

20 BRIDGE
26 CONFERENCE



The Art of *Being Water*

October 26-27 • Tacoma, WA

2026 Bridge Conference Workshop Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your interest in presenting at School's Out Washington's 2026 Bridge Conference! Our goal is to bring together presenters and participants of different identities, perspectives, and backgrounds from the expanded learning opportunities field. We welcome and encourage people who speak multiple language to participate.

We aim to create a balanced and diverse program, with a majority of presenters identifying as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC). We strive to include workshops from across Washington and to offer a variety of topics that meet the needs of attendees with different roles and levels of experience.

As an organization, SOWA is committed to breaking down language barriers and are excited to host sessions in languages other than English. English grammar is *not* part of our selection criteria. Instead, we seek proposals that offer a high-quality, compelling workshop, including clear titles and description, engaging delivery, alignment with conference goals and values, relevance to event learning objectives, and a strong commitment to racial equity.

This year's theme is ***The Art of Being Water***. We're looking for workshop proposals that help leaders and youth within programs and systems to:

- Understand stages of child and adolescent development (including what we know now that we didn't know 5-10 years ago), and how to apply this knowledge to programs and systems.
- Align employee, program, and organizational practices with values.
- Cultivate community care for youth and youth workers.
- Incorporate practices that support our humanity, from how to heal and manage grief to how to celebrate and play together.
- Lead an individual, organization, or system through transformational change.
- Create or grow new programs in collaboration with others, within an environment of support.
- Communicate about the strengths of the expanded learning opportunities field and the critical role we play in supporting youth and families to policy makers, government agencies, and the public.
- Reflect on our biases while learning and unlearning how to create more holistic and supportive environments for young people.

We look forward to reviewing your proposal! Thank you for your commitment to the field.

What is the process for submitting a workshop proposal?

This list below is designed to support you through the RFP application process. We recommend following the steps outlined below:

1. Review the Frequently Asked Questions below.
2. Review the [PDF of the RFP Questions List](#) before completing the RFP form.
3. Sign up for SOWA emails to receive announcements: <https://schoolsoutwashington.org/about-us/connect/>
4. If you'd like support with the RFP application or workshop development, you can make an appointment for RFP Application/Workshop Development via [this booking form](#).
5. Complete and **submit the RFP using this form**.

What are some important dates in the proposal process?

- The Request for Workshop Proposals will go live on **May 4, 2026**.
- Submit your proposal submission by **June 21, 2026**.
- All applicants will be notified of the status of their proposal by **July 31, 2026**.
- If selected to present, you'll be required to confirm your plans to present by **August 14, 2026**.
- If selected, we require all presenters to attend a virtual Presenter Orientation Meeting during the **week of October 5-9, 2026**.
- Bridge Conference will take place **October 26-27, 2026** at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center.

What are some benefits of presenting at the Bridge Conference?

- Share your expertise with leaders in the expanded learning field from Washington state and beyond
- Opportunity for professional development via our offer of 2 complimentary registrations (*value of \$800 per registration*) to each presenting team selected through the RFP
- Promotion of your session and organization through social media and our public-facing conference agenda on Sched
- Share your contact information with attendees who may be interested in inviting you to share your expertise with their own organizations
- Receive workshop survey feedback to support your development as a presenter, with the potential for a testimonial
- Opportunity to join our list of potential trainers for paid contracts with School's Out Washington

How can I prepare a workshop that aligns with Bridge Conference?

Please review the event description and learning objectives (on the next page).

2026 Bridge Conference description and learning objectives:

SOWA's annual Bridge Conference brings together youth program professionals, community leaders and organizers, funders, and policymakers from across the country.

Many of our attendees work in grassroots youth programs with limited resources. For those attendees, Bridge serves as an important connection to the broader youth development field, relationship building, and knowledge to help them sustain and grow their impact.

Reflected in all aspects of Bridge are the values of collectivism, joy, racial equity, belonging, innovation and curiosity. Our conference actively centers diverse BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) voices and youth program providers throughout the event and planning process. In 2025, 63% of attendees identified as BIPOC, and represented a diverse range of urban, suburban, and rural-based programs.

