



**SESSION  
PROPOSAL  
GUIDE**

# #VEX24

The exceptionally loose theme for the 2024 Visitor Experience Conference is *Moving Forward*. This year's conference is hosted by the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, and will take place October 20-23. Conference sessions will be held at the museum on Monday, October 21.

## TOPIC IDEAS FROM VEX23 ATTENDEES

- Green Energy
- Maintaining employee morale
- Cross-cultural relationship building
- Focus on small institutions
- Accessibility
- Leadership skills
- Managing up
- Connecting team to mission
- Accessibility for staff
- Dealing with difficult visitors
- Volunteer recruitment
- Analyzing visitor data
- Career development
- Staff engagement
- Operations
- Advocating for DEAL initiatives





# SHARE YOUR STORY

Get together with your team and submit your session proposal for the 2024 Visitor Experience Conference. Proposals must be submitted by Friday March 31, 2024. Only complete submissions will be reviewed.

What are we looking for in a good presentation?

- Clear takeaways with applications in our everyday work.
- Fresh ideas and projects that have been tested in your institution that resulted in a visible difference in operations.
- **Sessions that bring diverse perspectives** - consider who is presenting. Is your panel representative of different genders, races, economic backgrounds, work level, etc.
- Clarity and consistency in titles and descriptions. Your session has value, give attendees a snapshot of that value.

# DEVELOP A FUTURE-FOCUSED SESSION IN 3 STEPS

## 1

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

VEX welcomes visitor experience professionals from around the world each year. Our conference brings together everyone from the front line ticketing team to the President/CEO of an organization. Our audience is excited to be at a conference that focuses on experience and engagement and they are eager to hear from their colleagues in the field. We all have stories to tell and experiences to share, and our audience has shown time and again that they love to hear from people like you.



## PAST PRESENTER JOB TITLES

Guest Experience Manager  
Director of Communications  
Project Manager  
Director of Community Partnerships  
Visitor Services & Museum Shop Manager  
Assistant Director of Experience & Culture  
Vice President, Marketing & Brand  
Manager of Fan Engagement  
Visitor Services Team Lead  
Director of Operations  
Gallery Specialist

Manager of Visitor Services & Analytics  
Program Manager  
Director of Development  
Visitor Engagement Specialist  
Volunteer Program Specialist  
Chief Executive Officer  
Director of Visitor & Member Services  
Manager of Guest Services & Retail  
Visitor Services/Membership Coordinator  
Director of Interpretation  
Director of Operations

# 2

## KNOW YOUR STYLE

Make your content shine. Choose a format that highlights your content and allows you to interact with your audience. We offer a variety of formats to cover individual learning and engagement styles. Don't see your format here? Send us an email at [programming@visitorexperience.group](mailto:programming@visitorexperience.group)

- Lecture
- Panel Discussion
- Roundtable
- Technology Demo
- 2-3 Hour Workshop

# 3

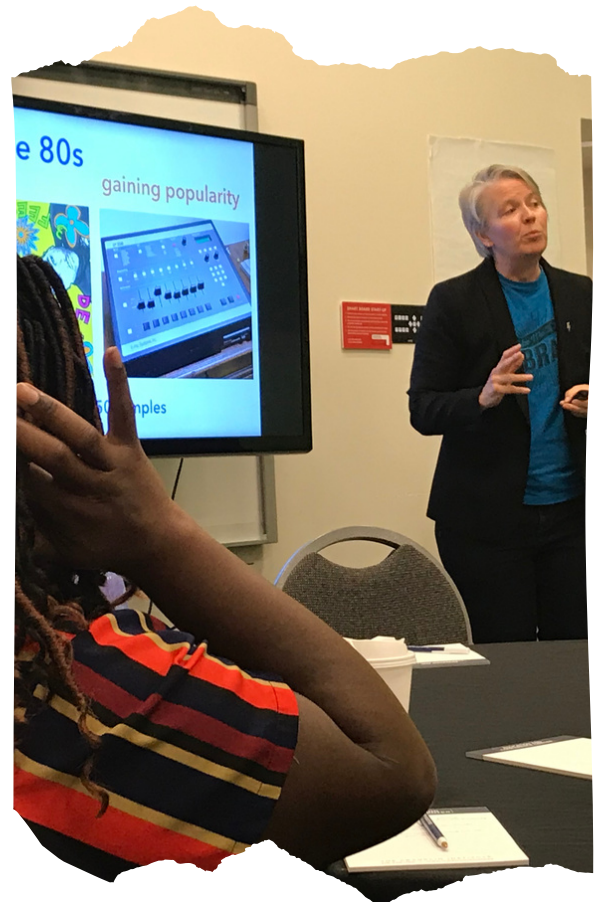
## KNOW YOUR TOPIC

This is it, the meat and potatoes and your proposal. Here are the components you need to include:

- Your primary objectives and goals for this session.
- Three or four audience takeaways

Other Considerations:

- Descriptions don't cover everything. Let the committee know if there is anything outside that description that is important.
- An interactive or action element can inspire your colleagues
- Case studies are valuable but balance them with concrete actions that attendees can bring to their institutions.



