

AASLH Annual Meeting Call for Session Proposals
In Partnership with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

Proposals Due: December 7, 2018

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Meeting Dates: August 28-31, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) in partnership with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience will present its 2019 annual meeting in Philadelphia, PA, from August 28-31.

The Theme: What Are We Waiting For?

In this time of political, social, and cultural turmoil, history institutions stand poised to connect with their communities and audiences like never before. Rancorous debates over issues like racial violence, immigration, global climate change, mass incarceration, and others divide our communities and the nation. These flashpoint issues also reveal opportunities for the history community to provide context and information to help make sense of modern challenges. History institutions can serve as a refuge from the rapid swirl of the news cycle and offer the restoration, contemplation, and community sought by a tired and disconnected citizenry.

Even as a need for the history community to take action becomes increasingly apparent, many of us remain hesitant to enter the fray. Some are aware that there are no quick solutions and that real connections take time. Others are afraid to weigh in on politically divisive issues or simply uncertain how, when, or if to make the jump. As history practitioners and history organizations encounter increasingly pressing and even dire challenges in our communities and within the field, the question remains:

What are we waiting for?

This question serves as our theme for the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) 2019 Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. Depending on the work at hand, our response to the question will vary. It might serve as a call to action, a challenge to embrace difficult work now. It might also serve as a cautious whisper, a reminder to slow down and get it right. Although different issues warrant different responses, consideration of the question is essential in light of the challenges our field, communities, nation, and planet are facing. For example:

- Only 77% of museums and 84% of other nonprofits have a written strategic plan.
- Museum board membership (89.3%), board leadership (92.6%), and executive directors (96%) remain overwhelmingly white despite widespread acknowledgement of the importance of diversity in staff and leadership.
- A UK-based study found that online information about accessibility, such as audio-tours, touch programs, and braille labels, was a key deciding factor for most visually impaired potential visitors, yet only 30% of museums provided useful information for those citizens on their websites.

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- The effort to open the National Museum of African American History and Culture took nearly three decades, as stakeholders worked deliberately and diligently through the process of federal designation, location selection, collecting, fundraising, and storytelling.
- Nearly 34 million legal immigrants live in the United States, changing the face of our communities and representing new audiences with whom local history organizations can connect.
- Rural communities are shrinking, and history organizations and museums in those areas must think about how best to serve their changing audiences.
- As sea levels rise and weather events like hurricanes and heat waves grow more extreme, museums, World Heritage sites, and other history institutions must prepare to deal with the effects of a changing global environment.

In fall 2019, AASLH will meet in Philadelphia to grapple with these issues and more. Philadelphia holds a central place in American history and reveals many of its contradictions. The city hosted the creation of our nation's founding documents, the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, both signed by enslavers on what was formerly Leni-Lenape Indian land. It's a city famous for celebrating the history of liberty, but it's also a city that bombed black activists in a residential neighborhood less than forty years ago. It's home to extreme wealth, but also rife with poverty.

Philadelphia has served as host to path breaking work in public history. Its buildings were the first documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey, and it was the nation's first city to be inscribed as a World Heritage site. It has pushed beyond its famous colonial stories to address change and welcome diverse stories. The Eastern State Penitentiary draws visitors to understand and address prison conditions in America today. Sites in the Germantown section of the city have collaborated in innovative ways to address issues like slavery, poverty, gentrification, and neighborhood change. Philly's Monument Lab and Mural Arts programs have brought people through the city to reflect on commemorative markers and public art amid blight and development. In these ways and others, the city's public historians take risks and solve problems to help the community make necessary changes all with an eye to the right timing.

As the American Association for State and Local History arrives in Philadelphia for the 2019 Annual Meeting, we'll be examining how getting the timing right can make the difference between success and failure, between building relationships or breaking them down. Should we dive in, get better organized before starting, or take time to consider an entirely new direction? It's definitely time to start the conversation: **What Are We Waiting For?**

In the spirit of this theme, the Program Committee seeks proposals that:

- Engage intentionality around advancing or pausing initiatives
- Inspire movement for "stuck" colleagues

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- Empower AASLH annual meeting attendees to address the pressing issues of our time successfully
- Provide understanding and tools for “slow growth” in areas where the weight of the issue requires foundational preparation
- Encompass a variety of formats that engage annual meeting attendees in fun, inspiring, serious, intellectual learning.

In crafting your proposal, consider what your colleagues can learn from you, your institution, and others as you strive to:

- Foster financial and organizational sustainability
- Build diversity and inclusion within the profession, AASLH, and our audiences
- Exemplify creativity and an experimental spirit
- Promote the relevance of history: understanding the past and applying lessons to the present.

Requirements

Each session must have an organizer responsible for finding other speakers and coordinating logistics. All organizers must be affiliated with an institutional member or be an AASLH individual member. Topics for sessions should fall into at least one of the categories listed on page one of the Proposal Form.

