



AHLA Leadership & Career Development Program (2026)

Proposals, Presentations & Speaking Skills

The moves that get you in the room — and make you unforgettable once you're there.

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WHERE WE'RE GOING

Tips are the principles. Tricks are the moves. Every slide has both.

01



PART 1

Proposals

Getting your idea accepted

02



PART 2

Presentations

Building a deck that works for you

03



PART 3

Speaking

Owning the room

INTRODUCTION

How the AHLA submission process works

01



The Idea

Timely, specific, matched to the health law audience.



02



Submission

Format requirements, title, panel bios, learning objectives.



03



Peer Review

Is it timely? Clear So What? Can these speakers deliver?



04



Accepted

You're in. Now build something worth showing up for.

Most common rejection reasons:

Too broad · Vendor-focused · Can't answer the 'So What' · Panel lacks perspective diversity

PART 1

Proposals

Getting your idea accepted

Topic Selection

Title Selection

Panel Selection

Topic selection

The right topic is timely, specific, and earns its room.



TIP

Pick a topic that is relevant and refined

- Find the balance between generalized to appeal to a broad enough audience, but in depth enough to provide real substance.
- “And Here’s What Happened This Year” proposals abound; they tend to go to very experienced practitioners who can read the tea leaves and interpret them.
- If it sounds like a sales pitch for a product or service, “just say no”.

TRICK

Run the 'So What' test out loud

Say: 'A health law professional needs to know this right now because ____.'



Title selection

Your title is the first impression — and usually the deciding one.



TIP

**Specific, outcome-oriented,
and jargon-light wins**

TL:DR-A title that requires decoding is a title that gets skipped.



TRICK

**Write three versions.
Pick the one you'd click.**

Descriptive · Provocative · Question format. Be honest about which one you'd actually click. Don't be afraid to have a little (but just a little) fun with the title.



Panel Selection

A great panel feels like a conversation, not a series of solo talks.



TIP

Diversity of perspective is non-negotiable

Provider · Payer · Counsel · Regulator. Real healthy tension requires real difference.



TRICK

Vet for chemistry, not just credentials

Ask: will they riff off each other — or just wait for their turn?



INTRODUCTION

Speaker introductions

The first two minutes set the tone for everything that follows.



TIP

One credibility stat, not a resume

Give them the one thing that answers: why are you on this panel?



TRICK

Give the audience the roadmap upfront

Three parts, one takeaway per part, one practitioner tool.
That's the contract.



PART 2

Presentations

Building a deck that works for you

Deck Structure

Deck Substance

Deck Design

Deck structure

The talk is the present value. The deck is the future value.

Problem



Framework



Application



Takeaway

TIP

Every deck needs a spine

Without it, slides become a document people read instead of a presentation they experience.

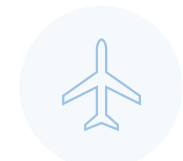


TRICK

The airport test

If a stranger reads your deck cold and follows everything, it's too dense.

Participants value takeaways; an appendix slide with cites, references or suggested readings can be a great part of that takeaway value



Deck substance

What goes on the slide is a decision, not a download.



TIP

Leave something for the room

If the deck tells the whole story, there's no reason to show up.



TRICK

Apply the FOMO test to every slide

If a stranger reads this and gets everything — you've put too much on it.

Don't forget to deliver the value, though; time management on the podium can be tough. Speaker notes (invisible to the audience) can be super-helpful here.



Deck design

Design is credibility. Bad design undermines good content.



TIP

Visual hierarchy. One idea per slide.

If you're making the audience work harder to read your slides, you've already lost them.

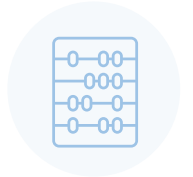


TRICK

One font. No flashy transitions.

Multiple fonts look like a ransom note. Flashy transitions signal you're compensating.

Videos are REALLY hard, except on an intro slide to set the tone. If you go that approach, limit the video to a sound bite. The speaker wants that “one on one” with the audience from beginning to end



Putting it together

Structure + substance + design = a deck that earns its room.



TIP

The three-layer test

Structure · Substance · Design. Sync all three before you finalize.



TRICK

Do a cold read with someone who wasn't there

Their confusion is data. Use it.

Do you have access to a corporate marketing person (inhouse or outside?) Use them; you know the subject matter, and they know audience engagement.



PART 3

Speaking

Owning the room

Talking vs. Speaking

Authenticity

Confidence

Audience Engagement

Talking vs. speaking

Talking fills time. Speaking creates connection.



TIP

Speaking is intentional

Don't talk through the slides, speak: eye contact, deliberate pausing — on purpose.



TRICK

Speak with the audience, not at

Engage with all corners of the audience.

Know someone in the audience? Call them out (Am I right, Christina?)

Reach out for audience engagement (how many in the audience practice in [insert setting], for instance); audiences love to be included.



Authenticity

Audiences don't connect with polish. They connect with honesty.



TIP

Vulnerability is a speaking skill

One honest moment enhances the polished points.
Pro tips for success are valued.

How you handled/managed your way out of a tough situation-priceless.



TRICK

The 'I once' formula —

Share the story. Share the lesson. Make it relatable.



Confidence & audience engagement



Confidence comes from prep. Engagement comes from trust.

TIP

Confidence is earned in prep, not performance

Don't read the slides. The slides should enhance, not replace.



TRICK

Find the nodder. Dare the room.

Engage with the room. Make eye contact.



Three parts. Twelve moves. One goal.

PART 1 · PROPOSALS

- Know your 'So What' before you submit
- 3 titles — pick the one you'd click
- Chemistry is as important as credentials-panels can shuffle
- Include a practitioner tool takeaway

PART 2 · PRESENTATIONS

- Build a spine: problem → framework → application → takeaway
- Leave something for the room
- The talk is present value; the deck is future value
- One font. No flashy transitions. Cites for later.

PART 3 · SPEAKING

- Engaging + relatable beats polished every time
- One 'I once' story per point — close the loop
- Confidence is earned in prep, not performance
- Find the nodder. Dare the room to challenge you.

Questions?

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