



Crafting a Great Conference Session Proposal

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Agenda

- Conference theme and discovery tracks
- How to complete the RFP process
- What makes a great proposal
- RFP submission tips
- Past examples
- Q&A



2026 ADRP
International Conference

Sep. 15-18, 2026 | Resilience and Reinvention

“Resilience and Reinvention”

Future of Work
Donor Expectations Technologies Change
Resilience & Reinvention
Learning Stewardship
Strengthening **Adapt with Purpose** Engagement
Building **Evolving Approaches** Thoughtfully
Thrive Building on Foundations Meeting the Moment
Moving Forward Impact Next



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5 Conference Discovery Areas



- **Foundations for Donor Relations**

- Think donor relations foundations like Acknowledgement Practices, Building Trust & Transparency, Donor Behavior, Donor Lifecycle Management, Donor Retention, Ethics, Gift Acceptance, Generational Giving, and more.

- **Messages and Recognition that Resonate and Endure**

- Donor recognition strategies, Stewardship activities, Donor communications, Impact reporting, Storytelling and narrative models, Personalization, Inclusive marketing, Donor surveys, Donor walls and naming opportunities , and more.

5 Conference Discovery Areas



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- **Data, Insight, and Adaptation**

- Donor retention metrics, Dashboards & data visualization, Analytics & trend analysis, ROI & optimization, Strategic planning, Impact mapping, Predictive analytics, and Data informed decision making

- **Leadership, Careers, and Organizational Resilience**

- Career growth and professional development, Leadership and management, Resilience and change management, Cross functional partnerships, Team building, DEI in practice, Volunteer and board relations

- **Innovation for Resilient Future**

- AI and automation, Digital innovations, Creative problem solving, Emerging tools and platforms, Fundraising trends, Technology integration, and Sustainability practices

Understanding the RFP Process

Types of sessions include:

- Lecture/Slide presentations
- Facilitated discussions
- Small group exercises
- Panels
- Workshops
- Or a combination of these

Submission Deadline: April 10, 2026

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What Makes a Great Proposal?



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Broad Topics



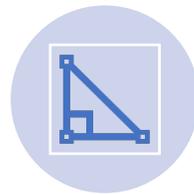
Audience-
Centered



Interactive



Targeted Topics



Unique Angles



Innovative



Timely



Variety

Evaluation Criteria

- Content Quality and Clarity
- Relevance
- Practical Application
- Strategic Value & Advancement of Practice
- Evolving Practice & New Models



Writing a Compelling Session Description



- Think concise, impactful and persuasive
- What topics will come as a breath of fresh air or an intriguing solution to a nagging problem?
- Be fun and creative and play into the “Resilience and Reinvention” theme.
- Cross your T’s and dot your I’s
- Your session description will also be used on the conference app

Submitting Your Session



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Submission Deadline: April 10, 2026

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Conference Theme:

Resilience and Reinvention

Conference Theme Description:

Resilience and reinvention are essential to the future of our work. As donor expectations evolve, technologies advance, and organizations face increasing complexity, our ability to adapt with purpose has never mattered more. True resilience is not simply weathering change – it is learning, strengthening, and moving forward with intention.

Submitting Your Session



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You will be listed as the **Point of Contact** for this proposal. We will reach out directly to you if there are any questions or if we need any additional information regarding the information in this form.

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Each Speaker/Panelist must have their own ADRP account. The contact information requested below is **connected directly to your ADRP Profile**. Changes to any pre-populated information will be updated on your ADRP Profile once this form is submitted.

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Name *

First Name

Last Name

Name is required

Pronouns (optional)

- He/Him/His
 She/Her/Hers
 They/Them/Theirs
 Ze/Zir/Zirs

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Upcoming Events

Thu Mar 19, 2026

A Simple Framework for Strong Workshop Proposals

Be Strategic. Be Intentional. Be Purposeful.

Be Strategic

Start with the “Why.”

- Why is this topic important **right now**?
- What challenge or opportunity in the field are you addressing?
- Why should your peers care?



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A Simple Framework for Strong Workshop Proposals

Be Strategic. Be Intentional. Be Purposeful.

Be Intentional

Design the experience for your audience.

- What will participants **learn, gain, or do differently?**
- Identify **2–3 clear takeaways**
- Speak directly to the needs of your peers



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A Simple Framework for Strong Workshop Proposals

Be Strategic. Be Intentional. Be Purposeful.

Be Purposeful

Answer the “So What?”

- What change will this session inspire?
- How will participants apply the ideas in their work?
- Preview the **experience of the workshop**

Examples:

“Together we’ll explore...”
“Participants will brainstorm...”
“You’ll leave with tools to...”

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It Takes a Village: Embedding Little "s" Stewardship Across the Institution

Stewardship isn't a single team's responsibility it's a shared commitment that should be embedded in the culture of every advancement shop. But how do you build that kind of alignment when teams are siloed, stretched, or unclear about where stewardship fits into the donor experience. In this session, you'll learn from a practitioner who has built and evolved donor relations programs across multiple institutions from hospitals to higher education by championing stewardship as a shared value and collective responsibility. Through case examples, mindset shifts, and practical frameworks, we'll explore how to embed stewardship across teams, functions, and workflows. We'll cover how to create and roll out an institutional stewardship philosophy, build internal accountability models, and foster partnerships that expand your reach without growing your headcount. You'll also learn how to engage internal partners in meaningful ways even those who don't see stewardship as part of their role. If you're ready to break out of the donor relations silo and embed stewardship more deeply across your institution, this session will help you lead that culture change no matter your title, team size, or starting point.

