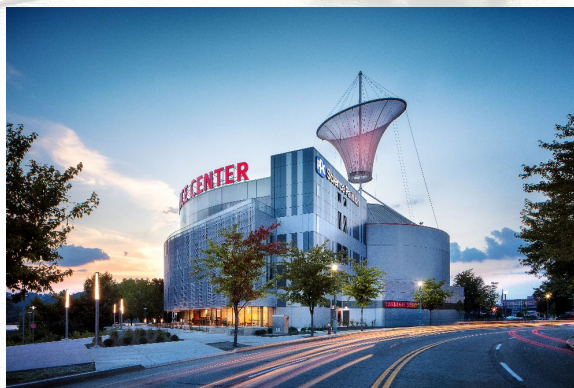**ASTC** Association of Science and Technology Centers

2020 Annual Conference

October 17–20, 2020
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Setting Course Together for
NEW FRONTIERS
in Science, Technology, Learning,
and Community Engagement
Toward a More Equitable Future

Hosted by Carnegie Science Center

Call for Session Proposals
Session Proposals Due January 13, 2020

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

ASTC 2020: New Frontiers

> *Catalyzing science engagement and science education professionals—together with local and global leaders in science, technology, learning, and community engagement—to set a course together for new frontiers and toward a more equitable future*

Ensuring access to opportunity for all—and tackling today's global challenges—requires that scientific research and technological development be connected with innovative approaches to lifelong learning and deep community engagement.

The Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) Annual Conference is one of the premier annual events for science-engagement professionals across North America and around the world. With nearly 2,000 participants, the ASTC conference brings together science and technology center and museum and allied professionals working in science communication, STEM learning, and the broader intersections between science, technology, and society.

The 2020 ASTC Annual Conference will be held in Pittsburgh on October 17–20 in partnership with Carnegie Science Center, with support from a wide range of local academic, technological, and educational organizations. Conference attendees will go beyond the walls of the convention center to explore Pittsburgh's innovation and learning ecosystems and be inspired by the good work happening in the city that will be woven throughout the fabric of the conference experience.

Pittsburgh is a national—and international—model for how communities can leverage science and technology—through world-class research institutions, entrepreneurship, private-sector innovation, evidence-based policymaking, and a vibrant learning ecosystem that spans schools, community organizations, and cultural institutions that support engagement among all people in the community.

The conference will equip and inspire—via content and memorable, participatory experiences—professionals at the executive and staff levels in science and technology centers and museums as well as the broader science, technology, and learning ecosystems to deliver excellence in their institutions and value in their communities.

ASTC welcomes proposals from inside and outside the science center field that address one or more of the goals below and help advance our shared vision of increasing understanding of—and engagement with—science among all people.

- **Fostering new collaborations** and networks across science centers and with stakeholders in science and technology research, education, and community engagement.
- 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 forging relationships and partnerships with experts and community leaders across sectors.
- **Increasing community impact** and making the case for the importance of our shared work to support lifelong science learning, connect science and society, engage diverse audiences, and partner to solve global and local challenges.

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 promote your session, and guide attendees to the sessions most relevant to them. Below is a brief outline of what is required in your submission. Each of these sections are explained in more detail later in this document.

- **Session Title:** A brief and descriptive explanation of your session.

- **Session Description**: This is the primary element of your proposal that the reviewers will use to evaluate your session. A 250-word description of your session, including a summary of the topic and of the information, takeaways, benefits, or lessons that you expect participants to gain. This should focus on outcomes for participants—you have opportunities to describe format and other elements below.

- **Session Leaders and Presenters**: The names, titles, and organizational affiliations for the people organizing the session, presenting, and facilitating discussions. Each individual may lead or present at a maximum of three sessions.

- **Diverse Perspectives**: A short description of the diverse range of perspectives present in the session. This will help reviewers understand the session makeup and enable ASTC to 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 as the top-level organization for attendees to 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, helping them find the sessions most relevant to them.

- **Target Audience:** One of four audience "levels" that describes the target audience for your session, from early career to experienced executive to a universal audience. Evaluators will use audience levels to determine the mix of sessions 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 during the session. The format will help attendees set expectations for their experience.

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

Follow the link posted at *www.astc.org* to submit your proposal. A myASTC account is required.

Proposal Types

Concurrent Session: A 75-minute session on a specific topic designed to share knowledge and develop skills and expertise among participants. This is the primary type of session at the ASTC conference. 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. Presenters are expected to attend their 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 take an in-depth look at a subject and connect with peers along occupational and topical interests. Intensives will be held on Friday, October 16, 2020. 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. Choose a succinct and descriptive session title that will quickly convey to reviewers what the session is about. Your 250-word session description should go into greater depth and detail on the focus of your session, engagement strategies, how the session will be organized, and what participants will learn.

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. To the extent possible, be clear about who your intended audience is and how the session will address the conference goals (listed on p. 2) and the subject matter within the content track you are suggesting. You will have the chance to describe the session format later in the proposal, but if you have specific ideas about how you plan to run the session, this is an opportunity to tell the reviewers how the session will be organized and what participants can expect.

You will also be asked to provide a brief, 25-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 presenters representing varied perspectives in as many sessions as possible. As a diverse organization representing science and technology centers and museums and allied organizations of all sizes, types, and geographies, 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.

You will be asked for a short statement as a part of your proposal describing how your session represents diverse perspectives, as appropriate and applicable to your topic and format. In addition to diverse ideas and perspectives in your content, the extent possible, we strongly recommend that session proposals include presenters with one or more of the following:

- diverse individual backgrounds
- from multiple types of institutions
- from museums of all sizes
- at every stage of their career
- organizations across a geographic span
- different topical viewpoints

Conference Track

In 2020, 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 leadership skills and expertise in running professional organizations committed to engaging the public in science. This can include topics like leadership capacity, science center and museum 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 Lifelong 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 ecosystems 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 partnerships within communities across the science, technology, learning, and engagement ecosystems help to 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.

Topical 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 tag, but not more than three,** that best describe the content of your session.

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

Target Audience

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 with a given topic. Select **one** audience level for your session.

Foundational (new to a topic or 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 the field), 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 (familiar with a topic or 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 explore lessons learned new techniques to apply in their own work.

Strategic (well-versed in a topic or 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 strategic work that is advancing the science center and informal learning fields.

Universal (all audiences)

Suitable for all attendees, at any level of experience and expertise, as well as broad familiarity with the topic.

Session Format: 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. Session 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 maximize 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 Q&A. Diverse panels should consider each participating institution's geography, 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 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 2020 ASTC Annual Conference.

Submitting a Proposal

Proposals should be submitted via the portal that is linked from the ASTC home page (*www.astc.org*).

A myASTC account is required. If you do not already have an active myASTC profile, you may create one at *myASTC.astc.org.*

Selection Process

The Conference Program Planning Committee (CPPC) and ASTC staff will review all submitted proposals and select sessions for the 2020 ASTC Annual Conference. ASTC will host a webinar in December to clarify the details in this Call for Proposals and answer questions you may have. Before making final selections, the CPPC or the ASTC staff may contact those submitting sessions to ask for clarification, recommend different tracks or tags, and offer other feedback to session presenters. Final selections will be made in March of 2020, with notifications and additional questions being sent in April 2020.

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