

2017 AIR Forum Call for Proposals Information

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Overview

AIR invites you to submit a proposal to present at our upcoming annual conference, May 29 – June 2, 2017 in Washington, DC. You do not have to be a current AIR member to submit a proposal (however, all Forum presenters must register for the Forum and purchase a 2017-2018 membership to attend). The selection of sessions is a competitive process, so reviewing the instructions and selection rubric can increase your chances of being selected. Each proposal is evaluated by at least five AIR members using a rubric that includes ratings for session quality and potential popularity. Additionally, volunteers evaluate proposals based on the overall fit within the program and other topics to yield the maximum learning for attendees.

The annual conference of the Association for Institutional Research, the AIR Forum, has been held consecutively since 1961. The AIR Forum is the world's largest gathering of higher education professionals working in institutional research, assessment, planning and related postsecondary education fields. This four-day conference includes more than 300 presentations by colleagues representing all sectors of higher education and an exhibit hall featuring the latest tools and resources to support data use for decision making. The Forum presents a unique opportunity for networking with peers, sharing best practices and learning from practical workshops and keynote sessions led by leading experts. The Forum is the "must attend" event for both seasoned and early-career professionals.

Participants

The AIR Forum attracts a wide range of participants. The 2016 Forum was well attended, with over 2,000 participants. Around $\frac{1}{3}$ participants are new each year and nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ manage IR staff or are IR staff (34% and 36%)¹. In addition, over $\frac{1}{4}$ (32%) of attendees are from small offices of 2.0 or less FTE. Finally, $\frac{1}{2}$ of participants (50%) have had five or fewer years of IR experience.

Important Dates

- Call for Proposals Opens: Tuesday, September 13, 2016
- Proposal Submission Deadline: Sunday, October 16, 2016
- Proposal Reviews: October 2016 – January 2017
- Final Proposal Status Notifications Sent: January 2017
- Scholarly Paper Upload Deadline for icon in program book: Friday, March 24, 2017
- Deadline for Presenters to Register and be listed in the program book: Friday, March 24, 2017
- AIR Forum: May 30 – June 2, 2017

¹ Participant data from 2016 Forum.

Presentation Formats

The Forum offers 5 presentation formats, listed below. Presenters in all formats, with the exception of workshops, may also submit a scholarly paper to accompany the session (which does not need to be complete at the time of proposal submission). Forum sessions with related scholarly papers are recognized in the AIR Forum program book and on the Forum website. Authors retain all copyright to the paper and are free to submit the final version to an academic or practitioner scholarly journal. Scholarly papers typically are 8-30 pages in length, contain research questions, methodologies, literature reviews, and findings (though variations are acceptable), and is the quality expected of graduate students or manuscripts submitted for peer review.

- Speaker Sessions (45-minute session; one-to-three presenters). Share innovative applications, research practices, and professional work products in IR, assessment, planning, and other data-centered functions

Room Setup and Technology: Speaker Sessions will be set-up in theater style seating with standard audio/visual including: Materials Table, Podium, Microphone, Projector, Screen, and VGA projection cable. Internet access not provided and presenters must bring a laptop.

- Panel Sessions (60-minute session; three-to-five presenters). Present multiple perspectives about an IR application, practice, or topic of interest. Panels are composed of three-to-five presenters with one member serving as a moderator. Panelists should represent different functions within a college (e.g., IR, IT, Dean), or offer perspectives from different organizations and have identifiable, unique points of view about the topic.

Room Setup and Technology: Panel Sessions will be set-up in theater style seating with basic audio/visual including: Materials Table, Podium, Panelist Table, 2 Microphones, Projector, Screen, and VGA projection cable. Internet access not provided and presenters must bring a laptop.

- Discussion Group Sessions (45-minute session; one or two leaders). Highly interactive group discussions that focus on a current topic or issue in the field. The session leader (presenter) briefly presents opening remarks to define the session and set the context. Three-to-five questions submitted with the session proposal provide the structure for the discussion that follows. The session leader's role also includes encouraging participants to share their perspectives and provides a summary and closure to the discussion.

Room Setup and Technology: Discussion Groups will be scheduled individual rooms with seating for 40 participants. A flip chart and markers are available upon request. No A/V, laptop, projector, or internet access is provided or available.

