TIPS WHEN PREPARING A CONFERENCE PROPOSAL

CALL FOR PROPOSAL TIPS
- Understand the conference focus
- Look at a sample of successful conference submissions
- Make it interesting
- Include key items
- Provide actionable recommendations
- Have others review your proposal
- If you get rejected, try again

Selecting speakers for conferences varies for each event and depends on many factors. However, most involve a *call for proposal (CFP)* process. If you have never prepared for a CFP before, there is always the first time. It is hard to understand what conference program committees expect.

If you're ready to submit a CFP but don't know where to start, these tips are for you.

1 Understand the conference focus: Conferences look for interesting and unique topics to engage their attendees. Review the conference tracks to ensure your topic fits with the tracks. Look at current hot topics and emerging trends and bring your own spin to your proposal. Keep in mind that WiCyS is primarily a technical conference.

2 Look at a sample of successful conference submissions: Some conferences share conference programs that will give you an idea of what to include in your proposal and what they want to see. For WiCyS, find them in Archives. Don't over-frame the problem or share too much about you. If the CFP allows 600 words, don't put 2 lines. Where available, use the samples and if unavailable, have a look for past conference speakers to see what they delivered.

3 Make it interesting: From an attention-grabbing title to sharing your enthusiasm for your topic that the audience will respond to, make sure you convey your authenticity and connection in your proposal. Focus on why your topic is interesting for the audience and share your enthusiasm for the topic. When you deliver the talk, consider starting with a story to carry through your talk while putting your own personal spin on the topic. If you have room in the proposal, share a short version of the story but not too much – proposals are outlines.

4 Include key items: Include primary research that aligns with the conference audience. Re-sharing other people's research without primary researched doesn't position your proposal for success. Even using your own research, share how you're applying it in a unique way. Share what the problem is; the solution and what you're going to present. Share the "what" and the "why" and save the "how" for the talk.

5 Provide actionable recommendations: Make sure your proposal includes your lessons learned. What are attendees going to learn from your session? What are you going to share that they don't already know? What will be their takeaway from the session?

6 Have others review your proposal: A second set of eyes will give you valuable feedback. Someone else can provide an audience perspective and tell you if your proposal makes sense or not. If this is your first time or you have yet to get a proposal accepted, consider finding a mentor for support. The WiCyS conference offers CFP mentoring.

7 If you get rejected, try again: From too many proposals on the same topic to a topic not fitting the conference tracks or an unclear proposal, everyone gets rejected sometime. Don't let it stop you though. Look at your proposal document as fluid. Revisit it; update it as new information comes your way; and tailor your talk for the next conference you're applying to or next time. Continue trying and proposing while leveraging any program review committee feedback to support the next iteration of your proposal. You can do it!

This information was originally shared during the "How to Wow Submission Reviewers with a Stellar Proposal" webinar on June 9, 2021 by contributors Diana Kelley, Alyssa Miller, Chole Messdaghi and Tennisha Martin and was kindly transcribed by WiCyS mentoring co-lead, Karen Nemani, from WiCyS Ontario Affiliate, in August 2022. Edited September 2023 by the WiCyS Program Committee.

TOGETHER, WE THRIVE!

www.wicys.org

WOMEN IN CYBERSECURITY
WiCyS