Proposals must be submitted on a Call for Proposals form through AASLH’s online submission system.

To access the form, click here. For more information, visit the AASLH website, www.aaslh.org, or contact Bethany Hawkins at Hawkins@aaslh.org or by phone at 615-320-3203.

The 2019 annual meeting will include times for less formal presentation and discussion formats. For example, Pop-Up Sessions will allow you to submit topics on the fly for roundtable discussions while in Philadelphia.

Sincerely,

Jackie Barton
2019 Annual Meeting Program Chair
Heritage Development Professional

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Select a Title: Be creative and memorable.

- 1) **What will your session DO?** Tell the program committee what you want to do during your session?
 - Provoke (How?)
 - Inspire (Who?)
 - Grow (Where?)
 - Solve (How?)
 - Play (With what?)
 - Complicate (Why?)
 - Ignite (How?)
 - Accelerate (When?)

- 2) **After you decide what your session will do**, answer, in one sentence, how you will address the question in parenthesis in question 2 in your session. For example, if you chose inspire, WHO do you want to inspire at the 2019 conference?

- 3) **This session addresses issues related to:** AASLH Council outlined four values/aspirations for the association and the field we serve. Please check which value your session will address. Go to <https://aaslh.org/aaslh-aspirations/> to read more about the four aspirations.
 - History Relevance
 - Diversity and Inclusion
 - Creative and Experimental
 - Stability and Transparency

- 4) **Relevance to theme:** How does your proposal relate to the question, *What Are We Waiting For?*

- 5) **Session Description and Abstract:** Tell the program committee about the goals of your session. Session proposals must specifically highlight central issues the proposal addresses and their significance to the field of state and local history and theme. Be as clear and concise as possible.

- 6) **Format:** The program committee is introducing new formats for 2019. We encourage you to choose the most engaging format appropriate for your topic. Please read the description of each carefully before choosing.
 - **Thought Leader (15 minutes)** – Speakers briefly present a creative approach from your work from which other attendees can be inspired and surprised. One speaker, in Ted Talk format.
 - **Experiential (75 minutes)** - Do a program – don't just talk about it. Immerse your colleagues in a playful (or dark) example of your work.
 - **Problem Solving (75 minutes)** - Audience members work to develop creative solutions to a seemingly intractable problem at your site, in your community, or in the field at large.
 - **Conversation Provocation (75 minutes)** - The focus is audience discussion/debate. One facilitator poses a predetermined question and invites attendees to participate. The facilitator monitors the discussion to keep on track as a guide on the side, not a sage on the stage. One facilitator.

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- **Panel / Roundtable (75 minutes)** – These sessions should examine complex historical or professional issues. Includes one chair (who may serve as a speaker) and up to three panelists. These should emphasize takeaways for participants and discussion of the complexity of the issue. Panelists should provide contrasting perspectives and represent varied institutions (i.e. budget, mission, location, etc.). Presenters should allow ample time for questions and answers. Should include 1-3 panelists including moderator.
 - **Back-to-School (75 minutes)** – Sessions led by AASLH and Sites of Conscience academic members/affiliates will give attendees an opportunity to sit in on a class at some of our nation's best public history/museum studies institutions. Speaker should not lecture or read a paper, but engage the audience with the topic.
 - **Workshops (full- or half-day sessions on Wednesday or Saturday)** - These long-form sessions are designed to teach special skills in a small group setting and may occur on or off-site. Workshops include appropriate printed materials. Proposals should specify the particular skills the workshop will teach as well as the methods and techniques instructors will use. Participants in workshop sessions pay fees which contribute to the conference budget and presenters and panelists all contribute their presentations in-kind. Workshops can have 1-4 instructors.
- 7) **Select Presenters:** AASLH requires that you, as the person submitting the session, serve as the session organizer responsible for logistics, requests for materials and equipment, communication with participants and AASLH staff, and leading the session itself. *Session chairs must be affiliated with an AASLH institutional member or hold an individual membership.* In order to involve as many people as possible in the meeting, no one can participate in more than **one session**.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

1. **Complete the Session Proposal Form online:**
 - [Submit all session proposals here.](#)
 - [Download a hard copy of the form here.](#)
2. **Submit your Proposal:** Submit your proposal online by December 7. Session chairs will be notified of their proposal's status by February 15, 2019.
3. **Registration Fees & Cost:** Organizers and presenters must register for at least one day of the annual meeting. Speakers are encouraged to take advantage of their attendance and register for the full meeting. Discounts are not given for meeting registration. AASLH does not pay travel costs or honoraria for any session chairs or presenters. Session chairs are responsible for making sure that all presenters register for the annual meeting.
4. **Scheduled Sessions:** AASLH planning staff will assign all session times and dates. Submission of a proposal indicates your willingness to accept the schedule as assigned. You may submit a request for a specific date or time; however we cannot guarantee that we can honor all requests.