

2020 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 25 – May 29, 2020 in New Orleans, LA. 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 (not applicable for Pre-/Post-conference Session presenters).

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 world's largest gathering of higher education professionals working in institutional research, assessment, planning, and related postsecondary education fields. This five-day conference includes more than 250 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 2019 Forum was well attended, with over 1,900 participants. Around one-third of participants are new each year and nearly three-fourths manage IR staff or are IR staff (38% and 32%). In addition, over 28% of attendees are from small offices of 2.0 or less FTE. Finally, a little less than half of participants (45%) have had five or fewer years of IR experience.

Important Dates

- Call for Proposals Opens: Wednesday, September 18, 2019
- Proposal Submission Deadline: Wednesday, October 16, 2019
- Proposal Reviews: October 2019 – January 2020
- Pre-/Post-conference Decision Notifications Sent: December 2019
- Concurrent Session Decision Notifications Sent: January 2020
- Deadline for Presenters to Register and be listed in the session listing: Friday, March 20, 2019
- Scholarly Paper Upload Deadline for designation in session listing: Friday, April 24, 2020
- AIR Forum: May 25 – May 29, 2020

Presentation Formats

The Forum offers six presentation formats, listed below.

- Speaker Sessions (45-minute session; one-to-three presenters). Present research, share applications, practices, or topics of interest related to the effective use of data, analytics, information, and evidence for decision making that benefit students and institutions.

Room Set-up 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/HDMI projection cable. Internet access, beyond conference WiFi, is not provided, and presenters must bring a laptop.

- Panel Sessions (60-minute session; three-to-five presenters). Present multiple perspectives about an application, practice, or topic of interest related to the effective use of data in higher education. 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, finance), or presenters from different organizations, and always have identifiable, unique points of view about the topic.

Room Set-up and Technology: Panel Session will be set up in theater style seating with standard audio/visual including: Materials Table, Podium, Panelist Table, Table Microphones, Projector, Screen, and VGA/HDMI projection cable. Internet access, beyond conference WiFi, is 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 research, applications, practice, or topics of interest related to the effective use of data in higher education. The discussion leader (presenter) briefly presents opening remarks to define the topic and set the context. Three to five questions submitted with the session proposal provide the structure for the discussion that follows. The discussion leader's role also includes encouraging participants to share their perspectives and provision of a summary and closure to the discussion.

Room Set-up and Technology: Discussion Groups will be scheduled in a room set up with semi-circle chairs with a presenter table at the front. 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.

Room Set-up and Technology: Posters are displayed in the Exhibit Hall with presenters available for a 60-minute question and answer period. Each poster is allotted an area approximately 4' x 4' (half of a 4' x 8' board). The poster display boards and push pins are provided by AIR. Posters will be scheduled at a pre-assigned board in or near the Exhibit Hall. Audio/visual support, Internet access, and a materials table is not provided or available.

- Micro Sessions (7-minute session, within a 45-minute block of sessions, with one presenter). These highly engaging 7-minute sessions take place in our new expo theaters located in the Exhibit Hall (AV provided). Micro sessions are designed for one or two presenters, and each presentation should consist of a maximum of five slides. A staff moderator will monitor time to keep sessions on track. Micro sessions are designed to present software tips and solutions, succinct summaries of ideas or research projects, or share information central to a niche audience. Micro sessions are also a great way for new speakers to gain experience with conference speaking.

Room Set-up and Technology: Micro Sessions will be set-up in expo theaters, located in the exhibit hall, with theater style seating for 40 with standard audio/visual including: Laptop, Materials Table, Podium, Microphone, Projector, Screen, and VGA/HDMI projection cable. Internet access, beyond conference WiFi is not provided.

