



AdNet 2027 Annual Conference: Call for Sessions Guide

Deadline to Submit: [October 23, 2026](#)

About The AdNet 2027 Annual Conference

The AdNet Annual Conference brings together professionals from community foundations across the country to share insights, explore best practices, and learn from one another. As we plan for 2027 in Chicago, we recognize the challenges and rapid shifts facing the philanthropic sector. From leading teams to building operational resilience in uncertain times, we need forward-thinking sessions that inspire, educate, and equip our attendees.

This year's conference will be designed with **every career stage** and **foundation size** in mind. Whether you're new to the field, managing the assets for a small community, leading a team, or thinking at the strategic enterprise level, we want to build an agenda that speaks to you.

Based on feedback from the 2026 Post-Conference Survey and input from the 2027 Content Committee, we are placing extra emphasis this year on: **content for small and medium-sized community foundations, deeper/more advanced sessions for experienced practitioners, and clearer session levels (for example, Professional Advisor Engagement 101 vs. 201) so attendees can choose sessions suited to their experience.**

Communications & Marketing: Through our continued partnership with CommA, we are particularly interested in proposals addressing communications, marketing, donor communications, and related topics. Communications-focused sessions will be open to all conference attendees.

What We're Looking For in 2027

We are seeking proposals that:

- Address the current and emerging challenges in philanthropy
- Offer tools, frameworks, or case studies that attendees can adapt and apply
- Provide clear, practical takeaways. Strong proposals should identify 2-3 specific things attendees will leave knowing, understanding, or able to apply in their work.



- Reflect a diversity of perspectives, geographies, and foundation sizes
- Encourage audience participation and interaction
- Indicate a clear experience level (introductory, intermediate, or advanced) so we can build tracks that serve both newer and veteran practitioners
- Highlight collaboration around donor communications
- Keep the focus educational. Sessions may not serve as sales pitches, product demonstrations, or promotional presentations. **This applies to all sessions, including those involving sponsors or service providers.**

Topics of Interest Include:

- Planned giving
- Receiving and/or managing complex gifts; private foundation conversions
- Donor stewardship and engagement
- Business development; referrals; outreach tactics (engagement & marketing)
- Facilitation skills and interpersonal dynamics
- Professional advisor engagement (introductory and advanced tracks)
- Fund development, DAF strategy, and portfolio segmentation
- Advisor managed funds; financial firm partnerships
- Next-gen and family philanthropy engagement
- Legal updates in community foundation sector; legal issues working with aging donors
- Co-investing and collective giving models
- Rural and regional community foundation challenges
- Endowment campaigns and fee models
- Fundraising for discretionary dollars



- AI applications, governance, and emerging tools for community foundations
- Team development: managing staff, succession planning, and burnout/resilience
- KPIs and performance measurement
- Technology tools and trends
- DEI in advancement and donor engagement
- Communications and marketing best practices
- Partnering with program teams to advance mission

We also encourage:

- Real-world case studies
- Sessions co-presented by multiple foundations
- Sessions that spotlight community impact or internal transformation
- Panels that intentionally pair large and small community foundation perspectives on the same topic
- Submissions from small to medium-sized community foundations

Session Formats

- **Panel Discussions:** 2-3 speakers plus a moderator; interactive Q&A encouraged
- **Workshops:** Hands-on sessions with tools, templates, or group work
- **Fireside Chats:** Intimate conversations with thought leaders
- **Solo Presentations:** Especially if they present fresh research, ideas, or compelling personal stories



Conference Structure & Logistics

The 2027 conference will be held at the Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile. A few things to keep in mind as you shape your proposal:

- Breakout rooms are limited to four concurrent sessions per block, across an estimated four to five blocks (roughly 12-15 AdNet sessions and 4-5 CommA/communications sessions total).
- AdNet may recommend changes to a proposed session's title, description, format, speaker composition, experience level, or placement within the agenda. If we receive multiple proposals addressing similar topics, we may also invite submitters to collaborate on a combined session.
- Speakers are expected to cover their own conference registration and travel expenses. At this time, AdNet is unable to offer honoraria. However, we are exploring ways to enhance the speaker experience and welcome feedback.

Who Can Submit

We welcome submissions from community foundation staff at all levels.

If you are submitting a session on behalf of an organization that is not a community foundation, your organization must be a sponsor at the Thought Leader level or higher. For details on sponsorships, please refer to the 2027 Sponsor Prospectus [\[LINK/DATE TO BE CONFIRMED\]](#) or reach out to our Sponsorship Coordinator [Stephen Stephens](#). For other questions, please contact conference@adnetcf.org.

If you believe your organization - though not a community foundation - is similar in mission or scope and does not fall under the normal sponsor requirement (for example, you are a community-based nonprofit, an individual not representing a company, or a public sector partner), you are welcome to complete the session submission form. We will review your submission and follow up with you directly.

Review & Selection Process

Submissions will be reviewed by the AdNet Content Committee using a standardized rubric.



Criteria include:

- Relevance to the field and conference goals
- Clarity and focus
- Interactivity and engagement
- Practicality and innovation
- Speaker expertise and diversity
- Accuracy: the session description should reflect what will actually be presented
- Avoidance of sales pitches

Speaker Logistics

How to Submit

Please complete [the 2027 Online Submission Form](#) by October 23, 2026. For questions, contact Roxanne Legere [rlegere@arbmeetings.com].

Submitters can expect to receive a decision by December 18, 2026.

Let's build something meaningful together. We look forward to your ideas!