



Western Museums Association

Strengthening museums to serve diverse communities

WMA 2025 Annual Meeting

Proposal Guidelines

October 1-4 in Reno, Nevada

Application Deadline: Friday, March 21, 2025

The Western Museums Association (WMA) invites you to submit proposals for lively, thoughtful, and interactive sessions for the 2025 Annual Meeting. Examples of topics include:

- Instances of best practices in museums, reflections on successes and failures, explorations of professional courage, articulations of our core values as museums; how we cope with change and advances in technology, how we challenge ourselves and our staff to aim high
- Strategies for museums to build their potential to be effective, meaningful organizations and to sustain themselves, their communities, and their society.
- Examinations of who we are, whom we serve, and how we can build on our work so far

SESSION STRUCTURE

Annual Meeting sessions may be structured in any one of the following ways, or by another means of delivery that is well thought out and described.

Single Session Panel

Single Sessions are 75 minutes in length with a minimum of 2 speakers and can follow multiple structure formats. Examples include Fishbowls, PechaKucha, Knowledge Café, Speed Geeking, etc. For more info on session structures, please see our [Program & Session Structures](#) document.

WMA is open to other various, inventive formats for sessions, but please make sure to include a full explanation in the proposal.

Proposers are asked to include an assortment of individuals, institutions, and perspectives in their sessions. Ideally, sessions will include speakers (of various ages, ethnicities, etc.) from a variety of museums (small, large, different locations, etc.) and disciplines (history, art, science, etc.) to provide a broad discussion with diverse perspectives on the topic.

You may frame your session as a case study, a demonstration, or project report, but your session must be relevant and of interest to delegates who are *not* in your specific area. For instance, a case study could include a panelist to provide an objective or an outside perspective on the project you are presenting. WMA is interested in wide-ranging, all-inclusive, and meaningful perspectives and generally, sessions without broad representation are less likely to be accepted.

Sessions must also include built-in time for audience engagement where presenters will involve the attendees through discussion and answering of questions.

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Pre-Conference Workshops

Workshops are hands-on, participatory, practical sessions that are presented on the day preceding the Annual Meeting, lasting generally a full- or half-day. WMA generally cannot make exceptions to this scheduling; however, you may contact WMA staff to discuss any ideas you may have. Attendees pay the costs of the workshop in a separate registration fee.

WRITING & SUBMITTING YOUR SESSION PROPOSAL

Proposals **MUST** be submitted through WMA's [Online Submission Form](#), no later than **5:00pm, March 21th, 2025**. Because proposals must be distributed to Program Committee members in a timely manner, late proposals will *not* be accepted.

WMA has created a [Proposal Worksheet](#) for you individually, or with other members of your group, to work through the details of your proposed session or workshop, including format, learning outcomes, presenters, etc. The information in this worksheet will enable you to easily input the complete information and details into the online submission form.

The proposal should ideally provide descriptions that clearly, enthusiastically, and efficiently describe the point and relevance of your session. The description should include the primary focus of the session and the goals or outcomes to be achieved.

The Program Committee also asks that you include:

- A clear and concise session title (creative titles are OK but should be accurately descriptive; Section 1.A).
- A clear and concise description of the session (max. 75 words; Section 1.B). This text will be included in the final program.
- A more extended description of the session's intended objectives and desired outcomes (max. 250 words; Section 1.C). This includes – what types of engagement strategies will be employed during the session (Section 1.D); the target audience (Section 1.E); and how it relates to the WMA 2020 theme (Section 1.F).
- Complete contact information for the proposer, moderator, and all presenters (Section 2).

Community Representation

For any session that discusses a specific group of people, especially if they are the intended audience or focus of an exhibition or program, at least one member from the specific group should be represented on the panel. When session attendance is cost prohibitive for the individual(s), WMA will waive the in-person requirement for all presenters and virtual or recorded participation will be allowed to ensure an appropriate and balanced community representation in the session.

NOTE: *In the submission, you must include a list of confirmed speakers for your panel. Please indicate any contact you have made with potential speakers in developing your session to give the Program Committee a clear idea of how fully formed your session is. Please communicate to your speakers that sessions, including their participation, will not be confirmed until late April, 2024. You will be notified by **April 25, 2024**, if your session has received a final approval by the Program Committee. You as the proposer, will be responsible for notifying your speakers of the final approval.*

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VERY IMPORTANT

WMA limits the number of sessions that individuals can be included in – Individuals may *only* present or moderate in 2 sessions. This is done to ensure that a variety of perspectives are represented, as well as to alleviate scheduling difficulties. Please be aware of this as you agree to be on and/or ask people to join a session. Please let WMA staff know if you have questions regarding this policy.

The individuals serving on the Program Committee have been chosen for their experience in the field, the respect of their peers, as well as their broad network of contacts, and they reserve the right to suggest changes to your session proposal or your speaker list if they feel it will strengthen the quality of your session. Your cooperation in working with the Committee on recommended changes is required to assure acceptance of your session for the final program.

The more fully developed and clear your proposal is, the better the Program Committee will be able to consider its value for the conference. Unclear or incomplete proposals are less likely to be accepted.

POLICY ON FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE ANNUAL MEETING

The WMA is a non-profit professional service organization that welcomes participation from individuals interested in making professional contributions to their peers. The willingness of individuals to give their time and expertise to this effort ensures that the Annual Meeting continues to be affordable to the widest possible audience. Thus, WMA does not provide remuneration or travel reimbursement to any moderators or speakers participating in conference sessions. **In exchange for this service to the profession, a discount for the entire Annual Meeting registration fee is offered.** Additionally, presenters are welcome to apply to the Wanda Chin Scholarship if they are applicable.

POLICY ON CONSULTANTS & FOR-PROFIT SERVICE PROVIDERS PROPOSING SESSIONS

WMA encourages session proposals from company representatives and private consultants. However, the following policies and counsel ensure that these sessions are effective:

1. Your session must address an issue or topic in an objective manner. During your session it is OK to present your work, but it must be done in a manner that addresses a broad context and avoids specifically endorsing your business. If you are unsure of how to accomplish this, please feel free to contact the WMA with questions and concerns to help develop your proposal.
2. It is strongly preferred that a museum professional (not a client) serve as the session moderator, while you serve as a speaker.
3. Your session panelists should *not* consist of only yourself and your clients. This structure does not represent a truly objective session. If you have difficulty finding panelists outside of your client list, you are strongly encouraged to indicate this on your session form (Section 1.G), and the Program Committee can help suggest additional panelists that are knowledgeable about your topic.
4. No payment of professional fees will be paid to any consultant or for-profit service provider for facilitating or presenting in a session or workshop. It is expected that all Annual Meeting participants donate their time and expertise to the program.

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HOW DOES WMA SCHEDULE CONFIRMED SESSIONS?

The Program Committee will finalize the session schedule in May. Efforts are made to balance offerings throughout the Annual Meeting, avoid scheduling sessions with similar topics at the same time, and stack speakers presenting in multiple sessions.

Because of the complexity of scheduling 40+ sessions and the need to ensure the ideal schedule to create an enticing and relevant conference program, **WMA is unable to accommodate individual speakers' requests to present on a certain day or time.**

When you confirm session speakers for your submission, you must also confirm that your speakers are able to present on any day of the conference, and if you propose a pre-conference workshop, you must confirm that they are able to present a day earlier before the conference begins.

Proposers, moderators, and presenters will receive the final schedule by **May, 2025** with your session confirmation notification.

**Thank you for participating in the
professional development of your colleagues! – WMA**

Questions? Contact WMA staff at proposals@westmuse.org