

Notes on Chairing and Leading an Open Session

The Chairperson of the Open Session acts as a bridge between the panelists and the participants. Thus it is very important that the Chairperson is familiar with the material being presented so that she/he/they can monitor how effectively it is being communicated to the audience. The Chairperson also needs to help the audience communicate with the panelists and assure that the panelists are responsive to new material coming from the participants.

Open Sessions work best when: 1) panelists have formal presentations (these do not have to be written papers that are read), 2) there is ongoing communication between the Chair and panelists months prior to the event; and 3) the panelists meet as a group with the Chairperson prior to the event. It is not always possible to meet in person or via ZOOM, but emails are also workable.

1. Acceptance Letter

Some panels are composed entirely by the Chairperson, whereas other Open Sessions include individuals recommended by the AGPA Connect Committee. In this context, you may need to assess if changes in the composition of the panel requires modification of goals and objectives. In either event, it is important to review your goals and objectives with those who will be presenting.

2. Setting a time frame

Panelists need to provide an initial outline of their presentations (this may be a modification of what was submitted to the Conference Committee) and/or an initial draft of the presentation. If mid-November is set for receipt of this material, it will give presenters an opportunity to work on their presentations before the holidays. A "final" version should be given to the Chairperson about three weeks before the meeting. The importance of these dates may be reinforced by indicating that at the time of the receipt of the mid-November material, the Chairperson will be sharing all of the information among those involved in the session.

3. Getting it out in writing

Any communications should include an outline of the session itself with time frames, that is, the length of the introduction, presentation, audience discussion, break, and completion of evaluation forms. If accomplished early in the process, there will be sufficient time to negotiate any changes and strengthen the entire session. Remember, panelists don't have to agree with each other. Different points of view may lead to creative discussion. The Chairperson will mediate and establish the process, and monitor the communication between the panelists and the audience.

4. Observations

A member of the Open Session Committee will be observing your open session as part of our continuing evaluation of all Conference events. These observations will help the committee to obtain a sampling of open session offerings and also provide Chairpersons with constructive feedback. The details on format and timing for observations will be determined at a later date; however, Chairpersons will have the opportunity to reconvene with the observer.

5. **Presentation**

In light of the virtual format, presentation formats have not yet been finalized. We are planning a mixture of synchronous and pre-recorded presentation options. We will get back to presenters as these details are solidified. Training and support will be available before and during the presentation.