Call for Cumulus Conferences 2025
Now open!

Cumulus is pleased to announce the call for proposals for member institutions to organize and host as an individual institution and/or consortium of member institutions two annual Cumulus conferences in 2025 (the first to be held anytime between April and early June, the second one to be held between October and early December 2025).

Submission deadline is Friday 15 September 2023.

Cumulus Conferences: A Briefing for Hosts

Members should review the following information if they are interested in hosting a Cumulus Conference.

I. Overview

Since the early days of the founding of Cumulus, Cumulus members have been invited to gather twice a year to attend the two annual Cumulus Conferences hosted by member institutions in Cumulus Association.

Cumulus conferences are non-profit in nature and developed with the goal of enriching the community and advancing the mission and values of the Association. While each Conference is characterized by the unique make-up of people, culture, and region of the institution that is the host, all Cumulus conferences share a common vision: to create learning environments that foster engagement, networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange about art and design education and research in an open and friendly atmosphere that celebrates the increasingly diverse and global nature of the Cumulus "family." For our members, attending Cumulus conferences is one of the most rewarding experiences and tangible results of being a part of Cumulus.

Lessons Learned from the pandemic and Innovating our Cumulus Conferences

The COVID pandemic disrupted all global conference activity for Cumulus in 2020 until 2022. The adaptation to replacing face-to-face meetings also invited new opportunities for Cumulus for innovation. Our institutional conference hosts in 2021, La Sapienza in Rome Italy and Universidad de las Artes in Guayaquil Ecuador and in 2022 by College for Creative Studies in Detroit USA created hybrid and online delivery formats for participation for our members. Some of these lessons learned and innovations are here to stay. They have also accelerated Cumulus' commitment to ensure broader membership access to its conferences, with conference hosts now being asked to consider a portion of their programming always having a hybrid participation opportunity.

Benefits of Hosting a Cumulus Conference

The advantages of organizing a Cumulus Conference are numerous. For host institutions, organizing a Cumulus conference is an invitation to expose their institution and stakeholders to an inspiring set of peers from around the world and in turn highlight the work happening in their community and region. The efforts that

are directed toward hosting a conference will often have a positive impact on the organizational development of the host institution.

Given the global prominence of Cumulus, its advocacy as an association for the role of art and design education and research in society, and its vast network of diverse academic, business, industry and non-profit and governmental partners, Cumulus conferences represent a prestigious showcase for host institutions to be conveners of unique learning moments and networking with Cumulus members and partners from around the world.

II. Important Facts

Timing and Sequence of Conferences

Cumulus Conferences are held twice a year. The first Conference of the year has been typically held in Europe (where 60% of the Cumulus membership still resides) between the end of April and by Mid-June. The second Conference of the year takes place between late October through early December.

With Cumulus membership expanding its global footprint since 2006, the second Conference is increasingly hosted by member institutions located outside of the European continent which reflects the diversity of the network's contribution.

Conference Audiences and Participants

Cumulus Conferences welcome a mixed audience of stakeholders from member institutions including faculty, researchers, university leadership and administrative staff, practitioners, artists, and increasingly given the focus of making our Association more student-centered, a priority we encourage is also to create spaces for students.

Cumulus conference audiences also count with the participation of educators from non-member institutions, and with a variety of special guests from business, industry, government and other organizations in the Cumulus network. Hosting institutions always involve their own constituencies as much as possible in a Cumulus conference. The other Cumulus member institutions in the country or nearby region can be invited by Cumulus Secretariat mobilizes the local members/region to get-together during the event program, the host can also welcome them to contribute to the conference program. Cumulus Secretariat and the host collaborate closely to maximize the impact and reach of the Conference through broadcasting, live streaming and other outreach and media.

Conference Size and Core Cumulus Programming

Please expect an attendee range of approximately 300 – 500 participants. Numbers may fluctuate depending on the host country and venue. The first conference tends to be bigger in numbers in case the General Assembly is organized to take place

during the conference. The ideal is to organize the conference mainly in the premises of the hosting university.

