



Proposal Submission Guidelines

GiGi's Annual Leadership Conference
November 5-7, 2026
Renaissance Convention Center Hotel
Schaumburg, IL 60173

Thank you for saying YES!

We are so grateful for your willingness to share your stories, talents, and expertise with the GiGi's Playhouse network at our 2026 Annual Leadership Conference. Because of passionate leaders like you, this event continues to inspire growth, innovation, and connection across Playhouses nationwide.

This year's theme, **One Mission. Many Leaders. *Securing Our Future, Sustaining Our Impact***, reflects the shared responsibility we all carry across Playhouses, boards, volunteers, staff, and Inc to lead and strengthen our network together.

This guide includes everything you need to know to submit your proposal for this year's conference, taking place at the Renaissance Convention Center Hotel in Schaumburg, Illinois on November 5-7.

Who You'll Inspire

Our conference brings together dedicated leaders from across the country who are eager to learn, grow, and bring new ideas back to their communities, including Playhouse staff, board members, ambassadors, and key volunteers.

Ready to make an impact?

Please review the guidelines below and submit your proposal by July 3, 2026 at the following link: [GiGi's Playhouse 2026 Annual Leadership Conference Proposal Submission Form \(Part 1\) – Fill out form](#) (Opens June 1)

Helpful Tips

- All presenters register for the conference (great news—registration is FREE again this year!).
- Review the criteria below so you understand how proposals are evaluated and can set yourself up for success.
- Choose your category thoughtfully. If it's hard to decide, consider refining your focus to best match our audience.
- Pick the right session format:
 - 60-minute Session
 - 30-minute Spotlight Session – new this year!
- The review panel may suggest adjustments (category, format, or content). You'll have the chance to review and approve any updates before confirmation.
- Notification Date: Lead presenters will be notified by July 24.
- Final confirmation (title, description, presenter names) due by July 31.

Dates to Remember:

July 3	Proposal Submissions Due
July 6-17	Proposal Review
July 24	Notification to Presenters
July 31	Proposal Confirmations Due
August 28	Presentation Drafts Due
September 18	Presenter Registration Deadline
October 5	Hotel Reservations Deadline

October 16	Final Presentations Due
October 30	Final Materials for Attendees Due (PDF format)
November 5-7	2026 Annual Leadership Conference!

Session Types:

1. 60-Minute Sessions
 - Engaging, interactive learning experiences designed specifically for Playhouse leaders and staff.
 - Plan to use the full hour
 - Up to 4 presenters
2. 30-Minute Spotlight Sessions Short, focused presentations on one impactful topic.
 - Perfect for highlighting a program, event, tool, or best practice
 - Up to 2 presenters

Proposal Categories:

We are seeking dynamic presentations across the areas listed below. The most impactful sessions will include real-life examples, practical tools, and actionable takeaways. Whether you're sharing a successful Playhouse initiative or applying professional expertise to nonprofit leadership or the Down syndrome community, your knowledge can spark meaningful change.

Questions? Reach out anytime: sjackson@gigisplayhouse.org

1. Leadership

Focus on building strong, confident leaders who inspire others and drive impact.

Examples:

- “Leading with Purpose: How to Motivate Volunteers and Staff”
- “From Team Member to Leader: Growing Leadership from Within”
- “Time Management Strategies for Busy Playhouse Leaders”

2. Board Development

Strengthen your Board to ensure engagement, accountability, and long-term success.

Examples:

- “Recruiting Passionate Board Members Who Get Results”
- “Running Effective, Efficient Board Meetings”
- “Building a Board Culture of Accountability and Enthusiasm”

3. Marketing & Communications

Share your story in a powerful way to grow awareness, engagement, and impact.

Examples:

- “Social Media That Inspires: Sharing the GiGi’s Story”
- “Developing a Simple but Powerful Marketing Plan”
- “Email Strategies That Increase Engagement and Donations”

4. Human Resources

Support, develop, and retain staff to build a strong, mission-driven team.

Examples:

- “Hiring for Heart and Skill: Building the Right Team”
- “Effective Staff Evaluations That Drive Growth”
- “Creating Clear Roles, Expectations, and Job Descriptions”

5. Finances

Build confidence in managing your organization's financial health and sustainability.

Examples:

- "Budgeting Made Simple"
- "Financial Processes Every Playhouse Needs"
- "Understanding Financial Reports: What Leaders Need to Know"

6. Development & Fundraising

Grow your impact by increasing revenue and strengthening donor relationships.

Examples:

- "Elevating Your Events to Energize Your Community"
- "Grant Writing 101 for Playhouses"
- "Building Strong Donor Relationships That Last"

7. Programming & Volunteer Management

Share innovative, effective program and/or volunteer management strategies that create meaningful outcomes for participants.

Examples:

- "Ensuring Volunteers Know Their Impact"
- "Using Data to Improve Program Impact"
- "Adapting Programs to Meet Community Needs"

8. Family & Community Connection

Highlight strategies on building strong, meaningful relationships that support participants and families while strengthening connections within the community.

Examples:

- "Creating Meaningful Family Engagement Opportunities That Build Connection"
- "Building Community Partnerships That Expand Your Playhouse Impact"
- "From Welcome to Belonging: Creating Inclusive and Engaging Environments"

Proposal Review Criteria:

Each submission is shared anonymously (without identifying information) and carefully reviewed by at least three committee members made up of your peers, then scored (1–5) across these areas:

Criteria	What We Are Looking For	Potential Score
Relevance to Attendees & Alignment with Conference Theme	The proposal clearly demonstrates that the content is timely, relevant, and valuable for conference attendees (staff, board members, volunteers). It is specifically tailored to the GiGi's Playhouse network and offers insights beyond what would typically be presented at conferences for parents, policymakers, or educators. Proposals should also reflect this year's theme, One Mission. Many Leaders. <i>Securing Our Future, Sustaining Our Impact</i> , by highlighting shared leadership, collaboration, and relevance across multiple roles within the network.	5

Presenter Credibility/Skill	The lead presenter shows strong knowledge and experience in the topic area and is well suited to deliver the session. Background, skills, or lived experience demonstrate credibility and the ability to provide meaningful insights.	5
Organization and Clarity	The proposal includes a clear and well-structured session plan. It is logical, easy to understand, and thoughtfully developed. The content is substantive and appropriately scoped to fill the selected session length.	5
Audience Engagement and Takeaways	The session is designed to actively engage participants and support meaningful learning. The proposal outlines specific strategies for interaction and ensures attendees will leave with practical tools, ideas, or actions they can apply in their daily work.	5
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS		20

Ready to Share Your Passion?

We can't wait to see your ideas come to life and to celebrate the impact we'll create together.

👉 Submit your proposal here: [GiGi's Playhouse 2026 Annual Leadership Conference Proposal Submission Form \(Part 1\)](#)
– [Fill out form](#) (Open June1)

Deadline: July 3, 2026 at midnight (CT)

No late submissions will be accepted.



Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
educate. inspire. believe.

See you in Schaumburg!