

2026 VRSA Conference Presenter Guide

Pathways to Play

Show us not only what you have done, but how others can do it too.

Table of Contents

<i>Welcome</i>	3
<i>Conference Theme</i>	3
<i>Before You Submit</i>	4
<i>Presenter Expectations</i>	4
<i>Session Formats</i>	4
<i>Proposal Submission Information</i>	5
<i>Proposal Selection Criteria</i>	6
<i>Proposal Review Rubric</i>	6
<i>Educational Tracks</i>	7
<i>Important Dates</i>	9
<i>Our Educational Philosophy</i>	10

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in presenting at the 2026 VRSA Conference.

The educational program is built on the belief that recreation professionals create meaningful opportunities for connection, well-being, belonging, learning, and community through many different pathways. Whether your expertise is in programming, facilities, leadership, assessment, business operations, marketing, accessibility, or another area of the profession, your experiences can help colleagues strengthen recreation across Virginia.

As you prepare your proposal, we encourage you to think beyond simply sharing what your institution has accomplished. The strongest sessions provide practical ideas, transferable strategies, and engaging learning experiences that attendees can adapt and implement within their own organizations.

Throughout this guide, you'll find information about conference expectations, educational tracks, proposal requirements, and the review process. We hope these resources help you develop a proposal that contributes to an engaging and impactful conference experience.

Conference Theme

Pathways to Play

Show us not only what you have done, but how others can do it too.

Play takes many forms and serves as a powerful pathway to connection, well-being, belonging, learning, and community. The 2026 VRSA Conference theme, **Pathways to Play**, recognizes that recreation professionals create meaningful opportunities for engagement through a wide variety of programs, services, facilities, experiences, and initiatives.

We believe play extends far beyond traditional recreation activities. Whether your work focuses on programming, operations, leadership, assessment, facility management, marketing, accessibility, or another area of recreation, you help create pathways that enable others to participate, grow, and thrive.

As you prepare your proposal, consider not only what you have accomplished, but how your ideas, strategies, and lessons learned can help others strengthen recreation programs and services within their own organizations.

Before You Submit

Before submitting your proposal, take a moment to reflect on the conference's educational philosophy.

Ask yourself:

- What will attendees be able to do differently after participating in my session?
- What practical ideas, tools, templates, resources, or strategies will attendees take back to their own institution?
- How will I actively engage participants throughout my session?
- How does my presentation help others create their own pathway to play?

If you can confidently answer these questions, your proposal is well aligned with the educational goals of the 2026 VRSA Conference.

Presenter Expectations

The VRSA Conference is designed to provide practical, engaging, and transferable learning experiences. Presenters are expected to:

- Design sessions that help attendees learn and apply new ideas rather than simply highlighting their institution's accomplishments.
- Include at least one meaningful participant engagement activity. Examples include facilitated discussion, polling (e.g., Mentimeter), guided reflection, case studies, small-group discussion, demonstrations, problem-solving activities, or other interactive learning strategies appropriate for your session topic.
- Provide attendees with at least one actionable takeaway, tool, template, resource, or strategy they can implement at their own institution.
- Share presentation materials by the designated deadline.
- Ensure presentation content and materials are accessible and inclusive.

Session Formats

Session Format	Length
Educational Session	50 minutes
Interactive Workshop	75 minutes
Panel Discussion	50 minutes
Roundtable Discussion	50 minutes
Lightning Session	15 minutes

Proposal Submission Information

Presenter Information

- Presenter Name
- Institution/Organization
- Position Title
- Email Address
- Presenter Biography (100 words maximum)

Session Information

- Session Title (10 words or fewer preferred)
- Session Description (150–250 words)

Educational Track

Select the educational track that best represents the primary focus of your session. If your presentation spans multiple areas, you may select up to **two** educational tracks.

Educational Track Options:

- Programs & Experiences: Expanding the Definition of Play
- Well-Being & Engagement: Building Connections Through Play
- Leadership & People Development: Growing the Next Generation
- Operations & Infrastructure: Creating the Foundation for Play
- Assessment, Strategy & Impact: Measuring the Pathway Forward
- Access, Inclusion & Community: Creating Opportunities for Participation

Additional Session Information

- Session Format
- Learning Outcomes (2–3)
- Intended Audience
 - Graduate Students
 - New Professionals
 - Early Career Professionals
 - Mid-Level Professionals
 - Senior Leaders
 - Faculty
 - Open to All Audiences

Impact Questions

- How will attendees be able to apply information from your session within their own organization?
- What tools, resources, templates, or strategies will participants leave with?
- How will participants be actively engaged during your session?

Proposal Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on their ability to contribute to a meaningful learning experience for conference participants.