Cumulus Working Groups and Cumulus Partner Programming

Cumulus Working Groups (CWG)
Cumulus Working Groups are always part of Cumulus Conference Programming. Cumulus Working Groups are voluntary communities of practice and spaces for Cumulus members to self-organize around key topics of interest to members. There are presently about 20 Cumulus Working Groups that range in thematic scope and touch on topics that are of unique relevance to members including e.g. AADTE Art and Design Teacher Education and Pedagogy, Business, Industry and Innovation, Leadership and Strategy, Fashion and Textiles, Research Vectors in Art and Design, Food Think Tank, X-Files for Internationalization, BioDesign, Contemporary Art, and more. Each Cumulus Working Group is governed by rotating leaders among Cumulus members who help determine the programming and agenda for each session and modes of access to their sessions. Cumulus Working Groups are open to all members who might wish to attend and learn about their activities.

Cumulus Partners and Sister Organizations
As a "network of networks" Cumulus has an open and dynamic set of collaborations with other diverse stakeholders varying from global associations to NGOs. This represents sometimes a unique opportunity to engage in special programming during Cumulus conferences.

Conference Organization and Execution

Budget Logic
Cumulus Conferences are organized as non-profit events by either one single member institution, or alternatively, by a consortium of institutions that come together to design a single conference experience that is closely coordinated across multiple institutional venues.

The host institution(s) is responsible for the fundraising necessary to support the Conference (through internal institutional resources and outside sponsorship). The registration fees of Cumulus delegates cover only partially (typically 80%) of the total costs that are typically incurred in the execution of these conferences which are non-income generating events for neither the host institution nor the Cumulus Secretariat.

The conference budget must account for a number of free tickets enabling participation of a range of individuals from the Cumulus Student Ambassadors and Cumulus Plus+ Grantees to Cumulus strategic partners and special guests, the secretariat staff, and the board.

Cumulus Secretariat currently does not have the capacity to fundraise for Cumulus Conferences. As a matter of principle however, Cumulus Secretariat and CEB collaborates with hosts to identify additional resourcing and sponsorships for key initiatives and opportunities that might arise.

Host Institution Imprimatur
Cumulus celebrates the distributed leadership of its membership and as such, host institutions have a significant degree of autonomy regarding the authorship of the Conference and the Conference theme that they propose hosting under the Cumulus umbrella. Once their proposal is accepted, host institutions must take charge for the budget, planning and the execution of their Conference.

Conference Host Coordination with Cumulus

Secretariat and Cumulus Executive Board CEB
Host institutions and their conference organizing team are expected to coordinate and communicate closely with Cumulus Secretariat and CEB throughout key milestones of the Conference's planning to design a successful conference. There is an expectation to comply with integrating a number of key activities and events that relate to the association's ongoing work within the master schedule of all Cumulus conferences.

This close partnership between Cumulus Secretariat/CEB and the host institution ensures quality standards and the continuity of Cumulus programming across conferences.

Programming that is coordinated with the Secretariat and CEB includes but is not limited to:
- Cumulus Executive Board Meetings
- Cumulus Working Groups
- Cumulus Organization Partner events with sister networks
- Student Ambassadors Presentations
- Special Award Ceremonies and Exhibitions

In addition, Cumulus Conference hosts are expected to liaise with two assigned advisors from the CEB whose responsibility is to act as "mentors" to the Conference host organizing team. Board mentors typically support the Conference host ensuring that there is an alignment in the overall content programming of each Conference within the mission and values of Cumulus with strong support with the academic part of the conference.

