Who Is the Audience?
The AZA Annual Conference began in 1924 and has been a premier event for the zoo and aquarium community. Today, the conference attracts more than 2,500 individuals and more than 150 product and service providers. The conference program is geared toward the many disciplines in the profession -- directors, animal curators, keepers, aquarists, society members, scientists, gift shop merchandisers, and practitioners in public relations, development, marketing, education, volunteer management, registrars, and government relations.

Role of the Moderator
As the session Moderator, you have the important role of preparing session information and organizing speakers and their contributions to the session. Moderators also are tasked with making the initial introductions at the beginning of the session, keeping the session running on schedule, and facilitating questions and answers (Q&A) at the end (if time allows).

Prior to Submitting a Proposal
• Check Hot Topics list.
• Select a topic, title, session format, and speaker options. Be creative with the session format. Consider open discussion, interview or interactive dialogues, instead of just panel discussions.
• Organize session content, learning objectives, flow and desired results with the speakers.
• Collect information for submitting a program proposal. This includes full name and contact information from each participant and topic descriptions for the session as a whole as well as each individual speaker. Be sure all speakers in your session are engaged and committed to participating.

For Submissions
• Serve as the contact person for the Annual Conference Program Committee during the submission, review and decision process. The moderator ensures that the participants are properly aware and informed of requirements and changes required by the Annual Conference Program Committee.
• Be prepared to work with both the Annual Conference Program Committee and your speakers to follow up on any changes requested by the Annual Conference Program Committee during the evaluation process.

Tips
• Invite speakers who are both engaging and have something important to say. It’s important to have valuable content, but it is just as important to deliver it well. Make sure you schedule time for your speakers to do a “dry-run” presentation with one another. The Speaker Prep room will be available during the entire conference for speakers to practice their presentations.
• If applicable, establish a speaking order that connects the presentations in a logical fashion. And once the final speaking order has been submitted - don't change it. Conference participants often move from session to session in order to catch individual speakers.
• Establish a timetable that allows all speakers adequate time and allows time for questions and answers. As moderator, you must hold speakers to their allotted time.
• Provide a good introduction that explains the goals of the session and a closing that wraps it up. Don't make overly long introductions that take time away from the speakers and from potential questions.
• Inform AZA of any emergency changes in the speaker list or order.

Session Information
Please make sure that all details submitted to AZA for the session are accurate and up-to-date. Session information, including session title, speaker names, learning objectives, and session descriptions will be your responsibility. Here are a few points to remember:
• Come up with a compelling title for the session – it’s the first and perhaps the only impression you’ll make on attendees.
• Don’t be too cute with the title – you want attendees to understand what the session is about by reading the title.
• Write a clear and succinct description (75-100 words) of the session using action words that describe what attendees will learn. Session descriptions should get the readers attention and make them want to learn more by attending.
• Craft strong learning objectives and include labels for the appropriate professional levels that would benefit from the content, to help attendees have a clear understanding of what they will learn by participating.

Organizing Your Speakers

As the Moderator, you will be the key to helping your presenters stay on target with their deadlines. Communicate with speakers on a regular basis. Here are a few tips:

• Begin the presentation planning process by laying out a timeline for your speakers. Many deadlines will be provided by AZA. Others should be set by you, the Moderator. Such as the creation of final presentation files and uploading to the online Speaker Presentation Management system, participation in planning conference calls with all speakers, and meeting onsite to make any final changes to the presentations.

• Ask speakers for an updated draft outline of the presentation they plan to make. It’s good for them to identify the top three things they’d like session participants to come away from the session knowing.

• It’s a good idea to remind your speakers of the following points: What are the key take-aways for your audience? What are some things attendees will be able to implement when they return to their own institutions? And, be sure to create presentations geared toward both zoos and aquariums – large and small – whenever appropriate.

• Once you have identified the key points and take-aways, you will determine the best speaker order (if you have multiple panelists). Keep personalities in mind – it’s good to open and/or close with a more lively speaker if you have the choice.

• Look at the overall time allotted for the session. If a panel discussion, you’ll need at least 5 minutes to introduce the speaker(s) and it’s important to save 10-15 minutes at the end for Q&A. Survey results show that attendees find Q&A time among the most valuable time during the session. Divide the rest of the time between the speakers you have confirmed. Consider time for Q&A, if desired. Sessions are 90 minutes.

• Ensure all speakers are registered for the conference for at least the day they will be presenting. All registration categories and rates are located at www.aza.org/annualconference. If your panel contains a speaker from outside of the industry, be sure to request a registration waiver from AZA.

Developing Presentations with Speakers

Once your group has drafted their “roles” in the presentation and the flow of how the session will occur, your speakers are ready to develop their presentations. Here are some tips to help your speakers:

• Schedule a conference call with everyone in your session to go over each speaker’s presentation outline.

• Encourage everyone involved in the session to ask questions and give feedback to the group. This will help flesh out the ideas to be presented.

• Once the outlines have been developed and discussed, ask participants to create a PowerPoint presentation (if your format permits) complete with the notes field describing what they will say on each slide.

• Ask speakers to practice their presentation several times so they’re comfortable with the timing. It can be just as awkward to have the presentation be too short as too long.

• Schedule a “dress rehearsal” conference call or webinar so that each person can actually present his/her piece. This should be done at least 1-2 weeks in advance of final deadline.

• It’s important for speakers to practice with the PowerPoint presentations maximized on the screen exactly as they’ll be presented at the conference. This is important to the overall timing. Sometimes speakers have animation built in that requires them to click the mouse separately for each bullet point on a slide. This needs to be taken into account when you time the presentations.

• If you’re working with multiple panelists, encourage them to make small references to the previous speaker on the panel as they’re presenting. This will give the panel a cohesive feel.

• Rather than having the moderator come back to the podium before each speaker, have each speaker hand it over to the next speaker with a sentence or two to make the transition. The last speaker hands it back to the moderator for Q&A.

• Have questions prepared in advance so the Moderator can ask questions of the panel if they’re not coming from the audience.

• Ask speakers to bring a back-up copy of their presentation to the conference as “plan B” just in case.

Audio Visual Guidelines

The Online Speaker Presentation Management System will be available for each presenter to upload their presentation prior to the Conference. The site will be open beginning in mid-August and instructions will be
provided to each speaker and moderator. The upload site will remain open until approximately 1 week before the start of the Conference. After this time, presentations must be brought to the conference and uploaded onsite in the Speaker Ready Room at least 24 hours before the session. The Speaker Ready Room is where all speakers will be required to “check-in” to ensure the latest and most correct version of their presentation is uploaded, and that all files work correctly with the computer systems provided onsite.

All presentations must be uploaded to the Online Speaker Presentation Management System prior to the conference or onsite in the Speaker Ready Room (details to follow in August). This will lessen the chance of delays or technical difficulties during your session.

All session rooms will be equipped with the following:

- 1 laptop computer with PowerPoint
- 1 LCD projector and screen (16:9 resolution)
- 1 wired podium microphone
- 1 microphone w/stand at head table

It will be your responsibility to report to AZA any other equipment needs, including presentations with video files or audio files that require sound. Be sure to check with your speakers to determine if they have an AV needs other than what is listed above.