



## 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 will help you make your proposal more competitive.

At each year's convention, our goal is to design the best possible program, with innovative topics that are timely and relevant to our professional disciplines and that will have a broad appeal. Each year, we receive far more proposed sessions than we can accept.

**1. Session Quality:** Proposals submitted should include a concise title, not to exceed 10 words, and a descriptive overview. Please understand that this overview will be the marketing piece included in the final program, which will be used by convention participants to determine whether to attend a session. When submitting your proposed session, list at least three learning objectives in your overview, explaining what the audience will learn, what the focus of the session is, and what information can be implemented by attending the session.

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 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. SHAPE America program staff will then combine and average this information to generate a composite score for each proposed session, upon which the recommendation for proposal acceptance is made. 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 the 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 tone. Ask 3-4 people you know to read through your proposal. Find people who know about the



concepts you are going to talk about, and some who don't. 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 confuses you?
- What questions do you have when reading this?
- What is unnecessary?
- What is unclear?
- Would you choose to attend this session? Why? Why not?

This way, you 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. Presenting a clear and mistake-free proposal helps you demonstrate your professionalism, which can help you increase your chance of approval.

Pay close attention to the proposal submission format. Follow all the instructions on the SHAPE America call for proposals site completely and carefully. Finish every section appropriately. If you are not certain that you know what information is being requested in a section, review the available resource documents. If you are still unsure, correspond with SHAPE America at [proposals@shapeamerica.org](mailto:proposals@shapeamerica.org). Your submission is one of hundreds, received each year. Of the various sections, pay particular attention to the description. This is the portion of your proposal that will be printed in the conference program. Keep it brief but informative and stick to the maximum word count.

**3. Breadth of Topics:** You have no doubt seen that our program focus may shift from year to year, but it should be noted that this is typically driven by the proposals submitted. During our review of the proposals submitted we generally do not select lower-rated proposals simply to have more of a specific topical area represented at the convention. 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 diversity 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 utterly understand how attendees will benefit from participating in your session.

We hope you will take these tips into account to better understand the competitive process of submitting a proposal for consideration. We look forward to reviewing the content that will be submitted for the upcoming SHAPE America National Convention & Expo, and we look forward to welcoming you to our host city!