Conference Length and Format
Cumulus conferences are typically 2,5 - 3 days in length with cultural or equivalent program. Conferences are usually scheduled to start mid-to late-week to take advantage of weekend departures which help accommodate long-haul international flights for many delegates. The format and overall conference programming of each Cumulus conference may vary and is approved by Cumulus Board at the time of the host institution's bid. A portion of the programming to be online participation is a requirement from an access and inclusion perspective.

Typical formats will accommodate plenary keynote sessions, parallel sessions with academic paper tracks, workshops, Cumulus Working Groups and Cumulus Conversations (special sessions co-hosted with Cumulus partners), exhibition openings, and cultural/ social networking events. All Cumulus Conferences include a Gala dinner for conference attendees (this dinner is typically included as an optional activity for delegates and as an additional cost to the conference registration fee).

Cumulus conferences include optional programming that can vary widely depending on the host venue: Examples include pre-or post-conference related seminars, student workshops, Cumulus PhD Network activity, exhibitions, and regional or in-country educational/cultural field trips or events (organized by the host or with partners and offered outside the conference fees), to name a few.

III. Key Ingredients in the Recipe of a Successful Cumulus Conference

In submitting a proposal bid to host a Cumulus Conference, member institutions are encouraged to develop a plan that strives to embrace the following 6 key ingredients which are conducive to designing a successful Cumulus conference experience:

1. **Embracing Multidisciplinary Conference Themes**
Unlike many other academic and professional conferences that may focus on a narrow domain of research or practice, Cumulus conference themes succeed best when they strike a balance in their programming approach. For example, conferences can be provocative about new directions and contemporary issues in art, design and media education, research and/or practice as well as be multi-disciplinary and broad enough to resonate with the wide spectrum of interests and back of the time.

2. **Rigorous Management of the Academic Dimension of the Conference**
While Cumulus conferences may vary in format with some hosts choosing to take a more practice focus, all conferences should strive to include a mix of professional sessions and academic papers, panels and poster sessions. Many faculty members in the Cumulus network will only be able to participate if there is an academic program for them to present at.

This academic dimension in the programming of a Cumulus conference should be managed with the expected standards of rigor of the Academy (appropriate communication lead-times of deadlines, organization of Scientific Review Committees and double-peer review submissions, organization of track themes, designation of track chairs, enabling proposals by the call to be presented as well. Publishing of conference proceedings will take place with Cumulus ISBN-number.

3. Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the Richness of the Local Institutional and Regional Context

Providing Cumulus delegates with an introduction to the host institution is paramount to the experience of a Cumulus conference. Finding ways to honor the richness of the host's local and regional context in the overall programming of the Conference and any related pre-or post-events is an important consideration.

Host institution is encouraged to shape this experience in a variety of ways that make sense to their unique circumstances. Past conferences have included tours of campus facilities for example, but also orientations about a particular approach to pedagogy in a degree program or the visit to a novel research lab or a partner venue are of big value. Cumulus community always sees as a great gift the opportunity to share knowledge and participate in conferences where every touchpoint from a keynote speaker, a workshop, an exhibition, a field trip or a meal have been designed with the aspiration to foster engagement and networking that honors the local culture of the host. Building networks with local stakeholders is an additional beneficial aspect of this intentional planning.

4. Cultivating a sense of community

The "open and friendly atmosphere" of the Cumulus family is foundational to all conferences organized under the Cumulus umbrella. Designing a conference program that allows for delegates to network and celebrate being together through sharing expertise, connecting over a coffee break or meal, participating together in a local cultural or social event or field excursion is a very important part of a Cumulus conference.

5. Professionalism and Production Matters

A great majority of Cumulus delegates are educators, artists and designers that will pay attention to the details of the whole conference experience: i.e. conference website, branding, badges, wayfinding, schedules, conference venues, access to local transportation choices and pre-negotiated and diverse range and price-points in accommodations etc.

6. Diversity, Access and Inclusion

Cumulus is committed to celebrating the diversity of its membership and see that diversity reflected by conference hosts in key aspects of the programming of all conferences (inclusive of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, etc.).

