

PyCon au 26

Specialist Tracks

Track organiser companion guide

Updated 8 December 2025

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Dates: 26 - 30 August, 2026

Location: Brisbane Sofitel Central, Brisbane, Queensland

Wednesday (26 August)	Thursday (27 August)	Friday (28 August)	Saturday (29 August)	Sunday (30 August)
Workshops	Main Conference & Specialist Tracks			Sprints
	Sponsor Exhibition			

What are specialist tracks?

A 'track' is typically a one day mini-conference within the overall PyCon AU schedule. Track organisers are the facilitators and MCs of their room for the day. Specialist tracks typically curate talks on a given topic, niche or industry. A great example of this is the Education Specialist Track, which has run for 10 years curating talks (and showcases) relevant to education and teaching Python in schools.

What is involved in running a track?

Running a specialist track typically involves three phases of effort.

1. **Call for proposals:** During this phase, it's all about networking and outreach. Encouraging everyone you know (and reaching out to people that inspire you) to help them submit a talk to the conference.
2. **Talk review & program selection:** This is where we review all the talks submitted during CFP and pull together the program. At PyCon AU we review talks in three stages:
 - a. **Anonymous Review:** talks are scored purely on their title, abstract and description with no references to the proposing speaker.
 - b. **De-anonymised Review:** we evaluate talks and speakers in unison assessing for topical expertise and bias.
 - c. **The Thunderdome:** We come together on a big long call to debate and discuss how to best pull together a program based on the review process. Track organisers typically provide a shortlist for their tracks - which pending any 'clashes' of selection, takes about an hour on a weekend.
3. **Chairing your track:** This is when you rock up, MC the room, introduce speakers, facilitate Q&A and generally 'run the track'. PyCon AU has LOTS of supporting materials like runsheets, slide templates, in-room video recording & tech support for speakers.

We're very open to fun and different ideas to make your track unique and exciting. In previous years we've had special invited speakers (think mini-keynotes), showcases, panel discussions and more.

Benefits of running a track

Right out the gate, selected tracks will get two free tickets to the full conference.

PyCon AU is an all-volunteer run conference, so while it is some extra volunteer effort to run a track, there are several benefits of doing so.

- **Be recognised as a leader in your field!** Track organisers are routinely seen as the voice of expertise in their field, and many of our track organisers in the past have landed new contracts or employment in-part from their visibility in the industry.
- **Curate the talks you want to see at the conference!** For conference regulars, being a track organiser gives you the opportunity to influence what talks you get to see. You'll have the support of the conference to reach out to speakers, and pull together a day of talks that you find informative and exciting.
- **Learn new skills!** As technical professionals, running an event, MC'ing a room and promoting a conference are not skills that we get taught on-the-job. The conference will do the heavy lifting of organising the event, giving you the opportunity to learn and hone new skills in the process.

Requirements & eligibility

We've got a few rules of thumb when it comes to running a track. We're open to exceptions, but let's chat about the details. Please email us at program@pycon.org.au with any questions - we'd love to figure out the details.

- **Tracks must have two organisers:** we politely decline single organiser tracks. This is primarily to increase resilience when 'life' happens to someone.
- **You're able to join occasional synchronous calls,** scheduled for east Australian timezones. Our office hours & team meetings are typically on weekday evenings and the program selection typically happens all-day on a Saturday.
- **You must plan to be on-site at PyCon AU 2026.** You'll receive a free ticket, but we cannot commit to travel assistance or guarantee a visa will be granted. That typically means we encourage track organisers to be based in Australia and to already be planning to be at the conference.

And while we think it goes without saying we'll say it anyway: your track theme must be in line with, and encourage talks that comply with, our code of conduct.

Propose your specialist track for PyCon AU 2026

We'd love to hear from you, even if you're not quite sure on the details yet.

Please email program@pycon.org.au with your concept and we'll help you bring the idea to fruition. (That includes if you're looking for a co-organiser!)

To propose a track, please fill in the submission form at
2026.pycon.org.au/specialist-tracks

Be ready to fill in the following information:

- Track name/title
- Short summary of the audience, industry or specialist niche your track is for.
- The preferred schedule day for your track (Thursday, Friday, Saturday, or no preference).
- One or two paragraphs describing your track in public (e.g. relevant to people submitting a talk or deciding what track to attend). This doesn't have to be final - we'll work with you on marketing copy ahead of any public announcements.
- The full name & email addresses of your two track organisers
- A link to your LinkedIn (or other platform if preferred) professional social media.

Our call for tracks is open until **11:59pm AEDT January 23 2026**.

Please also expect to join a briefing call one evening the following week - likely Tuesday (27 January) or Thursday (29 January) approximately 7pm AEDT as we share all the behind the scenes details ahead of the CFP opening shortly after.


Specialist Track Office Hours

We're planning two office hours calls to answer your walk-in questions about organising a track.

- Tuesday 16 December 2025 6pm AEDT
- Thursday 15 January 2026 at 6pm AEDT


Office Hours will be hosted in the **Python Australia Community Discord** server. You can join that discord via pythonaustralia.org. You can also email program@pycon.org.au with questions. Calendar invites (.ics) can be downloaded from 2026.pycon.org.au/posts/call-for-specialist-tracks

New & changed in 2026

 This section is particularly relevant if you've run a PyCon AU specialist track before.

In 2026, we're making three key changes to how specialist tracks are integrated into the overall conference. These changes are based on a combination of feedback and logistics around our schedule & venue for the conference.

- **We can run more tracks on different days!** With the conference shifting to a Thursday-Saturday schedule, we're also opening up the option to run tracks on different days.
 - We're no longer restricted by the number of rooms hired on the 'tracks' day. This might mean one track each day, or multiple tracks across multiple days.
 - We're flexible to figure out the arrangement of tracks as part of the overall schedule.
- **Track selection finalised after CFP:** This is possibly the biggest change we're making to the process of track selection. Previously, we would



commit to tracks prior to opening CFP. In 2026 we'll shortlist tracks, and then run a combined CFP. Track organisers are encouraged to promote the CFP to their industry and community to ensure a strong program can be selected for their track. This also removes the stress from tracks that don't have high submissions - we can run half-day 'summits' and other formats based on the outcome of the CFP.

- **More formats:** tracks, summits and symposiums: We're looking for different format activities and content which means we're open to running a half-day summit, or an all-morning deep-dive. The term 'specialist track' is a very conference-centric phrase that we realise might not resonate with your audience or industry. So you get to tell us what's relevant, and we'll flex around your advice.

We're also putting more time and effort into the marketing of PyCon AU, so your track (or symposium or summit) will get a dedicated landing page on the website where we can highlight specific talks, formats and themes of your schedule.

We're also aiming for a longer CFP to help everyone (speakers, track organisers and the conference team) reach out to more people and reduce the stress of a rushed CFP. Without committing to firm dates, we're aiming for as close to two full months of February and March 2026.