

THE CONVENING

THE POWER OF ASCENSION

Fueling Our Rise for the Next Decade

May 8-10, 2025

RFP Guide

www.surgeinstitute.org

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The **2025 Surge Convening** Committee is accepting proposals for presenters for our 2025 Convening which will take place in Scottsdale, Arizona, from May 8th to May 10th, 2025.

We're planning to offer various dynamic, engaging, and thought-provoking sessions focusing on various topics. Our goal is that our very own Surge community will facilitate these sessions as we want to use this opportunity to elevate your work while sharing your expertise with others.

Surge is dedicated to the empowerment, advancement, growth, and achievement of youth and communities of color. The Convening will provide a platform to educate and elevate leaders of color and equip them with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets necessary to transform urban education and expand the opportunities for our youth.

Each proposal will be carefully considered and discussed with a committee of reviewers, and sessions will be selected according to several criteria, specifically to create a robust, diverse convening agenda that will appeal to the range of participants in attendance.

Presenting at The Convening is a unique opportunity to showcase your best practices and expertise to a national audience of education influencers working in nonprofits, schools, colleges, and for-profit organizations who are all committed to empowering students of color.

Proposal submissions are due by January 20, 2025

Please note that you will have the ability to save and return to your proposal submission after clicking "Begin Proposal".

[Submit Your Proposal](#)



RFP Timeline Overview

Please submit your session proposal with the understanding and commitment to the timeline below.

- RFP Opens | December 19, 2024
- **Submission Deadline | January 20, 2025**
- RFP Committee Review | January 20 - February 14, 2025
- Selection Notifications | February 24, 2025
- Presenter Confirmation Due | February 28, 2025
- Presenter Registration Deadline | March 7, 2025
- Headshots, Bios, & Draft Agenda Due | March 13, 2025
- Presenter Thought Partnership/Coaching / March 13th, 2025 (Tentative)
- Review & Revision Period | March 13 - 28, 2025
- Convening Breakout Schedule Shared | April 2, 2025
- Final Session Documents (Presentation Deck (Google Slides) & Handouts) Due | April 11, 2025
- Presenter Run-through | April 24, 2025
- Alumni Convening | May 8 - 10, 2025

Convening Overview & Proposal Review Process

Ascension is not a solitary act; it is a shared journey. We invite you to celebrate and honor Surge's 10th anniversary, as we reflect on a decade of rising together and empowering leaders of color to transform education while looking to the future. The theme of this year's convening is ***The Power of Ascension: Fueling Our Rise for the Next Decade*** - honoring the collective strength that has fueled our movement. Together, in Scottsdale, Arizona, we will breathe, bond, and bring to life the power of our shared vision as we prepare to rise to even greater heights. Through retreating, we replenish our strength. Through reflecting, we deepen our connection. And through reimagining, we shape the future of our communities.

Similar to our approach with Surge Fellowship sessions, the Alumni Convening will focus heavily on concrete learning and takeaways that benefit practitioners as they work in support of communities of color (specifically - Latinx, Black/African American, and Asian/Pacific Islander).

As attendees, our alumni will arrive ready to learn, prepared to network, open to self-reflection, and eager to grapple with a variety of critical topics as we look to the future. Our goal is for all participants to leave with as much actionable information as



possible, and to create a culture and community of continuous learning that is an extension of the Fellowship experience.

Surge Alumni are heavily experienced and among the top practitioners and leaders in their fields. As such, sessions should:

- Provide attendees with tangible tools and best practices to bring back to their organizations and schools that will improve programming and services, and/or engage alumni in reflective inquiry around their leadership, work, or communities they serve;
- Connect to the field of education/education management and context of Surge's work and that of its alumni (Note: sessions that promote a product or organization or simply describe a program model absent a broader context will not be considered);
- And, cater to mid-to-senior level professionals with *ample* context on the educational, social, and historical landscapes impacting communities of color.

All proposals will be reviewed by members of the 2025 Steering Committee based on the following criteria with a pre-developed rubric. Criteria for consideration include:

- **Relevance:** Is the topic highly relevant to our field, the convening theme and objectives, and our audience?
- **Objectives:** Are the objectives clear and can they be met realistically in the time allowed?
- **Delivery/Engagement:** Do the proposed presentation delivery methods incorporate differentiated learning modalities (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, etc.)? Does the presentation provide sufficient opportunities for audience engagement and Q&A?
- **Applicability:** Can the session information be used or applied by alumni across leadership roles, in a variety of organizational settings? If not, is it clear how the intended audience of Surge Alumni will benefit from attending this session? Does it build off some of the foundational knowledge that is a part of the Surge Fellowship?

The following information will also be considered, but is not scored against the rubric:

- **Clarity:** Does the description give a clear, concise picture of what the presentation will include?
- **Active Learning:** Will the session provide hands-on takeaways?
- **Professionalism:** Is the proposal well-written and complete? Does it demonstrate correct spelling and grammar, and are all questions answered completely?

Please note: Based on proposals received, you may be encouraged to work with other alumni if your topics are similar or related to co-construct a new session.



