How to Make a Proposal to NCHEP

Directions

Making a proposal to the NCHEP for the first time or in need of a refresher on our submission “best practices”? Please use these points as your guide in making a successful proposal.

1. **Read the submission directions and prompts carefully.** You’ll want to, for example, strictly adhere to the proposal and submission directions, as well as the word limits. Give your proposal a title; make it abundantly clear who wrote the proposal and who will be presenting, etc. If you are submitting the proposal as an Emerging Scholar, please take the time to know what that means and what resources will be available to you as a result. You can read more about the Emerging Scholar designation in our NCHEP Submission FAQ.

2. **Design your proposal with the conference theme “Amplifying Access” in mind.** Is your proposal, in other words, on point for this year’s conference? Consider re-reading the Call for Proposals to think through what the conference planners had in mind when they offered “Amplifying Access” this year as a conference theme and make sure that your proposal has at least one point of connection with the call.

3. **Select an appropriate conference track for your presentation.** The conference tracks are designed to cultivate discussions across the broader #higheredinprison field. A conference track that is poorly paired with a proposal can mean that the presenter has not fully considered the discussions underway, or has not taken the time to consider the conference’s likely audience. Submitting your proposal to a track without a clear connection to the track will likely result in a declined submission.

4. **Make a compelling and original claim in your proposal.** A strong claim (or argument) will further discussions in the field. It will make a case, offer strong evidence in support of that case, and throughout, deploy reasoning that will further illuminate and expand upon the connections drawn between the claim and the evidence. The strongest claims of all will anticipate and grapple with likely objections or counter-claims from the field, while standing firm to its well-argued principles.

5. **Be rigorous.** Cite your evidence wherever possible and take care to engage in field-level conservations carefully and diplomatically. Be measured and forthright in your assessments.

6. **Explain how you will engage your audience.** Keep the audience (and time limits) of this conference in mind. Think through some presentations you have seen from dynamic speakers. Some of the same principles that apply in those contexts likely apply for NCHEP--if you use questions or activities to engage your audiences, for example, know why you’re using them. Strive to be inclusive and accessible in how you develop your proposals and their resulting presentations. Presentation sessions this year are to be 75 minutes total; but if you submit an individual paper or are on a panel, the time will be divided among the group, so the length of time you have for your presentation will vary. In most cases, you’ll want to aim for making a 15-20 minute presentation at the conference.

7. **Have a takeaway message.** Consider stating that takeaway early and late in the presentation, and weave this takeaway(s) throughout.
Have a clear sense as to what format your presentation will take. Think through all the implications of an individual paper presentation, panel discussion, performance, etc. Is the claim you’ve offered or outlined in your proposal best-suited for this format?

Other Reminders--The Essentials “Checklist”

- Review the NCHEP Submission FAQ before you begin writing your proposal
- Given the Call for Proposals one more read before you begin writing your proposal
- Give your proposal a title
- If you are adding others as co-presenters make sure they know in advance of the submission and work on the proposal together
- Make sure all sections of your proposal honor all the stated word limits and proposal directions
- Consider the conference theme and interweave that theme in your proposal thinking!
- Make sure you’ve thought through which conference track you’re proposing the proposal under
- If you are a submitter who is currently incarcerated, talk with your liaison who will submit on your behalf and ask them to review your proposal and give you feedback
- Do not hesitate to ask for help or advice: ncdep@higheredinprison.org
- Take your time with the proposal and give it one more review before submitting!