

2019 ASTC Annual Conference

September 21-24, 2019
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Hosted by the Ontario Science Centre

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) Annual Conference is the premier professional development event for the science center and museum field. The conference reaches up to 1,800 science center and museum professionals at all career stages, representing the organizational and geographic diversity of the field.

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK AND INPUT!

The ASTC Conference Program Planning Committee (CPPC) wants *your* feedback on this draft call for proposals. Does this capture your goals and aspirations for the 2019 ASTC conference? Will you be excited to submit session ideas that respond to these themes, goals, and questions? Will you be excited to attend the sessions that come out of this proposal? Will the session tracks and types, along with the new topical tags and target audiences help you find the content that is most relevant to you?

The CPPC will be taking your feedback throughout the 2018 ASTC Annual Conference—come to the ASTC Community Space in the Exhibit Hall to tell us what you think. You can also email ideas@astc.org directly with your ideas.

We plan to release the final call for proposals after the conference, but it's never too early to begin planning your dynamic, participatory, informative session now!

2019 CONFERENCE THEME
Moonshots*: Rendezvous with the Future

**ambitious, yet achievable, goals that leverage science and technology
to solve difficult problems*

The 2019 ASTC Annual Conference will be hosted by the Ontario Science Centre which will be celebrating its 50th anniversary—an occasion that marks 50+ years of excellence for many science centers across our field.

Together, we will also be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landing—a seminal moment for humanity, and for the importance of science, technology, engineering, and math. That original moonshot showed us all what it meant to set our sights high and achieve an audacious goal. It demonstrated that by working together, being willing to take risks and fail, and tapping into the ingenuity of diverse sets of people, humanity is able to achieve what had previously been unthinkable.

In the same way that the science center field saw great development and growth in the years around the Apollo landing 50 years ago, 2019 offers us an opportunity to celebrate the successes we've had while revitalizing and redefining the trajectory that our field will take for the next 50 years. What moonshots are needed within our own field for the decades ahead? What societal moonshots will science centers help make possible within our communities, regions, counties, and across the globe?

ASTC 2019 will focus on the Moonshots that will advance our field and will offer an opportunity to explore the strategies, people, operations, programs, technologies, partnerships, and new approaches that will shape how science centers function in the decades ahead. ASTC 2019 will inspire science center leaders to go beyond their own institutions and launch the 21st Century Moonshots¹ that will shape the world.

Conference Goals

The ASTC conference will **equip and inspire**—via content and memorable, participatory experiences—**science center and museum professionals** at the executive and staff levels to do their jobs better in order **to deliver excellence in their institutions and value in their communities**.

¹ While the Apollo moonshot required a massive investment—as expressed in the form of a percentage of the U.S. gross domestic product—today, across the globe, moonshots and grand challenge pursuits are being made possible through science that can be conducted with lower-cost tools, democratized access to state-of-the-art technology, advanced engineering and manufacturing, and emerging tools in mathematics and big data. This makes moonshot thinking possible across many areas of our society and pushes us to think more broadly about the impact that we can make in our communities and across the globe.

The theme of “Moonshots,” will build our field’s capacity for advancing their future aspirations and pursuing even their most audacious goals by:

- **Fostering new collaborations** and networks among science centers and their stakeholders.
- Building from the collaborative nature of this field to **exchange and scale what works**—informed by evidence from evaluation and research—and to learn from failures.
- **Source new ideas and opportunities** from the communities we serve and from outside our field, and forge relationships and partnerships with community leaders and across sectors.
- **Influence how the world sees our field** and demonstrate our ability to deliver societal value and impact.

By submitting a proposal, you are contributing to the professional development of your colleagues and advancing the field.

Thematic Questions

The following questions are intended to spark your thinking and help you develop a session proposal that aligns with the 2019 theme and advances the goals of the conference. You are encouraged to consider multiple questions in shaping your session.

- After 50 years, where have we—science centers, science museums, and informal science learning broadly—*landed*?
- What has been most important to our *trajectory* for success? What has thrown us off course, or put us behind others, and what have we learned from this?
- What will be most important to our *future trajectory*?
- How will we evaluate our progress, test new ideas, and *measure our impact* along the way?
- What *capacity* do we need to ensure we stay on the course that we set for ourselves?
- What needs to be *invented* to reach the ambitious yet achievable goals we have for our centers and our field as a whole? What might need to exist that the rest of the world doesn’t yet know it needs?
- What *collaborations* do we need to foster within our field to ensure we have the creativity, strength, and resilience, to pursue our future plans?
- What *partnerships* will we need to create with those outside our field to ensure we have the right expertise, networks, and resources to realize our vision?