Session Expectations

We encourage proposals that are focused on best practices and current research toward serving our focal student populations and communities while remaining relevant to the convening theme and broader values of the Surge movement. All proposals must also take into consideration the Surge Ethos and Inclusive Language guidelines attached [here](#).

Content

The alumni experience is rooted in two primary values: *Collective Care* (sharing knowledge, space, and expertise) and *Collective Action* (coalition-building). As you consider a topic you may want to share with fellow alums, consider if these primary values are represented in your proposal. With that in mind, the proposed session must:

- A. Meet at least one Alumni Convening Objective
- B. Fall into an Alumni Convening Domain
- C. Align with a Surge Fellowship Pillar.

Below are detailed explanations of those areas.

Convening Objectives: The objectives of the 2025 Surge Alumni Convening are to:

1. **Retreat:** Slowing down to deepen connection with ourselves and across networks, binding our alums tighter as a collective of changemakers.
2. **Reflect:** Collectively and individually reflect on progress and next steps, while growing our knowledge and sharing our expertise.
3. **Reimagine:** Collectively reimagine our responsibility to Surge, our youth, our communities, and to our cities.
4. **#FuelTheSurge Into the Next Decade:** Examine and identify what the work looks like as we move into the next decade of the Surge Institute.

Convening Domains: Sessions must also align with at least one of the Alumni Convening Domains which describes how learning will occur.

- The **“Head”** domain will focus on thinking. Sessions within this track and domain will focus primarily on providing the audience with theoretical or academic knowledge/perspectives such as insights relevant to the broader education or policy landscape, or have a focus on research or data-driven insights.
- The **“Heart”** domain will focus on the “soul work” that is critical to the work and long-term sustainability of leaders of color. Sessions within this domain might focus on an aspect of identity development; working in affinity or across



differences or explicitly tying big-picture thinking to the 'why' of it all - supporting students and families in our communities.

- The **“Hands”** domain will focus on providing attendees with tangible skill development, planning, or change management. Sessions within this strand might focus on key executive skills such as negotiations, strategic planning, talent management, etc.

Surge Fellowship Pillars: Sessions should support attendees in connecting material covered to one of the Surge Fellowship Objectives as outlined below:

- **Dream Big:** Our work is situated in complex and inequitable systems, institutions, and schools. We need to dream big—beyond the status quo—and radically re-imagine and build alternatives to these systems when possible. This starts with your ability to be visionary and to organize, inspire, and lead others towards that new vision. Embrace the ancestral and futuristic wisdom and experience of our peoples to inform your vision, and learn alongside inspirational leaders of Color who can inspire you to freedom dream.
- **Focus Inward:** As alumni, we have to continue to do the internal soul and heart work of healing from racism and other systems of harm, in order to lead with and alongside young people and communities of color from a place of wholeness and wellness. Our communities need our leaders to unlearn internalized racism, to show up in ways that honor their and others' humanity, and to lead and live courageously in their true genius and full power.
- **Know the Landscape:** Increasing the capacity of our alums to understand the complexity of the highly politicized and inequitable education landscapes in which they lead. Increasing alumni understanding that the systems of educational inequity are part of historical policies and practices that need to be examined and changed and enhance the skills to identify root causes of problems, and help them develop the discernment to respond strategically to the complexities they encounter.
- **Make an Impact:** It's not enough to dream big, focus inward and know the landscape. We have to synthesize all of that into a leadership practice that builds with others to drive collective, transformative change, reimagining what is possible for youth, families and communities of Color—including ourselves. Through this objective, we also help alums develop their deep and wide “toolbox” of values, beliefs, competencies and skills for leading people, programs and organizations.

Audience

As a reminder, Surge alumni from Chicago, Oakland, Kansas City, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Detroit, and The Leadership Collaborative embody:



- **Connectedness:** African-American, Latinx, and Asian/Pacific Islander emerging leaders working in systems of schools, public policy, education philanthropy, and advocacy organizations.
- **Excellence:** Proven high-potential trailblazers with track records of professional success.
- **Experience:** Minimum of six years of relevant working experience and at least a bachelor's degree.
- **Passionate:** Serving high-need communities, preferably with connections to these communities.

Surge Institute does not seek to advance any *one* model of education or programmatic approach. Instead, we seek to encourage collaboration across varying perspectives and approaches to ensure sustainable efforts and true connections for our communities. We seek to transform the educational experience of *all* underserved youth and communities across our cities and see this as an opportunity for you to learn from one another.

Presentation Logistics

Upon acceptance of a proposal, all presenters must submit an agenda using the template provided with all completed components.

While not required, we welcome and encourage proposals featuring multiple presenters, especially those representing multiple perspectives.

Sessions should be interactive and engaging and offer best practices that can be applied.

All sessions will be 75 minutes (*sample breakdown: 5 min intro, 50 minutes content, 15 mins Q&A, 5 mins thank you & survey*).

Sample Session Topics

The following session topics are **examples** of aligned content that meet the above expectations and are grouped into each of The 2025 Convening's objectives. We welcome and encourage you to bring your own ideas and expertise as you develop your session.

