



**SESSION
PROPOSAL
GUIDE**

#VEX26

At the 2026 Visitor Experience Conference, we will gather in Philadelphia as many have before to discuss, engage, and learn. In a time when life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are under constant threat and there are those who seek to inhibit the sharing of knowledge, it is our responsibility as the keepers of culture to come together and ensure that the future of our field is bright. As more are silenced every day, now is the time to stand up and be heard. Come to Philadelphia and share your ideas, collaborate with your colleagues, and discuss how we the people can help form a more perfect union.



The logo for the 2026 Visitor Experience Conference. It features a top border of white stars on a blue background. Below this is the text "VISITOR EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE" in blue. The year "2026" is prominently displayed, with the "0" replaced by a stylized red and white starburst. Underneath is the slogan "A MORE PERFECT UNION" in blue, followed by "PHILADELPHIA" in red. At the bottom is a blue silhouette of the Philadelphia city skyline, including recognizable buildings like the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall. The entire logo is framed by a bottom border of white stars on a blue background.



#VEX26

The 2026 Visitor Experience Conference will take place in Philadelphia, PA between October 11th and 14th. Conference sessions will be hosted at the National Constitution Center on Monday, October 12. You can learn more about this year's conference and look back at previous conferences by visiting vexgroup.org/conference.



TOPIC REQUESTS FROM PAST VEX ATTENDEES

- Topics relating to current events
- Virtual queueing
- Personal facilitated experiences
- Smart tours
- Staff recognition
- Security
- Training
- Collecting & responding to guest feedback
- Amenity spaces & how to manage them
- Panel discussions geared toward upper management
- DEAI
- Avoiding burnout
- Data
- Staff onboarding
- De-escalation





SHARE YOUR STORY

Ready to share your expertise at the 2026 Visitor Experience Conference? Submit your session proposal—whether solo or with a team—by Friday, February 27, 2026. 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 levels, etc.
- Clarity and consistency in titles and descriptions. Your session has value, give attendees a snapshot of that value.

DEVELOP A VEX CONFERENCE 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
- Assistant Director of Experience & Culture

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 veconference@gmail.com



- Lecture - one presenter, 60 minutes
- Panel Discussion - several presenters, 60 minutes
- Roundtable - several presenters in a discussion-based format, 60 minutes
- Interactive - involving a lot of audience participation, 60 minutes
- 90 minute workshop

3

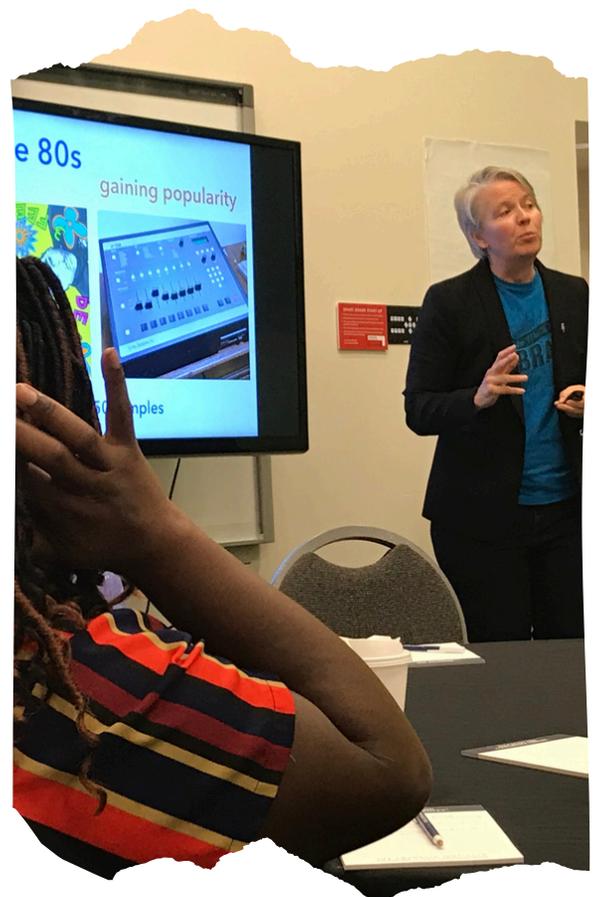
KNOW YOUR TOPIC

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

- Navigating Budget Cuts
- Welcoming New Communities
- Accessibility
- Political Influence over Content
- 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 Communications
- 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 Friday, February 27, 2026. Only complete submissions will be reviewed.
- Sessions are 60 minutes in length (this includes time for questions and answers).
- If there is more than one presenter, please establish a main point of contact.

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

SAMPLE SESSIONS

Practicing Inclusivity, VEX24

This session will uncover helpful, readily available reference materials for inclusive exhibition and space design, discuss ways to equip your front-line staff with skills, materials and information that will make every guest feel welcome, and empower attendees to lead the charge in fostering inclusivity at their respective institutions.

Critical Investment: Creating Career Pathways for Frontline Staff, VEX22

Every institution's greatest asset is their frontline team and every institution's most critical challenge is to create opportunity for the pool of talented people carrying visitor experiences. In this session we will share the Barnes innovative approach to frontline staff development by introducing you to our internal Pathways Program with a focus on our Gallery Specialist role and look at how incentivizing employment boosts morale, establishes department stability, retains employees, and creates the mental bandwidth for positive visitor engagement.

Welcome Starts in the Office: Humanizing the Visitor Services Manual, VEX25

The ways we welcome visitors are informed by the ways we welcome our colleagues. In this interactive session, let's explore together what welcome means to us—and how we can build it internally, using the same models of invitation, community agreements, and community building that we use with our visitors.

Impact and Scalability: Building Civic Engagement into Every Museum, VEX19

Rooted in the belief that museums can cultivate the next generation of active citizens, this session will ignite a conversation about programmatic strategies and interpretive techniques for promoting civic engagement. Hear how one museum designed opportunities for students to think critically about the world and their roles in it, creating positive change in their local communities beyond museum walls. Speakers from the National Constitution Center will share what happens when we approach each learner as a future participant in our democracy.

FAQ

Where/when is the conference?

VEX26 takes place over October 11-14 in Philadelphia. Your presentation will take place on Monday, October 12 at the National Constitution Center.

Is there any compensation for presenting?

As a volunteer-led organization, we do not have the capacity to provide compensation for presenters. We greatly value your willingness to share your expertise and contribute to advancing the field through this collective effort.

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 April of 2026. Please email the Programming Committee at veconference@gmail.com or visit our website at vexgroup.org with any questions during the process.

Should I register myself for the conference?

Presenters will be automatically registered for the conference at the National Constitution Center. 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 program and marketing as a way to help attendees find familiar faces at the conference based on attendee feedback from prior conferences. If you have more than one presenter, please email us the photos of any additional presenters after your session has been accepted. Please ensure that each photo's file name identifies who is pictured.

What's Next?

Early March 2026

After you submit a proposal, you will hear from Kyle Porter Avery, 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.

Late March 2026

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

April 2026

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

May 2026

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.

Summer 2026

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

September 2026

You will share your Google Slides presentation with veconference@gmail.com by September 25, 2026. Your slides will be preloaded on a computer in the room in which your session takes place.

