OTT

A global consultancy
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OTT Conference 2024:

Think tanks & their communities

Session Proposal Guidelines

1. Think tanks & their communities

Think tanks began within communities. The Chicago Civil Federation (1894) was set up by local business and civic leaders to address local issues. In Peru, the Sociedad Académica de Amantes del País (1779) met to exchange ideas about an independent nation. The Royal Society of Arts (1754) founders met in their local coffee house to tackle community challenges.

However, these institutions have evolved over time. Navigating complex political and philanthropic landscapes, they are often perceived to be part of the elite. While think tanks have become trusted evidence sources for policymakers, are they trusted members of their communities? How many people walk past think tank offices without knowing what transpires within?

As complex policy problems continue to challenge our societies, communities themselves hold invaluable knowledge, insights, and experiences that must be integrated into effective solutions. Think tanks are beginning to recognise that true progress comes when they embrace their roles as facilitators and collaborators, working alongside communities to bridge the gap between research and policy.

Join us at the On Think Tanks Conference 2024 to discuss how think tanks can build trust, engage and collaborate with their communities.

2.   Agenda

The Conference will take place on 22-23 May 2024 at Fundació Bofill, Barcelona, Spain.

The two days will feature a dynamic line-up of keynotes, parallel sessions, interactive discussions, and 'unstructured time', creating the space for emerging conversations and connections.

3.   Proposing a parallel session: key information

Parallel sessions are designed to be dynamic, interactive and participatory, offering a space to exchange experiences, concerns and advice.

Session duration: Parallel sessions typically run for 1.5 hours, allowing sufficient time for engaging conversations.

Format: The format of these sessions is adaptable to suit the specific topic. Whether you prefer a roundtable discussion, a workshop, or a "fishbowl" format, the primary objective remains the same: to create an environment that fosters an engaging and participatory experience.

Avoid long or large panels: The OTT Conference is a space for dialogue. In our experience, panels make this harder. We therefore encourage you to avoid a panel presentation. Instead, we suggest having 2 or 3 people who can share a few key ideas with the intention of encouraging a discussion, or explore other formats that promote dialogue.

Conveners as facilitators: We encourage session conveners/leaders to take an active role in designing and leading their sessions. Your role as a convener is key to moderate the discussion and effectively manage the session. OTT team members will be on hand throughout your session to offer logistical support, ensuring that everything runs smoothly.

Inclusivity of speakers: We aim for a diverse range of speakers, and we do not accept all-male-led sessions. We recommend that the other session speakers represent various countries, regions, and backgrounds to enrich the Conference experience.

So what? We want the conversations to be useful. Ask yourselves, what do we want to get out of this session? Maybe it is a new initiative, ideas for a study or article, or insights to help address a problem that you and others are facing.

Avoid too much self-promotion: The OTT community looks for thoughtful and nuanced reflections about the sector. It's always happy to celebrate successes but we aim to keep the focus on sharing the lessons and don't shy away from talking about what doesn't work.

Topics to address: While we encourage you to be inspired by the Conference theme, you are not bound by it. We only ask that you bring discussions of mutual interest to the sector and that you aim for a very high standard of discussion. For example, you could focus on the governance of think tanks, financial planning, fundraising, the impact of populism on think tanks or AI and think tanks.

1.   Submit a session proposal

To submit your session proposal please <u>complete this form</u>. It will ask you the following information:

- **Session leader's name and email.**
- **Session title.**
- **Short session summary** (50-100 words). Be clear about the issue(s) you will address and what participants will gain from joining the session.
- **Session format** (a short description).
- **Potential speakers and facilitators**. Please remember that all speakers, facilitators or resources persons will need to register and travel to the Conference. As the session organiser, you will be responsible for coordinating this.

We are reviewing session proposals on a rolling basis. We will review your submission and get back to you within two weeks. The final deadline for session proposals is **31 December 2023**.

*Please note that OTT may propose combining your session with another one that shares a similar topic. We may also recommend speakers. These suggestions are made in the spirit of promoting international diversity and a wide range of perspectives.

2.   We will offer

- A suitable space for your session after reviewing its alignment with the Conference.
- Guidance and advice (if needed) on the session structure and content.
- Material and resources, where possible and available (e.g. post-it notes and flip charts). OTT team members will be in the session room to provide logistical support.

3.   Session leaders' responsibilities

- Submitting the session proposal.
- Assuming responsibility for the overall management of the session including convening the session speakers and preparing presentations (if any) and sharing them with us.
- Alerting us of any changes to the agreed session.
- Delivering the session along with the other speakers during the conference.

- Producing a summary of the session including the findings, recommendations or follow-up actions.

Questions and comments: contact Stephanie Nicolle at
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