Planning for Sessions at the TRB Annual Meeting

Session Types

Sessions at the TRB Annual Meeting are divided into three categories: lectern sessions, posters sessions, and workshop sessions. Committees may plan sessions that are hybrids of these three models but, for the sake of simplicity, this guidance document addresses session planning in these three categories.

Allocation of Sessions

TRB staff have responsibility for allocating and managing Annual Meeting session slots. General guidelines for allocation follow but do not constitute guarantees for individual committees, sections, or groups:

- Available space in the convention center allows for an average of approximately two sessions per standing technical committee. Committees that carry out session planning according to the guidelines and due dates can count on two sessions.
- Slots also are put aside for TAC cross-cutting sessions, Executive Committee-sponsored sessions, TRB sponsor needs, and other special events, which vary in number and type from year to year and often involve unique schedule requirements. Because all of these additional sessions must be sponsored by a TRB committee, committees are sometimes listed as sponsors on more than two sessions.
- Available space allows for approximately one three-hour workshop session for every two committees.
- Poster hall space is ample so this space is allocated more or less in proportion to the papers received and accepted by each committee.

Due Dates for Annual Meeting Session Planning

June 1: List of anticipated Annual Meeting sessions (lectern, poster, and workshop) must have been sent to TRB staff officer.

June 15: For workshops, the following preliminary information should be entered into the online planning system:

- Workshop Title
- Workshop Length – Half Day (3 hours) or Full Day (6 hours)
- Description (maximum of 500 characters)
- Attendance Estimate
- Sponsoring and Co-Sponsoring committees
- Name of person taking the lead on organizing
- Special room setup requests

July 1: For lectern sessions, the following preliminary information should be entered into the online planning system:

(For lectern session presentations based on papers and for poster sessions, paper submissions are unknown at this point, so inform TRB committee staff officers of how many paper sessions are expected, co-sponsorship considerations, and who will take the lead on planning the paper sessions):

- Title
- Co-sponsoring committees
- Name of person taking the lead on organizing

Mid-July: Chairs will hear if their workshop proposals have been accepted.

October 1: Final details for all sessions (lectern, poster, and workshop) must have been entered into the online planning system in order to prevent a session from being removed from the program. The following final information is required:

- Title
- Presiding officer and his or her full contact information
- Co-sponsoring committee(s)
- For paper presenters and poster sessions: list of paper numbers in the order they will appear*
- For invited speakers: list of presentations in the order they will occur*
- For workshop sessions: list of presentations or workshop activities in the order they will occur*; detailed agenda including all activities taking place in the workshop
- Presentation titles
- Speaker names and full contact information
- Speaker contact information
*TRB staff may adjust the presentation order to help presenters with schedule conflicts. More information about planning for each type of session follows.

**Lectern Session Planning**

Lectern sessions are held Monday through Thursday in the convention center, typically in the “smaller” meeting rooms, though a few high-profile sessions may be held in a ballroom. They are referred to as “lectern” sessions because they typically involve speakers making presentations to an audience from a lectern.

A lectern session is usually scheduled for a 1¾-hour time period and typically includes no more than four presentations. Speakers may present papers that went through the paper submission and peer review process and were accepted by the committee for presentation, or they may be invited to present on a topic for which they are an expert without needing to prepare a paper for review in advance, or some combination of these two. Typically, paper presenters will discuss a detailed piece of research and invited speakers will present broader conceptual ideas or practitioner experience. The selection of presenters (paper and invited) should be organized around a common theme.

Session planners should allot specific time durations to each speaker, allowing sufficient time for discussion. Please emphasize to speakers the importance of honoring these time limits for the sake of other speakers and for audience participation.

Topics that require more than a single session may be programmed in multiple sessions (i.e., Part 1, Part 2); however, it is not guaranteed multiple slots will be available or programmed in adjacent time slots.

**Poster Session Planning**

Poster sessions are held Monday through Wednesday in an exhibit hall in the convention center. They are called “poster” sessions because presenters post summaries of their work on boards and discuss it with individuals and small groups, rather than make formal presentations to a large audience. A poster session is usually scheduled for a 1¾-hour time period. Poster sessions involve papers that went through the paper submission and peer review process and were accepted by the committee for presentation. Authors are provided a display board on which to mount a poster summarizing their research; meeting attendees may choose which papers to stop and read and engage in discussion with the authors. No formal presentations are given. A poster session may include up to several dozen papers organized around a theme, which can be looser than the theme of a lectern session in order to accommodate a larger number of papers.

All papers accepted for presentation in lectern or poster sessions must meet the same review criteria. Papers are assigned to poster sessions as opposed to lectern sessions based on various factors, including the nature of the subject matter (i.e., presentable in a poster format), the status of the research, and the value of direct interaction between author and audience.

**Workshop Planning**

(Note: the following information does not apply to the Human Factors Workshop series. For more information about Human Factors Workshops, please contact Bernardo Kleiner at bkleiner@nas.edu).

Workshops sessions are three hours long and take place on Sunday morning and afternoon and Thursday morning in the convention center. A full-day workshop on Sunday counts as two workshop sessions for allocation purposes. Workshops are intended to be more interactive than lectern or poster sessions, engaging attendees in some form of creative activity rather than mostly listening to presentations. The exchange is typically outcome driven where the conversation leads to a product or defined content. Examples include participant training, development of a research agenda around a specific topic, or some other product or deliverable. Workshop information is due well before the August 1 paper submission deadline. However, if a Committee accepts a paper for presentation that relates to a workshop topic, those papers may be presented as part of the workshop and can be entered into the program accordingly.