When gathered, our attendees and presenters work toward a collective vision of more equitable systems for young people that include community care, best practices, and advocacy.

We gather to:

- Learn how to implement tangible practices that promote high-quality programs and an equitable expanded learning ecosystem
- Identify and address the ways that racial inequities impact youth, expanded learning opportunities, and educational outcomes
- Highlight strengths and inequities in programs and systems and begin to strategize how to co-create stronger partnerships across sectors.
- Experience belonging and personal/professional nourishment through social connection and networking.

What is this year's Bridge theme?

The Art of Being Water

This year's theme, ***The Art of Being Water***, invites us to embrace the power of adaptability, resilience, connection, and collective flow. Like water, we learn to move with purpose – reshaping our path, filling spaces with possibility, and finding ways forward where none seemed possible. This theme calls on the expanded learning field to remain grounded while fluid, balancing action with reflection and honoring both movement and stillness.

The Art of Being Water reflects the strength of an interconnected youth development ecosystem. When young people, families, providers, educators, and communities move in alignment, ideas ripple outward, barriers begin to soften, and new opportunities emerge. Together, we create environments that are responsive, inclusive, and rooted in shared growth.

As we gather, this theme encourages us to listen deeply, collaborate boldly, and design with intention. It is an invitation to explore how we adapt to evolving needs, strengthen cross-sector partnerships, and cultivate systems that allow all young people to thrive – while also making space to be present.

Bridge Values: Collectivism, Joy, Racial Equity, Belonging, Innovation and Curiosity.

Conference workshop themes will center:

- **Community Building:** Our conference emphasizes fostering a supportive community within the youth development field through networking and collaborative sessions.
- **Collective Action:** We're dedicated to promoting collective action and collaboration among stakeholders to drive positive change and advancement.
- **Advocating for Legislative Change:** By mobilizing efforts to influence policy, we aim to create a more supportive and equitable environment for youth development initiatives.
- **Skills & Resources Empowerment:** Attendees will gain essential skills and resources to support youth effectively, through workshops and resource-sharing platforms.

Join us as we navigate the intricate interplay between individual experiences, collective movements, and the overarching landscape of youth development. Together we will uncover strategies to cultivate, amplify, and harness these moments to catalyze a ripple effect of positive change.

What are examples of past workshop titles and descriptions?

Check out previous examples of Bridge workshops here: <https://2025bridgeconference.sched.com/>

What are examples of topics that would fit into each of the Conference focus areas?

- **Race and Equity:** While we are seeking sessions across all focus areas that incorporate race and equity, this focus area is especially for sessions where topics of race and/or equity are the main content area. Examples include the intersections of race and _____ (e.g. *class, disabilities, access to food and housing, adulthood, racial literacy, white privilege, structural racism, social justice, or sex, gender, gender identity, or supporting specific populations such as immigrant and refugee youth and families*).
- **Youth Development Programming:** What do high-quality out-of-school programs for youth, especially low-income youth, and youth of color, look like? What practices, curriculum, and environments will provide opportunities youth deserve to thrive? Examples include cultural responsiveness, social and emotional learning, trauma-informed and restorative practices, STEM, sense of belonging, relationships, identity development, creativity, safety and wellness, youth leadership and engagement, and program development.

- **Workforce and Systems Building:** What does it look like to invest in our staff and our field? How do we strengthen the formal systems – such as policies, institutional practices, and funding - and informal, cultural systems – such as communities of practice, shared beliefs, and youth and family voice - to advance equity? Examples include efforts like organizational policy and practice changes that promote racial equity; leadership and management improvement; grant writing and resource development; advocacy; research and evaluation; and ongoing assessment, strategic planning, and continuous improvement.
- **Emerging Issues:** What does the future of youth development look like? Reflecting on the past couple of years and looking to the future, what are some topics our field should prioritize to meet the needs of youth? Examples include mental health, resilience, collective trauma, compassion fatigue, deepening investment in racial equity conversations and actions, youth activism, creative or restorative justice, and identity development for adults.
- **Multi-Sector Partnerships & Collaboration:** How can we build enduring partnerships in youth development and education? Which types of partnerships, and the way their members collaborate, can help create a more equitable and expansive learning environment? There are various examples, such as sharing power in cross-sector partnerships, managing the effects of turnover within relationships, developing genuine partnerships with youth and families, applying community-centric fundraising principles, and seeking funding for cross-sector collaborations.
- **Self and Collective Care:** We will have dedicated space to pause, breathe, and recharge. To return to our purpose and support young people, we must restore and replenish. Some examples may include workshops on self-care, affinity spaces, information on mutual aid, sound baths, labyrinth creation, and creating mindfulness for young people.

