



COOL Idealist National Conference Workshop Design Guide

This guide to workshop design should help you think through the process of developing a strong workshop, specifically for the COOL Idealist National Conference. It is geared primarily toward first-time presenters and will help you translate a general idea into a focused workshop.

1 What is your topic?

First, determine what – specifically – you want to train people to do or talk with people about.

What are your general ideas for topics?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now that you have jotted down a few broad ideas, start to articulate them a little more specifically: Are they concepts? Experiences? Tools or techniques? Think about which of the general topics above are feasible to meaningfully talk about or teach in a 90-minute block of time, taking into account that part of that time will be used for introductions, reflection, and evaluation. Does one topic jump out at you? Choose one of the above topics that you think is deep enough to engage people for an hour and a half, but not so complex that a meaningful discussion would require significantly more time.

Use these examples to help you describe your workshop topic:

Example 1	Example 2
<i>How to make your favorite lasagna</i>	<i>How to organize a political candidates' forum on my campus</i>
This workshop is about making the best lasagna on the planet. It will cover ingredients, instructions, seasoning, and baking tips.	This workshop is about organizing a forum for political candidates. It will cover the goals of such an event, how to get candidates to attend, what partners to include in the planning, and logistics.

Now, in the space below, write a two sentence description of your topic:

“This workshop is about...”

“It will cover...”

2 Determine your intended goals/objectives.

What do you want participants to take away from this workshop? Formulate some intended outcomes, considering the following types of “takeaways”:

- “Head” – intellectual, cognitive, knowledge, concepts, ideas
- “Heart” – feelings, attitudes, experiences, intangible things
- “Hands” – handouts, materials, things to keep and refer to later

A goal, or objective, describes what will happen for participants as a result of their participation in the workshop. Take a look at the examples below:

Example 1	Example 2
<i>How to make your favorite lasagna</i>	<i>How to organize a political candidates' forum on my campus</i>
Know how to use simple ingredients to make great lasagna	Know more about local issues in the community
Practice combining, measuring, and preparing ingredients	Learn how candidates position themselves in an election
Be excited about cooking lasagna	Think about their own political involvement
Have a recipe to use at home	Get involved in the political process
Taste a great lasagna	Participate in the political process

Write a few phrases that represent your desired outcomes for your training. Try to address aspects of “head,” “heart,” and “hands.” Try completing the following statements:

- Head - “At the end of this workshop, participants will know...”
- Heart - “By the end of this workshop, participants will develop ideas that...”

- Hands - “At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to...”
- Hands - “By the end of this workshop, participants will create tools that...”

3 What can you teach about this topic?

Think about the things that influence, shape, or constrain how you might cover the topic. Start by asking a question: What’s teachable? Think about how you learned what you need to teach. What resonated for you? What do you think would resonate with others? How can you make this personal for the workshop participants?

Ask yourself: What does a participant or learner need to see, touch, hear, experience, feel, etc., in order to understand this topic and material? Which of these things that come to mind are appropriate for a workshop (i.e., what is feasible to do indoors, in 90 minutes, with a group of anywhere between 10 and 200, etc.)?

Make a list of things to teach or to talk about, so that you can recognize how to best structure the teaching and learning experience.

For example:

Example 1	Example 2
<i>How to make your favorite lasagna</i>	<i>How to organize a political candidate’s forum on my campus</i>
Identifying ingredients Measuring Cooking noodles Layering Cutting Seasoning Mixing Baking Using drawings and pictures	Thinking about the value of a forum Scheduling an event on campus Identifying co-sponsors Designing a schedule Learning how to do a press release Publicizing the event on campus Preparing for the forum Facilitating a forum Following up with candidates

Make a note of the “teachables” that come to mind for your topic:

4 Focus the topic.

Some key concepts to take into consideration:

Goals/objectives: Using your reflections from #2 above, what do you wish to accomplish through this workshop? Impart skills? Facilitate reflection and/or discussion? Present a working model or best practices? Inspire action? Educate on an issue? Encourage networking?

Audience:

Experience level: How will you gauge the experience level of participants to make sure the content is relevant to the majority of participants? Does their experience or lack of experience with a topic or skill make a significant difference in what they take away from the workshop?

Comfort level: What things might participants be dealing with in their own experiences with this topic? Do people know each other? How do they know each other? What do they have in common? How can you help people that do not know each feel comfortable sharing and participating?

Format: What format would work best for this topic?

Presentation: an informational session, wherein the presenter gives attendees information and plans for a question and answer period

Discussion: a facilitated conversation among attendees; the presenter should lead off with some guiding questions, but should rely on attendees to provide much of the content of the session

Panel: a partnership among several individuals who wish to speak and answer questions about a certain topic

Caucus: a space for affinity groups or students working on similar projects to gather for networking and discussion

Size: How small of a group can be present and still accomplish your goals? How large of a group can be present and still accomplish your goals? How might your workshop need to be adjusted “on the fly” if more or less people show up than you were expecting?

