

Submission Deadline Extended to March 27, 2023

2023 Annual Conference Session Proposal Submission Guide

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[Submit your proposals here.](#)

Welcome!

Grantmakers for Education invites members to propose learning sessions for our 27th [annual conference](#) – *In Pursuit of Justice: Creating Contexts for Young People and Adult Learners to Thrive*. **Only Grantmakers for Education members may propose conference sessions** (click [here](#) to learn more about membership) – doing so is an exclusive member benefit. If you are not sure whether your organization is a member, please refer to [this list](#) or contact membership@edfunders.org.

The EdFunders conference will take place in Atlanta, Georgia from October 10–12, 2023. We are excited to be able to meet in person to reaffirm our commitment to supporting learners and advancing effective, equity-centered grantmaking in the field of education.

The conference is Grantmakers for Education’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.

We are seeking 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 and Grantmakers for Education’s [guiding principles](#).

As you write your proposal, think seriously about how conference attendees will engage with your session. Over the years, attendees have told us that **they most enjoy sessions that allow them to connect with presenters and fellow participants**. Engaging sessions leave attendees with more actionable learnings and encourage collaboration after the conference.

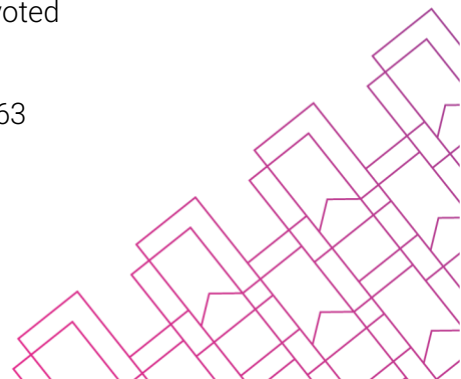
The instructions below should serve as guidance as you prepare your session.

2023 Annual Conference Theme

In Pursuit of Justice: Creating Contexts for Young People and Adult Learners to Thrive

“Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary.” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*, 1963

“I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom... [are those] more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice...” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, 1963



We are at an inflection point, one that compels us to invest in creating contexts that enable young people, adult learners and communities to thrive. We can support the development of comprehensive and inclusive systems of learning where everyone benefits – students, educators, families and communities – even as we strengthen short-term investments that mitigate the harms of immediate injustices. We recognize that old ideas of education and conventional approaches to philanthropy will not enable us to build these systems. We know that the world demands something more of all of us: a new set of workforce skills; new tools to strengthen democracy; new ways of sharing and distributing wealth, power and information. We see that we can't get there without working with each other, partnering for justice.

At the close of our 2022 conference, our speakers invited us to embrace the importance of learning contexts and their intersection with broader social systems in order to help students understand the purpose and value of learning, and to help adults help them truly thrive. The closing panel of Black leaders challenged us to think about the dynamics of wealth and power, including systems that empower a few and disempower others. At our 2023 conference, let's move these ideas from abstraction to action. Let's focus on what learners need today and what major shifts are needed for tomorrow. Let's build the path from here to there together.

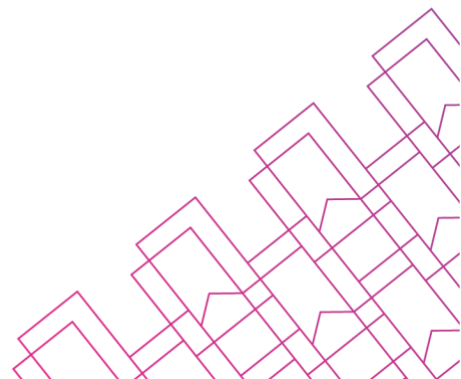
INCORPORATING THE THEME

In applying the theme to your session proposals, think about what would help education grantmakers build a path to a future in which young people, adult learners and communities are able to thrive. What contexts and environments do we need to build or support, both now and in the future? What needs to change in education and philanthropy to make this happen? As philanthropists for education, we are in a unique position to help move our field and the American education system into a new era at a critical moment.