Retreat

- The Rest Revolution: Centering Collective Care in Leadership Practices – *Explore strategies for integrating rest as resistance into leadership routines to sustain energy and impact over the long term.*
- Healing Together: Creating Brave Spaces for Vulnerability and Reflection – *Practice building networks of trust and support within the alumni community to foster deep, restorative connections.*
- Mindful Leadership: Techniques to Recharge and Reimagine Your Role – *Learn mindfulness techniques to cultivate presence and enhance decision-making in professional and personal spheres.*



- Rooted in Resilience: Honoring Ancestral Practices to Sustain Our Journey – *Draw on cultural and ancestral wisdom to strengthen resilience and foster well-being as leaders of color.*
- The Art of Intentional Pause: Tools for Reflecting and Resetting as Leaders – *Identify and implement actionable tools for creating intentional pauses to realign with personal and organizational goals.*

Reflect

- Mirror Moments: Assessing Your Leadership Journey and Next Steps – *Engage in guided self-assessment to identify leadership growth areas and future aspirations.*
- Lessons Learned: Sharing Innovations in Education for Lasting Change – *Facilitate knowledge-sharing among alumni on successful initiatives and programs that have transformed communities.*
- From Ideas to Impact: Measuring Your Contributions to Community Change – *Learn methods to evaluate the tangible and intangible impacts of your work within communities of color.*
- Storytelling for Transformation: Using Narrative to Amplify Change – *Explore the power of personal and organizational storytelling to inspire collective action and build community trust.*
- Mapping the Movement: Reflecting on Surge's Decade of Impact and Beyond – *Analyze Surge's collective accomplishments while envisioning the next chapter for alumni engagement and leadership.*

Reimagine

- Designing Futures: Imagining Equitable Systems in Education and Beyond – *Collaborate on reimagining systems that center equity and justice for marginalized communities.*
- Breaking Barriers: Transformative Leadership for Inclusive Communities – *Develop innovative approaches to dismantling systemic inequities in education and leadership spaces.*
- The Future We Deserve: Reimagining Advocacy with Youth at the Center – *Redefine advocacy by integrating youth voices and leadership into systemic transformation efforts.*
- Rebuilding Trust: Strategies for Healing Relationships Between Communities and Institutions – *Explore ways to rebuild trust between historically marginalized communities and the systems meant to serve them.*
- The Power of Possibility: Creating New Narratives for Communities of Color – *Engage in visioning exercises to craft narratives that uplift and empower communities of color.*



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- Building Coalitions for the Next Decade: Strength in Numbers – *Learn strategies for coalition-building to expand the impact of Surge alumni and communities of color.*
- Future-Proof Leadership: Adapting to Change in Uncertain Times – *Develop skills to navigate evolving educational landscapes and prepare for future challenges.*
- Tech & Equity: Leveraging Innovation to Advance Educational Justice – *Explore the role of technology in addressing educational inequities and supporting underserved communities.*
- Scaling Impact: Growing Initiatives to Amplify Community Transformation – *Discover best practices for scaling successful programs and initiatives to reach more communities.*
- Vision 2035: Envisioning Surge's Role in the Next Decade of Social Change – *Participate in a collaborative strategy session to map out Surge's alumni priorities and opportunities for the next ten years.*

Presenter Guidelines and Benefits

Presenting at the 2025 Convening is open to all Surge alumni, faculty, coaches, and staff. If presenting with collaborators, only one proposal is required. However, the proposal must include the names and email addresses of all presenters.

All 2025 Surge Convening speakers/presenters will have the opportunity to elevate their work and expertise in front of an audience of 200+ education leaders. Selected speakers and presenters will receive a \$250 discount code applicable to the registration rate. The discounted rate must be redeemed by March 7, 2025 to confirm participation in the 2025 Convening. Please note that alumni scholarships and presenter discount rates can not be combined.

Presenter Expectations

By submitting a proposal, I understand that, if accepted:

- I, along with my co-presenters, must register for the convening and commit to attending the convening in person if selected. Surge will communicate the benefits to the presenter upon notification of proposal acceptance.
- Submission of a proposal implies a commitment to deliver the presentation as outlined in the proposal, in-person in Scottsdale.
- My proposal demonstrates a commitment to active learning by providing takeaways that attendees can bring back to their work in a variety of professional



and educational settings. It also connects to the Alumni Convening Objectives, Alumni Convening Domains, and Surge Fellowship Pillars.

- I will confirm my participation by February 28, 2025, and redeem my discounted registration by March 7, 2025.
- All materials for my presentation must be submitted to the Surge Institute Alumni Team by April 11, 2025. My handouts and presentation must match the accepted proposal and, where applicable, reflect any agreed-upon alterations through coaching and refinement. These materials will also be shared with attendees to support continued learning.
- Any recordings, submitted materials, photos, etc., taken of me and/or my session before and during the convening may be used on the Surge website or in marketing materials.
- Surge Institute and its members may promote my session on social media (including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn) leading up to, during, and after The Convening.

For questions regarding anything shared in this document please reach out to us at alumni@surgeinstitute.org.

