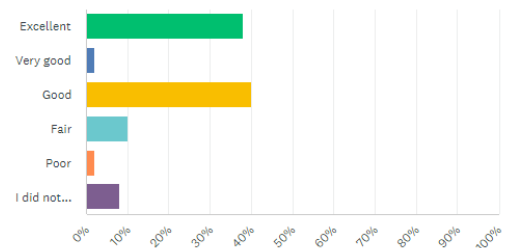
AFTERNOON AI WORKSHOPS

- [How to use AI and digital to find funding](#) – **Ian McLintock, Charity Excellence Framework** (Excellent – 73%, Good – 27%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
- [Navigating AI hype for nonprofits](#) – **Tania Duarte, We and AI** (Excellent – 78%, Good 22%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
- [Chatbots and websites](#) – **Joe Oldak, Voice Online Communities** (Good – 100%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)
- [Unlocking the power of AI: transforming marketing and communications](#) – **Róisín McGovern and Jasmine Warren, Lightful** (Excellent – 66%, Very Good – 6%, Good – 22%) [SEE SPEAKER DASHBOARD](#)

Which of these afternoon workshops did you attend?
Answered: 50   Skipped: 1
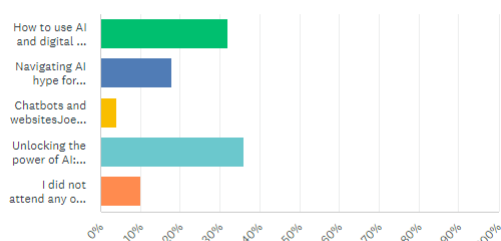
From Email to AI: harnessing technology for community action - Evaluation   ▽ (0)

> - *"It was impressive to see the passion and commitment of the speaker,"*
> - *"It [...] highlight[ed] the need for a strong internal shared understanding of what AI really is."*
> - *"We could see how bots work."*
> - *"Calm, clear and focused delivery. This was a really interesting session."*

CLOSING REMARKS

We came together at the end of a special day for final thoughts, celebratory cupcakes, and giveaways. Our winners were Kingston Carers, Richmond and Kingston ME Group, and Whittingham Gardening Club.

> - *"Overall, I really enjoyed the day, especially winning the wheel of fortune - that was a big surprise, thank you!"*
> - *"Well done team! Gluten free / vegan cakes at the end were a bonus too."*
> - *"All in all, I thought it was an informative day, and I left the event having learnt new things we could implement in our charity."*

NEXT STEPS

Improvements for the future included:

- ability to attend more workshops/record them & more interactive and longer sessions
- better catering to the range of expertise among attendees
- a list of all charities in attendance to better facilitate networking
- more coordination around lunch and better variety of food
- physical/digital materials ready on the day and more visually accessible presentations

Participants pledged to:

- look more into AI and automation to assist with workload and support productivity
- develop a company-wide AI policy
- explore the tools and resources mentioned throughout the day
- improve accessibility and user experience
- create a data strategy
- review existing and new digital, data and tech tools
- share the information gathered from the conference with colleagues
- seek more Superhighways training

[SEE THE FULL SURVEY MONKEY DASHBOARD HERE](#)

The overall feedback emphasises the event's value, showcasing how the knowledge and tools shared have empowered small charities and community groups across London to utilise existing and emerging digital, data and tech resources to enhance their work.