In terms of access, initiatives such as the Cumulus Plus grant program offers support that broadens the participation of educators and academic staff in universities of art and design in regions of the world where Cumulus is poorly represented and where financial resources to attend a conference may be a barrier. Conference hosts are always encouraged to design ways to make their conferences as inclusive as possible both from the perspective of programming topics as well as by identifying mechanisms to encourage wide participation (i.e., offering a menu of registration pricing structures for example for partial attendance)

IV. Cumulus Conference Requirements

• Once accepted, Cumulus host organizers should start the active preparations of their Conference a year and a half before their proposed Conference. They must attend a minimum of two prior Cumulus conferences, and actively participate to brief Cumulus Secretariat, CEB and Cumulus members of their progress in conference planning.

• Host Institutions should consult with Cumulus Secretariat before setting the final amount of registration fees and pricing options for participation.

• Host Institutions should anticipate a period of great intensity six months prior to a conference happening. The demand of communicating closely with the Secretariat during this time period and have in place the adequate operational plan and infrastructure to execute on the Conference becomes critical. A dedicated conference manager and team should be in place that will be responsible for registration, program oversight, website, social media, visa guidance, finance issues etc.

• Cumulus Conferences must integrate Cumulus organization branding and logo in all key conference materials (print, digital and key signage and wayfinding). This co-branding supports the host institutional brand as well as the visual identity related to the host conference theme.

• Cumulus Conferences are expected to produce conference websites (linked to the main Cumulus site, site logic model: https://cumulusdetroit2022.org) that are effective at communicating the various components and programming of a given conference. Hosts must design a communication strategy to promote the Conference adequately (through press releases, social media channels etc.) to ensure the target attendance is reached. Hosts should keep the Cumulus Secretariat closely apprised of their communication plan.

• English is the language of Cumulus conferences and of all their communication materials; conference hosts must arrange for live translation services if needed in plenary and other main Conference related events and/or publications.

• Since the academic components of a Cumulus conference require double-peer review, conference websites should typically go live with the call for papers at a minimum 9 months before the Conference takes place.

• The site should include all of the necessary information to allow for delegates to register and plan their participation. The website should be designed as an archival repository of conference proceedings that Cumulus will have access to after the Conference is over.

• Cumulus Conference must provide delegates with accepted abstracts and the full conference program schedule in downloadable format before the Conference via the conference website.

• Cumulus Conference organizers should make every effort to plan for live-streaming of plenary sessions and keynote portions of the Conference to include members who may not have the opportunity to attend live. Cumulus Working Group sessions are available also online for free during the conference to Cumulus members.

• All Cumulus conference proceedings must be published digitally within a timely schedule after the Conference has taken place; 6 months is the maximum time allotted for publication of proceedings post conference. Print publications of conference proceedings are at the discretion of the host.

• Proceedings include a Cumulus ISBN and ISSN (Cumulus Conference Proceedings Series) which are provided by Cumulus Secretariat to the host institution. The host institution can also include a second conference ISBN number as appropriate.

• All Cumulus hosts should plan for visual documentation and professional photography and media capture (including social media) of the Conference (and obtain any necessary advance permissions from participants and speakers). Hosts must commit to transfer a curated set of visual assets from the Conference to the Secretariat for promotional and archival purposes.

• Conference hosts are responsible for all logistical and hospitality arrangements connected to the organization of the Conference. They should anticipate the complexity of welcoming international delegates including planning for crowd management and adequate spaces to accommodate plenary sessions and parallel sessions; conference meals; negotiating a diverse price-range of accommodations (and making available as much as possible affordable and/or free accommodations to Cumulus Student Ambassadors and Cumulus Plus Scholarship Travel grant recipients); arranging when possible and/or necessary for local transportation arrangements between accommodations and main conference venue (s); organizing optional pre-or-post cultural/educational events, seminars, and cultural trips.

