ICES Annual Science Conference

Theme Sessions and Network Sessions

This is a guidance document prepared by the ICES Science Committee and the ICES Secretariat to describe the content of theme sessions and network sessions at the ICES Annual Science Conference (ASC) and the processes and timetable for choosing convenors and session content. Theme sessions provide the main forum for talks and poster presentations at ASC and showcase new and emerging marine science. They cover a range of defined science topics of relevance and interest to the ASC audience and ICES community as a whole. Network sessions, known as open sessions before ASC 2019, aim to introduce, discuss, and get feedback on science, data, and advisory topics of relevance to ICES, and to engage existing or potential partner organisations internationally. As such, they may have more eclectic formats than the theme sessions and provide flexibility for engaging a large proportion of those people joining the sessions. Typically, there will be four times as many theme sessions as network sessions at an ASC. The timetable for proposing and selecting both types of session is the same.

Theme sessions

Purpose

Theme sessions provide the main forum for talks and poster presentations at ASC and showcase new and emerging marine science. Theme sessions address a range of defined science topics of relevance and interest to the ASC audience and ICES community as a whole

For speakers, the purpose of the theme sessions is to provide a welcoming and collegiate environment where they have an opportunity to present their latest scientific work to other scientists. The convenors help to place the presenters' scientific work in a wider context.

For poster presenters, the purpose of the theme sessions is to provide a welcoming, constructive and brightly lit environment for them to showcase and share their work with other scientists.

By sharing their scientific work with the ASC attendees, theme session speakers and poster presenters increase the profile of their work, make new contacts, and benefit from feedback from peers. Contacts made during the theme sessions may lead to ideas for further research and opportunities for future collaboration.

Process

Theme session topics are proposed by convenors, following a call for proposals that closes around 13 months before each ASC. Each theme session proposal should be supported by at least two convenors from different countries, with a maximum of three convenors for regular ICES sessions and up to four when the session is co-sponsored by another organisation (e.g. PICES). Theme session proposals are reviewed and selected by ICES Science Committee.

Convenors of theme sessions accepted by the Science Committee are notified around 10 months before the ASC. In broad terms, convenors may propose any science topic of relevance and interest to ICES community. ICES Strategic Plan describes the breadth of science relevant to ICES.

Around 9 months before the ASC the chosen theme sessions are advertised on ICES website and a 'call for submissions' to the theme sessions opens. The call is for oral as well as poster presentations, with posters being linked to the relevant theme session in the poster display area. The call remains open until approximately 6 months before the ASC. Convenors should be proactive in encouraging scientists to submit oral presentations and posters to their theme sessions. When the call for theme session submissions closes, the convenors are responsible for selecting the submissions, oral and poster, to be presented in their theme sessions. If there are not enough submissions to run a theme session, the Science Committee may decide to cancel it.

Typically, each theme session is scheduled for a duration between two and six hours (with longer sessions divided into sub-sessions with breaks) and includes oral presentations of 10–12 minutes each in 15-minute slots. When the call for submissions closes, time is allocated to individual theme sessions by the ASC hosts and ICES Secretariat, broadly in proportion to the number of submissions received. Typically, theme sessions account for 75–80% of the total number of sessions (combined number of theme sessions and network sessions) run at an ASC. The total number of theme sessions it is possible to accommodate varies with ASC venues and durations, but we avoid having more than four parallel theme sessions at any time. Thus, a typical four-day ASC will include 16–18 theme sessions.

The number of posters that can be presented is not limiting in most ASC venues, and convenors may suggest that oral presentations that cannot be accepted will be accepted as posters. Convenors are asked to report selected oral presentations and posters for their theme sessions to ICES Secretariat at least 4 months before the ASC, to allow time for development, publishing, and advertising of the full ASC programme.

At the ASC, theme session convenors are responsible for hosting, introducing, and chairing their selected session and liaising with ICES Secretariat and ASC organisers to ensure it runs smoothly. They should also be available at the poster sessions linked to their theme sessions to meet presenters and people viewing the posters. Some theme sessions include introductory and/or synthetic talks by the convenors, to place the presentations and posters in a wider context and propose ideas and directions for further scientific development.

Once the theme session is complete, convenors are responsible for writing a short theme session report. A template is provided by ICES Secretariat for this purpose and the report is posted on ICES website and used for reporting to ICES Science Committee and the Council. Theme session reports should be submitted within 2 weeks of the ASC ending.

Network sessions

Purpose

Network sessions aim to introduce, discuss, and get feedback on science, data, and advisory topics of relevance to ICES, and to engage existing or potential partner organisations internationally. As such, they may have more eclectic formats than the theme sessions and provide flexibility for engaging a large proportion of those people joining the sessions.

Outcomes of network sessions should be tangible, resulting in proposals for new collaborations, expert groups, lines of scientific research, data products, conferences, and future theme sessions,

for example. All network sessions are expected to address topics that are accessible to, and will engage, a reasonable proportion of attendees at the ASC.

Process

Network session topics are proposed by convenors, following a call for proposals that closes around 13 months before each ASC. Each network session proposal should be supported by at least two convenors from different countries, with a maximum of three convenors for regular ICES network sessions and up to four when the session is co-sponsored by another organisation (e.g. PICES). Network session proposals are reviewed and selected by ICES Science Committee. Convenors of those network sessions that are accepted by the Science Committee are notified around 10 months before the ASC and details of the sessions are posted on ICES website 9 months before the ASC.

Each network session is usually scheduled for one hour but, occasionally, this time allocation may be increased slightly at the discretion of the ASC hosts and ICES Secretariat to fit the ASC schedule. Network sessions normally account for 20–25% of the total number of sessions (combined theme sessions and network sessions) accommodated during an ASC. We avoid having more than four parallel network sessions at any time.

At the ASC, network session convenors are responsible for hosting their session and liaising with ICES Secretariat and ASC organisers to ensure it runs smoothly, and especially notifying at least 9 months in advance of any equipment requirements.

Once the network session is complete, convenors are responsible for writing a short network session report. A template is provided by ICES Secretariat for this purpose and the report is posted on ICES website and used for reporting to ICES Science Committee and the Council. Network session reports should be submitted within 2 weeks of the ASC ending.