

## How to Submit a Conference Proposal

Presenting at a state or national conference can be an exciting step in professional growth. There are multiple benefits, including meeting like-minded individuals, giving back to your profession and learning to speak intelligently and fluidly about your profession. The first step to presenting is submitting a conference proposal. There are a number of things to consider when submitting, and with a quick review of these tips, you can be prepared to join your colleagues behind the microphone at the next conference.

Prior to submitting, there are a few decisions you will need to make. Will you present a general topic or a research presentation? A workshop, short course, or poster? What will be your primary topic category (pediatrics, health and wellness, productive aging, etc.)? What will be the subject matter of the presentation? Obviously, consider a topic of which you have solid foundation of knowledge and a strong passion. This will allow you to answer questions readily and share your excitement of the topic.

For every conference, the submission process will vary. It is important to carefully read all of the instructions and accurately complete every section as directed. An excellent topic and presentation may be declined for the simple fact that the proposal application is incomplete. The following are some of the requirements you may be asked to provide when submitting a proposal.

Primary Presenter – credentials, work setting, contact information, especially email. Often email is the only form of communication with potential speakers.

Co-presenters – credentials, work setting and contact information for all others presenting

Contributing authors – names and credentials

Title – be creative, but succinct, and remain mindful of any word or character limitations

Program Abstract – this is written for those reviewing the proposal for acceptance. Be sure to check grammar and spelling, and adhere to word count if one is required. It is beneficial to complete the abstract in a word document for ease of spelling and grammar check, and word or character count verification, rather than typing directly onto the submission form.

Abstract synopsis – this is the brief summary of your presentation that may be printed in the program or on the web site if your proposal is accepted. Again, word or character counts are important in this step.

Learning objectives – 3 or 4 are usually suggested. They should be worded so that they answer the question “At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to...”

References – these are important to the reviews to determine if your research is current and timely

Level of Material - determine if your information is introductory, intermediate or advanced

In most situations, conference proposals are “graded” blindly by multiple reviewers. Points are assigned based on the proposal meeting the established criteria, and those that score above a given number are chosen for acceptance. Some examples of the criteria used for scoring include timeliness of the topic, relevance to occupational therapy, presence of current supporting literature, and the level of

presentation as indicated is reflected in the abstract. Sometimes a proposal may score high on the criteria, but still not be accepted. The primary reason for this is scheduling, as there may be a large number of proposals that scored well within your content area.

Presenting at conference is a wonderful professional opportunity. If you have never presented, I encourage you to consider presenting at the 2016 NJOTA conference on October 22. I look forward to reading your proposal!

#### Reference

Gainer, F. (2015), How to Submit a Conference Proposal for AOTA's Annual Conference & Expo.

American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. Retrieved from [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)