
2018 Annual Conference

Session Proposal
Submission Guide

grantmakers^{for}education 

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Please note: Session proposal forms are due March 20, 2018

Welcome!

Grantmakers for Education invites members to propose learning sessions for our 22nd annual conference — *The Equity Journey - Investing in the Whole Learner*. **Only Grantmakers for Education members may propose conference sessions** (click [here](#) to inquire about membership) – doing so is an exclusive member benefit. If you are not sure whether your organization is a member, please contact membership@edfunders.org.

Grantmakers for Education's annual conference will be held October 16-18, 2018 at the Hotel del Coronado in San Diego, California. The conference is GFE's signature program. Centered on improving outcomes for all learners, the annual conference is designed to challenge education philanthropists as they adapt to a rapidly evolving field that is ever more interconnected. Highly rated year after year, our conferences unite funders and experts in exploration of the deep and sometimes thorny education and philanthropic issues on the horizon.

Imagine sessions that explore how to create a healthy and supportive environment that promotes positive and versatile outcomes for each learner. Support grantmakers in gaining a deeper understanding of how learners are shaped or deterred by their environment. By drawing from the voices of educators, learners and policymakers, you can help us examine best practices, policies, interventions and support structures that can effectively enhance learning environments in and out of the classroom. Assist us in discovering new learning methods that may be critical to each learner's success — and ultimately the success of our communities and nation in an ever-evolving world.

We are seeking provocative proposals that proactively prepare funders for the future using engaging formats, innovative ideas, diverse perspectives and a focus on impact. Proposals should have clear learning objectives, specific strategies for engagement, and relevance for funders. Proposal topics should have clear connection to the conference theme on the whole learner and Grantmakers for Education's operating principles.

As you write your proposal, think seriously about how your session will engage conference attendees. Over the years, feedback from attendees has shown that they prefer sessions that are engaging and interactive. More engaging sessions provide more actionable learnings and create more potential for collaboration after the conference. A strong session must actively engage attendees on its topic.

The instructions below should serve as guidance as you prepare your session.

2018 Annual Conference Theme

The Equity Journey: Investing in the Whole Learner

“A central challenge of our time is creating the intellectual, emotional, and social supports that empower students for the difficult task of continually unlearning the old ways, while simultaneously learning new ones. If education succeeds, students will soon be the inventors of a bright future.”
-Christopher Dede, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Over the years, we have taken a journey together as grantmakers. We explored what it takes for learners to compete in a global society and how to empower learners to succeed in a rapidly changing future. We addressed difficult questions about learners facing challenges from race, ethnicity, poverty and rural issues, and we brought new, powerful voices from community stakeholders to our

conversations. Our journey confirmed that learners, birth to career, must be prepared for new challenges in a new world. We also learned that, as education grantmakers, we can prepare ourselves to support learners in myriad ways in order to advance our investments in our nation’s future.

Together we take the next step in our journey: to explore how to strengthen the whole learner.

It’s time to transform our thinking on when and how learning takes place. It’s time to broaden our understanding of how we can help learners succeed. From birth to career, learners are shaped, supported and deterred by the many elements that make up their full environments. We will investigate what it takes to foster the whole learner by exploring interventions and support structures to enhance environments within and outside of school, as well as by examining how and why to incorporate social and emotional competencies into the learning domain.

We need nothing less than a coordinated approach to creating healthy, safe and supportive environments that promote positive and versatile outcomes for the whole learner.

Selection Criteria

Grantmakers for Education’s (GFE) annual conference planning committee—consisting of representatives from a range of grantmaking organizations across GFE’s membership (including size, grantmaking budget, area of focus and type of foundation)—works collaboratively with GFE staff to provide critical input and perspective on the session selection process, which takes place in April and May. Selections will be informed by the following criteria:

General Criteria

Topical & Future Facing: We are especially interested in sessions that specifically address or reflect the conference theme and, within that context, showcase new and emerging work and innovative and break-through models. Additionally, we look for sessions relevant to what’s happening in education today and that anticipate future issues in the field.

Insightful: We are looking for sessions that are tied to the conference theme and its framing language, and that either explore new concerns or take perennial topics and advance the conversation to a deeper level. Because GFE values a diversity of perspectives, we’re particularly interested in sessions that challenge funders to consider old problems or assumptions in new ways by, among other strategies, incorporating fresh voices (students, teachers, parents, etc...) and perspectives. Speakers and moderators who bring depth, experience and energy to a session are also valued.

