



**Hosted by the Ontario Science Centre
September 21–24, 2019 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada**

CALL FOR SESSION PROPOSALS

Proposals are due by 11:59 p.m. (Pacific Time) on Thursday, December 20, 2018

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) Annual Conference is the one of the premier professional development events for the science center and museum field. With nearly 1,800 participants, the ASTC conference brings together professionals working in science centers and museums, informal STEM learning, science communication, and the broader intersections between science, technology, and society.

CONFERENCE THEME

Moonshots: Rendezvous with the Future

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

The 2019 ASTC Annual Conference will focus on the Moonshots that will advance the science center field. The conference 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 and museum leaders to go beyond our own institutions and launch the 21st-century Moonshots that will shape the world.

This Call for Proposals provides additional detail on the 2019 theme, goals for the conference, and questions for you to consider as you develop your session—all of which has been informed by extensive feedback from conference attendees and from leaders across ASTC's membership.





2019 ASTC 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.**

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

- **Fostering new collaborations** and networks among science centers and with 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.
- **Sourcing new ideas and opportunities** from the communities we serve and from outside our field, and forging relationships and partnerships with community leaders and across sectors.
- **Influencing how the world sees our field** and demonstrating our ability to deliver societal value and impact.



By submitting a proposal, you are contributing to the professional development of executives and staff in science centers throughout the world, and enhancing the practice of science communication, informal science education, and organizational operations throughout the field.

ASTC welcomes proposals from outside the science center field that have relevance to members of our community, align with our conference goals, and move us forward in our shared mission to advance public engagement with science, technology, and innovation.

Quick Guide to Submitting a Session Proposal

The ASTC Conference Program Planning Committee (CPPC), along with the ASTC staff, evaluates all proposals submitted for the conference. The information that you include in your submission through our online portal will be used by the reviewers to understand your proposal and what the proposed session will offer attendees, help ASTC market your session, and help attendees find the sessions most relevant to them. To submit your proposal, [click here](#) or go to www.astc.org/conference/future-conferences. Below is a brief outline of proposal-submission items, which are described in more detail on pages 5–9.

- **Session Title:** A brief and descriptive explanation of your session.
- **Session Description:** A 250-word description of your session, including a summary of the topic and of the information, takeaways, benefits, or lessons that you expect conference participants to gain. This is the primary element of your proposal that the reviewers will use to evaluate your session. If your session is accepted, you will be asked to provide a refined 50-word summary for the conference program and marketing materials.
- **Session Leaders and Presenters:** The accurate names, titles, organizations, and contact information for the people organizing the session, presenting, and facilitating discussions. No one may lead or present in more than three sessions.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** A short description of the diverse range of perspectives present in the session, which will help reviewers understand the session makeup and will help ASTC promote the full range of viewpoints being shared.
- **Conference Track:** One of five conference tracks that best describes the major content focus of your session and will be used to help conference participants find the content most relevant for them.
- **Topical Tags:** Up to three topical tags that provide additional information on the topics discussed within your session. Tags will be used by the reviewers in assessing the range of content across the program and will be searchable by attendees in finding sessions most relevant to them.
- **Target Audience:** One of four audience “levels” that describes the target audience for your session: early career, mid-career, experienced executive, or universal audience. Audiences will be used by evaluators to help determine the mix of sessions for attendees at the conference and will be used by attendees to find sessions most appropriate for their professional development.
- **Session Format:** The session format should be designed to provide the experience and the takeaways desired for your intended audience. Make clear what kind of interaction and engagement will be provided in your session content. The format will help set expectations for what attendees will experience.

For assistance in refining topics or identifying other speakers to add to your session proposal, please contact sessions@astc.org

Thematic Details and Questions

ASTC 2019 will be hosted by the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto, which will be celebrating its 50th anniversary—a milestone year that marks more than 50 years of excellence for many science centers across our field.

Together, we will also be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first Apollo moon landing—a seminal moment for humanity and for the importance of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). 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.

2019 offers us an opportunity to celebrate the successes we've had while revitalizing, reimagining, and redefining the trajectories that our field might take for the next 50 years. What trends have begun that we need to lead and follow? What new moonshots are needed in and beyond our field for the decades ahead? What 21st-century Moonshots¹ will science centers help make possible within our communities, regions, and across the globe?

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.



- After more than 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 in responding to trends and changes in society, 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, for our field as a whole, and for our communities? 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?

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 we can make in our communities and across the globe.

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—and have deeper, one-on-one conversations about your work or the topic? 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. Posters will be displayed for two full days, and presenters are expected to attend one designated session time to engage with their colleagues.

Preconference Intensives: Full-day and half-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 with in-depth learning and concrete takeaways. They offer a chance for participants to go deep on a subject and connect and network with peers along occupational and topical interests. Intensives will be held on Friday, September 20, 2019. Separate preregistration is required and will be available at the same time as the general conference registration. Attendee fees include meals and transportation, if necessary.

Session Title and Description

You will need to provide a title and describe your session in 250 words or less. When crafting a title for your session, think of something succinct and descriptive that will quickly convey to both reviewers and conference participants what the session is about. Your 250-word session description should go into greater depth on what participants will learn and how you will organize your session.

