

# 2026 National Forum on Education Policy Call for Proposals

Education Commission of the States is seeking proposals for concurrent sessions at the 2026 National Forum on Education Policy.

We invite state leaders, policy organizations, education and research institutions, nonprofits and other organizations and individuals to submit a proposal to share insight on innovations and advancements in a range of education policy topics from early care and education through K-12, postsecondary and the workforce.

Please take time to review this document for information on the relevant details about the event, topics of interest, applicant responsibilities, deadlines and how to submit a proposal.

## About the National Forum on Education Policy

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Education Commission of the States will host the 2026 National Forum on Education Policy in Washington, D.C. at the JW Marriott July 8-10.

Leading a concurrent session gives you the opportunity to present to a highly influential, bipartisan audience of governors' education policy advisors, state legislators and staff, chief state school officers, state board members, higher education officials and early care and education and workforce development leaders across education areas. We are a trusted and valued partner to education stakeholders across the United States and its territories.

Concurrent sessions will take place in 60-minute blocks starting the afternoon of Wednesday, July 8 through the morning of Friday, July 10. All speakers and session leaders must be prepared to conduct their session on any of the three days of the National Forum (July 8, 9 or 10).

## Session Proposals Guidelines

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ECS welcomes proposals on innovation and advances taking place in a range of education policy topics from early care and education to postsecondary and the workforce. The list below includes topics that are of particular interest to ECS' audience and [Commissioners](#) currently. Regardless of the topic, each session should be relevant to state education policymakers with an emphasis on including different viewpoints from a range of education leaders and role groups.

ECS welcomes no more than **three proposals** from one organization. Should more than three proposals be submitted, ECS will consider the first three that were submitted.

*Applying entities are asked to identify one topic and one subtopic for their proposal.*

### Topics:

- Creating Accessible, Affordable and High-Quality Early Care and Education Systems
  - Early childhood integrated data systems.
  - Governance of ECE programs and services.
  - Improving access and quality.
  - Supporting the mixed-delivery system.
  - Early literacy and numeracy.
- Improving Student Attendance, Engagement and Wellbeing
  - Chronic absenteeism.
  - School-based health services.
  - Mental and behavioral health.
  - Nutrition.
  - School climate.
- Strengthening the Educator Pipeline
  - Certification and licensure.
  - Compensation.
  - Recruitment and retention.
  - Working conditions.
- Reforming and Refining K-12 Finance
  - Balancing state and local revenues.
  - Declining enrollment and consolidation.
  - Demands on schools to address more student needs.
  - Funding for school choice programs.
- Building Holistic Skills and Aligned Pathways
  - Work-based learning, dual enrollment, profile of a graduate and competency-based education.
  - Stackable credentials and durable skills.
  - Postsecondary transfer and completion.
  - Blended and braided funding for education and training.
  - Literacy and numeracy.

- Civics.
- Enhancing the Value of Postsecondary Education by Preparing for the Future of Work
  - Supporting and incentivizing institutional innovation and adaptability.
  - State financial aid and student borrowing.
  - Funding for student support and wrap-around services.
  - Aligning K-12, postsecondary and workforce data systems.

## Session Types

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We ask applicants to identify their proposal as one of the following session types. If a proposal incorporates aspects of more than one session type, please select the session type that most closely meets the goals of the proposal.

- **State Spotlights:** These state-submitted sessions highlight a successful or innovative policy in a single state and include at least two state leaders who were actively involved in the enactment and implementation of the policy.
- **Policy Features:** These sessions highlight successful or innovative policy work in more than one state — ideally featuring speakers from diverse role groups or political backgrounds.
- **Research Features:** These sessions highlight recent or emerging research studies that may support state education leaders as they consider policy strategies in their states.
- **Workshops:** These highly interactive sessions are intended to guide state education policymakers through conversations and considerations as they develop and consider policy goals.

## Applicant Responsibilities

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For selected proposals, the applying entity is responsible for the payment of a session registration fee to cover the discounted event registration for up to **three individuals** who will serve as speakers and/or moderators for the session. Session registration fees are as follows:

- For all sessions, including those submitted by ECS Partners, education institutions and nonprofits: \$2,500 (If you have a question about using Partner registrations for your session, please contact [Anthony Sabo](#), development manager.)

