AMPO Drop-in Help Sessions for 2026 Annual Conference Call for Proposals

AMPO staff held two drop-in sessions during February and March of 2026 to field questions about the call for proposals for our 2026 Annual Conference. Below is a Q&A outlining the questions we received and responses we gave.

Q: Do I need to propose a panel or group of presenters, or can I propose solo?

A: You can do either! Some successful proposals include multiple speakers/session leaders, and some are just a speaker. When solo speakers are accepted we combine them into a session. Panels of speakers are fine, but we encourage you to add an interactive element to engage the audience. This document has guidance on submitting a successful proposal, and in this document you'll find all the fields you'll fill out in your proposal, including the session types. You can also propose a brand-new session type!

Q: How are proposals reviewed and scored?

A: AMPO has a Applied Research & Training Committee made up of 30 MPO planning professionals from across the U.S., and they review and score each session proposal. AMPO staff then pulls together an agenda with the highest-scoring proposals. For our 2025 Annual Conference we received almost 150 proposals and were able to include about one-third of those in the agenda. Past acceptances aren't guarantees of future successful proposals, but if you want to look over the sessions that have been accepted for previous AMPO events, you can find those here.

Q: If I wanted to pull together a proposal including other session leaders, how do I find other agencies to partner with?

A: First, think about your network. Who do you know at other MPOs, in local governments, in a state DOT, or at another type of agency who's doing work similar to yours and might want to propose with you? AMPO members can also post on our member forum to find potential proposal partners.

Q: What topics are most likely to be accepted for the Annual Conference?

A: We'll accept proposals on just about any topic that's relevant to MPOs. As part of your proposal, you'll identify the key topics, which helps us combine individual speakers into larger sessions if needed. But our reviewers don't focus just on the topic of a proposal. Rather, they look for proposals that are clear about how they will engage the audience and give them information and tools they can take home to inform and improve their own work.

Q: Will AMPO be offering support to small MPOs again?
A: Yes! For the 2025 Annual Conference we offered a half-price registration and $1,000 travel stipend to up to 10 small MPOs with the goal of increasing the visibility of MPOs serving areas under 200,000 in population, and we're doing that again for the 2026 Annual Conference. So if funding is a barrier to your small MPO presenting, please keep that support in mind!

Q: Does every proposal have to come from an MPO and/or include an MPO?

A: No, a successful proposal can come from anyone, but each proposal needs to include a public agency. Typically that public agency is an MPO, but it could also be a local, state, or federal government agency, or an educational institution.

Q: The proposal submission portal allows us to upload documents and share links. What sort of documents and links are you looking for?

A: Those are optional elements of a proposal, but submitters can share a link or a document that's relevant to their proposal if they think that's helpful. For instance, if your proposal was about a data dashboard that your agency created, you could share a link to that dashboard.

Q: The Call for Proposals says "presentations that market specific products, vendors, and services will not be accepted." Can we still mention a particular consultant or software we used during our session?

A: Yes, sessions at the Annual Conference can mention consultants you worked with, software you use, etc. Your consultant partners can even be a part of your session. We just don't want your proposal to sound like an advertisement for a particular product or vendor.

Q: We want to submit a proposal focusing on a project that's ongoing, but we expect will be wrapping up before the Annual Conference. How should we write about that?

A: Note in your proposal where you're at in the process, where you expect to be at the time of the event, and to tell us what you expect you'll be able to share at the conference. As always, focus on what MPO staff will be able to take away from your session to apply to their own work.

Q: Is there interest in a session on air quality conformity and modeling?

A: Yes, there are a lot of MPOs that need to do air quality conformity, and a session on this topic would be of interest to them. It's primarily the quality of the proposed session, rather than the topic, that determines whether a session is selected.

Q: What are some examples of successful interactive sessions?

A: Here are excerpts of the session descriptions for a few of the interactive sessions that were accepted to our upcoming [Planning Tools & Training Symposium](#):

> **Session Title:** Reimagining Public Engagement: VR, AI, and GIS for the 2050 LRTP
> **Format Type:** Skill-Building Lab
> **Excerpt from the Session Description:** An overall goal for the Miami-Dade TPO 2050 LRTP was to ensure it reflected the values and future transportation needs of the communities within Miami-Dade County. One of the most effective ways to learn about a community's mobility needs is through engagement. As part of this effort, the Miami-Dade TPO utilized new technology and created tools to gather information from the public. As part of this session, participants will have the chance to experience the VR outreach room, the Needs Assessment Tool, and envision the future with AI. This will be a hands-on experience where the participants will get the chance to experience outreach and provide data similarly to that of the public participants during the 2050 LRTP outreach process. At the end of the session, the Miami-Dade TPO will go through the data collection and how it was used during the LRTP process. The goal of this session is to illustrate a modern way to gather data and ideas from public participants. In utilizing new technologies, participants were more willing to provide feedback and their vision for the future.

Session Title: Designing Better Maps and Geospatial Apps
Format Type: Hands-on design
Excerpt from the Session Description: The rapid evolution of geospatial technology has transformed the way planners communicate complex data and engage decision makers. At the 2025 AMPO Planning Tools and Training Symposium, the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) in partnership with Esri, presents an interactive, hands-on lab designed to equip participants with practical skills for designing more effective maps and geospatial applications. This session is tailored for planning professionals seeking to elevate their ability to visualize, analyze, and present information that supports informed decision making in the planning process. A central feature of the session is a guided miniature design charette, where attendees actively collaborate in small groups to conceptualize wireframes for map-based applications addressing real planning challenges. Each group will select a scenario—ranging from transportation prioritization to land use analysis—and, using provided templates and best practice checklists, sketch out a purpose-built app. Facilitators from Esri and OKI will circulate to offer coaching, feedback, and design tips, ensuring that participants leave with a stronger foundation in both the art and science of geospatial communication.

Session Title: Off the Road! Getting Your Plan Back on Track When Things Go Wrong
Format Type: Role-playing exercise similar to a murder mystery dinner game
Excerpt from the Session Description: Participants will role-play the adoption of a Regional Transportation Plan/Metropolitan Transportation Plan. This will be a whole-room game (or at a minimum two tables playing as a group) where participants act as members of the planning team, jurisdiction/agency staff, elected officials, MPO Council/Board members, and community members. Through prompts from the session leaders, the game will proceed from draft plan to final adoption. Participants will learn skills that help them handle things when the planning process doesn't go as expected.