



V2020 Symposium 7 Call for Presentations
CRR Radio www.StrategicFire.org/crrradio#s7call

- Speaker 1: From the Vision 2020 Project, welcome to CRR Radio.
- Ed Comeau: Welcome to CRR Radio, my name is Ed Comeau with Vision 2020. Today, we're talking about the Seventh Model Performance in CRR Symposium from Vision 2020, or what we call S7. Joining me is Monica Colby. Monica, could you take a moment and introduce yourself, please?
- Monica Colby: Hi, thank you. My name is Monica Colby. I'm a fire and life safety educator in Rapid City, South Dakota and I'm working with the peer review team, the selection team for Symposium Seven.
- Ed Comeau: This certainly isn't your first rodeo. You've done a number of these, haven't you?
- Monica Colby: I have, I've been lucky enough. I attended the first one before it was ... Well, even the one before it was called this, and then the first symposium. Then I was a peer reviewer. Then I was assisting the people who are in charge of all of that and now I'm the one running that piece of the rodeo.
- Ed Comeau: I think that sets up your credentials there that you kind of know what you're doing here, don't you, Monica?
- Monica Colby: I've been around, I know what's going on.
- Ed Comeau: Well, before we get started, a few important points about S7. It's going to be held again in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where we held it in 2020. Great location, everybody loved it so we're going to be going back there again. It's going to be happening in February of 2022. We do these every two years. We're really getting the ball rolling early this time. The call for presentations is going to open on January 12, 2021, which is at the time of recording in just a few weeks from now.
- If you're looking for more information, you can find it at www.strategicfire.org/s7. Let's get into what we're going to be doing this time around. There are quite a few different twists on it this year, Monica, that we really want to tell people about so, first of all, how is the symposium different than a learning or a networking conference, what makes S7 stand out?
- Monica Colby: When you go to a conference you're usually going to learn a new skill or to keep up on trends and to be energized in your work. What's different about the symposium is it's showcasing a collection of programs that have done an evaluation to prove that they could do what they set out to do. Not only did they do a good job, but they accomplished the bigger picture of reducing injuries or deaths or that they reduced the number of incidents that something

occurred or, whatever the bigger picture that we're all trying to accomplish is, they're proving that they got that done.

It's not about, "Oh, here's something new to learn about," it's about, "Hey, look at what these guys did and how they evaluated it and can prove that it works, I think that will work for my community, I'm going to take that and use it." While you'll probably learn something new and be energized by it, it really is more about showing off what other people are doing.

Ed Comeau: We keep using the word model program, it's in the title of the symposium. What exactly would you call a model program and what is the peer review team looking for in a presentation?

Monica Colby: A model program is one that has documented what they were setting out to do and had some clear expectations and goals. Not just we want to install fire sprinklers in 50 homes but we want to reduce deaths in home fires and we're going to do that by installing sprinklers in 50 homes. They set out those goals very clearly and proved that they accomplished them and documented how they got it done.

A model program follows the Community Risk Reduction Program evaluation used by Vision 2020 and the National Fire Academy. It's based on things from the CDC and from Canada. This is a way of evaluating health programs and fire programs, medical programs, to reduce risk in the community.

Ed Comeau: Really what you're saying is a model program is one that measures the outcomes, not the outputs. Like you said, it's not that we installed 50 sprinkler systems but that we reduced fire deaths in our community by X percent.

Monica Colby: Right. A model program does both but it makes sure to keep that bigger picture, that bigger goal for that risk in mind. As you said, it's an evaluation. It's really about measuring all of those pieces and documenting it. Not just what feels good, not what we think needs to be done, but it also starts with what really is going on in our community, what is most important for us to tackle, how are we going to do it, and then did we get it done. It usually takes at least three years, often more of 10, 15 years to see that your program is really working, but along the way you keep checking. Not just feels good but really is it making a difference.

Ed Comeau: One thing I'd really like to point out and I'm sure you have something to say on this too, we always gravitate towards fire-related topics, like you'd mentioned sprinklers or smoke alarms, but community risk reduction is really much more comprehensive than just that. It could be a lot of different things. It's really whatever risk in the community they can mitigate and we'd be interested in hearing about programs like that, wouldn't we?

Monica Colby:

Absolutely. We do prefer, even though we're looking for the best and the peer review team gives them a score based on their evaluation, not necessarily what the topic was but just do they have a program they've evaluated and got to the results they were hoping for or better, but we also try and keep that diversity.

We're looking for programs that where, in the past, ones that have been selected have shown that they reduced the number of times the fire department needed to respond to someone who has fallen and kind of pushed back in getting that local place where they were living to take care of the person. Or some have done projects to make sure an ambulance can get back in service faster. How to make sure that you're investigating fires.

