

Tips for writing your ICAA session proposal

Pay attention to the Call for Presentations.

The Call has important information on the ICAA Conference audience, the topic areas and instructions on submitting the proposal. Mark the due date!

Tip: Submit your proposal(s) early to avoid the rush.

Know your audience.

The ICAA Conference gathers professionals in many roles who work with older adults. What are the interests of the main audience you will speak to? What do they already know, and what do they want to know?

Tip: ICAA attendees ask questions and contribute their own experiences during a session.

Set clear expectations.

Is the content aimed at senior managers or staff positions? People in operations or life engagement or dining/nutrition or physical activity or wellness development? Are the older adults physically able or with physical impairments, with or without cognitive impairment?

Tip: Be clear on who the session is for.

Be specific about what is in your session, and why it is special.

What exactly will the session cover? Is there a unique angle? Provide as many details as you can about the techniques, approaches and strategies you will share.

Tip: Ask yourself, why will attendees choose this session over another on the same topic?

Write a clear, informative title.

The title determines whether your audience will read more about the session, or skip it. The title should explain what will be covered. Keep it simple, concise and engaging.

Tip: Think ahead to how the title will look viewed on a cell phone.

Craft a description that details the content.

Think of the description as a short but compelling story of what will happen during the session. What problem or challenge can they solve by attending? Will they practice a technique or share their own ideas?

Tip: Think about, what is special about your approach to this topic?

Use action verbs for learning objectives.

What practical techniques or skills or action plans will attendees walk away with? Learning objectives start with an action (e.g., list, analyze, develop, demonstrate, modify). When attendees leave the session they “will be able to...” what?

Tip: Write the learning objective takeaways before planning the session.

Ensure the session content matches the description attendees see.

Think about a conference session you attended because the description made it a good choice, but when you arrived the presentation didn't match the description. Disappointing? Don't make the same mistake.

Tip: Save your final draft of the proposal and refer to it.

What do session selection committee members look for?

- Topic that presents fresh approaches to current and future issues, relates to the daily work of attendees and can transfer to their work after the conference.
- Content contains information, skills and techniques that can be used regardless of where a person works.
- Content is based in evidence, either from research or outcomes or standard practices.
- Speaker provides details on how to achieve an outcome (as opposed to stating an action should be done without explaining how to do it).
- Application to the dimensions of wellness: cognitive/intellectual, emotional, environmental, physical, professional/vocational, social, spiritual.
- Promotion of the integration of wellness culture among all disciplines, departments and organizational structures.
- An emphasis on what people can do, rather than what they cannot do. Aimed at promoting philosophies and language that are positive and promote successful aging.
- Language clearly explains the psychosocial and functional levels of the older adults being referenced rather than chronological age.

Why are proposals eliminated?

- Not relevant to the ICAA professional audience; for example, aimed at consumers.
- Promoting a person, business, product or service.
- Incomplete information. No description, or lacks sufficient detail.
- Speaker(s) are not qualified for the topic; topic is outside the scope of practice of majority of ICAA conference attendees.