2026 ISI ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Envision the Future of Sustainability

Moderator Expectations and Guidelines

1. Purpose of the Moderator

Moderators play a key role in creating an engaging and well-organized session experience. In addition to introducing speakers and facilitating Q&A, moderators help coordinate presenters, manage session flow and timing, support audience engagement, and create a welcoming environment for discussion.

2. Time Commitment / Expected Participation

Moderators should expect to participate in:

- One moderator kickoff meeting hosted by ISI.
- One introductory meeting with the session presenters.
- One Zoom tech session.
- Assigned conference session.
- Optional follow-up with ISI if notable questions, issues, or follow-up items arise.

3. Before the Conference

Coordinate with Presenters

- Schedule a brief meeting with all presenters. The purpose of this call is to ensure presenters understand the session flow, timing, speaking order, transition points, and how audience questions will be handled.
- Confirm pronunciation of speaker names.
- Confirm preferred titles and organizational affiliations.
- Discuss how Q&A will be handled.
- Identify any potential discussion themes or areas of audience interest.
- Determine whether a rehearsal or dry run would be beneficial.

Review Session Materials

- Review speaker bios and presentation abstracts.
- Review the consolidated presentation deck (if ISI is combining slides).
- Note key points, speaker transitions, and potential audience questions.

Prepare for Success

- Attend the moderator kickoff meeting and Zoom tech session.
- Prepare opening remarks and speaker introductions.
- Prepare 3-5 backup questions in case audience participation is limited.
- Familiarize yourself with the conference platform and moderator controls.

- Understand if/how attendees will be asked to participate during your session, including the use of chat, Q&A, polls, or discussion prompts, as applicable. ISI will provide platform guidance and support during the tech session.

4. During the Session

Create a Positive Experience

- Welcome attendees and set expectations for participation.
- Explain how attendees can submit questions.
- Introduce speakers using the provided bios.

Manage Time and Flow

- Keep presentations on schedule.
- Monitor speaker timing and provide gentle reminders as needed.
- Guide transitions between speakers.
- Adjust as needed to preserve adequate Q&A time.

Facilitate Q&A

- Monitor incoming questions throughout the session.
- Prioritize questions that are broadly relevant to attendees.
- Consolidate similar questions when appropriate.
- Ask prepared questions if audience participation is limited.
- Ensure all speakers have an opportunity to respond and contribute.

Facilitate Engagement

- Encourage attendee participation through available engagement tools.
- Help maintain an inclusive and welcoming discussion environment.
- Identify opportunities to connect attendee questions and comments to the session discussion.

Handle Unexpected Situations

- Work with ISI staff to manage technical issues.
- Fill gaps if a speaker experiences connectivity problems.
- Help keep the session moving if content runs short or long.

If a technical issue occurs, moderators should remain calm, keep attendees informed as appropriate, and defer to ISI technical support for troubleshooting. If a speaker is delayed or temporarily disconnected, moderators may use prepared questions or transition to another presenter if appropriate.

5. After the Session

If relevant, moderators are encouraged to:

- Share notable questions or discussion themes with ISI.
- Identify any follow-up topics raised during the session.
- Provide feedback that may help improve future conference programming.

6. Moderator Presence and Tone

- Serve as a professional and welcoming representative of the conference.
- Facilitate discussion in a balanced and inclusive manner.
- Keep remarks concise to maximize presenter and attendee interaction.
- Encourage respectful dialogue and participation.
- Keep discussions focused on the session topic, speaker expertise, and attendee learning outcomes.
- Avoid introducing personal political, ideological, nationalistic, or other unrelated viewpoints into the discussion.

7. Support from ISI

ISI will provide the materials and support moderators need to prepare for and facilitate their session, including:

- Speaker bios and presentation abstracts
- Session description and agenda information
- Moderator kickoff meeting
- Zoom tech session and platform guidance
- Consolidated slide deck, where applicable
- Day-of technical support
- ISI staff contact for questions before and during the conference

8. What Moderators are Not Expected to Do

Moderators are not expected to provide technical support, manage Zoom settings, troubleshoot attendee access, or create session materials. ISI staff will provide day-of technical support and will help address platform-related issues.