Sessions can support grantmakers to gain a deeper understanding of, and take action on, issues embedded in the theme. For example, sessions could explore:

- Pathways to increase equity and justice in grantmaking with attention to systemic issues.
- The voices and approaches taken by members of communities that have historically not been represented at decision-making tables.
- Action-ready tools or best practices to increase equity and justice in the classroom and beyond, with a focus on addressing intersecting challenges such as racial, health or economic disparities.
- Lessons from this historic moment that will help transform education at various points along the education continuum.
- Innovative roles for schools, postsecondary institutions and other learning venues.

Session Types



We are offering several types of learning sessions this year to reflect feedback we have received from past participants, and to reflect changes in how people hope to engage in learning during in-person conferences. You can select the type of session you are interested in presenting on the session proposal form.

A note on audience: The purpose of our conference is to serve education grantmakers. Other interested parties such as grantees, researchers, students and educators may be present in sessions because we extend the courtesy to our speakers to attend sessions on the day they are speaking.

LEARNING SESSIONS

Purpose: To cultivate an engaging learning space for conference attendees in the form of an interactive workshop, panel session, etc. We highly encourage a portion of the agenda be devoted to small group discussion and/or Q+A in order to promote an exchange of ideas. Unless there is a compelling reason discussed in your proposal, panels should include no more than three to four people.

Dates and length: October 10-12; 75 minutes.

Audience: Your target audience is education grantmakers, but other conference attendees may participate.

SNAPSHOT SESSIONS

Purpose: To provide a fast-paced, punchy session with high-level takeaways. We encourage an interactive format like [PechaKucha](#) to keep presenters organized and presentations short, and to keep participant engagement high. For Snapshot sessions we recommend no more than three presenters.

Dates and length: October 10-11; 45 minutes. You will have the opportunity to present this session **twice** during one afternoon block, including a break.

Audience: Your target audience is education grantmakers, but other conference attendees may participate.

FUNDER LABS

Purpose: To cultivate an engaging, funder-only learning space where presenters and attendees can candidly address issues that are specific to funders. The session can take the form of an interactive workshop, panel session, etc. We highly encourage devoting a portion of the agenda to small group discussion and/or Q+A in order to promote an exchange of ideas.

Date and length: October 12; 75 minutes

Audience: Your target audience is education grantmakers, and only grantmakers are invited to participate. This means that all panelists or presenters should also be grantmakers.

Selection Criteria

Grantmakers for Education's (EdFunders) annual conference planning committee—consisting of representatives from a range of grantmaking organizations across EdFunders' membership (including size, grantmaking budget, area of focus and type of foundation)—works collaboratively with EdFunders 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:

Topical and 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 and reflective: We are looking for sessions that explore new concerns or take perennial topics and advance the conversation to a deeper level. We're particularly interested in sessions that challenge funders to consider old problems or assumptions in new ways. We like sessions that create genuine conversations among attending grantmakers and that engage their wisdom and experience.

Thought leadership and diversity: As the largest gathering of education philanthropists, EdFunders' annual conference is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to gather the leading voices in the field. Speakers and moderators who bring depth, experience and energy to a session are valued. To the extent possible (given the limits on panel size laid out earlier) speakers should reflect racial diversity and a diversity of perspectives and experiences including new and unexpected voices. It's an opportune moment to not only draw from your own grantmaking experience, but also that of grantees, educators, learners and other stakeholders.

Well-conceived and innovative learning format: Sessions should provide participants with practical tools and knowledge that will help them grow as education grantmakers and strengthen their work. Sessions should give a behind-the-scenes look at the rationale for a strategy, the lessons learned and the choices and decisions that led to particular outcomes. We look for sessions that engage the audience as active learners. Please consider untraditional and innovative strategies for learning; check the Selection Tips for ideas.

Clear lessons and evidence for funders: Craft sessions to meet thoughtful, relevant learning objectives. Ideas presented should be clearly linked to supporting data, which may mean they are based on research and practices that have proven effective in the field. They might also be ideas/approaches that have historically been undervalued by



those in positions of power in grantmaking, policy or research but are grounded in the wisdom of local communities. Funders should leave the session with a clear understanding of evidence and how to apply lessons to their own grantmaking.

