Abstract vs. Proposal - What is the difference?

•The Abstract will appear in the conference program and is meant to attract attendees to your session.

•The Proposal is your outline, or description, of your session that the proposal readers use to evaluate your session for inclusion in the conference schedule. Your Proposal is never seen by conference attendees.

Three Characteristics of Effective Proposals

1. A solid foundation for proposal content (a framework of the program should be evident based on data indicating success of a program or strategy discussed). Proposals should reflect the diversity of students and their needs when possible.

2. Adherence to proposal submission guidelines is imperative. It is important to include all information requested in the program proposal guidelines and adhere to length restrictions where indicated.

3. The utilization of good writing practices is necessary. Well-written proposals are rated more favorably than those lacking clarity, specificity and conciseness. A logical program organization should be evident. Proofreading your proposal before submitting is essential.

Guidelines for Writing an Effective Presentation Proposal

Reviewers rely on an in-depth well-written description to enhance their understanding of the content and goals of the presentation. A complete description includes background information, an overview of the presentation, and a description of the format. If the program is reporting research, a description of methods, findings and recommendations may be appropriate - an emphasis on research results and collected data is highly desirable. The program description should also include learning outcomes, the relationship of the program to the conference theme, methods of audience involvement (i.e., engaging in discussion, sharing effective practices, analyzing a case study), and the familiarity and background of the presenters with the subject matter of the program.

If appropriate, an effective proposal description:

*   Mentions relevant theories and research
*   Includes an outline of the presentation
*   Describes intended learning outcomes for participants
*   Describes the institution and/or presenters

Guidelines for Writing the Presentation Title

The abstract and title are the portions of your submission that are printed in the conference program. Attendees will read these to decide which session to attend; therefore please accurately describe what attendees can expect at your session. Both should be considered thoughtfully, written concisely, and thoroughly proofread before submitting.

The program title is your first opportunity to invite the reader to your program. An effective title encourages the reader to review the abstract; a poorly written title can cause the reader to dismiss the proposal.

At a minimum, an effective title ...

- Introduces the subject matter
- Captures the interest of the reader
- Does not become a run-on sentence (keep it brief)

If appropriate, an effective title ...

- Identifies the scope, sequence and/or level of the program content
- Identifies specific group presenting
- Identifies potential target audiences

Examples of Well Written Program Titles:

- Catch 22: When Welfare to Work Programs Put Families at Risk
- Hoops & Hurdles: Advocacy & Community Building with Student Parents at The University of Toronto
- Make it Work! Improving Public & Community Resources to Ensure Student Parent Success
- Dinner on Us: An Innovative Model for a Parent Education Program at College Campuses

Guidelines for Writing an Effective Abstract

The abstract is a brief description of your presentation that provides the reader with an accurate picture of what the presentation will cover. The abstract helps conference attendees choose between 15 concurrent sessions. Well-written abstracts identify the purpose and intent of the program, are concise, organized and specific. Additionally, effective abstracts begin with the most important information or thought. Defining unfamiliar abbreviations and acronyms is helpful to the reader. One hundred and thirty-five words is not much, you may want to save your research and theory for the actual presentation and use the 135 words to outline the presentation content.

At a minimum, an effective abstract...

- Captures the attention of the reader
- Adheres to the abstract submission guidelines (135 words)
- Previews the content and what the attendee can learn
- Identifies the manner of audience involvement
- Clarifies the contribution of the topic to the field
- Alludes to the benefits of the program content

If appropriate, an effective abstract...

- Summarizes the content and activities of the presentation.
- Distinguishes the program format (e.g., group discussion).
- Designates the scope, sequence and/or level of the program content.
- Names the potential target audiences.

An example of Well Written Abstract:

Family Place Program Coordinators from statewide locations across Texas will provide a panel presentation and discussion of a revolutionary self-sufficiency model for single parent students and how that model can be replicated in other communities. The DVD and PowerPoint presentation will include a video tour of the various facilities and summary of how each has been funded and maintained using local, state, and private donor-based support according to regional availability of resources. By reaching out to single parent students at the community college level, this unique approach has successfully served over 300 families and been replicated in five locations over the past ten years. Longitudinal data and outcomes will be discussed, with question/answer period at the conclusion.

Evaluation Criteria Used by Committee

Your proposal will be evaluated by higher education professionals on the 2013 SPSS committee using these five standards:

1. Clearly stated purpose objectives and learning outcomes

2. Timeliness of the subject matter

3. Topic's contribution to the advancement of the field of student parents in higher education

4. Creativity in an approach to a situation or in ways to manage it

5. Adaptability of ideas to a variety of institutional settings