

## Getting Your Proposal Seen and Accepted

If you're thinking about submitting a session proposal for the upcoming SHAPE America National Convention & Expo, this document provides tips for submitting a competitive proposal.

Each year, SHAPE America receives more session proposals than we can accept for our National Convention & Expo. Our goal is to build an engaging, innovative program that reflects current trends and best practices across our professional disciplines. To help your proposal stand out, consider the following guidelines:

**1. Session Quality:** Proposals submitted should include a concise, engaging title, not to exceed 10 words, and a descriptive overview. Please understand that this description overview will be the marketing piece included in the final convention program, which will be used by convention participants to determine whether to attend a session. It should clearly communicate what attendees can expect, including the session's focus, format, and key takeaways. Be specific about what will happen during the session—will it include interactive components, demonstrations, discussions, or practical applications? Make it both informative and appealing. When submitting your proposed session, include at least three clear and actionable learning objectives, explaining what the audience will learn, what the focus and purpose of the session is, and what information or skill can be implemented by attending the session.

To preserve the integrity of the blind review process, do not include any identifying details (such as presenter names, institutions, or organizations) in your session description or objectives.

Keep in mind that our reviewers will score and rank proposed sessions using established criteria. This includes, but will not be limited to, the topical area's relevance, the last time a similar topic was presented, and how similar sessions may have been rated based on the evaluation data collected from past meetings. This review process will all occur over a 2–3-month period and will include several review stages given the volume of submissions.

Because we have a large pool of proposals, *a key point to consider is that your proposal and the significance of the topic should stand out among the plethora of session proposals we receive.* Each session will be scored and provided with its own comments. = Individuals who review proposals possess broad expertise across many specialty areas within our discipline, and they represent many job sectors (e.g., k-12, higher education, government, etc.). Therefore, we ask that as you develop your content you do not presume that everyone will “get it,” but do the best you can to help everyone understand the content regardless of their background and expertise. Take time to look at last year's convention program to see examples of sessions that have been previously accepted.

**2. Proposal Quality:** A successful conference proposal will clearly and succinctly introduce and summarize the key content and actionable objectives of their presentation. The proposal idea should be simply stated along with the issue that the idea solves. State clearly what action you want attendees to take as a result. Provide 1-3 key concepts that you will cover to support the problem, idea, or action. Remember, by the

time you have written your proposal, you will have a strong outline of what you will be talking about when you present. Brevity and clarity are extremely important.

Be sure that your proposal discusses the uniqueness of your content, along with its significance. Do not just summarize your topic, but rather, place your topic in a larger context. What are the implications? How might others implement the same content? Avoid overly specialized jargon that would only be familiar to participants in a subfield. Make sure your proposal is clear, logical, and straightforward and maintains an

academic yet accessible tone. Ask 3-4 people you know to read through your proposal. Include both experts in your topic and people less familiar with it. It's valuable to see if people outside of your area know what you want to achieve through your proposal. Ask your reviewers to focus on constructive feedback and answer questions such as:

- What is unclear or confusing?
- What questions do you have when reading this?
- What content feels unnecessary?
- Would they attend your session? Why or why not?

Use their feedback to refine your proposal and ensure clarity. Get an idea of what your audience would want to hear more about. Read through your proposal to make sure it is clear and free of spelling and grammatical errors. A well-written proposal reflects professionalism and strengthens your chances of acceptance.

Pay close attention to the proposal submission format. Carefully review all instructions on the SHAPE America call for proposals site. Complete every section thoroughly. If you're unsure about what's being asked, check the resource documents or email [proposals@shapeamerica.org](mailto:proposals@shapeamerica.org) for clarification. Your submission is one of hundreds received each year. Pay special attention to the session description—this will be printed in the program. Keep it informative, concise, and within the word limit.

**3. Breadth of Topics:** SHAPE America selects the highest-quality proposals, not necessarily to fill specific content areas. The final program reflects the proposals submitted—so submit your best work! The primary focus is on the highest quality proposals that encompass the many disciplines represented by the SHAPE America membership and convention participants. When reviewing proposals, we look to see if there is variety among the speakers and topics proposed. Your goal when writing your proposal is to make it perfectly clear to the organizers and the attendees exactly what you are going to talk about and teach attendees at the conference.

In general, reviewers are looking for presentations that offer a focused and original response towards current (relevant, important) issues. Remember that reviewers are also interested in the content of your proposed session and what the audience can learn from attending it. Make sure your proposal clearly outlines how you will address the topic, what evidence or data you will use to support your conclusions, and what knowledge you expect your audience to gain from your presentation. Since your title should capture what's in it for them, write your title last. This will ensure you understand how attendees will benefit from participating in your session.



We hope these tips help you better understand the proposal selection process and what makes a proposal successful. We look forward to reviewing your submission and seeing you at the SHAPE America National Convention & Expo and welcoming you to our host city!