



Guidelines for Theme Forum Preparation and Information Required from Theme Forum Organizers

At its October 2006 meeting, the IAIA Board of Directors mandated that guidelines be put in place for the development of theme forums, since forums have become a standard part of IAIA conferences. The purpose of these guidelines is primarily to ensure very high quality and to help the program chairs select an appropriate number of forums for the final schedule.

Theme forums are a core element of IAIA conferences and are intended to address cross-cutting issues of relevance upon themes decided on by the program committee to a wide range of impact assessment practitioners. Because of time limitations, competing interests, and the distinctively different quality of theme forums, **the number of theme forums is limited to 12** during the course of the 3.5-day conference. **No more than four theme forums should run concurrently.**

Program chairs are strongly encouraged to select the best from among many quality proposals. Theme forum selection is a competitive process that is conducted in two phases: Those theme forum proposals received and accepted for publication in the preliminary program (phase one) are expected to undergo continuing development and will be reviewed for inclusion in the final program (phase two) by the program committee based upon the following criteria:

- Relevance of the topic to the conference theme. Is the topic cross-cutting?
- Relevance to a wide international audience.
- Objective(s) of the forum and what participants will learn.
- Quality of speakers. Theme forums with speakers that have not been previously heard at IAIA conferences will have preference.
- Format of the forum, i.e., how the information will be presented in the 90-minute time frame. Theme forum proposals that adopt creative, innovative formats encouraging wide audience participation over standard paper sessions or “talking heads” will have preference. Care is required to ensure theme forums do not become paper sessions on a larger scale; the program chairs will reassign the forum to a concurrent paper session if that option is more appropriate.
- Mix of topics to avoid overlaps and to ensure that a wide range of the most topical impact assessment issues are addressed and different perspectives are presented.
- Theme forums not selected for the final program may be considered as a regular session.

Theme forums organizers should demonstrate development of the theme forum from its initial proposal to the final selection by communicating with the program chairs, and either updating the description of the forum online by editing the original submission or providing an updated description of the theme forum at the time the program chairs request that organizers turn in session plans.

All theme forum speakers are required to submitted an abstract via the regular paper/poster submission process, even if they do not intend to present a “paper.” This ensures that IAIA has basic contact information about them and their presentations, and that they receive all relevant conference information communicated to delegates from HQ or the program chairs. Presenters will not be included in the final program if their abstracts are not submitted by the submission deadline.

Theme forum organizers may wish to review generally-submitted abstracts for possible presenters in addition to speakers they may invite; instructions on how to review abstracts are available online and/or from IAIA Headquarters. The theme forum organizer is strongly encouraged to work with the presenters ahead of the conference to ensure that the speakers in a forum coordinate their efforts and avoid duplication of content.

At a minimum, theme forum organizers should ask speakers to prepare and submit copies of their presentations by 30 April (to impact@iaia.org) so that they may be posted online as part of conference preview and proceedings. Where speakers also wish to submit a paper for review, they may follow the instructions for optional paper submission and review provided upon submission of their abstract.

All theme forum participants are required to register for the conference at the applicable rate based on member status and date of registration. Theme forum speakers not registered by the presenting author deadline will not be included in the final program.

During the conference, the theme forum sessions will be recorded, on both visual and audio media if possible, in a digital format that can be published subsequently on the IAIA web site (video may be conditional on obtaining appropriate sponsorship). Upon submission of an abstract, authors/speakers have the option to request that they not be recorded; these requests will be honored on an individual basis.

IAIA appreciates the effort and commitment of all theme forum organizers and their role in making IAIA conferences the premiere event for IA practitioners.