

# ICES Annual Science Conference

Theme sessions and network sessions



**ICES**  
**CIEM**

International Council for  
the Exploration of the Sea

Conseil International pour  
l'Exploration de la Mer

This document describes the purpose of theme sessions and network sessions at ICES Annual Science Conference (ASC) and the processes and timetable for choosing conveners and session content.

We aspire to run a conference that is attractive to marine scientists, from ICES community and beyond, and provides many opportunities to participate. We encourage proposals for topics that are accessible to a broad range of marine scientists. This means that topics are broad enough to cover at least one, and preferably more, of the sub-priorities in [ICES Science Plan](#). Theme and network sessions based solely on the work of a single project consortium or expert group, for example, would not be suitable, unless the sessions are described in a way that openly encouraged submissions from scientists outside the project or expert group and working on related topics.

## Theme sessions

### Purpose

Theme sessions provide the main forum for talks and poster presentations at the 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. In a hybrid conference, video and poster presentations are made available through an event platform before the conference, leaving more time for discussions during the planned theme session.

For all presenters, the purpose of theme sessions is to provide a welcoming and constructive environment to showcase and share their work with other scientists. The conveners help to place the presenters' scientific work in a wider context.

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

Each proposer of a theme or network session is asked to identify [one science priority area in ICES Science Plan](#) to which the proposal is predominantly linked, and to list other science priority areas that are also relevant.

Each theme session proposal must be supported by at least two conveners from different countries, with a maximum of three conveners for regular ICES sessions and up to four when the session is co-sponsored by another organization. Theme session proposals are reviewed and selected by ICES Science Committee (SCICOM). Proposals including more than the specified numbers of conveners will not be accepted for review.

A SCICOM subgroup ranks the proposed theme sessions, based on an indicative vote on their quality by all SCICOM members. The group selects, in the first instance, the most highly ranked theme sessions linked to each of ICES seven science priorities. In the case of “Seafood production”, one session is selected for an aquaculture topic and one for a fisheries topic to reflect the relative scale of work related to this priority. The group then selects the next best theme session proposals in each of four different science priority areas, excluding seafood production. This approach is used to achieve an overall balance of scientific topics among theme sessions while leaving some flexibility to accept excellent crosscutting proposals and excellent proposals whatever the topic.

One theme session is always reserved for contributed papers on any marine science topic of relevance to ICES, with two, up to a maximum of three, conveners identified by SCICOM. The contributed papers session maximizes opportunities for marine scientists to share science that is not directly related to the topics covered by other theme and network sessions.

### **Call for abstracts**

Call for abstracts for theme sessions opens about nine months before the ASC. The call is for oral as well as poster presentations. The call is open for two to three months. Conveners should be proactive in encouraging scientists to submit oral presentations and posters to their theme sessions. When the call for abstracts closes, the conveners are responsible for selecting the submissions, oral and poster, to be presented in their theme sessions. The Secretariat will notify abstract submitters about abstract acceptance several months prior to the event.

Typically, each theme session is assigned 2–6 hours (with longer sessions divided into sub-sessions with breaks). Time is allocated based on the number of abstract 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 and five parallel sessions are held. With five parallel sessions, a four-day ASC includes 16, up to a maximum of 18, theme sessions. These numbers include one contributed papers session.

### **At the ASC**

At the ASC, theme session conveners are responsible for hosting, introducing, and chairing their selected session, as well as liaising with ICES Secretariat and ASC organizers to ensure the session runs smoothly. Poster presentations are grouped by theme session in the poster display area, and should 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 conveners, to place the presentations and posters in a wider context and propose ideas and directions for further scientific development.

### **After the ASC**

Once the theme session is complete, conveners are responsible for writing a short theme session report. ICES Secretariat provides a template and associated guidance for this purpose.

The report is posted on ICES website and used for reporting to the Science Committee and the Council. Theme session reports should be submitted within two 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 organizations 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 conveners, following the call for proposals. Each network session proposal must be supported by at least two conveners from different countries, with a maximum of three conveners for regular ICES network sessions and up to four when the session is co-sponsored by another organization (e.g. PICES). Proposals including more than the specified numbers of conveners will not be accepted for review.

Each proposer of a theme or network session is asked to identify one science priority area in ICES Science Plan to which the proposal is predominantly linked, and to list other science priority areas that are also relevant.

Network session proposals are reviewed and selected by SCICOM. The Committee will select the best network session proposal from within each of three different science priority areas, as defined in ICES Science Plan, and make one “open” selection based solely on innovation and excellence and relevance to ICES vision. Crosscutting proposals are encouraged and quality will be evaluated alongside the quality of proposals linked more closely to single priority areas. No more than four network sessions are selected.

Conveners of those network sessions selected by the Science Committee are notified around 10 months before the ASC and details of the sessions are posted on the ASC website about 9 months before the ASC.

Network sessions are scheduled for one hour but, occasionally, this time allocation may be increased 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. Network sessions are run as parallel sessions.