2026 ISI ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Envision the Future of Sustainability

Networking Session Host Guidelines

1. Purpose

Networking Sessions are designed to be interactive, sponsor-hosted conversations that connect conference attendees around important topics in sustainable infrastructure. Sponsors are invited to contribute their industry expertise and practitioner perspective to the discussion, but these sessions are not intended to be sales presentations, product demonstrations, recruiting sessions, or extended company overviews. Hosts may use a brief presentation, case example, or project experience to frame the topic, but attendees should spend most of the session actively discussing, responding, sharing ideas, or asking questions.

2. What Makes a Successful Networking Session?

A successful networking session should feel like a facilitated roundtable conversation — not a formal presentation.

Hosts should design the session so attendees leave with practical insights, new connections, and a sense that their perspectives contributed to the conversation.

Strong networking sessions typically:

- Create an engaging and welcoming atmosphere for both experienced and newer professionals
- Address a timely issue connected to sustainable infrastructure and the conference.
- Build interactive opportunities for attendees to share experiences, opinions, or ideas
- Recognize diverse geographic, organizational, and professional perspectives
- Leave attendees with practical insights and new connections
- Avoid promotional content — Sponsor expertise and experience should help frame the conversation, rather than becoming the focus of the session.

3. Selecting a Strong Session Topic

Topics should:

- Be relevant to sustainable, resilient, and equitable infrastructure
- Appeal to a broad audience of infrastructure professionals
- Encourage diverse perspectives and experience sharing
- Align with one or more conference session themes
    - Construction Decarbonization
    - Designer, Builder & Owner Collaboration
    - Embodied Carbon
    - Sustainable Procurement
    - Best Practices in Sustainable Infrastructure
    - Envision in Curriculum
    - Sustainable Construction Outcomes
    - Sustainability at Airports
    - Systems Thinking for Lasting Impact
    - Sustainability in Practice

Discussion Questions

A strong networking session starts with a topic but is built around a question. Rather than simply presenting information about a broad subject, consider framing the session around a challenge, opportunity, or question that participants can explore together. For example:

- **Construction Decarbonization:** What could accelerate meaningful construction decarbonization?
- **Embodied Carbon:** What opportunities do we see to advance embodied carbon reduction in infrastructure?
- **Sustainable Procurement:** What examples are we seeing of procurement creating greater value for projects, communities, and the environment?
- **Sustainable Construction Outcomes:** What can project teams do to strengthen sustainability outcomes during construction?
- **Systems Thinking:** Where can systems thinking unlock greater impact across infrastructure projects and systems?
- **Sustainability in Practice:** How can we better transfer and scale examples of sustainable practice from ongoing Envision projects?

4. Session Format & Suggested Structure

There is no required format for Networking Sessions. Hosts are encouraged to choose the approach that will generate the most meaningful interaction among participants.

Recommended Time Allocation

For the 60-minute session:

- 5-10 minutes: Welcome, introductions, and brief framing of topic
- 40–50 minutes: Facilitated discussion, interaction, and/or activity
- 5 minutes: Wrap-up and key takeaways

Creating an Interactive Experience

Each Networking Session should include at least one meaningful opportunity for attendees to actively participate. Interactive approaches may include:

- Facilitated discussion or roundtable conversation: Pose a question or challenge and invite participants to share experiences, perspectives, or ideas.
- Polling: Use a quick poll to identify audience perspectives, then use the results to launch a discussion.
- Participant Q&A: Incorporate questions throughout the session rather than reserving all audience interaction for the end.
- Case study presentation discussion: Present a brief project scenario or challenge and ask participants how they would approach it.
- Small-group breakout conversations: Break participants into smaller groups to discuss a question and report key ideas back to the larger group.
- Interactive workshop or brainstorming scenarios: Invite participants to generate ideas, solutions, tradeoffs, or lessons learned around a specific challenge.

When planning an interactive approach, consider the following:

- What do we want participants to discuss or explore?
- What will participants be asked to contribute?
- How will we encourage participation from different perspectives and levels of experience?
- How will we use available engagement tools (e.g., chat, polls, Q&A, or breakout discussions) to broaden participation?
- What practical insights, ideas, or connections should participants take away from the session?

5. Expectations of Hosts

Hosts are responsible for creating an engaging, welcoming, and participant-centered conversation. Hosts are encouraged to use their expertise and experience to help frame the discussion, while creating space for attendees to share their own perspectives and experiences.

If more than one facilitator is involved, sponsors should identify clear roles in advance. For example, one person may open and frame the topic, another may monitor questions or chat, and another may help summarize key takeaways. Facilitators should avoid turning the session into a series of sponsor remarks.

Networking Sessions are often most effective when a small number of facilitators guide the discussion. Additional sponsor representatives are welcome to participate in the conversation as attendees, but the session should avoid becoming a panel of sponsor speakers or a sequence of prepared remarks.

Facilitate the Discussion

- Introduce the topic and provide context for why it is relevant to sustainable infrastructure and the conference.
- Establish a clear question, challenge, or theme for participants to explore.
- Ask thoughtful, open-ended questions that stimulate discussion rather than presenting a single "right" answer.
- Connect ideas and perspectives shared by participants
- Manage the flow of conversation and keep the discussion focused.
- Summarize key ideas or themes as the discussion progresses.

Keep the Conversation Participant-Centered

- Attendees should be active participants in the session, not simply an audience.
- The session is intended to emphasize shared learning and exchange rather than company-specific messaging or promotion.
- Strong facilitators actively ensure that multiple voices and perspectives are heard throughout the discussion.
- Create an environment where participants can ask questions, exchange ideas, and respectfully challenge assumptions.
- Make space for both experienced and newer professionals to contribute.

Sponsor and Promotional Guidelines

Sponsorship provides firms with an opportunity to bring their expertise, experience, and perspectives into the conference conversation. The greatest value comes when that expertise is shared through an engaging discussion rather than a traditional marketing presentation.

Recommended practices:

- ✅ Briefly introduce themselves and their organization
- ✅ Reference relevant projects or experiences when appropriate
- ✅ Share lessons learned and industry insights
- ✅ Participate as thought leaders and practitioners

To preserve the discussion-focused nature of the session, avoid:

- ❌ Extended company presentations
- ❌ Sales pitches
- ❌ Product demonstrations
- ❌ Recruiting-focused presentations
- ❌ Content that is primarily promotional

Session Planning Considerations

Before finalizing your session, consider:

- What is the one question we want participants to explore?
- Why does this matter to infrastructure professionals right now?
- What will participants be asked to contribute?
- How will we hear from people with different perspectives?
- How much time will participants spend actively engaging?
- What will participants take away from the conversation?
- Does the session still work if we remove our company-specific content?

6. ISI Support

ISI will provide:

- Session promotion before the conference
- Technical orientation and host briefing
- Zoom Events support
- Event moderation assistance if needed

Hosts are expected to attend all required kickoff and technical preparation sessions prior to the conference.

7. Session Submission Checklist

To support conference planning, hosts will be asked to provide:

- ☐ Brief explanation of how the session aligns with session themes
- ☐ Session title
- ☐ 2–3 sentence session description
- ☐ Facilitator name(s), title(s), and organization
- ☐ One primary discussion question
- ☐ 2–4 supporting discussion prompts
- ☐ Description of planned interactive element
- ☐ Any slides, resources, or technology needs

ISI will review submitted session information to confirm alignment with the Networking Session format, conference objectives, and attendee experience. ISI may provide feedback or suggestions to help strengthen the discussion focus, enhance attendee engagement, or reduce overlap with other conference content.