- Poster Presentation Sessions (visual display, with one 45-minute Q&A session; one-to-three presenters). Visually communicate the purpose, research approach, data sources, and outcomes of a scholarly or applied research project study. Supporting handouts should be uploaded to the AIR website at least one week prior to the Forum.

Room Setup and Technology: Poster Presentations are displayed on shared board space (two per board). Each poster is allotted an area approximately 4' x 4' (half of a 4' x 8' board). Posters will be scheduled at a pre-assigned board in, or near the Exhibit Hall. Audio/visual support, materials tables, and Internet access not provided or available.

- Pre-Conference Workshops (interactive half-day [3½ hour] and full-day [7 hour]) sessions; one to three presenters). Engage participants in learning about practical tools and techniques, research, or statistics. The ideal workshop includes a mixture of lecture style teaching, along with individual/group exercises, demonstrations, and discussions. Participants should leave the workshop with a deeper understanding of the topic, a new network of colleagues, and resources (lists of helpful websites, references, AIR Forum sessions, etc.) for continuing their education. The typical workshop includes 40 or more participants and one or two instructors.

Room Setup and Technology: Workshops will be set-up in either classroom or crescent round style seating with basic audio/visual including: Materials Table, Podium, Speaker Table, 2 Microphones, Projector, Screen, and VGA projection cable. Internet access not provided unless requested, and approved. Presenters must bring a laptop.

Forum Topic Areas

Forum topic areas are used by attendees and AIR staff to identify presentations by subject area. This information is not used during the proposal review process. The six topic areas include:

- IR Studies for Campus Decision-Support. This topic area includes case presentations of IR studies conducted for institutional decision support at an institution, district, or system office. Presentations may focus on methodology, data sources, analytics, or results that inform decision making or inspire similar efforts.
- Data Analysis and Research Methods for IR. Presentations in this area are scholarly, theoretical, and/or focused on broad understandings of higher education issues or research/analytical methods. Emphasis should be on tools, methods, data sources, or national policy issues rather than individual institution decisions.
- Assessment: Accountability, Institutional Effectiveness, and Accreditation. Topics include case studies, methods, theories of assessment of student learning, accreditation, and program review, as well as other assessment or institutional effectiveness topics.
- IR Technologies. This topic includes technologies used in conducting IR studies. The emphasis is on technology and may include a demonstration. Examples include data storage, manipulation, and analysis; dissemination of results (e.g., dashboards, scorecards, fact books); automation of reporting; and other technologies that support IR, institutional effectiveness, and assessment. Note: in 2014 this topic area had the highest average attendance per session and lowest number of sessions. More sessions are needed in this area.
- Reporting and Transparency. The focus of this area is on reporting to external entities. Case studies may include designs that improve efficiencies or practices for producing and tracking mandated reports. Also included are consortia and other data-sharing initiatives.
- IR Operations. This area focuses on the organization and management of IR offices and functions. Topics include tracking requests, organizing/archiving past studies, reporting to various stakeholders, staffing, resources, relationships with other operational areas (e.g., IT), and legal standards (e.g., FERPA). Studies about the field of IR and ethical issues are also included. . Note: in 2014 this topic area had the 2nd highest average attendance per session and lowest number of sessions. More sessions are needed in this area.

Proposal System

The Forum proposal submission system is an online application process which allows applicants to begin, save work, and return at a later time to finish. It is recommended that proposals be created in word processing software (e.g., Microsoft Word) first, and then pasted into the online system to prevent losing your work due to possible internet connection or power failures.

A proposal includes eight items (some proposal elements. –Title, Narrative, Outcomes, Experience, and Abstract – vary slightly based on presentation format):

