

# 2024 Annual Conference Session Proposal Submission Guide

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**\*Submission Deadline: March 29, 2024\***

**[Submit your proposals here.](#)**

## Welcome!

Grantmakers for Education (Edfunders) invites members to propose learning sessions for our 2024 [annual conference](#) — *Education for a Thriving Democracy: Truth, Discourse and Transformation*. **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](mailto:membership@edfunders.org).

The person who submits the proposal will also serve as the session organizer and main point of contact, unless otherwise indicated. Only people from member organizations may be session organizers. Nonmembers, including representatives from grantee organizations and other partners cannot be the session organizer or primary point of contact.

The conference is Grantmakers for Education's flagship event, where we convene education funders so that they have a dynamic space to learn, share, network, and advance progress toward improving educational outcomes for all students. 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. This year's conference will take place October 16-18 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

We are seeking proposals that deliver learning experiences which help grantmakers become better practitioners, create spaces for inspiration and connection, and encourage healthy discourse and dialogue. Engaging formats, innovative ideas, diverse perspectives and a focus on impact are encouraged. Lastly, session proposals should have clear learning objectives, specific strategies for audience engagement, relevance for funders, and should align to 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 appreciate sessions that allow them to connect with presenters and fellow participants**. Engaging sessions leave attendees with actionable learnings and encourage collaboration.

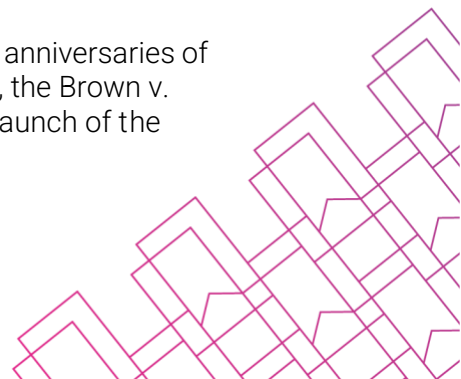
The instructions below should serve as guidance as you prepare your session proposal.

## 2024 Annual Conference Theme

**Education for a Thriving Democracy: Truth, Discourse and Transformation**

What is the public promise of education in a vibrant and inclusive multiracial democracy? In an era when democratic processes are routinely tested, defended and changed, this is the central question that education philanthropy is poised to engage at the Grantmakers for Education 2024 Annual Conference.

This is a landmark year, with a national election in the U.S. and milestone anniversaries of historic moments and movements: passage of the Indian Citizenship Act, the Brown v. Board of Education decision, the Stonewall Riots, and more recently, the launch of the



internet, global social platforms and artificial intelligence. These and other pivotal events demonstrate that transformational change comes from the efforts of individuals and collectives to reconcile tensions, affirm truths, exchange ideas and act. Education philanthropy has long been active in this process and plays a role in setting expectations and resourcing imaginations and efforts to impact the transformation of education.

At this year's conference, we will be inspired to sharpen our thinking about teaching, learning, civic participation and equity in the democratic ideal. We will be challenged to expand our ideas about how individual grantmakers and philanthropic organizations show up. We will zoom in on concrete actions and zoom out to ideas and a range of frameworks that grantmakers may need to ensure all learners and leaders may participate fully in their classrooms and communities, with deep and broad opportunities for achievement, mobility, fulfillment and human flourishing.

## Session Types

The conference program includes several types of breakout sessions. You can select the type of session you are interested in presenting on the session proposal form.

*A note on audience: The primary audience of the conference consists of education grantmakers, including board members, CEOs and other senior directors, program officers, researchers and evaluators, and grant managers. Other interested parties, such as community leaders, academics, 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

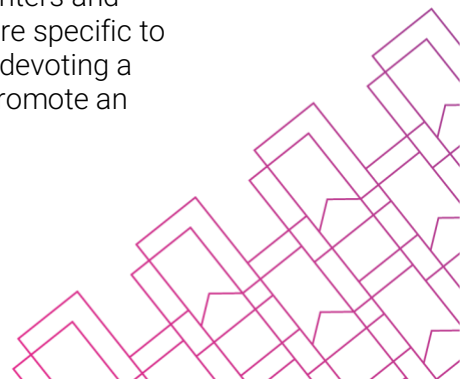
Purpose: To cultivate an engaging learning space for conference attendees in the form of an interactive workshop, panel session, etc. We highly encourage a portion of the agenda be devoted to small group discussion and/or Q+A in order to promote an exchange of ideas. Unless there is a compelling reason discussed in your proposal, panels should include no more than three to four people. **Length: 75 minutes.**

### 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. Depending on interest and availability, you may have the opportunity to present this session **twice** during the event. **Length: 45 minutes.**

