

Suggested conference session formats

● Split Sessions

... Suggested session format/structure

Split-sessions involve blending a traditional session format of papers and questions with techniques such as the world café to facilitate more open discussion after the papers. This can be a good way to gain experience and confidence with more participatory approaches and explore the benefits of alternative session formats. These sessions combine the delivery of academic papers with greater audience participation and engagement.

This format requires the normal resources for presentations and papers, as well as those listed for the world café above. As a combination of techniques is employed, it is suggested that two session timeslots are requested when you make your session proposal.

This session format allows speakers to be recognised as formal presenters (which can be important for funding) while also involving them in more participatory sessions.

Preparing the session

Advertise a standard Call for Papers as you would for a traditional paper session, once you know who is presenting ask them to confirm whether they would participate in an additional session.

Decide what type of additional session you would like to run – roundtable, world cafe, panel, work in progress, etc. – and make sure you request an additional timeslot when you submit your application for sessions to the conference organisers. Ensure that you have suitable facilitators to run the second (participatory/engaged) session.

Running the session on the day

Explain the format of both sessions at the beginning of the first session, so that participants understand the potential for more discussion later. Explain clearly how the second session will work, especially as it is likely to be a new format to many participants and speakers. Get people from the first session to help in setting up the second session – by moving chairs and writing on the flip charts etc., as this can help people feel involved and valued and thus more likely to feel open to participating in the discussions.