

ANNUAL MEETING SESSION FORMATS

Traditional Formats

Format	Description
Oral Paper Presentation	One of the most common formats, where an individual presenter discusses their research in a timed slot (often 10–20 minutes), followed by a brief Q&A period
Plenary Session or Symposium	A session with a group of invited speakers present to all conference attendees.
Panel Discussions	A group of experts discuss a topic, offering diverse perspectives and encouraging audience interaction. Panel discussions can foster debate and increase audience engagement. Select diverse panelists who bring different perspectives and experiences. Clearly define the panel topic and objectives, and choose a skilled moderator to facilitate the discussion and manage audience Q&A. Interactive and alternative formats

Interactive and Alternative Formats

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Panel Discussion	A group of experts discuss a topic, offering diverse perspectives and encouraging audience interaction. Panel discussions can foster debate and increase audience engagement. Select diverse panelists who bring different perspectives and experiences. Clearly define the panel topic and objectives, and choose a skilled moderator to facilitate the discussion and manage audience Q&A.
Debate Session	Two or more speakers with opposing views on a topic engage in a structured debate, with a moderator facilitating the discussion. This format encourages critical thinking and can lead to lively, thought-provoking conversations. Clearly define the debate format, rules, and time limits.
Roundtable Discussions	Small group conversations that facilitate more profound engagement, networking, and exchange of ideas. Roundtables allow participants to learn from each other’s experiences and perspectives. Limit the number of participants to facilitate more in-depth engagement. Assign a facilitator or topic leader for each table to keep discussions focused and encourage participation.
Lightning Talks	Extremely short, fast-paced presentations (often 5–10 minutes), sometimes using the PechaKucha (20 slides, 20 seconds each) or Ignite (20 slides, 15 seconds each) formats. This allows for a large number of topics to be covered quickly.
Fishbowl Discussions	A discussion format where a small inner circle of participants discusses a topic, while a larger outer circle observes. The "fishbowl" is often an open seat, allowing an audience member to join the inner conversation.
World Café	The World Café format is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue. The process begins with the first of two or more rounds of discussion for groups of 8-10 seated around a table. Each round is prefaced with a question. At the end of each 15-20-minute round, each member of the group moves to a different table. They may or may not choose to leave one person as the “table host” for the next round, who welcomes the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round. Once all rounds have been completed, key points from each table are presented to the whole group for a final collective discussion. World Cafés may be open, open by invitation, or closed, depending on how the chair wants to hold the session.
Case-based Presentations	A case study presentation involving a comprehensive examination of a specific subject.
"Shark Tank" ¹ Style Pitches	Presenters pitch a research idea or project to a panel of experts who act as "sharks." This format is energetic and offers a fun way to receive feedback on early-stage ideas.
Workshops	Hands-on sessions where attendees can develop new skills, collaborate with peers, and apply their learning in a practical setting. Workshops are interactive and often focus on specific tools, techniques, or best practices. Ensure the room setup is conducive towards collaboration and choose skilled facilitators who can effectively manage group dynamics.
Fireside Chat	An informal, conversational-style interview between a moderator and a guest. This format is more relaxed and spontaneous than a formal panel discussion.
Solution Room	Designed to provide peer-supported advice on individuals’ most pressing problems, each speaker presents a challenge they are facing. Participants then divide into small

¹ Shark Tank is a reality TV series where aspiring entrepreneurs present their business ideas to a panel of wealthy investors called "Sharks" for potential investment

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	groups of 8-10 individuals. Each speaker presents their problem to a small group and has it brainstormed by the group in 7-minute cycles. At the end of a cycle, the participants move on to the next table and the speaker talks to a different group. Groups share tables with paper that they can write on to gather solutions to the problems. Solution rooms are open.
Think Tank	A session focusing on a single issue or question. Initially, a chairperson orients attendees to the issue or question and relevant context. Then, attendees break into small groups to explore the issue or question and finally reconvene to share their enhanced understanding through a discussion facilitated by the chairperson. The abstract should succinctly identify the question or issue to be addressed, the relevant contextual factors, and the roles of the individual breakout groups.