# TOPIC IDEAS

- Welcoming New Communities
- Accessibility
- Visitor-Centered Strategic Planning
- Master Planning/ Building Re-design
- Forming a Union
- Construction
- Innovative Wayfinding
- Visitation Models
- Negotiation
- Staff Engagement
- Inclusion Initiatives
- Evaluation Strategies
- Partnerships/Corporate Partnerships
- Innovative Programming
- Community Engagement
- Membership
- Internal and External Communication
- Sustainability
- Dealing with Difficult Situations
- Staffing, Training, and Hiring
- Leaving the field
- Performance Reviews/Appraisals
- Staff Retention Programs
- Volunteer Services
- Retail Services
- Budget Basics
- Security/Public Safety



## SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSAL TODAY!

### **Please follow these guidelines for submitting:**

- Proposals must be submitted by midnight EST on April 5, 2024. Only complete submissions will be reviewed.
- Sessions are 60 minutes in length (this includes time for question and answers).
- If there is more than one presenter working on a proposal together, please establish a point of contact.

[Fill out this form to submit your proposal](#)

# SAMPLE SESSIONS

## Putting People First: Lessons in Staff Engagement - VEX23

- Patrick Wittwer, Assistant Director of Experience & Culture, Delaware Museum of Nature and Science



In 2022, the Delaware Museum of Nature and Science reopened after a massive renovation. In 2024, DelMNS leadership decided to change how they engaged with their staff in an effort to improve staff relations, morale, and move toward a people-first model. Learn how this museum is reimagining the employer/employee relationship and changing how they hire, train, develop, and recognize staff. VEX VP and DelMNS Assistant Director of Experience and Culture Pat Wittwer will share how he is doing the work on a day-to-day basis and offer tips on how to make similar changes in your institution.

## Beyond the Field: Putting Transferable Skills to Work - VEX20

- Joseph Gonzales, Business Development Associate, Physician Life Care Planning
- Mikaela Maria, Manager of Community Programs and Services, Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities
- Tarra Raspanti, Office and Events Manager, Manor College

Join us for a lively discussion with former museum professionals who have left the field and learn about moving into a new field, adapting skills from museum work for a new profession, and life after museums.



# FAQ

## Where/when is the conference?

VEX24 takes place over October 20-23 in Richmond, VA. Your presentation will take place on Monday, October 21 at the Science Museum of Virginia.

## Is there any compensation for presenting?

All profits from our merchandise sales from November 1, 2024 through October 15, 2024 will be combined with donations from attendees during the conference and whatever that amounts to will be divided evenly among session presenters.

## When will I know if my session was accepted?

Decisions regarding the selection of sessions and panelists will be e-mailed to all candidates by mid-May of 2024. Please email the Programming Committee at [programming@visitorexperience.group](mailto:programming@visitorexperience.group) or visit our website at [vexgroup.org](http://vexgroup.org) with any questions during the process.

## Should I register myself for the conference?

Presenters will receive instructions on how to register themselves for the conference over the summer. You are responsible for registering yourself for any add-ons such as the welcome event, post-conference networking party, tours, and workshops.

## Which format should I use?

We ask all presenters to submit their presentations as a Google Slides file. This allows us to test all presentations prior to your arrival and share them with our attendees.

## Can I submit more than one proposal?

Yes!

## Why do you want a headshot/museum selfie?

We decided to include these in our digital programming and marketing as a way to help attendees find familiar faces at the conference based on attendee feedback from prior conferences. Make sure to submit a photo for each presenter along with your proposal!



# What's Next?

## Before April 5, 2024

After you submit a proposal, you will hear from Kyle Avery Porter, the VEX Programming Chair, to confirm receipt of your submission. From there, Kyle will share it with the rest of the board and we will begin the selection process.

## April 2024

The board will review session proposals to prepare for selection. We will meet in mid-to-late April to discuss and review. Sometimes, at this meeting, we decide to ask presenters to combine proposals

## Early May 2024

Decisions regarding the selection of sessions and panelists will be e-mailed to all presenters by mid May of 2024.

## Late May 2024

If your proposal has been selected, the Programming Committee will reach out with the Presenter Questionnaire. This form allows us to learn a little more about you and your proposal and helps us ensure that what our attendees see in September matches what is described in the program.

## June 2024

The Communication Committee will reach out to you about promoting your individual session. This can involve short videos if you're comfortable on camera, or photos relating to your presentation along with a quote. They will also give you a kit for promoting the conference with all of the tools you need to reach out to your network.

## July/August 2024

The Programming Committee will follow up with you to discuss needs for your presentation. They will confer with the Hospitality team and then get back to you with your session's room/layout.

## October 2024

You will share your Google Slides presentation with [veconference@gmail.com](mailto:veconference@gmail.com) by October 9, 2024. Your slides will be preloaded on a computer in the room in which your presentation takes place.