There has been some that have helped to decide what's the most efficient way to inspect the buildings in your community. Heart attacks, how to reduce heart disease or increased survival. Fall prevention. I'm really looking forward, I think we're going to see some things about opioid crisis coming up because a lot of people are trying to get a handle on that and find solutions there. It's really anything, nothing is off the table as far as topics. It's generally still an emergency response aspect, emergency preparedness, wild land fire, structure fire, EMS, are generally what we're looking for, things that are within that still fire, EMS, wheelhouse. A lot of things are related to that.

Ed Comeau:

You can find some good examples of that. If people who are listening to this want to get an idea of what has worked in the past for getting selected, on our website we have all the programs from all the symposiums over the past 12 years now. You can look at them, you can see the presentations, you can download the PowerPoints for Symposium 6. We even had some interviews with some of the folks that did present too so you can get a better handle on the different flavor of programs that we'd be interested in having there.

Now, one thing that is distinctly different this year, and I think this was a great idea, is that of coaches. Do you want to explain what the coaches program is going to be about this year?

Monica Colby:

Yeah, I'm really excited about that and our entire application process is a little bit different this year. The coaches are available while you are putting together your program during the submission process, that call for submissions from January, February, and March. If you want someone to look over your program, they're available to do that at no cost.

It'll be a first come first serve, we'll try not to overwork them. We're offering, if you have a program that you know is really good but you're not sure what this community risk reduction program, evaluation, outputs, all of this doesn't make sense to you, then you can email with them and they can guide you to the right places; explain your program, help you to figure out, "Oh yeah, I did document

that, I do know that. I know what was happening before. I know what our problem was. I know what we've accomplished," and they'll help put everything into the right way so you're more likely to be selected.

It also just helps you in your proving that your program works to your own community so it's a good process to go through. Even if you aren't selected, this is a good time to take advantage of this opportunity with coaches. These coaches are people who are currently teaching how to do program evaluation and some of them quite literally have written the books that we use at the National Fire Academy and Vision 2020, and to teach and to understand how to do community risk reduction.

They are the ones that know what they're doing. They know what the peer review team has been taught so they know what they're looking for. The peer review team are all practitioners, these are all people who are walking the walk. They know what they're doing, they know what they're looking for. Then, the coaches will help those that have been selected by the peer review team. The coaches will help them to make sure that everything just looks gorgeous and is ready to go, that they're ready to present.

One of the things that's different, you were mentioning that on the website, you can see all of the materials before. Always we've required the model programs that have been selected to write their entire program up into only two pages and to summarize the whole evaluation. Now our application is going to be a three page version of that so if you are selected you'll have to narrow it down to two pages. We understand that can be difficult in a first draft so we're accepting three pages, but it's that same format, it's the same look. You can look through existing ones that have been selected in the past, look at their two page overview, and that is what you're going to want to do for your application.

Ed Comeau: Something that people have struggled with in the past I know, and I know you've encountered it too, is we do 20 minute talks, kind of a Ted talk format and a lot of people struggle with that don't they, condensing their program to 20 minutes because they want to tell you everything, but you can't fit everything into 20 minutes.

Monica Colby: They want to tell you everything, they care about everything, we want to know everything, and it's something that some have been doing for 20 years and showing how great their program is. We want the whole piece in 20 minutes or less, absolutely. We really need just the story and the highlights. It's not to say here is exactly how to accomplish this and all of the little things that are near and dear to me that made me cry, but rather here are the highlights and if you want to know more you can ask me about it. If you want to know more, I have all the documentation and I can show it to you. They do go by quite quickly, it's

only 20 minutes to pour your heart out for something that you've been living with for years.

Ed Comeau: The good thing is, by doing it 20 minutes we get a chance, people get a chance to see more programs and presentations, and we're also building in time for everybody to network. You learn about this great program and you can catch up with the presenter later to get more information so we'll have plenty of that built in there. Let's talk a little bit about the selection process. Somebody's worked with a coach, they put together a stellar proposal, they submit it. What happens next?

Monica Colby: Now it goes to a small team of people whose identity we keep hidden, they're in our witness protection program, our peer review teams. We don't want them unduly influenced so they look at your submission, which does not have your department name on it or any of those kinds of identifying markers and they give it points, from zero to four for each piece of the four pieces of evaluation.

After they've given those and any other input that they have like, "This looks really good, I think they just didn't know how to write it," which is what we've had in the past and why we're hoping that the coaches are going to get people past that kind of holding back. Then, another team that works with the conference itself takes the top scoring ones and then makes sure we don't have too many duplicates. If we had 10 submissions that all scored the highest and they were all about what to do when seniors fall, that would make for too boring of a symposium so we might need to select only two or three of those.

We try and make sure we have the best, those that scored the highest, but also that diversity and variety. Then they're informed that they are selected and then the hard work really begins, they have to get ready for that 20 minute presentation. Some of what's different about this year is that you're already getting started on that harder work by filling out the submission as if you had already been selected and doing that two page summary.