Diverse Perspectives

ASTC is a diverse, global organization representing science centers and science museums of all sizes, types, and geographies, and we embrace the rich diversity found within our staff members and the communities we serve, including in ability, age, color,

ethnicity, race, family or marital status, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, pregnancy and related medical conditions, language, national origin, political affiliation, religion, socioeconomic status, veteran status, health status and other dimensions of diversity. ASTC is interested in promoting topics, viewpoints, and speakers representing these varied perspectives in as many sessions as possible. We strongly recommend that session proposals include speakers with diverse individual background, from multiple types of institutions, from museums of all sizes, and from organizations across a geographic span. For assistance in refining topics or identifying other speakers to add to your session proposal, please contact sessions@astc.org.

Session Categories and Conference Navigation

When submitting your proposal, you will select a track, a series of topical tags, a target audience, and a format that best describe the content and focus of your session. These forms of categorization are meant to help you develop your session, help the CPPC select the appropriate overall mix of sessions, and help 2019 conference participants find the sessions that are most relevant to them.

Conference Tracks

In 2019, the conference tracks have been updated to reflect the people, essential operating components, content design, learning environments, and community relationships that are the core concerns of ASTC members. You will **select one** conference track that best fits your session.

Leadership and Professional Development

Sessions in this track focus on developing skills and expertise in the field. They can include topics like leadership capacity; organizational governance; career development; strategic planning; demonstrating impact, and future directions for the field.

Business Operations, Marketing, and Development

Sessions in this track emphasize the essential components of a successful organization. Topics can be related to administration; buildings and operations systems; communications, public relations and marketing; development and member relations; volunteer engagement; community relations; income generation; and human resources management.

Content and Design

This track includes sessions about the content and design of audience-directed activity: exhibits and environments; immersive media and experiences (planetariums, large-format films, stereoscopic theaters, simulators, etc.); program content; outreach and engagement; and research and evaluation.

Informal Education and Learning

Sessions in this track focus on the role that science centers play in educating their audiences and working within the educational landscapes of their local communities and regions through relationships with K-12 schools and districts, out of school time organizations, institutions of higher education including learning research, and industry. New models and effective programs for learners and educators of all types fit into this track.

Collaborations and Co-Creation

This track includes sessions that give compelling examples of ways that science centers engage with their communities, reach learners where they are, connect through collaboration and co-creation. These can include examples from different structures like partnerships, collaborations, and alliances, as well as public events like science fairs, or creative spaces outside of a museum's building.

Target Audiences

These target audience descriptions are designed to help presenters describe who the content of the session is best designed for and will help attendees know what sessions are most relevant for them, based on their role in their organization, and their experience in the field. Select **one** audience level for your session.

Foundational (early/ new career)

Sessions for this audience focus on building awareness around current issues, initiatives, and practices in the science center field. These sessions are especially suited for professionals at the beginning of their careers (or new to the field), and those interested in sampling current topics in informal STEM learning, engagement, and communication.

Applied (mid-career professionals)

Audiences for these sessions include professionals with advanced practice in their areas of interest, middle-level managers or people looking to build on existing programs or organizational plans. These sessions focus on deepening understanding and engagement, building the capacity of individuals and organizations to improve their practices, operations, and areas of expertise.

Strategic (advanced career professionals)

This audience includes experienced professionals, people who are in positions responsible for setting directions for their organizations or are influencers in the field. Sessions for this audience address topics relevant to advancing the science center and informal learning field.

Universal (all audiences)

Suitable for all attendees, at any level of experience and expertise.

Tags

Tags are content topics that describe what will be featured in any given session. Sessions can have multiple tags; they help presenters describe their content, and help attendees find relevant learning experiences. Select **at least one, but not more than three tags** that best describe the content of your session.

Management	Learning Research
Fundraising	Emerging Technology
Business Development	Volunteer Management
Visitor Experience	Facilities Operations
K-12 School Collaboration	Program Evaluation
Community Impact	Market Research
Partnerships	Impact Measurement
Marketing	Making and Tinkering
Communications	Public Programs
Member Engagement	Small Museum
Finance	Diversity and Inclusion
Administration	Advocacy
Talent Management	Adult Engagement
Teacher Professional Development	Global Perspective
Early Childhood	Exhibit Design
Youth Development	

Proposal Types

Concurrent Session: A 75-minute session on a specific topic designed to share knowledge and develop skills and expertise among participants. See “Formats” below for a wide variety of creative approaches to this session-type.

