



VAM 2027 Speaker Handbook

Theme:

How to keep your museum relevant, mission-minded, and invest in your internal community- staff?

VAM 2027 plans to continue the revolutionary spirit while focusing on practical relevance for museum staff and visitors. Museums need to keep guests engaged, encourage repeat visits, and need to provide support for staff retention and promote career growth. In the spirit of Revolution, VAM 2027 is seeking presentation proposals about how your institution has gotten back to basics to support visitors and staff.

This is also an opportunity to share how institutions have shifted to make their space more accessible and relevant. How has your institution increased visitation, collaborated with local groups or government, and in general expanded the museum or site's local presence?

Some museums have added programming, collaborations, and local connections in a way that expand relevance and access to their world. Other museums have added gathering places onsite, creating a third space for guests to enjoy. This continued investment in your institution increases visitation opportunities despite economic shifts. It also shows more justification for staff support as roles adapt and expand to fit institutional goals.

- How has staff support changed to reflect those expanded programming options?
- What strategies can be implemented to support both groups?

VAM27 provides a venue to discuss strategies that make museums relevant spaces and how museums have aligned community engagement and mission. It will also give space for participants to share local practice, discuss problem solving strategies, how staff support has increased, and showcase collaborations both in and out of the field.

- How can we transform museums into both revolutionary and relevant spaces?
- What kind of building blocks are your institutions using to make your space both revolutionary and relevant?

Logistics:

The annual meeting and sessions will be held at the [Virginia Guesthouse](#):
2017 Ivy Road, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Parking is located in the adjacent Emmet/Ivy Parking Garage located at
123 Emmet Street N, Charlottesville, VA 22903

A special room rate is available for the Conference. To access room rates and to book your stay, visit:
[2027 VAM Annual Conference – Guest Reservation Link.](#)

Registration Information:

The session organizer and all panelists presenting **MUST** register. This allows VAM to compile a comprehensive list of attendees. This list is made available to exhibitors. During the registration process, you may opt-out if you do not want your information shared.

VAM depends on registration fees to cover conference expenses and cannot provide waivers or discounts to presenters. There are over a hundred presenters at the conference. Please take advantage of the early bird registration rate opening late Fall 2026.

If you cannot attend the conference in its entirety, daily rates are available. If you or one of your panelists plans to attend your session **ONLY**, you still need to register as a speaker only. VAM does not charge a fee to only attend your session. Contact Melissa A. Maxwell, Assistant Director, at mmaxwell@vamuseums.org to receive a complimentary registration code.

The full conference registration includes attendance to 3 days of concurrent sessions, as well as the VAM Opening General Session, a First-Time Attendee Welcome, Keynote Session, Townhall, annual meeting, and admittance to the Exhibition Hall where refreshment breaks will be held. **NEW** this year, access to the VAM Award Brunch and an exhibitor sponsored lunch. Enjoy lunch and learn about our exhibitors and network with current museum professionals Both are available to all attendees, however, registration is required! VAM will offer access to pre-and post-conference workshops, fieldtrips, and evening events, for an additional fee. Onsite parking at the Virginia Guesthouse is free.

Scholarship Information:

VAM scholarships are available for participation of museum professionals of all levels. The scholarship **ONLY** covers conference registration. It does not cover travel, lodging, or meals other than those included with conference registration. The scholarship also does not cover events that are an additional fee. The application for scholarships will open in the Fall.

Session Details & Presenting Information:

Session confirmations will be sent by our assistant director. Confirmation will include the day & time of your presentation. A survey QR code to be included in your slide deck will be sent at a later time. You will be asked to confirm your session description and panelist information (names, titles, institutions, and contact information). All edits must be completed by January 15, 2027. Please ensure all information is accurate as VAM will use this information in the conference program and for the conference app.

VAM will provide a projector and screen in each session room. Please ensure you bring a laptop and have your presentation on a flash-drive as a back-up. All rooms will have a microphone and sound speakers. VAM works with the host location for all logistics and tech support. In case of technology issue, each room will have a session assistant who will have the necessary contact information to get on-site assistance.

Regular sessions are 75 minutes; workshops are 3 hours. As you plan your session, please allow at least 15 minutes at the end for questions. Your session assistant will assist in monitoring the time and will encourage all attendees to fill out a session evaluation. Session evaluations help VAM plan for workshops throughout the year and future conferences. Presenters will receive copies of their session evaluations after the conference.

Presentation Best Practices:

- **If a microphone is available, please use it.** This is an accessibility requirement, not optional. While not all rooms will have microphones, it is essential to use one when provided.
- **Engage your audience.** An engaging presentation creates a more enjoyable experience for everyone. (presenters included).
- **Use the microphone effectively.** Speak clearly into it, repeat audience questions, or pass the microphone so all participants can hear.
- **If no microphone is available, project your voice.** Check in periodically to ensure the audience can hear you, and consider moving closer to attendees if needed.
- **Allow time for audience questions and discussion.** Be mindful of timing so all presenters have an opportunity to speak. Your session shepherd can assist with timekeeping.
- **Avoid reading directly from your slides.** Limit text-heavy slides and use the largest font possible to ensure readability.
- **Focus on takeaways.** Go beyond a case study or presentation—consider what attendees can apply in their own work.
- **Encourage feedback.** Include the conference session evaluation in your presentation and invite attendees to complete it.

Additional Information

As details become available, VAM will list all menus for the refreshment breaks, lunches, and evening events so you can plan accordingly. Please note that the hotel will do its best to accommodate food allergies. We apologize if you experience limited options.

Charlottesville is full of restaurants and things to do. Many are within walking distance of the Virginia Guesthouse and the surrounding University of Virginia area. A list of things to do and places to eat can be found [HERE](#).