What times are available to present a workshop?

When submitting a proposal, we will ask you to indicate which days you are available to present at the conference. Because there are a limited number of workshops in each breakout session, your availability may influence our decision-making as we finalize our menu of workshops. There will be five 90-minute breakout sessions, and one “lightning talk” 30-min session on day 2.

- Monday, October 26, 10:15 AM–11:45 AM PST
- Monday, October 26, 12:45 PM–2:15 PM PST
- Monday, October 26, 2:30 PM–4:00 PM PST
- Tuesday, October 27, 9:45 AM–10:15 AM PST (NOTE: 30-min session)
- Tuesday, October 27, 10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST
- Tuesday, October 27, 2:30 PM–4:00 PM PST

How many people can I expect in my session and what will the room layout be?

The maximum number of people per room will vary from about 30 to 120. We cannot estimate exactly how many people you may expect in your assigned room, as so many factors influence how many people choose each session. Rooms may be set up with round tables, U-shaped, school room or theatre style. Examples: [Click here](#)

What is the workshop selection criteria?

SOWA will prioritize the following criteria in the workshop selection process: high quality and compelling workshop (e.g. clarity of title and description, style, and delivery); alignment with conference purpose, values, and target audience (youth development, out of school time, expanded learning). We seek to offer an array of topics led by a diverse representation of presenters/facilitators (i.e. geographic representation, racial and ethnic identities, career role(s), etc.) that can speak to attendees with varying levels of experience, interests, and expertise. English grammar is *not* part of our criteria.

What are SOWA's expectations of presenters?

- **Required Presenter Orientation:** If selected, all presenters are required to attend the Presenter Orientation meeting via Zoom on one of the following days/times:
 - 10/06/2026, 4:30 PM–6:00 PM PST
 - 10/07/2026, 10:00 AM–11:30 AM PST
- **Room Host & Pre-Workshop Check-In:** Presenters must arrive 30 minutes prior to their workshop start time, check in at registration, and check in with the room host at the assigned room at least 20 minutes prior to session start time.
- **Complimentary Registration:** We encourage you to attend the rest of the Bridge Conference and offer 2 complimentary registrations (value of \$800 per registration) to each presenting team selected through the RFP. Co-presenters are welcome to purchase a ticket if they wish to attend. If you are selected, you will receive information about how to register as a presenter, and we strongly encourage you to register at that time in order to reserve your spot.
- **Products:** We encourage you to share *free* resources, tools, curriculum, etc. in your workshop session. If you are interested in promoting a product or service that is *not* free or widely available to the public, we offer you the opportunity to become a sponsor or exhibitor for Bridge. Please see our current [Bridge website](#) for more information.
- **Photos & Video:** School's Out Washington may take photos and video of the 2025 Bridge Conference, including speakers, attendees, and other activities to use in marketing and other materials. Conference attendees waive any rights and any claims regarding the taking and publishing of such photos, video, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions

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- **Important Dates & Timeline:**

- The deadline for proposal submissions is **June 21, 2026**.
- All applicants will be notified of the status of their proposal by **July 31, 2026**.
- If selected to present, you will be required to confirm your plans to present **August 25, 2026**.

Who can I reach out to if I have more questions?

If you have specific questions related to the workshop proposal, please email our team at bridge@schoolsoutwashington.org or visit our current [Bridge website](#) for more information.

How do I apply and what questions do you ask in the Workshop Proposal form?

First, please view [this PDF](#) to review the full list of the questions we ask in the Proposal form. Then, complete the [Proposal form](#) by June 21, 2026.