Reflective: GFE’s conference aims to be a learning environment that promotes reflection and peer exchange. We are looking for sessions that create genuine conversations among attending grantmakers and that engage their wisdom and experience.

Well-conceived learning format: Sessions should be designed with thoughtful, relevant learning objectives—and then be crafted to meet them. We look for sessions that engage the audience as active learners and provide them with well-designed opportunities for discussion. Please consider an untraditional and innovative strategy for interaction.

Clear lessons or ideas for funders: Sessions should provide participants with understandings and/or practical tools that will help them grow as education grantmakers and/or strengthen their work. In telling the story of the work, sessions should give a behind the scenes look at, for example, the rationale for the strategy, the lessons learned and the transferability or implications for other funders. The choices

and decisions that led to particular outcomes can be tremendously useful as peer grantmakers look to apply them to their own grantmaking.

Member Value

Grantmakers for Education’s Operating Principles: We encourage proposals that incorporate our strategic principles by helping to prepare our members for the challenges and opportunities of the future. Sessions should provide opportunities for new thinking, diversity of opinion, and open-minded discourse that respects different perspectives and encourages challenging conversation.

Outcomes based: Our intent is to encourage data-driven sessions, based on research and practices that have proven effective in the field.

Relevant to different types of funders: GFE’s conference attendees are a diverse group of grantmakers working on issues across the education continuum—cradle to career—with a wide range of strategies, budgets and scope of geographic focus. The conference planning committee will choose a final slate of sessions that reflect this range of interests. In your submission, please clearly state the group(s) for whom the session is most appropriate. While we appreciate proposals that are attractive to a diversity of funders, our strong preference is to have sessions that help a well-defined group of grantmakers improve their craft.

Selection Tips

Grantmakers for Education is always striving to provide the best experience possible for its attendees at the annual conference. Breakout sessions comprise a major portion of the conference program, so it's important that they provide an atmosphere that inspires collaborative and experiential learning that our attendees will not forget. Here are some suggestions that can transform ordinary sessions into highly engaging ones.

1. Make it relevant—Proposals need to have a strong link with our conference theme.
2. Consider an “unconference” format that allows attendees to help build the session agenda on the spot. Unconferences allow for open discussions and peer-to-peer learning. Some examples of unconference agendas include teaching workshops, show and tell, and group discussions. See [here](#) for more unconference methods.
3. Accommodate different learning styles—One of Grantmakers for Education’s major strengths is the diversity we find in our membership, both at the organizational and individual level. Your session needs to incorporate strategies that will cater to learners of all types.
4. Make it interactive—Attendees continually ask for more interactive sessions. While using a PowerPoint presentation or having a panel of speakers can be informative, it often leads to attendees being talked to rather than included in the conversation. Some ideas from past proposals included the use of games, storytelling, videos and inviting participants to contribute to the dialogue.

Speaker Requirements

All speakers must register for the conference (at minimum, they will incur a one-day registration fee) before the conference registration deadline, September 28, 2018. Many session organizers support some or all of speaker travel, lodging and registration.

All speakers must commit to the presentation of a session at designated times during the conference, October 16-18, 2018 in San Diego, CA.

Support

We are here to help! If you have any questions regarding your proposal submission, please email Grantmakers for Education at programs@edfund.org.

Important Dates

February 20, 2018 — Submission period opens.

March 20, 2018 — Proposals due by 5:00 pm PT.

Late May 2018 — Applicants will be notified about the status of their proposals.

September 28, 2018 – Conference registration deadline.

October 16-18, 2018 — Annual conference in San Diego, CA.

How to Submit a Session

Only Grantmakers for Education (GFE) members may propose conference sessions ([click here to learn more about membership](#))—doing so is an exclusive GFE member benefit.

We have an online process for submitting proposals, which will open February 20. A link to the submission form will be provided on the [Grantmakers for Education website](#) on that date.

We recognize that you may need several days to complete the form; before you start to fill out the form, create an account (instructions are embedded in the form), and you will be able to save and revise your proposal before submitting it. Multiple proposals may be submitted using one account. Even if you have submitted a proposal in past years, you will need to create a new account.

All proposals are due by 5:00 pm PT on Tuesday, March 20, 2018.