Equipment: All presenters will be provided newsprint and markers at the conference, but you might also consider other forms of visual communication. What equipment should you have in the room in order to make this workshop most effective? Overhead? Chalkboard? Computer? LCD projector? Which of these pieces of equipment are necessary and which are helpful, but unnecessary? Which of these pieces of equipment do you own or have access to? What do you need the conference organizers to provide for you?

5

Create programming activities and ideas.

Now, the tricky part comes in: it requires creativity, thoughtful planning, and a willingness to hone the “raw material” into a “finished product.” Don’t worry yet about the order of the workshop, unless that helps you.

Remember these things that are generally true about adult learners:

- Learn better from doing—or a combination of doing, listening, reading—than from just listening or just reading.
- Learn only when they can incorporate what they are learning into their day-to-day practice. In other words: if it’s relevant, it sticks!
- Often reject information or experiences that don’t correspond to their held beliefs, assumptions, experiences or constructs. This is a feature of how the brain works. So, for subjects where you are sharing information that challenges these things in some way, this is an important consideration. How you present information is critical.

Some ideas for programming include: role plays (setting up a scenario and asking participants to simulate the actions they would take), fishbowl discussions (a small group discusses a topic amongst each other, while a larger group encircles them and observes the conversation without comment), small group work, 1:1 interviews (participants pair up and ask one another predetermined questions pertaining to the workshop topic), question and answer, etc.

Considering all of the ideas presented and others you have seen, what are some things you could do to make the “body” of the workshop more interactive or engaging?

Is there any need for handouts? What could you give participants to take home that will remind them of the content of the workshop and give them ways to further explore the topic on their own?

6

Structure activities into a workshop flow.

Beginnings (10-15 minutes):

- Set a tone (i.e., a warm-up activity)
- Include introductions, lend clarity, give relevant history, etc.

- Establish credibility and often let people know what is coming (i.e., agenda review, find out what participants hope to get out of the workshop, etc.)

Middles (60-70 minutes):

- Introduce concepts, ideas, or experiences gradually
- Build so that participants meet the intended outcomes
- Provide the opportunity for some kind of participant engagement (mental, physical, emotional)
- Need to fit together (not too many storylines or metaphors!) within the time allotted

Ends (10-15 minutes):

- Bring the activities, emotions, or other elements to a “transition” or “close” (i.e., tie up loose ends by laying out next steps)
- Allow participants to restate or share what they did, learned, experienced, perceived, etc.
- Leave some time for questions from participants
- Always end with an evaluation [i.e., written (which we will provide for you) and/or aloud]

7 Think of a great title!

A well thought-out, provocative title will increase session attendance. Consider writing a title that includes a detail or nuance that is unique to your session, rather than a general concept. Suggest action and perhaps a different way of thinking about the workshop topic.

Here are some of our favorite titles from the 2004 conference:

- How To Take Over Your Student Government (And Why You Should!)
- Soul Food for the Activist: Practices to Sustain Our Lives of Service
- Before We Roed We Wade: Reproductive Rights Past, Present, and Future
- Brotherly Love?: Exploring Gender, Sex, and Service
- Beyond Petting Puppies and Planting Trees: Real Service for Animals and the Environment
- I Want to Change the World, but I Want to Have a Life: Organizer Burnout and Lifestyle Issues

8 Come up with an abstract, description, and biographical information.

Now that you have put together all these components of the workshop, it's time to summarize them for the proposal submission form. Using all of the pieces above, assemble a 150-word abstract of the workshop, detailing why you want to present this workshop, what you hope to accomplish, and why it is important that this workshop be included in the 2005 COOL Idealist National Conference. It is important to us that workshops take into consideration a variety of points of view and ways of looking at the

world. For that reason, the RFP asks how your workshop incorporates the perspectives of people of various social identities (i.e. race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.). This does not need to be the entirety of your workshop content, but you should spend some time thinking about how your workshop might be understood by and might speak to a variety of communities.

Abstract:

Using the abstract you've come up with, whittle it down to 50 words that will be used in the conference program to tell conference participants what the workshop is all about. Make it interesting and unique!!

Description:

Finally, put together brief biographical sketches of each presenter (if you are the only presenter, you only need your own bio). This should include school/organization, experience with the topic, and maybe an interesting fact that would make this presenter compelling to conference participants:

Presenter 1:

Presenter 2:

Presenter 3:

Presenter 4:

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Write a full trainer guide and practice it.

See the "Workshop Design Template" to actually put this workshop together in the form of a Trainer Guide. You will want to walk through the training, visualizing each part. And you should definitely discuss it with someone to get feedback, or even to give it a test run. Good luck and train well!!