

# How to Avoid Education Session Proposal Pitfalls

A great proposal gets noticed! Below are considerations for creating a dynamic proposal for presentation at the ASHP Midyear Clinical Meeting.

## **Why is this education session needed?**

On the proposal there is a question asking the submitter to describe the practice gap. A practice gap is the difference between health care processes or outcomes observed in practice and those potentially achievable on the basis of current professional knowledge. In simpler terms, a gap represents the difference between what is occurring and what should occur.

What is the problem that needs to be fixed? What is the problem that you intend to fix through the educational session? Describing the problem and the root cause of the problem thoroughly will demonstrate the session has been planned to meet a learner need. It will also help you as the planner develop learning objectives, learning activities, learning assessments, and give feedback during the session.

The easiest gap to close is a knowledge gap; however ASHP strives to provide educational programming that closes a competence (knowing how to do something) gap or performance (what a pharmacist actually does in practice) gap. This is accomplished by application based education sessions which allow the participants to learn and practice a skill during the session. *What do you hope to achieve by the end of the activity? What do you want the participants to do differently after participating in the education session?*

To further support the need for the education session, there must be documentation of that need. A needs assessment is a strategic exploration of the need for education or training. Documentation may include expert opinion (state who the experts are), evidence based literature and journals (provide the exact citations), required by governmental authority/regulation/law (explain in some detail), performance measures (describe), discussion board/listserv (provide a short description with specifics), needs assessment survey (describe the survey and what percent of respondents stated the need), guidelines (describe). Note: failure to cite two bona fide examples of needs assessment validation will likely result in the proposal not being accepted.

## **Who is the target audience?**

Be specific. What is the need? First determine who your target audience will be—what is their level of training and expertise? Determine what skills they have, what skills they need, and how to best deliver education to correct any deficiencies.

What is the level of the audience relative to the problem you are going to fix with the educational session? Do not combine content for a novice audience with content for an advanced audience. Do not

combine demographics unless the content applies to both. For example, small and rural hospital pharmacists generally want information about other small and rural hospitals; do not combine content for small and rural with large academic medical center content, unless you know for sure the content will directly apply to both audiences (e.g. “common ground”). The Midyear is a large meeting and attendees have choices; they will choose sessions that are the most practical and applicable to their practice and/or their specific professional development needs.

### **What level is your content?**

Attendees prefer intermediate and advanced level programming, with advanced level being the most desirable. Do not include basic information in an intermediate or advanced level program. Basic information includes pathophysiology, background, and rationale. In an advanced session, assume the audience knows what you are talking about—offer something provocative or controversial to stimulate discussion, offer interpretations instead of just facts, and refer to specific studies or basic sciences. What can you tell an advanced audience that is new?

### **What is the importance of learning objectives?**

Learning objectives are not what the presenter is going to do. Learning objectives state what the learner will be able to do at the conclusion of the session. Learning objectives must be measurable and obtainable during the education session. “Understand” is never an acceptable verb used in a learning objective. Many resources exist for writing good learning objectives.

If you are proposing an application based session (highly desired) use the appropriate learning objective verbs for application based activities.

### **How are you going to teach your audience?**

Confucius said: *“Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand.”* What can you do in your session to get the audience involved in their own learning? Hand raising and other forms of polling are acceptable, but be more creative than that. Case based learning is always better than lecture with hand-raising. Creativity really counts! Think of game show formats such as Jeopardy or Family Feud, hands on opportunities, or worksheets with activities, etc. Teach skills that can be practiced during the session. Be specific in the proposal with a description of your planned activities.

The best learning activities naturally flow as part of the program. Don’t save the learning activities for the end and don’t announce “This is the active learning portion” of the session. Think of workshops that you have attended-- the best sessions have opportunities for the learners to practice something related to what they are hearing every 12 minutes or so.

*Remember—your session should strive to close a competence or performance gap through application based learning activities. Motivate your participants to incorporate what they learn during the session into their practice. This is best accomplished when they have an opportunity to practice new skills during the session.*

### **Who are your speakers?**

The Midyear Clinical Meeting is generally recognized as an opportunity to hear from nationally known experts from across the country that have experience speaking in front of large groups; the most successful proposals offer attendees the opportunity to hear from those experts. Who can you engage as a speaker in your session that attendees will not want to miss?

Because the Midyear Clinical Meeting is a national meeting, ASHP strives to have geographically diverse speakers in sessions with more than one presenter to bring different practice perspectives to the session. To that end, it is important for proposal submitters to be in a network of experts from across the country so that you, as the submitter, can bring the very best expertise to your educational session.

### **How long will your session be?**

Sessions of 60-90 minutes are the most popular with attendees. However long your proposed session may be, don't try to cram too much in. What is the problem you are trying to solve and how much time do you need to teach the solution? Be sure there is adequate time to include learning activities.

### **Knock their socks off!**

How can you “wow” your audience? Be the session that is long remembered. Convey a “wow factor” in your proposal. (Please only suggest something that you can actually deliver.)

***ASHP Midyear attendees are looking for practical sessions that offer solutions to their problems. An outstanding proposal will teach skills and provide key takeaways that the audience can put into place right away.***

# PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

1. **Relevance**-effective learning is relevant to the work of the learner. Activities that create links between learning and the real world are useful for the learner to transform the knowledge to a form that they can use.
2. **Previous experience**-new learning should always build on existing experiences of the learner. Adult learners bring a variety of knowledge and experience to the educational session.
3. **Self-direction**-adult learners are self-directed; this is why they have chosen your education session.
4. **Expectations**-reactions to your session are shaped by their expectations related to content area, depth of content, learning format, fellow participants and the presenters.
5. **Alignment**-adult learners appreciate when the learning objectives, content, activities and assessment methods are aligned. The learning experience should resemble a practice situation. Be sure to check mastery of the learning objectives during the session.
6. **Active learning**-active participation produces more effective learning. If you are using lecture, active learning should be interspersed throughout the lecture with quizzes, problems, puzzles, cases, etc.
7. **Practice and feedback**-adult learners cannot master skills without practice accompanied by feedback. Don't confuse understanding with ability to perform; plan time in your session to provide practice and feedback.
8. **Response level**—adult learners master their skills at the level at which they are required to respond during the learning experience. If you want learners to solve problems, the learning activity should require them to solve similar problems (cases or scenarios). Challenge learners with problems that require thoughtful solutions.
9. **Reinforcement**-adult learners learn when they are successful and rewarded (game show format with prizes).

**For More Information:**

**<http://www.ashp.org/forpresenters>**