



SESSION PROPOSAL GUIDE

#VEX25

The exceptionally loose theme for the 2025 Visitor Experience Conference is *People First*. This year, we'll explore how prioritizing people—visitors, staff, & communities—can transform cultural institutions, foster inclusion, and create meaningful connections. VEX25 will take place September 28 - October 1 in Chicago, IL. Conference sessions will be held on Monday, September 29 at the Field Museum.



TOPIC IDEAS FROM PRIOR ATTENDEES

- Difficult conversations
- Presenting controversial topics
- Green energy
- Maintaining staff 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 DEI initiatives





SHARE YOUR STORY

Ready to share your expertise at the 2025 Visitor Experience Conference? Submit your session proposal—whether solo or with a team—by Friday, March 21, 2025. 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 PEOPLE-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 veconference@gmail.com

- Lecture
- Panel Discussion
- Roundtable
- Interactive
- 1.5 Hour Workshop

3

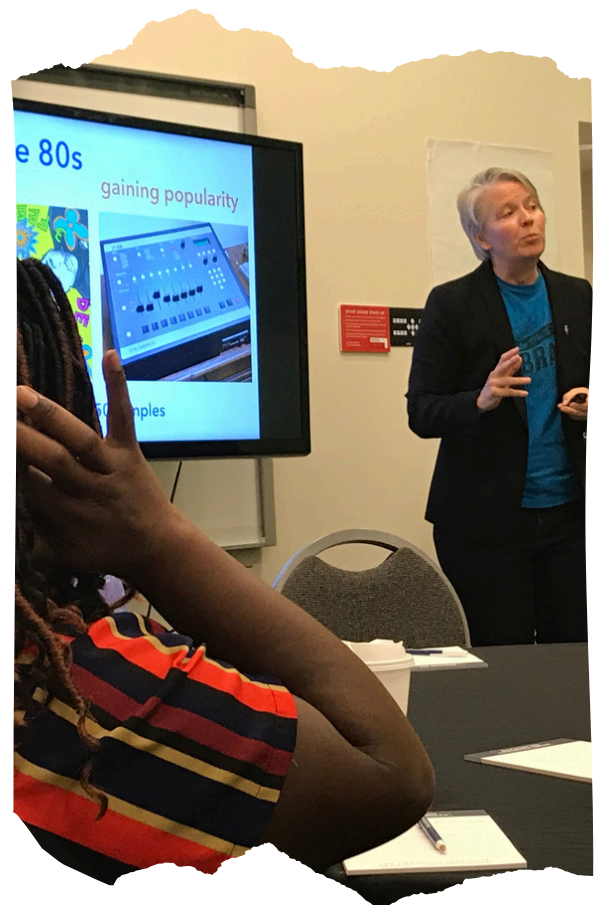
KNOW YOUR TOPIC

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

- 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 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, March 21, 2025. 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

Putting People First: Lessons in Staff Engagement VEX23

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

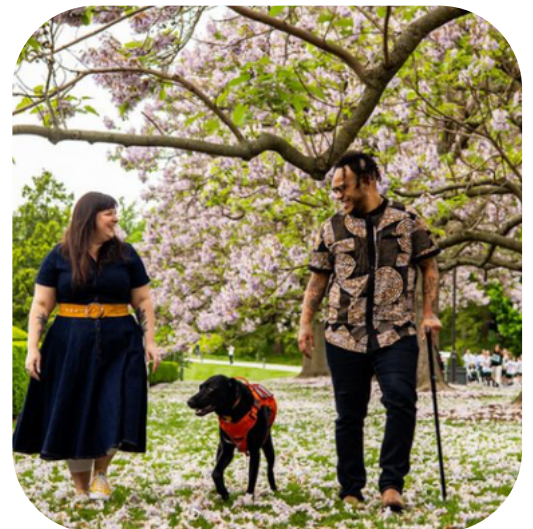


In 2022, the Delaware Museum of Nature and Science reopened after a massive renovation. In 2024, DelMNS leadership decided to change how they engaged with their staff in an effort to improve staff relations, morale, and move toward a people-first model. Learn how this museum is reimagining the employer/employee 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.

Strategic Accessibility Training VEX24

- Dani Rose, Managing Director, Art-Reach

Interested in increasing Accessibility and Inclusion at your organization? Well, then, as Beyonce says "Let me upgrade you!" Intentional diversity, equity, inclusion, and access initiatives require intentional planning. Guided by the disability rights phrase nothing about us, without us inclusion work must center the disability community. Recognizing it's hard to know where to begin, the Art-Reach consulting team will guide participants through their process of creating a strategic accessibility plan.



FAQ

Where/when is the conference?

VEX25 takes place over September 28 through October 1 in Chicago, IL. Your presentation will take place on Monday, September 29 at the Field Museum.

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 mid-May of 2025. 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 Field Museum. 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?

After March 21, 2025

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.

April 2025

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

Mid-May 2025

Decisions regarding the selection of sessions and panelists will be e-mailed to all presenters by mid-May of 2025.

June 2025

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 2025

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 2025

You will share your Google Slides presentation with veconference@gmail.com by September 19, 2025. Your slides will be preloaded on a computer in the room in which your session takes place.



**VISITOR
EXPERIENCE
GROUP**