

Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis

Guidelines for Chairs

Thank you for serving as chair of an SBCA conference session. As the chair, through advanced planning and your management of the session, you can help ensure a high-quality productive session with positive interactions among the presenters and audience. We offer the following guidelines to you as you prepare.

Before the conference

Prior to the conference, please connect with all of your presenters, including any discussants. We recommend that you also request a brief bio from each presenter and discussant so you can do very brief introductions at the beginning of the session. In your communication, you can:

- Remind participants of the total time available and the time allocated for each presenter or discussant, as well as Q&A with the audience which may be done after each presentation or after all presentations have been made. Note that sessions are 90 minutes long. For a typical session, a benchmark schedule would be 15 minutes per presentation, 15 minutes for the discussant (if one is designated), and the remaining time for audience questions and discussion.
- If there is a session discussant, request that each presenter distribute their paper/presentation to all panel participants in advance so that the discussant can prepare their remarks. Even in sessions without a discussant, encourage the presenters to share their presentations/papers in advance. This allows presenters to coordinate their presentations (e.g., avoiding overlapping content).
- Remind presenters that the deadline to submit their slides to SBCA for display during the session is **Friday, March 10**. We recommend that slides be submitted in PDF format to minimize version-control issues in PowerPoint, but presenters can also submit PowerPoint slides if they prefer. Any slides not submitted by March 10 will not be pre-loaded onto the presentation laptop. In that case, the presenter will need to come early to the session with their slides on a flash drive to load directly on the laptop.

If there is not an assigned discussant for your session, we recommend that you come prepared with a few initial questions to help kick off the Q&A session.

In the event of a last-minute change in your panel schedule (such as if a presenter does not show up) you may also choose to assign more time to each presenter or to extend the Q&A time at your discretion.

SBCA will provide a laptop in the session room, and will make sure that all presentations submitted by March 10 are loaded on the laptop in the room in advance (they will be on the desktop in a clearly-labeled folder). SBCA will also provide a cover slide to be shown on the screen at the start of the session.

SBCA will provide more detailed IT instructions to all chairs before the conference and will have an IT specialist on site for trouble-shooting throughout the conference. Please send someone to the registration desk if any last-minute questions or issues arise.

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At the session

- Please arrive early to locate and welcome your speakers and attendees. Make sure you have the correct pronunciation of participants' names. Remind speakers of the time allocated for each presentation and indicate that you will be providing alerts as they near the end of their time.
- It is important to start on time and end on time. This maximizes the time allocated for content and allows the next group the time they need to set up for an on-time start. If the discussion is still underway when the session ends, encourage participants to continue their conversation outside of the session room.
- Begin the session by welcoming the audience, introducing yourself (name and affiliation) as the chair, and identifying the session topic. Feel free to say a few introductory words to orient the audience to the session, but keep your remarks brief so that the presenters will have their allotted time.
- You may elect to introduce all speakers at the start or one-by-one before each presentation (the former may save time, but the latter may benefit latecomers). Introduce speakers by name and affiliation. If you have speaker bios, you need only say a few key highlights (i.e., you do not need to read the entire bio).
- Please follow the order of the speakers as listed in the program. This allows people who move between sessions to plan their arrival based on the published order.
- Mark the start time for each speaker and use the time cards provided by SBCA to provide alerts as they approach the end of their time limit (5 minutes, 2 minutes, and stop). In fairness to the other presenters, be firm with speakers who exceed their time limit and indicate that it is time to wrap up.
- After all presentations (including the discussant, if there is one), facilitate discussion among the presenters and the audience. If there is sufficient time, you can begin by asking the presenters if they want to briefly respond to the discussant's comments, but any such responses should be brief to allow time for audience questions and comments. Once you open the floor for comments, if no questions are initially forthcoming, it is fine to raise questions you may have of panelists to get the discussion going.
- As you invite the audience to offer questions or comments, ask that they first identify themselves (name and affiliation) and to keep their question or comment brief and to the point. You or the presenter may need to restate the question if the audience member can't be heard by all. Be sure to encourage broad participation by calling on different individuals and only returning to an audience member for a second time if no others are waiting.
- When it is time to end, feel free to add any concluding remarks before thanking the presenters and the audience.
- If you have any technical difficulties during the session or issues with the room, please come to or send someone out to the registration desk to talk to SBCA staff, who will assist with addressing the issue.