

2019 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 28 – May 31, 2019 in Denver, CO. You do not have to be a current AIR member to submit a proposal (however, all Forum presenters must register for the Forum 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. Held throughout the United States and including Canada, the AIR Forum is the largest annual gathering of institutional research, assessment, and institutional effectiveness higher education professionals in the world. 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 2018 Forum was well attended, with over 1,800 participants. Around ½ participants are new each year and nearly ¾ manage IR staff or are IR staff (38% and 32%). In addition, over ¼ (28%) of attendees are from small offices of 2.0 or less FTE. Finally, a little less than ½ of participants (45%) have had five or fewer years of IR experience.

Important Dates

- Call for Proposals Opens: Wednesday, September 12, 2018
- Proposal Submission Deadline: Sunday, October 14, 2018
- Proposal Reviews: October 2018 – January 2019
- Final Proposal Status Notifications Sent: January 2019
- Scholarly Paper Upload Deadline for icon in program book: Friday, March 22, 2019
- Deadline for Presenters to Register and be listed in the program book: Friday, March 22, 2019
- AIR Forum: May 28 – May 31, 2019

Presentation Formats

The Forum offers 4 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 available upon request. 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 at a pre-assigned round table in a room along with several other Discussion Group Sessions. 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 60-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.

Forum Topic Areas

Topic areas help organize sessions into common themes, and formats lay the framework for how a session will be presented. Please select the topic area and format that are most appropriate for your presentation. Topic areas have been updated for the 2019 Forum. Please review the descriptions for each of the new topic areas to determine which best fits your proposal. The six topic areas include:

Identify Information Needs

This topic area includes the process of identifying stakeholders and their decision support needs. Proposals in this topic area may include:

- reviews or results of research and policy relevant to higher education decision support (e.g. federal higher education data policy, state higher education policy and administration, large-scale studies of higher education topics);
- working with stakeholders in the decision support process;
- consideration of large datasets or surveys at the institutional, system, or organizational level.

Collect, Analyze, Interpret, and Report Data and Information

This topic area includes the technical functions of institutional research in providing data, information, and analysis for decision support.

Proposals in this topic area may include:

- data collection tools and methods;
- data analysis tools and methods;
- techniques to create more efficiencies in mandatory and other regular reporting processes;
- dashboard and visualization tools and technologies to provide accessible data and information directly to consumers;
- development of information to support stakeholders in understanding and making decisions.

Plan and Evaluate

This topic area includes operational, budgetary, and strategic planning and evaluation functions, such as those associated with assessment, both formative and summative, and formal accreditation requirements.

Proposals in this topic area may include:

- processes and results of planning efforts to improve institutional, system, or organizational operations (e.g. faculty workload studies, HR studies, space planning);
- processes and results of collaborative budgetary planning efforts;
- effective practices related to IR's role in organizational strategic planning;
- processes and results of assessment and accountability efforts;
- effective practices in regional, national, and specialized accreditation.

Serve as Stewards of Data and Information

This topic area includes IR's role in ensuring an organization-wide data strategy as well as efforts related to data governance.

Proposals in this topic area may include:

- effective practices in data governance;
- effective practices in development and use of data warehouses;
- processes in developing and coordinating organization-wide data strategy;
- effective practices related to data privacy, security, compliance, and ethics considerations;
- effective practices in data quality assurance;
- processes related to accessibility of data and information to appropriate users.

Educate Information Producers, Users, and Consumers

This topic area includes efforts to train, coach, and educate constituents related to the use of data, analysis, and information to inform decision making. It also includes IR's role in convening discussions related to information needs and connecting producers and users of data together.

Proposals in this topic area may include:

- effective practices in training and coaching related to data and information use;
- effective practices in training and coaching related to data collection and analysis;
- effective practices in convening discussions related to data-informed decision making;
- processes to connect internal and external producers and users of data.

Operations and Leadership

This topic area includes the organization and management of IR offices and functions. It also includes intentional development of professional staff and leadership development of IR, IE, and assessment professionals.

Proposals in this topic may include:

- effective practices in organization of the IR function inside the office (e.g. tracking requests, organizing and providing access to results of institutional research);
- effective practices in project management, particularly when balancing IR, IE, planning, and assessment work;
- processes to review and select technologies to conduct the work of IR, IE, planning, and assessment;
- professional development of IR, IE and assessment staff;
- leadership development and succession planning of an IR office.

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 750 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.
- **Institution Type:** This session is particularly relevant to professionals who work in (select “any” if the session is equally relevant to all Forum attendees) – Less than a 2-year institution, 2-year institution, 4-year institution, Graduate school, Outside of an institution (e.g. research institute, association), Any, Other.

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 Forum 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 six-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 Director 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 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.)