

Informal Focus Group: How Can We Improve Our Conference?

Saturday, September 15 | 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM | 201+202 | #ONA18FocusGroup

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MAJOR GOALS OF ONA18

1. Offer a positive learning environment to tackle some of the biggest challenges in journalism
 - a. Educational sessions
 - b. Training, workshop structures
 - c. Big idea addresses

2. Help people connect to others who might share their interests, help solve problems or support them in their careers
 - a. Official networking functions
 - b. Open, accessible co-working and meeting spaces
 - c. Attendee lists, app networking functionality

3. Recognizing and highlighting quality digital journalism — and the people who create it — in a fun and professional environment
 - a. OJA awards night and banquet
 - b. Social functions and sponsored parties
 - c. Informal, offsite meet ups in dynamic cities

SESSION SELECTION CRITERIA

We looked for pitches that were:

1. Clear and specific in concept
2. Relevant to multiple org types, size, mediums
3. Reasonably feasible, executable
4. Fresh, inspired and engaging
5. Resource-rich and tangible
6. Solutions-focused and practical
7. Inclusive and diverse in speaker talent

Ideally, there is a rough mix of:

1. **Practical Skills, Tools and Tips: Best-practices, guides, demos and training**
Speakers are experts with a specific idea on how to solve a common problem via training or education
2. **Inspiration, Aspiration and Big Ideas: Innovative work, best-in-class projects, ethical debates**
Speakers are well-recognized news leaders, groundbreaking educators and innovative startups

FAQs

1. *Rooms I wanted to attend were packed multiple times; why don't you move to a convention center?*

Fewer than 10% of ONA sessions fill to overflow. We try our best to predict which sessions will be popular, but we don't have a lot of data.

While ONA's conference is large for a hotel, it's small for convention center; convention center tables and chairs must be rented, so costs increase; and rooms are not larger than this Grand Ballroom.

ONA18 had more RSVP sessions than years past, which is a direct attempt to address this concern.

2. *Why wasn't a meal included with my ticket price?*

Attendees are price-conscious and lunch at a conference hotel is surprisingly expensive: at least 2x the cost of buying offsite. The convenience of having food onsite may not

3. *What are you doing for local / freelance journalists on a limited budget?*

ONA offers ~150 complimentary badges for volunteers, with priority given to local journalists and freelancers. While speakers are generally not compensated for their appearance, ONA has a small travel and hotel budget for freelancers and those undergoing financial hardship.