- ***Title** (Limit 75 characters): This should serve as a succinct description of your presentation.
- **Presenter/co-presenter contact information:**
 - Contact information (including name and email address of co-presenters, if applicable).
 - ADA accessibility needs of presenters.
 - Affiliation disclosure allows AIR to follow up with information regarding participant expectations for noncommercial sessions.
- **Proposal Narrative** (Limit 4000 characters, ~400 words): The proposal narrative is the primary document used by reviewers in selecting Forum program presentations.
 - Clearly explain:
 - Why the issue is important to AIR members
 - How you will structure your presentation
- ***Learning Outcomes** (Limit 1000 characters, ~100 words): Please provide a minimum of two participant learning outcomes in the format: *Participants in this session will...*
- **Presenter(s) Experience** (Limit 1500 characters, ~150 words): Describe how each presenter's experience/knowledge makes him or her uniquely qualified to present the proposed content. Be specific about the expertise related to the sessions (e.g. list other related presentations or reports) rather than general statements about degrees or years in the field.
- ***Program Book Abstract** (Limit 1000 characters, ~100 words, plain text only): The session abstract will be used by attendees in selecting a session to attend.
 - Concisely state:
 - The issue to be addressed
 - Its importance to the field
 - The objectives of the session
- **Target Audience Experience Level***: Select the level of experience attendees of this session should have – Intro/Beginner, Mid-level, or Expert/Advanced.
- **Key Words*** (Limit 100 characters, ~10 words): Please provide three-to-five key words/phrases participants may use when searching for this session.

**These items may appear in the Forum program book and/or on the MyForum App*

Note: Sponsored Sessions are scheduled separately and should not be submitted through the proposal process. An AIR staff member will contact sponsors to schedule sponsored sessions or sponsored discussion groups.

Review Process

Proposals undergo a half-blind review process, meaning that reviewers are not revealed to the session proposer(s) but session authors are revealed to reviewers. The half-blind review process was implemented in 2012 as part of a series of efforts to improve the consistency of quality sessions at the Forum. A successful session requires great content and organization, as well as a presenter who has the background and experience to handle the topic. The half-blind review allows presenters to share with reviewers their backgrounds, affiliations, and any other evidence of their expertise. Often, it is critical to know that a presenter has access to data or technologies. The half-blind review puts all presenters on a level playing field to build the case for their expertise.

Why does AIR use a full-blind review for publications and a half-blind review for Forum sessions? When reviewing a print manuscript the full evidence of the author's mastery of the topic is in the document itself. Reviewers have the actual product to review. But in Forum session reviews there is only a brief description and "promise" of what will be delivered. The presenter(s) capacity to fulfill the promise is legitimately part of the selection process.

More than 350 AIR members read, evaluate, and comment on proposals each year. Reviewers are recruited and selected through an annual call for volunteers and must have attended a prior Forum (to have experienced firsthand the quality and range of sessions offered at the Forum). Reviewers are randomly assigned to specific proposals and so there is the potential for a reviewer to be assigned a proposal in which he/she has a vested interest or close connection. Reviewers declare conflicts of interest, when they arise, and are reassigned to other proposals. AIR trusts reviewers to determine what constitutes a conflict of interest that would create an unfair review environment and to recuse themselves from evaluating such proposals.

Proposals are evaluated by AIR members using a rubric that includes ratings ranging from session quality and potential popularity. Proposals are then ranked based on reviewer ratings. Because there are usually more high quality proposals than space available, additional screening is required to reduce the number of sessions and balance the overall program in terms of topics and sector representation. It is unfortunate, but space limitations usually mean that some high quality sessions are not accepted (In 2016, approximately 170 of the 400 speaker session proposals were accepted).

Additional items are also taken into consideration by the Forum Program Committee when making final selections. This eight-member volunteer group reviews the accepted sessions holistically for an appropriate mix of topics across the program and breaks ties between proposal scores as needed. This committee is advisory to the Executive Office on all aspects of assuring that the educational program at the Forum meets the needs of members and maximizes the learning for our attendees. Additional selection criteria may include:

- The number of additional proposals submitted by an individual and the outcome of those proposals (accepted, request for resubmit, or not-accepted);
- The number of presenters for the proposed session;
- The number of sessions submitted by other individuals from the same institution, and the outcome of those proposals; and
- Any special institutional characteristics (e.g., minority serving or small institution).

Presentations that are not accepted in the first round of reviews may be invited to resubmit in a different format for a second review. Discussion groups and poster presentations are highly respected, highly valued educational offerings at the Forum and can be selected for a second-round proposal. (Note: Not all proposals are invited to resubmit in a different format.) Resubmissions must adhere to the guidelines for the format for which they are being resubmitted (i.e. posters must be a visual display of data and do not include AV; discussion groups must have three-to-five questions listed to guide the discussion and do not include AV.)