OLA/PNLA Conference:
Tips for a Great Program Proposal

Adapted from guidelines provided by the American Library Association and the Florida Library Association

1. Choose a topic that's timely and creative. Innovative program ideas, case studies of new trends, or discussions of hot topics are often compelling. Avoid topics that have been covered many times in the past unless your proposal has a unique perspective or approach.
2. Consider your audience. Make it clear which types of libraries/library workers might find your program interesting. Programs don't necessarily need to be universally appealing, but if you can make it more inclusive, you're encouraged to do so.
3. Consider ways to engage the audience. Could you incorporate small group discussion, audience participation, or a hands-on activity?
4. Give yourself plenty of time to write the proposal. Ask a colleague to read through it for clarity and any suggestions for improvement.
5. Be clear but succinct. Include what you intend to cover in your presentation and what participants will take away from your program. Focus on the outcomes for attendees rather than wordy descriptions.
6. Craft an illustrative title which is concise and appealing. Capture attention while indicating the general topic. Consider several different titles and run them by your colleagues to see which they find most enticing. Clever titles (and descriptions) may fail to communicate the content's real value.
7. Start with concrete benefits for attending the session, and something that gets the reader's attention:
   a. "Are you responsible for [topic] in your library? You will leave this session with five new ideas you can implement that will help you..."
   b. "Learn about recent developments in [topic] and how they affect your work. [Speaker] will use case studies from six school libraries..."
   c. "Get strategies for streamlining your [something] so it takes less time each day. "Include just enough details to help someone decide if they want or need to attend that session.
8. Avoid starting a sentence such as, "In this session, five panelists will talk about [repeat of session title]."
9. Avoid generalizations that everyone already knows such as, "In libraries today, technology is increasingly important" or "Librarians are busy people."