10. Relationship to Conference Programming (iLEAD Stream)

The Innovation Garden is closely linked to the annual iLRN conference, particularly the iLEAD practitioner stream. This connection creates a consistent pathway from early creative exploration to formal contribution, helping practitioners refine their work and present it to the global immersive learning community. This page outlines how Garden activities align with conference programming and how contributors can transition their work into conference-ready submissions.

10.1 The Garden as the Starting Point for Conference Contributions

Throughout the year, Garden activities generate early-stage ideas, prototypes, and applied insights that often mature into conference submissions. Typical starting points include:

- Garden Pods showcasing initial prototypes
- Guided Virtual Adventures supporting platform selection and design literacy
- Toolshed Sessions demonstrating workflows and techniques
- Maker Panels reflecting on design decisions and methods
- Co-creation sessions supporting collaborative ideation

These activities help contributors identify promising ideas while gaining feedback from peers across the iLRN community.

10.2 Proposal Clinics: Preparing Submissions

As the conference submission window approaches, the Garden hosts a series of **Proposal Clinics** to help contributors refine and formalize their work. These sessions offer guidance on:

- Choosing the right submission category (workshop, demo, practitioner paper, etc.)
- Aligning contributions with the Knowledge Tree’s branches and trunk disciplines
- Articulating purpose, methodology, and impact
- Strengthening coherence and narrative structure

- Addressing ethical, accessibility, and design considerations
- Meeting the expectations of the iLEAD review process

These clinics significantly enhance the quality and clarity of conference proposals.

10.3 The iLEAD Practitioner Stream

The iLEAD stream focuses on educational and design applications of immersive technologies across:

- K–12 and higher education
- Workforce training
- Community learning and GLAM contexts
- Cultural and heritage education
- Informal and lifelong learning

The Innovation Garden is the primary incubation space for iLEAD submissions. Garden contributors often present:

- Hands-on workshops
- Experience walkthroughs
- Demos and prototypes
- Case narratives
- Mixed-media experiential sessions
- Design patterns grounded in practice

This tight integration ensures the conference showcases a rich diversity of applied immersive learning work.

10.4 The Innovation Garden District (Virtual Campus Showcase)

During the conference, the Garden comes to life as the **Innovation Garden District** within the Virtual Campus. This space features:

- Live and asynchronous Garden Pod showcases
- Experience walkthroughs led by contributors
- Toolshed Sessions and maker conversations
- Interactions with global attendees
- Opportunities to gather feedback for Repository and Knowledge Tree contributions

The District serves as a vibrant, hands-on environment that complements the scholarly sessions of the Knowledge Tree.

10.5 How the Conference Strengthens the Garden

The relationship is reciprocal. The conference provides:

- Global visibility for contributor work
- Peer feedback that deepens reflective practice
- Opportunities to engage with international presenters and chapter leads
- A milestone-oriented cadence that drives project development
- A platform for ideas that will inform next year’s Garden cycle
- Themes and priorities that shape upcoming areas of exploration

The conference serves as both a culminating event and a launching point for future cycles of practice-based innovation.

10.6 The Full Pathway: From Idea to Conference Contribution

Most contributors move through the following sequence:

1. **Explore**
   Join Walkthroughs, GVAs, and community sessions.
2. **Experiment**
   Build a Pod, lead a ToolShed Session, or join a Maker Panel.
3. **Refine**
   Participate in Proposal Clinics to shape a coherent narrative.
4. **Submit**
   Enter the iLEAD reviewer pipeline and prepare for presentation.
5. **Showcase**
   Present in the Innovation Garden District or iLEAD stream.
6. **Integrate**
   Document outputs in the Repository or Knowledge Tree.

This consistent pathway gives practitioners a clear roadmap from initial idea to formal contribution.

10.7 Why This Relationship Matters

The link between the Innovation Garden and the annual conference:

- Ensures the iLEAD stream remains rich with practice-based innovation
- Enables global participation through both virtual and hybrid modalities
- Builds continuity between year-round activity and the conference experience
- Strengthens the overall quality of practitioner contributions
- Supports the network’s broader strategy of integrating practice, scholarship, and foresight

This alignment helps position iLRN as a uniquely hybrid, globally engaged community advancing immersive learning through both scholarship and practice.

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