



## 2010 SYMPOSIUM AND MINISYMPOSIUM PROPOSALS: GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS

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(Adapted from a statement by Jack Diamond  
in the 1981 Neuroscience Newsletter)

**DEADLINE: Wednesday, January 13, 2010, 5 p.m. ET**

Check [www.sfn.org/sympmini-proposals](http://www.sfn.org/sympmini-proposals) for more information.

Symposia and Minisymposia play a major role in shaping the scientific direction of the Society's annual meeting by focusing on timely, relevant research across the field. The following guidelines have been established by the Program Committee to clarify the procedures for [mini]symposium proposals.

### Symposia vs. Minisymposia

Each regular symposium contains four speakers who present during the two-and-a-half-hour symposium session. A minisymposium, on the other hand, accommodates six speakers who give shorter talks over a two-and-a-half-hour session. Whereas well-known, top researchers are chosen as participants in regular symposia, minisymposia are geared for a generally younger cross-section of neuroscientists. The Program Committee created the minisymposium format so that junior investigators (including senior postdoctoral investigators and junior faculty) will have the opportunity to present exciting and cutting-edge research in a more formal setting.

The same proposal cannot be submitted for consideration as a minisymposium and as a regular symposium. The Program Committee will examine the panel of proposed presenters to ensure adherence to the specific format (top researchers for symposia, and junior investigators for minisymposia).

### Choice of Topic

You are required to submit your proposal under one of SfN's themes, available in the proposal form. For content, the most successful topics summarize advances or present conflicting views in rapidly developing areas and communicate an overall view to the membership. Unless some recent and exciting developments have occurred, topics appearing within the past three years are less favorably considered. On the other hand, the principal argument in favor of a topic should never be that it has not been represented for many years. A [mini]symposium should not be used simply as a vehicle for one new or remarkable advance, padded out by two or three relatively pedestrian presentations. Nor should three or four possibly exciting pieces of work be arbitrarily lumped together with no clear relationship between them. The [mini]symposium theme should be obvious from the titles of the individual presentations. A modest overlap among presentations is infinitely preferable to distinct islands, and cross-referencing among them can be truly rewarding, especially in somewhat controversial areas. Some excellent [mini]symposia have come from both broad and relatively narrow themes; the former tend to be multidisciplinary and educational, the latter, to capitalize on new breakthroughs in emerging areas. Finally, proposals that touch on international issues in neuroscience will be of particular interest to the Committee for the 2010 annual meeting program.

### Participants

In accordance with the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education guidelines, the proposer should be prepared to provide conflict of interest information for each speaker. Examples of conflicts of interest include financial relationships or relationships to products or devices with commercial interests associated with the [mini]symposium topic on which they are speaking. A conflict of interest can be of any amount and over the past 12 months only. A commercial interest is defined as any entity producing, marketing, re-selling, or distributing health care goods or services consumed by, or used on, patients. Relationships with governmental agencies (e.g., NIH) and organizations that do not make or own FDA-regulated drugs or devices do not have to be disclosed. For a sample disclosure form, visit [www.sfn.org/sympmini-proposals](http://www.sfn.org/sympmini-proposals).

It is required that you name in your proposal a chair (perhaps yourself) who has agreed to be responsible for the event and four speakers who have also agreed to participate in the symposium (six for a minisymposium). The chair must be a member of SfN. Speakers may be SfN members or nonmembers. The chair's responsibility includes submitting one abstract (for the Neuroscience Meeting Planner), one description (for the *Preliminary* and *Final Program*), and other submission requirements for the full [mini]symposium. The chair is responsible for making sure that all speakers have returned necessary logistical and programming information (i.e., disclosure forms, audiovisual needs) to SfN staff. You have the option of listing a co-chair, if desired. Please note that during the submission and review process, the proposer (if different than the listed chair) will be the primary contact. After acceptance into the annual meeting program, the chair becomes the primary contact and, furthermore, is responsible for relaying any and all important information to and from the other speakers.

