

SESSION PROPOSAL GUIDANCE NOTES

Museums Association Annual Conference & Exhibition
5-7 November 2020, Edinburgh

Session proposals are assessed by a conference panel, which is made up of museum professionals and MA staff.

Please remember that this is a draft proposal and all session organisers will be asked to work with MA conference panel members to shape the final session. You might be asked to merge your session with another session if the panel feels the subject matter overlaps.

Timescale

Deadline for submissions is 2 March 2020.

The session proposals will be assessed by the conference panel in mid-March. Session proposers will be told whether they have been successful or not by early April. Those who make successful proposals will have to have all their speakers/chairs confirmed by the end of April.

Theme

Power to the People – Democratising our Museums

Museums have the power to change the way people think about the world and their place in it. We can use our collections, buildings and programmes to improve wellbeing, inspire debate and create better places for us to live and work.

For us to make a positive difference we need to empower our communities and those who work with museums so that we can have meaningful impact.

This conference will discuss how we can use our power ethically and responsibly, how we can share power and become more democratic institutions and how we can be structured and led in ways that make radical change possible.

We will address subjects such as decolonising our museums, devolving our institutional authority, using our collections dynamically, engaging with climate and social activism and rethinking how we deliver learning, participation and engagement.

We will bring together voices from inside and outside museums to share ideas on how to use the power we wield more effectively and fairly. We will ask challenging questions about who is excluded and why and how we can become truly inclusive spaces that represent all our communities.

Proposed session name

This might have to be changed if your session proposal is accepted.

Outline of session

We are keen to encourage proposals that contain new thinking, innovative ideas and radical solutions. We want suggestions that are bold, provocative and thought-provoking.

The outline of your proposed session (max 200 words) should include the content of the session, the key issues raised, and who should attend the session and why. You can include weblinks if relevant.

Session formats

Some common session formats are outlined below, but we are also keen to see proposals that offer new and unusual formats. Please do not feel limited by the formats below.

- Panel debate: consists of a chair/facilitator moderating discussion of two or more speakers. Works best with strong arguments and a controversial topic over which opinion in the audience and speakers is likely to be divided.
- In conversation: two or more speakers discuss an idea or theme with a chair leading the discussion.
- Panel: two or more speakers present in turn an idea or theme and then respond to questions from the floor.
- Workshop: following an introduction by one or more speakers, facilitators help delegates to work in pairs or groups so they can share experience and ideas.
- Quick-fire provocations: One or more speakers give very short talks exploring hot-topic ideas or issues. 30 minutes maximum.

- Exhibition seminars: we are looking for practical, insightful and case study-led content focused on three areas: digital technology; workforce development; and talks based on the recommendations of the [Museums Association's Empowering Collections report](#). They are an opportunity for companies, consultants and museum professionals to showcase recent projects, products or services, and lead discussion in a specific area of expertise. Seminars are 30 minutes-long, have a maximum of two speakers and take place on the exhibition floor.

Room layout

There two main types of seating plans are below:

- Theatre-style
- Round-table

Please state which would work best for your session and we will do our best to accommodate you. It is possible that we might not be able to accommodate your requirements, so you might have to think how your session would work with a different type of room layout.

Session length

All slots are timetabled to last either, 15, 30 or 60 minutes. Longer sessions should allow time for delegates to participate.

Speakers/chair

The speakers and chair do not have to be confirmed but it is vital that you approach all the people you are considering to check that they can speak in principle.

When there are two or more speakers, sessions with a range of speakers from different organisations are preferable.

We are keen to see sessions with speakers from outside the sector.

No session should have more than three speakers, plus a chair. Chairs should not be speakers as well.

Chair training is offered by the MA.

Session proposals are more likely to be successful if:

- The subject is relevant, timely and important.
- The session is highlighting something new, innovative and ambitious.
- The format encourages debate and active participation among delegates.
- The topic will be of interest to a wide range of delegates.
- The speakers are inspiring, informative and engaging

Conference places

Chairs and speakers get a free place at conference on the day they are speaking. We do not pay travel or accommodation costs. Session proposers do not get free places unless they are a chair or speaker.

More information

Please feel free to contact Simon Stephens, Head of Publications and Events, Museums Association, if you have any further questions about submitting a session proposal.

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