- Pre-/post-conference Sessions Interactive pre-/post-conference education sessions accommodate traditional classroom settings, seminars, and hands-on workshops offered in a variety of durations, including one to two hours, half-day, and full day. Sessions may focus on the development of specific skills or approaches to address institution-wide needs. Pre-/post-conference education sessions are offered on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday. Participants pay an additional fee to attend. Each workshop is supported by a modest honorarium (split if there are multiple presenters), one complimentary hotel room (up to two presenters), and reimbursement for costs to produce handout materials (up to a specified amount).

Room Set-up and Technology: Pre-/post-conference sessions will be set up as classroom (required when participants are using laptops), crescent rounds, or theater style seating with standard audio/visual including: Podium, Materials Table, Microphone, Projector, Screen, and VGA/HDMI projection cable

Presenters must supply their own laptop for presentations. Projector adapters for MACs or mobile devices and/or U.S. voltage adapters are not provided. Dedicated presenter internet is not typically provided.

Scholarly Papers

Presenters have the option to 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 digital program book on the Forum website and conference app. 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.

Concurrent Session Topic Areas

Topic areas help organize concurrent sessions (Speaker Sessions, Panel Sessions, Poster Presentations, Discussion Groups, and Micro Sessions) into common themes. Please select the topic area that is most appropriate for your presentation. Please review the descriptions for each of the topic areas to determine which best fits your proposal. The six topic areas include:

Leadership

This topic area features visioning, strategy, governance, and management at the organizational, unit, or program levels, and career planning and development.

Decision Support

This topic area features recognition of stakeholders with attention to equity; identification of their information, data, and analysis needs; and determination of effective and ethical approaches to meeting those needs in support of student and institutional success, including interpretation, contextualization, reporting, and communication.

Data and Technology

This topic area features the technical and ethical aspects of provision and manipulation of data as well as the application of appropriate analytic tools for decision support, including collection and structuring, methods, predictive models, and machine learning.

Assessment and Evaluation

This topic area features initiatives, research, and methods at program and institutional levels that are externally or internally driven for planning, accreditation, or other in pursuit of improved and equitable student and institutional success.

Educating Stakeholders

This topic area features efforts and approaches to coach and collaborate with stakeholders on the ethical and contextual production and use of data and information for decision making, and research and scholarship that informs and advances the work of professionals in the field.

Policy

This topic area features the development, evolution, implementation, and impact of policy at institutional, system, federal, state, or local levels.

Proposal System

The Forum proposal submission system is an online application process which allows applicants to begin, save work, and return later 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 work due to possible internet connection or power failures.

A proposal typically includes the following sections (proposal elements will vary 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 information used by reviewers when reviewing and selecting sessions. The narrative is not published for attendees. Clearly explain: how your session presents new or improved ideas and practices, why the information shared in the session is timely and relevant to Forum attendees, how you will structure the presentation, a timeline of the presentation, and the central theme of the session.
- ***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.
- ***Session Abstract** (Limit 750 characters, ~100 words, plain text only): This abstract will be used to engage attendees and inform them when selecting sessions that match their interests and skill level. It will also be used in the conference app and any session listings. Concisely state: the topics which will be covered, the importance of the topic, 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 digital program book and/or on the conference 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.

Concurrent Session Review Process

The selection of Speaker Sessions, Panel Sessions, Discussion Groups, Poster Presentations, and Micro 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.

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. 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 using a rubric that includes ratings on session quality and potential popularity. Proposals are then ranked based on the rating scores. 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 (on average, approximately 170 of the 400 speaker session proposals were accepted). Some formats such as posters, discussion groups and micro-sessions have more availability than others.

The Forum Program Committee performs a final review of the content and mix of sessions and advises the Executive Office to ensure that sessions chosen will meet the needs of members and maximizes the learning for our attendees. Additional selection criteria considered by the Program Committee 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).

Proposals that are not accepted in the first round of reviews may be invited to resubmit in a different format for a second review. (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.)