Learning Objectives

1. Explore how to embed "little s" stewardship values across departments to create a culture where everyone plays a role in donor experience and impact.
2. Gain a flexible roadmap to assess, build, and grow stewardship practices that transcend team silos, regardless of shop size or structure.
3. Walk away with practical tools and talking points to champion shared ownership of stewardship and deepen donor trust through consistent, values-aligned experiences.



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Strategic: This proposal is strategic because it clearly identifies a challenge many advancement shops are facing right now—how to move stewardship from a single function to a shared responsibility across

Intentional: Notice how intentional the learning objectives are. They tell us exactly what participants will gain—frameworks, tools, and language to influence their organizations.”It also defines the target audience benefit: Professionals who want to influence culture change and Advancement teams navigating silos

Purposeful: This proposal connects the dots between the ideas being presented and the real change it can create—stronger donor experiences and a culture of stewardship across an institution.” It also previews the experience by mentioning: case examples, mindset shifts, and practical frameworks. Which helps attendees know what to expect.



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Once Upon a Data Point: Crafting Data Stories That Inspire Donors

In an era of endless data and evolving technology, authentic connection remains at the heart of philanthropy. Thoughtful data design has the power to elevate transparency, trust, and gratitude in donor communications. This session explores how strategic partnerships between donor relations and data systems professionals can transform raw metrics into powerful, value-driven narratives. Grounded in ethical and intentional data visualization principles from Edward Tufte, Brent Dykes, and Cole Nussbaumer Knaflic, the session will show how storytelling can shift donor engagement from transactional to transformational. Drawing on experience in fundraising, analytics, and data systems, this session will share actionable strategies to move beyond spreadsheets, uncover the values behind the numbers, and craft donor-centered communications that honor generosity and demonstrate mission impact. No math prerequisites required—just a passion for telling stories that matter.

Learning Objectives

1. Apply storytelling frameworks to translate data into clear, engaging narratives centered on donor values. (Handout/ Resource Guide)
2. Implement best practices for visualizing and presenting data across reports and impact communications. (Handout/ Audience Participation)
3. Strengthen cross-functional partnerships between donor relations and data systems teams to build lasting trust and enhance donor engagement.



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Strategic: This proposal is strategic because it tackles a very real tension in our field—how to translate data into meaningful donor stories.” It also references recognized thought leaders in description, which adds credibility.

Intentional: Intentional proposals make it clear what participants will gain. Here we see a clear focus on storytelling frameworks, visualization practices, and cross-team collaboration. It also notes practical resources like: handouts, and is explicit about audience participation- which strengthens the proposal.

Purposeful: This proposal does an excellent job answering the ‘so what’ question—using data more thoughtfully can transform donor engagement.” It also previews the experience: storytelling frameworks, collaborative thinking and practical examples.



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Messages that Guide the Donor Journey: Personalization, Trust, and Long-Term Engagement

As a Donor Relations Manager working closely with high-net-worth individuals (HNIs), I've learned that effective stewardship is about more than timely reporting it's about building, nurturing, and managing deeply personalized relationships that reflect a donor's values, identity, and desire for impact. In this session, we'll explore how messages crafted thoughtfully and delivered at the right moments can serve as powerful tools to move donors from interest to investment, and from engagement to advocacy. We'll explore how crisis communication, digital storytelling, impact reports, and inclusive messaging can be used to foster authentic connections, especially in complex giving environments. This participatory session will integrate narrative tools, message mapping, and DEI-grounded strategies that speak directly to the modern donor mindset. Whether you're working with major gifts, alumni engagement, or multi-channel campaigns, this session will equip you with frameworks and examples to strengthen trust and guide every donor's unique journey.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the key stages of the donor journey and how messaging can deepen engagement.
2. Learn how to personalize communication for HNIs while maintaining inclusivity and authenticity.
3. Explore tools like impact storytelling, crisis messaging, and DEI-informed narratives to build trust.
4. Gain message mapping and multi-channel communication strategies applicable across donor segments.



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Strategic: This proposal is strategic because it speaks directly to a major shift in our field—donors increasingly expect personalized, authentic communication that reflects their values. It positions the session within a real professional challenge: Communicating effectively with high-net-worth donors.

Intentional: Intentional proposals make the value clear. In this example, the presenter outlines concrete skills participants will develop—from message mapping to inclusive storytelling. It also shows who benefits: major gift professionals, donor relations staff, alumni engagement teams, and campaign communicators.

Purposeful: The purpose is clear—participants will walk away with tools to strengthen donor relationships and guide donors from interest to investment. It also previews the interactive experience: participatory session, communication exercises etc. which signals to attendees that they will be actively engaged.



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Q&A

*Thank you for your interest!
You make the conference great!*



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Thank you
for your attention!