- There is no session fee for a State Spotlight session submitted by an ECS Commissioner whose state is in good standing with the Compact for Education. *(If you have a question as to whether your state is in good standing with the Compact, please contact [Deven Scott](#), senior director of state and board relations.)*

Your session registration fee includes full access to our event, including plenary and concurrent sessions, networking receptions, state spotlights, roundtable discussions and event materials. Additionally, your fee supports our marketing, promotion and onsite meeting costs such as audio-visual services and signage.

For the best audience engagement and due to session time constraints, ECS recommends no more than three total speakers, including moderators, for a session; however, one additional speaker or moderator may be registered at the discounted rate of \$825. Please contact [Caitlin Dennis](#) for information on registering additional session speakers.

The applying entity is responsible for arranging travel and accommodation for their speakers and moderators. ECS does not provide travel and lodging for any session participant; however, there will be a discounted room block available for all event registrants that's subject to venue capacity. Each session participant must be registered and have their room reserved by **May 29, 2026**.

Please note that while appointed ECS Commissioners from states in good standing with the Compact for Education are eligible to receive registration, travel and lodging support to attend the National Forum on Education Policy, session registration fees are not subject to change by virtue of ECS Commissioner participation in a session. If you have questions, please reach out to [Caitlin Dennis](#).

## Selection Considerations

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ECS is seeking proposals that have a clear connection to education policy topics, highlight state-level policy innovation, identify policy solutions that address challenges and barriers to education, and provide the audience with opportunities to interact in the session. Each session will be evaluated using the following rubrics. In addition to the rubric evaluation, session selection will take into consideration the distribution of subject matter and geographic and political diversity.

- [State Spotlight Rubric](#).
- [Policy Feature Rubric](#).
- [Research Feature Rubric](#).
- [Workshop Rubric](#).

## Deadlines

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- Submission deadline: Jan. 23, 2026
- Acceptance and rejection notification: March 26, 2026
- Registration and lodging deadline: May 29, 2026
- Registration payment deadline: June 26, 2026
- Session materials deadline: June 19, 2026

## How to Submit a Proposal

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Please use [this form](#) to submit your proposal. In the submission form, you will be asked to respond to the following prompts.

**Session Title:** *limited to 75 characters.*

**Session Type:**

- State Spotlights
- Policy Features
- Research Features
- Workshops

In 500 characters or less, please describe the format and structure of the session and how session organizers plan to engage participants.

**Session Description:**

In 2,000 characters or less, effective session descriptions should include:

- What specific topic the session will cover and why the session is important and/or timely.
- Any other relevant details that would show an attendee the value and importance of the session.
- For additional information about ECS priorities for each session type and how a particular session type will be scored, please see the applicable scoring rubric linked in the Selection Considerations section.

**Session Goals:**

In 2,000 characters or less, share 3-5 goals for your session, including what attendees will learn by attending the session and how they will be engaged in the material. *(Please see specific rubrics for additional information on ECS' priorities for each session type.)*

**Applicant Information:**

- Name
- Title
- Organization
- Speaker: Yes/No
- Are you an appointed ECS Commissioner? If you're submitting this proposal on behalf of an ECS Commissioner, please name.

**Speaker Information:** Please provide the following for up to 3 speakers. (Note: For accurate review, only include speakers who you have communicated with about this proposal.)

- Name
- Title
- Organization
- Bio
- Headshot photo
- If not identifying speakers, please identify specific organizations and/or states you plan to engage.
- State/Organization

**To submit a proposal, the applicant must agree and consent to the following:**

- The applying entity agrees to meet all stated deadlines.
- The applying entity agrees to pay for session registration fees.
- The applying entity allows ECS to engage with session organizers to adapt the session to fit concurrent session needs.
- The applying entity grants ECS permission to collaborate with the applying entity to modify the session proposal for use in alternative opportunities throughout the year (e.g., Ed Note blog posts, ECS-hosted webinars or plenary stage content at ECS convenings).
- The applying entity consents to session recording for promotional purposes.