Ed Comeau: Let's talk a little bit about the rubric. That's great information when you're putting together your presentation. It's all out there, it's the same thing that the selection team is going to be using so I want you to talk about that a little bit.

Monica Colby: We are using a rubric, it's all about evaluation, and everything is extremely transparent this year. What the peer review team is going to use to give those scores from zero to four is on the website, you can see exactly what we're looking for. The coaches have that, you have that. We also have the online recorded training that we provided for that peer review team available for you to look and see so you have all of the same information.

While we keep the identity of those people quiet so that they are protected in case you get mad about not being selected, I don't know. Just so that we know that they are being as impartial as possible, but we're making sure that everyone knows how we select, what is better than others. Really, part of the purpose of the symposium is to draw attention to the need to evaluate programs and to teach us how to do it well, and by rewarding, spotlighting those people that have done a good job to help inspire us. The process itself is part of that training and learning for all of North America that we can see how to do this.

Ed Comeau: Somebody who has submitted in the past and has not been selected, should they try again?

Monica Colby: Absolutely. Even though we've kept all of the presentations to 20 minutes or less, we still only get 12 to 15 within our time of the symposium. We can only select the very best and the most diverse and the most promising. There have been many years when there were really good presentations but we had to have a cutoff, we just couldn't select everyone. There are ones ... Or maybe they hadn't been doing it for very long. Looks really good and promising but they hadn't proven that they were reaching those outcomes yet. They couldn't show that they had reduced the number of injuries. They could show that their program was really neat but not that it was truly reducing a risk in the community. Those are ones we'd love to see again.

Ed Comeau: What you're saying is that at the time they weren't ready for prime time but by now they might be ready.

Monica Colby: Right. Now it's been two, four, six years later. If they're still doing this program and found it works, they're probably ready.

Ed Comeau: One thing we're doing this year, and this is in the very early stages but I know Monica and I are pretty excited about this. We're calling it the minnow tank for now or have we come up with a different name for it yet? I don't think ...

Monica Colby: I don't know yet. I kind of like that one.

Ed Comeau: That's kind of the working title. It's built on the idea of Shark Tank on TV but much more gentler and nicer than that. Where if you have a program that is like Monica was just talking about, it's in its early stages, we're going to be looking for submissions on that where you can present it before a panel of experts who can give you feedback on how to make it better or improve or have you thought about this? In other words, stuff that's in the very early stages. We haven't worked out all the details on that but I think that's going to be a real hit this year, don't you?

Monica Colby: I think so too. We've been talking about how great that would be, I'm glad we're going to get it done this time because I think that same thing. When you're first starting and you've got this great idea or passion or you have this big problem in your community, to have other people look at it from, "Okay, I've gone down this road before with something similar, here's the things that we found. Let me warn you about some of the potholes that are down this road, or have you considered doing this or adding to this or that to it?" I'm really excited to be able to give people who are definitely not at the prime time yet, they're just getting started, and make sure that they've got as smooth a road as possible.

Ed Comeau: The attendance at this just grows every time now. The Symposium 6 we were well over 300 people. We get a lot of people attending from a lot of different backgrounds, a real diversity of people attending there. If I don't have a model program, am I still going to learn something at this symposium?

Monica Colby: Oh, absolutely. Even if you do have a model program I think you'll learn, but probably those without one learn the most. There's so much opportunity to network with people, to find people who already have solutions to your problems that might work for your community, to have people to reach out to. A lot of times we're the only person in our city who's trying to get these kinds of things done, who's trying to raise the bar and do such a good job.

It's so wonderful to be in a room with another 400 people who get it, who understand, and then you can reach out to them later. To know that there are groups that are working together electronically on social media and that to get connected there. There's also the opportunity to see some of the best in the nation, to see what is going on and what can be accomplished and how little department, big department, it really doesn't matter, your ability to have a model program is there within your reach.

The opportunities to be with other people, to see other programs, to be inspired by what's possible, to join the minnow tank. Really, even just to sit around afterwards at dinner and around the bar and get to know other people and talk about work because we are the type of people we can't leave it behind. We'll talk about your family for about five minutes but you know we're going to be talking about your work, so it's a good chance to get together with others.

Ed Comeau: Well, we've been talking with Monica Colby who is heading up the call for presentations for the upcoming Seventh Model Performance in CRR Symposium and I can't believe it's seven, Monica, can you? Holy cow.

Monica Colby: No. It goes by so quickly, even though they're every other year. That's more than 14 years.



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Ed Comeau: Well, it's going to be happening in February 2022 in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The call for presentations is opening on January 12, 2021 and you can find more information on all of this at www.strategicfire.org/s7. Monica, I really appreciate you taking the time to join us today on CRR Radio.

Monica Colby: Thank you so much, Ed.

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Speaker 1: This is CRR Radio.