Preference will be given to proposals that:

- Align with the *Pathways to Play* conference theme.
- Provide practical strategies that attendees can adapt and implement within their own organizations.
- Include meaningful participant engagement.
- Demonstrate quality, organization, and clarity.
- Address topics relevant to recreation, well-being, and engagement professionals.

Throughout the review process, reviewers will be encouraged to consider the conference philosophy:

Show us not only what you have done, but how others can do it too.

Proposal Review Rubric

Criterion	Rating (1–5)
Aligns with the <i>Pathways to Play</i> conference theme	
Provides actionable takeaways attendees can implement	
Includes meaningful participant engagement	
Demonstrates quality and clarity	
Relevant to recreation, well-being, and engagement professionals	

Maximum Score: 25 Points

Educational Tracks

The educational tracks and potential topics listed below are intended as examples and are not exhaustive. Proposals on other relevant recreation, well-being, and engagement topics are encouraged.

Programs & Experiences: Expanding the Definition of Play

Exploring innovative approaches to creating meaningful recreation experiences across diverse populations and interests.

Potential Topics

- Aquatics
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Recreation
- Camps
- Challenge Course Programs
- Competitive Sports
- Creative Programming Models
- Digital Engagement
- Emerging Technologies
- Esports
- Fitness
- Innovation in Recreation Programming
- Intramurals
- Nontraditional Recreation
- Outdoor Recreation
- Participant Experience
- Recreation Technology
- Special Events
- Sport Clubs
- Virtual Programming
- Youth Programs

Well-Being & Engagement: Building Connections Through Play

Exploring the role recreation plays in supporting individual well-being, belonging, and community connection.

Potential Topics

- Belonging and Community Building
- Brand Development
- Community Outreach
- Engagement Strategies
- Marketing and Communications
- Mental Health and Recreation
- Participant Engagement
- Recreation as a Pathway to Well-Being
- Social Connection
- Social Media Strategy
- Student Well-Being Initiatives

Leadership & People Development: Growing the Next Generation

Exploring strategies for developing student leaders, professional staff, and teams that create impactful recreation experiences.

Potential Topics

- Change Management
- Conflict Resolution
- Employee Engagement
- Employee Recognition
- Human Resources
- Leadership Education
- Onboarding
- Organizational Culture
- Performance Management
- Professional Development
- Recruitment and Hiring
- Staff Training and Retention
- Student Employee Development
- Succession Planning
- Supervision and Coaching
- Team Culture

Operations & Infrastructure: Creating the Foundation for Play

Exploring the systems, services, and spaces that make accessible and engaging recreation experiences possible.

Potential Topics

- Budgeting and Financial Sustainability
- Business Operations
- Capital Projects
- Contract Management
- Customer Experience
- Emergency Preparedness
- Equipment Management
- Event Operations
- Facility Operations
- Facility Scheduling Software
- Maintenance and Facility Planning
- Membership Recruitment and Retention
- Membership Services
- Procurement
- Reservations and Scheduling
- Risk Management and Safety
- Sustainability
- Technology and Systems
- Vendor Partnerships

Assessment, Strategy & Impact: Measuring the Pathway Forward

Exploring how professionals use data, assessment, and strategic thinking to improve programs and demonstrate impact.

Potential Topics

- Accreditation
- Assessment Strategies
- Benchmarking
- Communicating Impact
- Continuous Improvement
- Data-Informed Decision Making
- Data Visualization
- Grant Writing and Funding
- Institutional Partnerships
- Learning Outcomes
- Program Evaluation
- Research in Campus Recreation
- Return on Investment (ROI)
- Strategic Initiatives
- Strategic Planning
- Student Success

Access, Inclusion & Community: Creating Opportunities for Participation

Exploring how recreation and well-being professionals create inclusive environments where individuals of all abilities and experiences can participate, connect, and thrive.

Potential Topics

- Accessibility Practices
- Adaptive Recreation and Adaptive Sports
- Community Engagement
- Creating Welcoming Environments
- Disability Awareness and Allyship
- Inclusive Programming
- Outreach to Underserved Populations
- Partnerships that Expand Access
- Removing Barriers to Participation
- Universal Design

Important Dates

Activity	Date
Proposal Submission Deadline	July 31, 2026
Proposal Review	August 14–21, 2026
Presenter Notification	August 26, 2026

Our Educational Philosophy

Every presenter contributes to the professional growth of colleagues across Virginia. We encourage you to approach your presentation with the mindset of sharing ideas that others can adapt, improve upon, and implement within their own organizations.

Every proposal should answer one simple question:

If someone attends my session, what will they be able to do when they return to campus?

The most successful sessions are those that provide practical strategies, meaningful engagement, and resources participants can immediately put into practice.

As you develop your proposal and presentation, remember the guiding principle of the 2026 VRSA Conference:

Show us not only what you have done, but how others can do it too.