

How to Develop a Successful Educational Program Proposal for the AHEPPP National Conference

Submitting a conference proposal may sometimes feel like a daunting task. You may be asking yourself, “where do I even begin?”

Below are tips and sample proposal components compiled to help you develop a quality educational program proposal.

Educational program proposals for the AHEPPP National Conference require a clear and concise title and abstract, a well-defined purpose, and a detailed outline of your planned content delivery.

After choosing your educational program topic, review the step-by-step suggestions below as you complete your proposal.

Educational Program Title

Your title should capture, in 10 words or less, for whom your session is intended and the topic that will be covered.

Educational Program Abstract

The abstract should build on your title and be clear and concise. Include what participants will take away from the educational program, the specific content to be delivered, and any other relevant information (50 words maximum).

Example: Title and Abstract

Title: Writing an Effective AHEPPP National Conference Educational Program Proposal

Abstract: Creating a strong conference proposal and navigating the proposal process are the keys to submitting a proposal that will be accepted. Gain insights from the Programming Co-Chairs and proposal reviewers about how to make your educational program proposal stand out. Anyone interested in presenting at future conferences should attend.

Intended Audience

Identify the appropriate audience(s) who will benefit from the content you are planning to share. Some general topics may be appropriate for all audiences, while others may be catered to specific audiences, such as new or seasoned professionals.

Purpose and Practical Applications

This section will provide reviewers with context needed to understand your intended goals or outcomes, as well as to identify how you will intentionally address how your content can be applied in practice.

Purpose

- Explain the purpose of your educational program. Having clearly defined goals will set your direction and keep it focused.



Example: Purpose

The purpose of this educational program is to provide valuable knowledge and experience related to submitting conference proposals in an effort to support professionals who are new to the process. After listening to the experiences of those who are involved with the proposal review process, participants will feel more comfortable and confident submitting a conference proposal in the future, and will have the tools and resources necessary to do so.

Evidence of Solid Foundation

- Evidence-based practices are becoming the standard in our field as we are continually asked to validate the important work that we do.
- Whether you conducted own research, used existing theoretical models from literature, or have access to program assessment data to support your major points, answer the question, “what relevant research or assessment/outcome data do you have to validate elements of the educational program?”
 - Be sure to cite authors and theoretical frameworks, where appropriate.

Example: Evidence of Solid Foundation

Together, the presenters have a total of 20 years’ experience submitting conference proposals, presenting at conferences, and being involved in the proposal review process. They are eager to share what they have learned from their own successes and mistakes, as well as share best practices developed by other professional organizations.

Practical Applications

- Describe how application of information to other institution types will be intentionally addressed in your educational program.
- Think of your audience and the transferable ideas that could work at institutions different from yours.
 - Highlighting universally applicable ideas or examples during your educational program will be helpful to participants as they make mental connections between your topic and its practical application on their own campuses.
 - Engaging your audience in a discussion to solicit ideas may also be helpful.
- Participants want to know how to apply theory and research to practice. If you include implications for practice, you are answering the most important question, “Now what?” In other words, how can a particular theory or theories be applied in a program you are describing?

Example: Practical Applications

Every professional in our field has the ability to contribute their ideas and add value to the profession by sharing what they have learned from their experiences. Through thoughtful reflection and discussion, educational program participants will brainstorm potential presentation topics based on their own bank of knowledge and experiences. In addition, participants will challenge and confront fears related to writing conference proposals or presenting at a conference. Participants will also leave with a thorough tip sheet denoting the step-by-step process of crafting a conference proposal for future use.

Connection to AHEPPP Values

- Demonstrate how your content and/or delivery methods connect to the mission and values we strive to uphold as a professional organization.
- AHEPPP’s mission is to support professionals in higher education who promote student success through informed parent and family engagement.
- AHEPPP shares a belief in and commitment to:
 - Supporting a collaborative environment
 - Responsible and ethical behavior
 - Leading innovation and ideas for the profession
 - Diversity and inclusion
 - Fiscal strength and responsibility
 - Continued professional development
 - Research, assessment, and best practices

Example: Connection to AHEPPP Values

This educational program emphasizes promoting AHEPPP’s values of supporting a collaborative environment and continued professional development to address the need of supporting new professionals, professionals who are new to AHEPPP, and professionals who have not yet had an opportunity to submit a conference proposal.

Relevance to Conference Theme

- Describe how your content is connected to the conference theme, where appropriate, in an effort to create a unified learning experience for all conference attendees.

Example: Relevance to Conference Theme

This educational program relates to the conference theme in that we are investing in shaping the future of our profession and organization. By investing in our new professionals and members, we are celebrating the knowledge and skills gained from our past and passing them on to the next generation of leaders within our field.

Overview and Outline

This is the backbone of your proposal and the reviewers will likely draw most of the information they need from this section.

You will need to think about your session breakdown:

- What topics and details will be delivered?
- What methods or format will be used to deliver that content?
- Who will deliver it?
- How much time it will take to do so?