Cancellation Policy

After the bid to host a Cumulus conference is approved by Cumulus Executive Board CEB the agreement that ensures between Cumulus Secretariat and the host is binding. Only force majeure circumstances are to be considered as a permissible ground for cancellation.

Conference Bid Proposal Required Content

How to Apply?

Cumulus Conference proposal bids consist of a comprehensive narrative written in English approximately 4 to 5 pages in length. The narrative should touch upon the 8 required content areas listed in the application content section.

Writing this narrative is an opportunity for the institution applying to gain a clearer understanding of their individual approach and capabilities to host a possible conference. The application must include an endorsement letter signed by a senior authority of the applicant institution in official letterhead with institutional logo. The application package should include supporting documents as indicated in the required content section below. Once accepted upon review by Cumulus Executive Board (CEB) and Secretariat, the application is binding.

Application Content

1. Institutional Contact
Please provide the name and address of your institution, city, country and full contact details of the Conference organizing team. (Contact information: Address, email, phone/skype/whatsapp/wechat, etc.)

2. Team
Please describe the qualifications and capacity of the organizing team. For the academic and scientific dimension of the Conference, please articulate the expertise you will rely upon to fulfill the academic rigor expected in the Conference. Provide a copy of team organizers CVs with the application.

3. Motivation
Please give a short statement about your rationale for wanting to host the Conference and how your vision aligns with the overall objectives and values of Cumulus and how the Conference may serve its members. Articulating the anticipated regional or national impact, business, industry and non-governmental presence of the Conference is also a relevant consideration to include.

4. What
Please provide the (provisional) title and overarching theme of the Conference. Describe what the key sub-themes of the Conference might be and how they

might connect to your institutional context and/or cultural and regional expertise and interests. If possible, provide a list of potential or desired keynote speakers and/or presenters with the application and any other material that might inform your overview.

5. Where

Please provide the location(s) you will anticipate using for the conference programming. Indicate what conference facilities are available, the number and size of lecture rooms, space for poster sessions and workshops, and exhibition venues (if planned). Include a description of planned networking and cultural activities, such as field trips and tours pre-and post-conference. Provide photos and /or architectural plans of the facilities in your application.

6. When

Please provide a range of proposed dates for the Conference per Cumulus guidelines. When proposing dates, please review academic calendars to avoid conflicts with major national and/ or religious holidays. Cumulus Secretariat will review your proposed dates and advise on any possible competing conferences from other prominent international associations that may have Cumulus cross-membership.

7. How

As future conferences should create more access and impact through digital media for people not attending the Conference physically, please provide an overview of IT services, live-streaming capacity, translation services and your intended communication/outreach strategy for the Conference. Indicate the availability of hotels and student accommodation, their locations and distance from the venue. Include details about travel access to the conference venue (major airport hubs and transportation centers). Include information about general visa timetables applications when applicable.

8. Recommendation Letter(s) and Supplemental Materials

If applicable, please include references from existing member institutions or partners of Cumulus and/or authorities such as the city, region, chamber of commerce, government, companies, etc. that you intend to engage. If your proposal is selected, Cumulus Secretariat will follow-up with you on this information. Feel free to include any other supplemental materials that may support your application.

Submission deadline is Friday 15 September 2023.

Submissions to be sent to applications@cumulusassociation.org cc. eija.salmi@aalto.fi with the title 'Cumulus 2025 conference application'.

Decision making

Proposals will be reviewed and both hosts proposed by Cumulus Executive Board in its consecutive meeting. CEB is entitled to ask for any further information necessary from the applicant before or after the meeting. Cumulus Secretary General may negotiate further regarding the conference bid with the applicants before the selection of the Conference host.

Questions

Any questions should be directed before the deadline via email to:
Eija Salmi at eija.salmi@aalto.fi
with copy to Justyna Molik at justyna.molik@aalto.fi.

Check our website for information at cumulusassociation.org.