Flash Session: A short (10-minute) presentation especially suited for reporting project results or presenting program outcomes. Presenters should submit Flash presentations individually using the online form and be sure to select the corresponding duration option (10 minutes). Individual presentations will be combined by the program committee into a limited number of collective sessions based on theme or topic

Posters: Want to share project results, exhibition advances, or new ideas in a graphic format? The poster session is a visual presentation of an author’s work—using graphs, photographs, diagrams, and any sample educational materials developed—on a poster board. Select this proposal type to have your poster included in timed groupings that will be placed in visible conference areas for extended intervals. Presenters are expected to attend their designated session time to engage with their colleagues.

Preconference Intensives: Full-day workshops are created, designed, and delivered by experts in the field, and are an opportunity for conference attendees to engage in

focused learning experiences. They offer a chance for participants to connect and network with peers along occupational and topical interests. Proposals for preconference intensives will be submitted separately, with additional instructions in the final call for proposals. We encourage you to contact sessions@astc.org with suggestions and questions about potential topics for Intensives. Intensives will be held on Friday, September 20, 2019. Attendee fees include meals and transportation, if necessary. Separate preregistration is required and will be available at the same time as the general conference registration.

Formats: Concurrent Sessions

Select the format that is most appropriate for your topic and will best involve the audience and create the most effective learning opportunity. All sessions are non-commercial and avoid endorsement of services or products. Sessions marked below with an asterisk (*) are new to the ASTC conference in 2019 and reflect feedback from participants that they desire a greater variety in session formats that allow presenters to bring their full range of creativity to the topic.

Café: A moderated session that opens with short presentations of 3-5 minutes per presenter (maximum of 3 presenters), followed by roundtable discussions that allow the audience and presenters to interact. A session leader articulates the issues and facilitates both the discussion and wrap-up.

Hands-on, Minds-on Exploration: A program for a limited number of participants around a specific theme, emphasizing participation and interactivity, with one or more hands-on activities.

Panel: A session with three to four presenters in a moderated panel discussion, followed by 15-20 minutes of Q&A. Diverse panels should consider each participating institution's geography, size, type, budget, and other diversity factors as described above.

Debate*: This format takes a central theme or question and has two speakers debate for and against. At the start, participants are polled to measure their opinion on the topic. Following the debate, they are polled again to see if there are any changes in opinion. The "winner" of the debate is the speaker who convinced the most audience members to change their votes.

Game Show or Talk Show*: Inject some fun into proceedings by creating a *Family Feud* or *Jeopardy* -style session. Or take this opportunity to become the next Oprah Winfrey (or Phil Donahue) and interview your presenters and take questions from the audience. Add interactive elements like audience polling to spark responses, or to take the conversation in a new direction.

Soapbox*: A soapbox format provides attendees with a platform to have their ideas heard. Individuals can submit proposals to participate and, if they are chosen, will be

given a short time on stage to present an issue that is important to them. Challenging views are encouraged, as well as the sharing of any projects or pieces of research likely to be of interest to the audience. This session type can be modified for “confessional” or crowd-sourced speakers.

The Solution Room*: The Solution Room is designed to provide peer-supported advice on individuals’ most pressing problems within the topic or theme of the session. Each participant is given time to think of a challenge they are facing. Participants are then divided into groups and each person has a chance to present their problem and have it brainstormed by the group in short cycles (5-7 minutes cycles). Groups then share out their solutions and can create a visual that notes/identifies all the challenges.

Your Session Format Idea Here...! We encourage you to be as creative as possible in your approach to session format. Please feel free to propose a new or different approach not described above, with details for how the session will be designed, set up, and facilitated/moderated. We look forward to learning great new approaches from you on how to introduce novel formats for concurrent sessions to the 2019 ASTC Annual Conference.

Selection Process

The Conference Program Planning Committee (CPPC) and ASTC staff will review all proposals submitted to select sessions for the 2019 ASTC Annual Conference. The final version of this Call for Proposals will also include a link to the assessment matrix that the CPPC will use in evaluating each session idea. The CPPC also may contact those submitting sessions to ask for clarification, recommend different tracks or tags, and offer other feedback to session presenters.