

Twelve Tips for Developing a Successful Conference Proposal

1. Consider your audience. Who will you be presenting to? What background, if any, will they already have on your subject? What can you share that will interest them? What might your audience want to know?

2. Be aware of the difference between a proposal and a presentation. In a proposal, you are trying to convince the reviewers that you ought to be accepted to present, while the presentation is what you will actually share at the conference.

3. Determine your focus, but don't be *too* focused. Make sure you have a clear theme for your presentation – a big idea you want to get across, with details tying back to that idea. At the same time, keep your presentation general enough that it will be relevant to your audience. Bear in mind that your topic may connect with many other topics that are of particular interest to your audience.

4. Consider how you will engage your audience. How will you get them to sit up and take note of what you are saying? Will there be opportunities for them to interact with you, such as a question-and-answer period after your presentation?

5. Develop a title that is clear but intriguing. The title is what determines whether a potential audience member will consider attending your presentation. Keep your title simple and clear, while still wording it in a way that spark interests. The title is worth taking time to think about. An effective title does one or more of the following: highlights a specific benefit or outcome; emphasizes an issue the participants want to hear more about; creates curiosity; adds urgency.

6. Know the difference between a project summary and a presentation description. Many proposals require both. The UAGC Research Symposium proposal asks for a project summary that is limited to 50 words and that will be used in the Research Symposium program provided to conference attendees. The presentation description is a more thorough account of what your talk will cover (see #9, below).

7. Draft a project summary that gets the key information across. An effective project summary is brief, and every word counts. Describe the topic you will be

talking about in a sentence or two, and then add a sentence describing what the audience will get out of listening to your presentation (the objectives).

8. Make the objectives of your presentation SMART. Present objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely. You can read more about these elements [in this web article](#).

9. Make sure your presentation description accomplishes three things. First, show the readers you know your stuff. Second, demonstrate that you have a plan for sharing your information effectively with the audience in the time available. Finally, make the presentation description address all selection criteria relevant to the conference.

10. Demonstrate your scholarship to the proposal reviewers. Include a couple of citations to highly relevant research articles on your topic, preferably ones dated within the past five years. Show them that you are aware of the current state of knowledge within the research field to which your presentation contributes.

11. Allow time to step away from your proposal before submitting it. Allow enough time to let your draft proposal sit for a day or two, so that you can return to it with fresh eyes. Doing this will be tremendously beneficial in producing the best proposal possible.

12. Proofread. Don't let silly typos intrude on the professional quality of your work. Look over every sentence with care before submitting. Consider using an app like Grammarly to support you in that task.

Helpful Resources

Cheney, D. (n.d.) How to write a successful conference proposal.

<https://dave.cheney.net/2017/02/12/how-to-write-a-successful-conference-proposal>

Diebold, H. (2021, 23 March). 8 essential tips for nailing your next conference program proposal. <https://www.presence.io/blog/8-essential-tips-for-nailing-your-next-conference-program-proposal/>

McVeigh, J. (2012, 16 May). Tips on writing successful conference presentation proposals.

<http://blog.tesol.org/tips-on-writing-successful-conference-presentation-proposals/>

Mind Tools (n.d.). SMART goals: How to make your goals achievable.

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm>

Wu, Y. (2021, 1 Jun). Tips for writing a great conference proposal.

<https://openeducationconference.org/news/tips-for-writing-a-great-conference-proposal>