If you choose to follow a **traditional presentation** format, outline the introductory, middle and ending key points of your educational program and any interactions with the audience (Question & Answer sessions, quizzes, polls, etc.). You may also include what insights and knowledge the audience will gain as a direct result of participating in the educational program.

If you choose to follow a **roundtable discussion** format, describe the overall topic, as well as the set of questions and activities you will use to guide the conversation. You may also include what insights and knowledge the audience will gain as a direct result of participating in the roundtable discussion.

You may want to follow some or all of the steps outlined below when writing your educational program description:

- Summarize the content and activities on an outline format including time estimates.
 - Pinpoint the major content areas in the beginning, middle, and the end of the educational program.
 - Indicate the amount of time you will need for each section
 - (e.g. Introductions – 3 minutes, Historical Context – 5 minutes, etc.)
 - Order key points in a logical progression; move from easy to more difficult content and tasks, general to specific, etc.
 - If you are including research or assessment results, a description of methods, findings, and recommendations may be appropriate.
 - Explore the underlying implications of your topic.
 - Clarify any acronyms, abbreviations, or terms that may not be familiar to your audience.
- Diversify your methods and exercises
 - Outline the visual aids you plan to use (PowerPoint slides, Prezi, handouts, flip chart, etc.).
 - Varying approaches to delivering your content maximizes participant involvement and learning while accommodating for diverse learning styles.
 - Find ways to involve your audience!

Below are several methods for you to consider using when designing your educational program:

Method	Description
Brainstorming	Generating ideas in a group by eliciting quick contributions without comment or opinion
Case study	Examine a fictitious or true account of something
Debate	Assigning participants to explore "pro" and "con" positions to stimulate discussion
Demonstration	Showing participants how a concept, procedure, or skill looks in action
Dyadic discussion or dyadic exchange	Requesting pairs of participants to hold a brief conversation
Experiential exercise	Designing an activity that dramatically illustrates training content by allowing participants to experience it
Feedback exercise	Requesting participants to give one another their reactions to the behavior of the other

Fishbowl	Configuring a group by asking a portion of the group members to form a discussion circle, and having the remaining group members form a listening circle around the discussion circle
Game	Using quiz-program formats or playful activity to experience or review training material
Group discussion	Conducting any exchange of ideas with the total group able to participate
Group inquiry	Inviting participants to ask the trainer questions about subject-matter content after being presented interesting training material
Icebreaker	Helping participants to get acquainted or immediately involved in the training program using a structured exercise or game
Information search	Having participants search for information in source materials or training handouts
Interviewing	Inviting participants to ask one another questions
Jigsaw	Merging the learning of two or more subgroups of participants
Learning tournament	Combining cooperative learning and team competition
Lecturette	Briefly presenting key points about a training topic
Mental imagery	Guiding participants through an event or experience visualized in their minds rather than through real interaction
Observation	Watching others, without directly participating
Reflection	Enhancing personal learning and its application to participants
Role-playing	Trying new skills, stimulating discussion, portraying a challenge
Story-telling	Gain new perspectives on issues, provide examples of experiences that demonstrate the value or importance of material presented

Tips and Considerations

Below are some additional tips and concepts to consider as you construct your educational program proposal.

Adult Learning Principles

- Your proposal should be developed based on adult learning principles, also known as learner-centered learning.
- The characteristics of adult learners are outlined below:
 - need relevant and practical content
 - have experiences to contribute
 - are self-directed
- Tips and Considerations
 - Share content in a way that is relevant to your audience and practical in nature.
 - Create opportunities for participants to contribute their own professional and personal experiences to your content.
 - Encourage participants to identify their needs and direct their own learning during your educational program.

Learning Styles

- Learning styles indicate how one prefers to learn and make meaning of their experiences. Identifying learning styles and designing an educational program to accommodate these differences maximizes learning.
- Learning styles can be summarized in four basic categories:

Learning Style	Characteristics
Doing	Take initiative and learn while engaging
Experiencing	Learn from specific experiences
Reflecting	Observe things before making judgments and view things from multiple perspectives
Thinking	Analyze ideas logically, plan and think systematically

- Tips and Considerations
 - Include activities that involve more than one of the following tasks in your educational program to accommodate diverse learning styles:
 - Writing
 - Highlighting
 - Illustrating
 - Handouts
 - Talking
 - Questioning
 - Small-group discussions
 - Multimedia
 - Active participation
 - Change of pace
 - Practice
 - Movement

General Tips for a Successful Proposal

- Have a clear purpose and objective for your proposal – better to start narrow, then expand later.
- Construct an accurate title for the session, as well as be specific about what the session will cover in your abstract.
- Utilize your knowledge and/or firsthand experience to guide your proposal.
- Make the presentation practical – focus on your key takeaway points.
- Keep it simple and concise, yet detailed!
- Include how your information is applicable to other institutions and professionals.
- Refrain from using acronyms.
- Have fun and be creative!

*Adapted from NODA's *Tips on How to Develop and Submit a Successful Session or Roundtable Proposal for the NODA Annual Conference*