Relevant to different types of funders: EdFunders' conference attendees are a diverse group of grantmakers working on issues across the education continuum—prenatal to career—with a wide range of strategies, budgets and geographic scope. The conference planning committee will choose a final slate of sessions that reflects this range of interests. In your submission, please select the focus area(s) that would be of particular interest to funders. 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 to improve their craft. Based on past feedback from attendees who noted a disconnect between session titles/descriptions and actual content, the committee and staff will be especially attentive to evaluating the fit between a learning session's goals, intended audience and proposed content.

Session Tips

Grantmakers for Education is always striving to provide the best experience possible for its attendees at the annual conference. Concurrent learning 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. Please keep grantmakers in mind as your key audience you craft your session description and think about design. Grantmakers should be able to walk away answering the question: "What does this mean for me and my work?"
2. **Accommodate different learning styles:** One of Grantmakers for Education's major strengths is the diversity found within our membership, both at the organizational and individual level. Your session needs to incorporate strategies that will cater to learners of all types.
3. **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. Attendees bring a wealth of knowledge to the conference – take advantage of it! Here are some strategies to consider:
 - **Keep the presentation brief.** Instead of making the presentation the focus of the session, use it as a jumping off point for discussion.
 - **Encourage small group discussion.** Use a format like a "[world café](#)" to allow participants to discuss topics with each other.
 - **Get up and moving.** Incorporate a "[data walk](#)" to allow participants to stretch their legs and engage with your session.
 - **Host a show and tell.** Share a tool that you use in your work, and allow participants to experiment with it.



- **Teach a skill.** Use your session as a workshop to teach participants a skill or strategy that they will be able to use in their own work.
- **Play a game.** Incorporate a game of Jeopardy to see what participants have learned, or play an improv game to brainstorm ways to use new tools or strategies.

Speaker Requirements

If it's possible to confirm your speakers before submitting your proposal, please do so and indicate this on the RFP form, as this will help to inform our decision.

Speaker registration:

- All speakers must register for the conference before the speaker registration deadline (date TBD).
- We offer a special, one-day registration rate available to all speakers. Speakers who are not funders or members should plan to use this registration option and register only for the day on which they are speaking. Non-funder speakers are not eligible to register for the full conference.
- Speakers who are funders or members AND wish to attend the full conference will need to pay the full conference registration rate.
- While not required, session organizers typically support some or all speaker travel, lodging and registration. Please keep this in mind as you propose panelists since unfunded travel/registration costs can make engagement by young people, educators and community leaders difficult.

All speakers must commit to the in-person presentation of their session at designated times during the conference. Dates and times will be confirmed by the end of June.

Support

RFP FORM WORKSHEET

[You may download this worksheet](#) to plan your session submission in advance. You might find this especially helpful if you are working with a group.

HOW TO REACH US

We are here to help! If you have any questions regarding your proposal submission, please email Grantmakers for Education at programs@edfunders.org. We recommend adding this email address to your contacts so that our emails don't land in your junk folder.

CONFERENCE SESSION PROPOSAL Q+A

We held a proposal informational session plus Q+A where we covered topics like how to submit and what makes a proposal successful. Highly recommended for newbies as well as experienced session organizers. [Find the presentation slides and video here.](#)

The Out-of-School Time Impact Group is also holding a conference session idea exchange on February 28. [Learn more here.](#) Watch our website for possible additional information sessions in other topic areas.

Important Dates

February 21 – Submission period opens.

February 24 – [Conference Session Proposal Q+A.](#)

Deadline extended March 27 – Proposals due by 11:59 pm PT.

Late May to mid-June – Applicants will be notified about the status of their proposals.

August 7 – Early bird registration deadline.

TBA – Speaker registration deadline.

September 25, 2023 – Conference registration deadline.

October 10-12, 2023 – Annual Conference, Atlanta Hilton (GA)

How to Submit a Session

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

We have an online process for submitting proposals, which will open February 21.

[Submit your proposals here.](#)

We recognize that you may need several days to complete the form; before you start to fill out the form, create an account and you will be able to save and revise your proposal before submitting it. Multiple proposals may be submitted using one account.

All proposals are due by 11:59 pm PT on Monday, March 27, 2023.

We highly encourage submitting authors to [add programs@edfunders.org](mailto:add_programs@edfunders.org) to your email [contacts](#) to avoid the risk of important communication going to spam and junk mail.