Pre-/Post-conference Education

Approach

In an effort to meet the needs of different audiences, some pre/post-conference sessions will be tool-based, and others will be primarily value or theory-based. Also, in order to provide a wide array of content and training, AIR has specific interest in exploration of the following topics:

Leadership and Management

The organization of data functions vary across institutions, and key leadership and management principles set the foundation for successful enterprises. This topic addresses the knowledge, skills, resources, and training needed to effectively manage an office, unit, or project to ensure it meets institutional needs (e.g., hiring and supervising staff, mentoring/training, resource management, budgeting, space allocation).

Institutional Effectiveness

A student-focused paradigm requires the integration of institutional effectiveness and operations. This topic explores the roles of IR, IE, and Assessment in leading institutional data strategies and strategic planning to improve student success.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Commitment to student success requires attention to equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of the institutional enterprise, including the data function. This topic considers the roles of IR, IE, and Assessment in efforts to ensure that equity, diversity, and inclusion are prioritized in data-informed decision cultures.

Data Models

Robust data functions that support data-informed decision cultures are more than the sums of their parts. This topic explores the essential considerations, leadership requirements, design challenges, and structures necessary for the creation of data models that facilitate achievement of the institution's mission and goals.

Use of Data

We know use of data is essential in pursuit of improved student success. Yet each institution varies in its needs and levels of sophistication. This topic considers the how of data use (e.g., advanced analytics, software, governance), the why of data use (e.g., goals, ethics), and the theoretical (e.g., is IR/IE/Assessment the same as or different from data science?) with attention to institutional and student contexts.

Effective Communication of Data

A data-informed decision culture relies on compelling presentations of data that engage and inform stakeholders. This topic explores theoretical and ethical considerations and best practices, including creation of visualizations, report writing, and the varied approaches needed to reach different audiences.

Data Literacy

Cultivation of a data-informed decision culture requires strategies to increase data literacy, capacity, and use among stakeholders. This topic focuses on ways to build data literacy across the institution and expand decision support capacity.

All proposals will be given equal weight and consideration based on their merits regardless of topical area. If you have questions, please contact Elaine Cappellino ecappellino@airweb.org.

Proposal Submission

Pre-/Post-conference proposals are submitted through the Forum proposal submission system. This online application process allows applicants to begin, save work, and return later 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 work due to possible internet connection or power failures.

A proposal includes the following sections:

- **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.
- **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.
- **Structure** (Limit 5000 characters, ~500 words): Describe whether this session will be more software/application-based or more theory and discussion-based. Include examples of the type of activities/discussions you will present. If primarily tool-based, explain how the activities will ensure maximum participation during the workshop. Note: Wi-Fi is typically available for participants, but bandwidth is limited. Cloud-based applications or sessions requiring downloading software or materials onsite will likely be frustrating for participants.
- ***Title** (Limit 75 characters): This should serve as a succinct description of your presentation.
- ***Session Abstract** (Limit 1000 characters, ~100 words, plain text only): This abstract will be used to engage attendees and inform them when selecting sessions that match their interests and skill level. It will also be used in the conference app and any session listings. Concisely state: the topics which will be covered, the importance of the topic, the objectives of the session.
- **Proposal Narrative** (Limit 4000 characters, ~400 words): The proposal narrative is the primary information used by reviewers when reviewing and selecting sessions. The narrative is not published for attendees. Clearly explain how your session presents new or improved ideas and practices, why the information shared in the session is timely and relevant to Forum attendees, how you will structure the presentation, a timeline of the presentation, and the central theme of the session.
- **Outline** (Limit 5000 characters, ~500 words): Provide an outline that includes timeline and content.
- ***Learning Outcomes** (Limit 1000 characters, ~100 words): Please provide a minimum of two participant learning outcomes in the format: *Participants in this session will...*
- **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.

- **Supporting Documents:** If you have delivered this content in the past, please upload most recent PowerPoint and any additional materials.

**These items may appear in the digital program book and/or on the conference App.*