If the chair or co-chair, where applicable, will give more than brief introductory remarks, he or she must be listed as a speaker. Each participant should be familiar with the overall objectives of the [mini]symposium and of the material likely to be covered by the other speakers.

***IMPORTANT: All proposed speakers must have agreed to speak at the [mini]symposium before the proposal form is submitted.***

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## Funding

Remember — the Society for Neuroscience *cannot guarantee to meet any expenses of speakers*, except registration fees. (Limited funds may be available to cover a portion of the expenses for nonmember participants, but participants should not be led to *expect* financial support from the Society). In general, do not propose as a speaker a member or nonmember residing outside North America unless you are sure he or she can be present.

## When to Put It Together

The Program Committee reviews all proposals and makes the final selection in mid-February, the latest date to include [mini]symposium titles in the *Preliminary Program*. Your proposal, therefore, must be submitted to the proposal Web site by **5 p.m. ET, Wednesday, January 13, 2010**. This means that it should be well-developed in design, particularly in regard to an agreed upon chair and speakers, during November or December. Some of the best-organized and well-thought-out proposals seem to have been finally and firmly put together during annual meeting time.

## How to Present It

During the submission process, you will be directed to provide the following information: title of the [mini]symposium; names and addresses of proposer, chair, and speakers; and tentative titles of the individual presentations. It should be clear that the proposal is firm, meaning that the agreement of the proposed chair and speakers has already been obtained. In addition, it is required that you address the following:

### Overall Proposal (all character limits include spaces)

- The overall objectives of the [mini]symposium (limit to 1500 characters)
- Why the proposal is timely (500 characters)
- The extent to which it could have a broad appeal for the membership (500 characters)
- The clinical relevance, if any, of the topic (500 characters)
- The diversity of your participants (female speakers, speakers from outside North America, or under-represented minorities) (500 characters)
- Other considerations that make the proposal especially attractive
- A short description of the [mini]symposium that will be printed in the *Preliminary* and *Final Programs* if the proposal is accepted (500 characters)
- One recent, full citation of a published work for each speaker

Complete each section with as much information as you feel is necessary and relevant within the character limits. Do not write a monograph, do not praise just one particular breakthrough,

and do not just complain of “neglect.” Keep to the guidelines indicated in the Choice of Topic section. You may want to mention when the topic and speakers were last represented in a symposium, minisymposium, or lecture. Finally, you are required to note the theme classification into which the proposal fits best, as well as any potentially cross-cutting themes. The Committee tries to ensure that all the themes are represented, if good proposals are available.

## General

The final selection is made by the Program Committee, and the Committee’s primary consideration is to determine what will best serve the interests of the Society for Neuroscience and the success of the annual meeting. The Committee may suggest substitutions of speakers or chairs. The Committee may decide to coalesce two proposals into one and suggest which speakers should be retained in that event. Suggestions arising from discussions of the Program Committee are passed on directly to the proposed chair. Proposals that are not accommodated one year will not be held over for consideration the next. However, a proposal may be re-submitted the following year and will receive the same consideration as any other; a number of such re-submissions have been accepted in the past. For more information, please contact SfN program staff at (202) 962-4000 or e-mail [program@sfn.org](mailto:program@sfn.org).

Of the proposals that are selected for presentation at Neuroscience 2010, several will be invited to submit a minireview to the meeting edition of the *Journal of Neuroscience*. If you do not wish for your proposal to be considered for a minireview, please indicate this preference during submission.

Note: Appropriate representation of women, international neuroscientists, and under-represented minorities is strongly encouraged and will be considered in the selection of [mini]symposia by the Program Committee. The Committee retains the right to work with the organizer to modify the composition of the session to ensure the diversity of the scientific program and participants. The Committee discourages the inclusion of chairs or speakers who have participated in [mini]symposia or lectures in the past two years (2008-2009), as well as those proposed in another [mini]symposium or lecture within the same year. The Committee will give preference to topics that have not been represented in the past two years. SfN Councilors and Program Committee members cannot participate in [mini]symposia or lectures during their terms of office.