

RFP Guidelines

2026 Conference for North Carolina Nonprofits

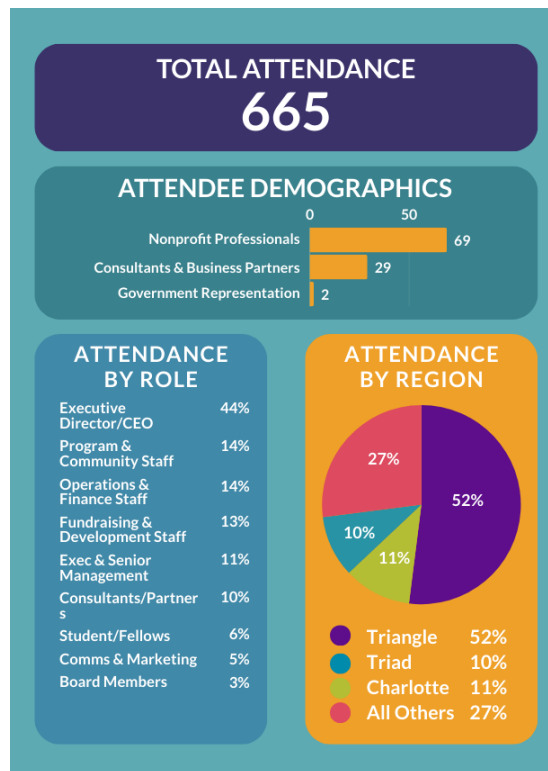
The North Carolina Center for Nonprofits annual statewide conference is our premier event bringing together professionals from the nonprofit, for-profit, philanthropic, and government sectors from across the state to learn, connect, and strengthen the work happening in communities throughout North Carolina.

Conference Focus & Purpose

Through engaging stories, practical workshops, and peer-to-peer exchange, this conference will focus on building resilient organizations, navigating a changing landscape, and working together to advance opportunity in our communities. Participants will leave with useful tools, new ideas, and stronger connections to help lead their organizations forward.

Audience

This event is tailored for nonprofit professionals, government representatives, consultants, and business partners engaged in nonprofit work. The following highlights reflect the value and impact of our 2025 Conference, and we are excited to continue building on this success in 2026.



Presentation Formats

We seek engaging and interactive sessions, including hands-on workshops, case studies, panel discussions, and guided conversations. **You may submit proposals for either a 75-minute concurrent session and/or a 25-minute lightning session (see description below).**

*A maximum of two sessions total from any one presenter or consulting group will be accepted.

Lightning Sessions are dynamic, 25-minute presentations designed to ignite ideas, spark inspiration, and equip nonprofit leaders with practical tools they can put to use right away. Modeled after the TED Talk format, these concise sessions deliver a focused and fast-paced exploration of a powerful concept, innovative strategy, or real-world solution relevant to the nonprofit sector. These talks are led by experienced practitioners, thought leaders, and changemakers who bring fresh perspectives and hard-won insights from the field. Whether it's a new approach to fundraising, a breakthrough in community engagement, or a leadership tool that builds stronger teams, Lightning Sessions are packed with value in a compact format. Examples of Lightning Sessions from last year's event:

- *Raise Money Without Asking – Here's How!*
- *You're Not Just a Leader – You're a Facilitator: Practices That Build Belonging and Weave Culture*
- *How Does My Story Serve Others? Turning Lived Experiences into Lasting Community Impact*
- *The Secret to More Impact? Do Less.*
- *Beyond Survival: Reimagining Leadership & Support for Women of Color in Nonprofits*
- *Pause. Breathe. Lead: Mindfulness Practices for Resilient Nonprofit Leadership*

Suggested Topics

Presentations should explore the themes listed below as it relates to the Center's Twelve (12) [Principles & Practices for Nonprofit Management](#). We are particularly interested in topics that inspire social change, address leadership challenges, financial management in challenging and changing times, and/or offer innovative approaches for our sector. The Center is committed to walking the talk in terms of equity and inclusion in its conference and program planning while balancing the following: speaker diversity, geography, and lived experience.

- *Governance & Board Leadership*
- *Financial Sustainability & Revenue Diversification*
- *Policy, Advocacy & Compliance*
- *Talent, Culture & Leadership*
- *Equity, Power & Community-Centered Practice*
- *Operations & Infrastructure*
- *Executive Leadership*

Selection Criteria

- A maximum of four (4) presenters per session is permitted.
- A maximum of two (2) sessions from any one presenter or consulting group will be accepted.

- If you presented at last year's conference, please note that back-to-back selection is rare so that we may showcase a variety of voices and perspectives each year.
- Connection to the Center, such as being a nonprofit member, funder, sponsor, conference exhibitor, or statewide partner, is an additional lens through which we evaluate sessions.
- Preference is given to presenters based in North Carolina; however, out-of-state submissions are welcome and will be considered.
- Selection will be based on alignment with conference goals, clarity of objectives, and presenter credentials.

Scoring Criteria

- Relevance to Nonprofit Management (25%)
 - *How relevant is the topic in relation to today's nonprofit management landscape?*
 - *Does the proposal acknowledge/align with The Center's Principles & Practices Guidebook.*
 - *Does the proposal offer solutions or new thinking to today's challenges while advancing the Center's goals and priorities?*
- Innovation and Engagement (25%)
 - *How compelling is the material and information? Is there "ah-ha" potential?*
 - *How dynamic will the presentation of the session be?*
 - *Is there a healthy variety of techniques and approaches offered?*
 - *Does the proposal include at least one practical, take-home resource (worksheet, template, checklist, framework, or resource list)?*
- Session Title and Description Quality (15%)
 - *Proposals should clearly demonstrate: the value of the session; what specific problem(s) it helps solve; and what types of things participants will be able to do differently as a result of attending.*
- Audience Relevance and Statewide Applicability (15%)
 - *Proposal must identify who/what type of organization the session is intended for as well as who/what type of organization it is not intended for.*
 - *The Center will determine how well the session description matches the proposed intended audience and its statewide applicability.*
- Presenter Expertise and Experience (10%)
 - *Experience matters but not at the expense of clarity, applicability, and relevance.*
 - *Proposals should clearly state why/how the presenter(s) are the ideal messengers for the topic.*
 - *Preference will be given to presenters with direct, hands-on experience implementing the strategies/practices being shared. Proposals should emphasize real-world application over theoretical or promotional content.*
- Equity & Inclusion (10%)
 - *Does the proposal emphasize equity & inclusion as related to the topic area and a clear plan/commitment to making the content accessible and representative.*

Accepted Proposals

Approximately 20-25 proposals will be selected in addition to 6-8 lightning sessions. All session presenters will receive a complimentary conference registration. Presenters will be responsible for all

travel arrangements, preparations (e.g. presenter laptop/adaptors, handouts, materials), and expenses incurred.

Note: Sessions must be educational and non-promotional. While presenters may briefly reference their organization or work, it cannot be the primary focus and must remain incidental, comprising no more than 4% of the total presentation time (e.g. no more than 1 minute of a 25-minute session and no more than 3 minutes of a 75-minute session).

Deadline

RFP closes May 31, 2026! Submitters will be notified of selection in early August.