

LOCAL SOLUTIONS 2027

Themes, Session Ideas & Proposal Guidelines

Climate change affects nearly every part of community life, from housing, transportation, infrastructure, jobs, health, and energy to municipal budgets, social cohesion, ecosystems and natural capital, and public trust. Local Solutions 2027 will focus on how communities can respond in ways that meet immediate needs while building the capacity to adapt and thrive over time.

Who the conference serves

The primary audience includes municipal leaders, staff, planners, volunteer boards, community-based organizations, regional partners, nonprofits, practitioners, tribal leaders, and others working to implement resilience in communities, particularly small cities, towns, and rural areas.

What makes a strong proposal

- Showcase best practices, tested approaches, or lessons from implementation and evaluation.
- Include more than one perspective or speaker whenever possible, particularly community, municipal and Tribal partners.
- Explain what worked, what did not, and what the team would do differently if they could do it over.
- Give attendees practical tools, strategies, examples, or next steps they can use.
- Engage attendees rather than relying only on a series of lectures or research presentations.

Session formats

Concurrent session | 75 minutes

A facilitated session featuring **more than one speaker or perspective**. A useful structure is 30–40 minutes of concise presentations, 20–30 minutes of facilitated discussion or activity, and time for questions and practical takeaways. Panels should be designed as conversations, not a sequence of long presentations.

Morning workshop | Smaller and hands-on | 3 hours

An applied learning session in which participants use a tool, work through a scenario, troubleshoot a challenge, or develop an action they can take home. Workshops should minimize lecture and clearly state what participants will produce, practice, or learn to use.

Poster presentation | Opening @ May 3rd Reception

A visual presentation of a project, partnership, implementation story, tool, or emerging practice. Posters should communicate the challenge, approach, partners, outcomes, lessons learned, and relevance to other communities.

Applicants may propose a poster by a team or submit individually. The conference team may co-locate accepted posters with complementary themes, or suggest a different format.

Proposal expectations

We are looking for sessions grounded in real-world experience that give participants practical ideas, approaches, skills, or tools they can apply in their own communities and work.

Proposals should make clear, as applicable to the proposed session:

- What community challenge, need, or opportunity the session addresses and why it matters.
- Who has been involved in the work and what different partners or perspectives have contributed.
- How residents, affected communities, or other stakeholders have helped shape the work, where relevant.
- What has been put into practice, tested, learned, or adapted. OR what practical approach, skill, or tool participants will explore during the session.
- What has worked, what has not, and what has changed or evolved along the way.
- What participants will be able to use, practice, apply, or do differently after the session.

We especially welcome interactive sessions that help participants build skills, explore new approaches, work through real-world challenges, or strengthen their capacity to lead and adapt in changing conditions.

Not a fit: Research-only presentations without clear implications for practice; single-project presentations without transferable learning; or commercial presentations intended primarily to sell a product, consulting service, or organization.

Conference themes and possible topics

Proposals may address one or more themes. The examples are illustrative, not exhaustive.

How Do We Keep Our Communities Livable?

- Affordable, energy-efficient, healthy, and resilient housing
- Protecting existing housing as well as building more

- Climate-safe locations for new housing
- Housing for workers, older adults, and displaced households
- Zoning and permitting innovations for small communities
- Manufactured housing, accessory dwelling units, and community land trusts
- Reusing vacant buildings, schools, and commercial properties for housing

What Must Keep Working When Disruption Happens?

- Keeping housing, healthcare, food, transportation, communications, and energy functioning
- Resilience hubs and trusted community spaces
- Backup power for critical facilities and vulnerable residents
- Mutual-aid agreements across towns
- Protecting water, wastewater, roads, bridges, and communications
- Planning for overlapping disruptions, including flooding, heat, outages, and displacement
- Supporting local businesses before and after disasters

How Can One Investment or Action Solve Multiple Problems?

- Housing that improves affordability, health, energy security, and resilience
- Flood projects that create recreation, habitat, cooling, and economic benefits
- Schools, libraries, and community centers as resilience hubs
- Weatherization as a housing, health, workforce, and energy strategy
- Downtown revitalization linked to housing and transportation
- Local food systems that strengthen health, economic vitality, and preparedness
- Infrastructure investments that reduce municipal operating costs

How Do We Govern When Rules and Resources Keep Changing?

- Planning amid federal and state funding uncertainty
- Moving forward when grants are delayed, reduced, or discontinued
- Developing no-regrets strategies
- Knowing when to act, adapt, or change course
- Regional service sharing and joint procurement
- Working across municipal, Tribal, state, nonprofit, utility, and community boundaries
- Maintaining momentum through political and staff transitions
- Communicating difficult choices and rebuilding public trust

Who Will Do the Work?

- Municipal workforce shortages and succession planning
- Supporting volunteer boards and commissions
- Preventing burnout among local staff and community leaders
- Shared regional staff, grant writers, and technical experts
- Engaging younger residents as community leaders

- Building local contractor and resilience workforces
- Universities, extension programs, and nonprofits as capacity partners
- Responsible uses of AI for grants, public communication, data analysis, and routine municipal work

How Do We Pay for Resilience?

- Packaging several projects into an investable portfolio
- Community development finance and revolving loan funds
- Green banks, credit unions, utilities, and local lenders
- Regional grant applications and shared administrative capacity
- Public-private-community partnerships
- Capturing the avoided costs of resilience
- Funding predevelopment, maintenance, and local staffing—not only construction
- Preparing funding-ready projects before opportunities appear

[Fill out the proposal form here](#)

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