### FUNDER LABS

Purpose: To cultivate an engaging, **funder-only learning space** where presenters and attendees, who must be grantmakers, can candidly address issues that are specific to funders. The session can take any format, however 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. **Length: 75 minutes.**



## DEEP DIVES

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for deeper engagement and extensive investigation on a particular topic or area of interest in education philanthropy. **Length: 2 hours.**

## GRANTMAKERS EXCHANGE

Purpose: To provide an informal setting for networking and small group conversation around a particular topic of interest. Session organizers do not submit a proposal for a Grantmakers Exchange but can indicate interest in converting a proposed session to a Grantmakers Exchange if it is not accepted in the form originally proposed. **Length: 60 minutes.**

## Selection Criteria

Grantmakers for Education's annual conference planning committee—consisting of representatives from a range of grantmaking organizations across EdFunders' membership (including size, grantmaking budget, geographic coverage, 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 through June. While we welcome multiple session proposals, it is very likely that only one session will be considered for acceptance given a substantial increase in proposals submitted annually. Selections will be informed by the following criteria:

**Topical and future facing:** We are especially interested in sessions that showcase new and emerging work and innovative and breakthrough models. Additionally, we look for sessions relevant to what's happening in education today that anticipate future issues in the field and call attention to blind spots in education philanthropy.

**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. 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:** Sessions should provide participants with practical tools and knowledge that will help them grow as education grantmakers and strengthen their work. When reviewing your proposal, the committee and staff will be attentive to evaluating the fit between a proposed session's goals, intended audience and content.



**Innovative in format:** 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, based on research and proven practices. Ideas/approaches that have historically been undervalued or underfunded by those in positions of power in grantmaking, policy or research but are grounded in the wisdom of local communities are especially welcomed. 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, and beyond—with a wide range of strategies, approaches and geographic scopes. The conference planning committee will choose a final slate of sessions that reflects this range. 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.,

## Session Tips

Grantmakers for Education is always striving to provide the best experience possible for those who attend the annual conference. Concurrent breakout sessions comprise a major portion of the conference program, so it's important that they provide an atmosphere that inspires experiential learning that our attendees will not forget. Here are some suggestions that can transform ordinary sessions into highly engaging ones.

**Make it relevant:** Please keep grantmakers in mind as your key audience you craft your session description and design the session itself. Grantmakers should be able to walk away answering the question: "What does this mean for me and my work?"

**Accommodate different learning styles:** Your session needs to incorporate strategies that will cater to learners of all types. Consider neurodiversity and social preferences (e.g., introversion or preference for independent work vs group activity) when designing your session.

**Provide access to unique and powerful speakers:** Attendees seek opportunities at our conference to learn from and engage with speakers that they do not normally have access to.

**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 pair or 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 tool 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.

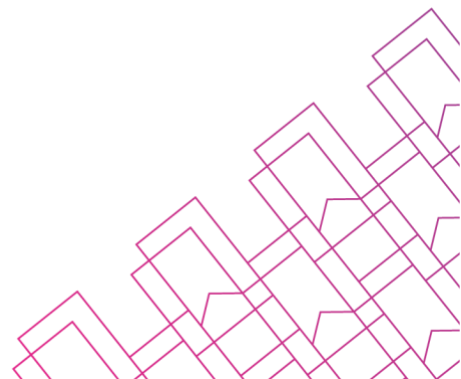
## Speaker Requirements

If possible, please have your proposed speakers agree to be on your panel (if the session is accepted) before submitting your proposal and indicate this on the RFP form.

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 nonmember funders AND wish to attend the full conference will need to pay the full conference nonmember registration rate.
- Speakers who are members AND wish to attend the full conference will need to pay the full conference member registration rate.
- Grantmakers for Education does not cover the cost of speaker attendance. This means that either speakers must pay their own way, or more commonly, session organizers support some or all speaker travel, lodging and registration. Keep this in mind as you propose speakers since unfunded travel/registration costs can make engagement by young people, educators and nonprofit and community leaders difficult. Please make it clear to your speakers when you invite them whether you will be covering their costs.

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



## Support

### HOW TO REACH US

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

## Important Dates

February 26— Submission period opens.

March 29 — Proposals due by 11:59 pm PT.

Mid-June — Applicants will be notified about the status of their proposals.

July 2 — Early bird registration opens.

August 6 — Early bird registration deadline.

TBA — Speaker registration deadline.

October 1 — Conference registration deadline.

October 15 — Preconference.

October 16-18— Annual Conference, Hilton Minneapolis.

## How to Submit a Session

Only Grantmakers for Education (EdFunders) members may propose conference sessions and be session organizers ([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 26.

### [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 so you will be able to save and revise your proposals before submitting. Multiple proposals may be submitted using one account.

All proposals are due by 11:59 pm PT on Monday, March 29, 2024.

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