The most important information to convey in the description is the knowledge that will be shared and the takeaways that participants will gain from your session. The session description should also be used to describe how you plan to run the session, giving the reviewer a chance to understand how the session will be organized and what participants can expect.

If your session is accepted, you will be asked to provide a brief, 50-word description that will go into the conference program and can be further refined to focus on the core elements of your session.

All sessions are noncommercial and avoid endorsement of services or products.

Diverse Perspectives

ASTC is interested in promoting topics, viewpoints, and speakers representing these varied perspectives in as many sessions as possible. As a diverse, global organization representing science centers and science museums of all sizes, types, and locations, 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. We strongly recommend that session proposals include speakers with diverse individual backgrounds, from multiple types of institutions, from museums of all sizes, at every stage of their career, and from organizations across a geographic span. You will be asked for a short statement on how your session represents diverse perspectives, as appropriate and applicable to your topic and format.



Conference Tracks

In 2019, the conference tracks 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 and will be the primary way that ASTC attendees find content most relevant to their work and areas of interest.

Leadership and Professional Development

Sessions in this track focus on developing skills and expertise in the field. They can include topics like leadership capacity, science center staff diversity and inclusion, organizational governance, career development, cultural competence, strategic planning, change management, capacity for innovation, 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, fundraising, and member relations; volunteer engagement; community relations; business models and revenue 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, research and evaluation, and demonstrating impact.

Informal Education and Learning

Sessions in this track focus on the role that science centers play in educating their audiences, driving learning outcomes, and working within and improving 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.

External Collaborations, Putting Community First, and Co-creation

This track includes sessions that give compelling examples of ways that science centers engage and partner with their communities, put community goals and aspirations at the forefront of their work, reach learners where they are, and connect through collaboration and co-creation. These can include examples from different structures like partnerships, collaborations, collective-impact initiatives, networks, ecosystems, and alliances, as well as public events like science fairs, festivals, or creative spaces outside of a museum’s building.

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.

21 st -century Skills	Early Childhood	Making the Case for Science Centers	Social Justice
Accessibility	Emerging Technology	Management	Social Media Engagement
Administration	Exhibit Design	Market Research	Talent Management
Adult Engagement	Facilities Operations	Marketing	Teacher Professional Development
Advanced Technology (AR, VR, etc.)	Finance	Member Engagement	Teen Programs
Audiences with Special Needs	Fundraising	Outreach	Temporary and Traveling Exhibits
Board Management	Future Planning	Partnerships	Ticketing and Scheduling
Business Development	Global Perspective	Pricing and Sales	Visitor Experience
Business Intelligence	Grant Writing	Program Evaluation	Volunteer Management
Communications	Impact Measurement	Project Management	Women in Leadership
Community Impact	Inclusive Workforce Development	Prototyping and Piloting	Working with Higher Education
Customer Service	K–12 School Collaboration	Public Programs	Youth Development
Design Thinking	Learning Research	Science Shows	
Diversity and Equity	Making and Tinkering	Small Museums	



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 professionals)

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 science centers and museums), and those interested in sampling current topics in informal STEM learning, engagement, and communication. These sessions may also be perfect introductions to a new topic that may be unfamiliar to attendees, regardless of their career stage.

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. These sessions may also be a deeper dive into a topic for practitioners who are experienced with a given approach and want to dig into the lessons learned and new techniques to apply in their own work.

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 high-level strategic work that is advancing the science center and informal learning fields.

Universal (all audiences)

Suitable for all attendees, at all levels of familiarity, experience, and expertise with the topic.

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. Sessions types reflect feedback from participants that they desire a greater level of interactivity in all sessions and variety in session formats across the conference. We have suggested some new formats below, and we encourage you to suggest a different format that maximizes participant interaction and allows the presenters to bring their full range of creativity to the topic.

Panel

A session with three to four presenters in a moderated panel discussion, followed by 15–20 minutes of questions and answers. Diverse panels should consider each participating institution's location and setting, size, type, budget, and other diversity factors as described above.

Café

A moderated session that opens with short presentations of three to five minutes per presenter (maximum of three 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.

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.

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 lasting five to seven minutes. Groups then share out their solutions and can create a visual that identifies all the challenges.

Hands On, Minds On

This workshop format has participants working together in an interactive session designed to be hands-on and collaborative. While there may be lessons conveyed by the session leader, the emphasis is on facilitated peer-discussion, hands-on activities, and real-world problem solving.

Your Session Format Idea Here . . . !

We encourage you to be as creative as possible in your approach to the 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 seeing new and novel formats for concurrent sessions to the 2019 ASTC Annual Conference.



Selection Process

ASTC will host a webinar on Wednesday, December 5, for anyone interested in submitting a session to clarify the details in this Call for Proposals and answer questions you may have. [Click here for webinar details and registration.](#)

The Conference Program Planning Committee (CPPC) and ASTC staff will review all proposals submitted to select sessions for the 2019 ASTC Annual Conference. Before making final selections, the CPPC or the ASTC staff also may contact those submitting sessions to ask for clarification, recommend different tracks or tags, and offer other feedback to session presenters.

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on Thursday, December 20, 2018**

