



General Presentation Guide

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CoHEsion

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A MESSAGE FROM THE COHESSION BOARD OF DIRECTORS & THE COHESSION CONFERENCE COMMITTEES (CC)

We're glad that you will be presenting at a CoHEsion Summit conference. Thank you for your willingness to participate and for the time and effort you will spend in creating and presenting your session(s).

Many presenters at the conference are experts in the work they do, but not necessarily in the work of making presentations. That's why we created this handbook. It outlines tips for putting together an effective presentation along with techniques for delivering it. For specific instructions regards to presenting at a CoHEsion conference, please see the [CoHEsion Presenter Quick Guide](https://cohesioncentral.org/presenter-resources) located at: <https://cohesioncentral.org/presenter-resources>.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with information regarding how to prepare, enhance, and deliver your presentation at a CoHEsion Summit. After reviewing this material, you should have a better understanding of:

- The basic rules for preparing and delivering your presentation
- Use of different techniques to enhance your presentation
- The importance of verbal and non-verbal communication in presenting
- How to effectively facilitate a question and answer session

This handbook is intended to be an informational guide for all CoHEsion presenters. Please use the handbook freely as you develop your presentation, but consider it a guide only. We encourage you to capitalize on your own ideas and creativity in developing your presentation. As you prepare your session, remember that your Track Chair will be happy to assist you. At any time during this whole process, please contact the CoHEsion office (admin@CoHEsionCentral.org) if you have suggestions for improvements to this handbook.

1.0 PREPARING FOR YOUR PRESENTATION

1.1 PRESENTATION BASICS

When presenting, there are some basic concepts that apply to all situations:

The purpose of presenting is to persuade.

A presentation is an opportunity to sell not only your ideas, but yourself as well.

Perceptions are more powerful than facts.

It is important that your information be accurate and correct; however, how you communicate is more important. People are swayed by the quality of the presentation, not because they are fools, but because a powerful presentation projects professionalism, confidence, and capability.

People are inundated with data

If you want your audience to listen to your message you must separate it from the masses of information that they take in each day. Strong speaking skills are critical in doing so. People have data coming at them from all angles, but what they usually remember is what matters to them most. The strongest speakers have the ability to transfer their interest in something to others.

1.2 PLANNING

Before you even think about the words you will use, you must establish parameters for your presentation. You will first need to define your objectives – what do you want to get across. Then set the level of the presentation to match your audience. Your next step is to define the goal and message.

- *To persuade or convince* – seek approval or support for a change in attitude, process, etc.
- *To inform or explain* – a status report – change audience’s knowledge
- *To inspire* – emotional, enthusiastic
- *To entertain*
- *To activate* – bring people to act on a proposal, or commit to further action

Usually, your presentation will have one main goal, which should be used to state your purpose.

1.3 LEARNER ANALYSIS

Understanding your audience is a key element of planning a successful presentation. Members of your audience may have varying backgrounds. Experience indicates that conference attendees would rather attend a class not totally relevant to their area of expertise than skip a session. Because you cannot meet the needs of every learner in your class, it is important that your materials be as well presented as possible. Most participants will react favorably to a good presentation even if it has limited applicability. Make sure that your class description provides enough information for attendees to determine if it is appropriate for them.

You will encounter many different learning styles and personality types in your audience. Some people learn best by hearing, others by seeing, and still others by doing. Accommodate as many learning styles as possible without being repetitive:

- Support what you are saying with visual aids
- Do not include every word that you are speaking on a slide
- Add graphics throughout your presentation
- Don’t be concerned if someone is focused on taking notes

To make sure the message you want to send is close to the one, which the audience receives, you must relate your content to your learners. Ask yourself questions like: what is meaningful to them, what are their attitudes toward the topic, and what are their expectations?

In the beginning phases of presentation preparation, your main focus is going to be the content. Once you have laid out the flow of the presentation and confirmed the content it is time to begin enhancing the presentation. You want to concentrate on delivering the content that will persuade, entertain, or activate your audience.

1.4 ENHANCING YOUR PRESENTATION MATERIALS

STORIES

Stories are a great way to explain a main point, transfer knowledge, and add creative flair to your presentation. This is also a great tactic to gain and keep your audience’s attention. Stories help the adult learner retain more information and for a longer period of time when the information is not just

shared as a lecture or written in a handout. The stories use practical application instead of strictly theory. Stories stimulate emotion. Stories can make your audience feel all the emotions you felt while experiencing the situation you are relying. As they experience the same emotions, they will remember the principles, tricks, etc. You have involved them physically, mentally, and emotionally.

ANALOGIES

As with stories, analogies can add that little something extra to our presentations. You will find analogies most helpful with explaining new or complicated concepts or processes. It may help to set up the situation you are explaining. It gives your audience a starting point. When using analogies, start with simple and build up to complex. Analogies also help with the audience's retention of the information you are presenting.

SLIDE ENHANCEMENTS

- *Graphics*
- Graphics add to the overall message of any presentation. Graphics can explain a complex process or topic in less than half the time as written text or spoken words.
- Caution: Do not overuse graphics. Graphics can be charts, pictures, cartoons, etc. Graphics are not necessary on each slide nor are they recommended. If not used properly they can be confusing, offensive, and/or distracting. As stated above, they can be an excellent complement to your presentation but just remember the placement should be very concise.

The use of graphics, animations, photographs, images, videos, music, and sounds requires proper licensing or written permission from the rightful owners. Due to Copyright and Trademark laws, we cannot allow the use of these items in your presentations unless you have the permission or licenses to do so. For more on Copyrights, visit <http://www.copyright.com>.

You may not use photos or images of people or identifiable entities in any manner that suggests the endorsement or association of any product or service or in connection with any pornographic or questionable materials. Please keep in mind that CoHEsion has a diverse attendee base; your presentation materials and delivery must be appropriate for all.

- *PowerPoint Tips*
- PowerPoint presentations are designed to be visual aides to enhance the flow of the presentation.
- A great way to use the PowerPoint tool is to 'build' your slides in the presentation. Building slides refers to displaying bullets or steps in a process one at a time. By using this technique, you are coordinating the slides with the specific point or step in a process you are speaking of. The benefit of using this technique is to facilitate the flow of the presentation and the concentration of your audience members.
- Displaying bullets all at once will allow the participants to read the entire slide and distract their attention. Also, remember that bullets are not complete sentences but key phrases of the overall topic. They are meant to emphasize the important aspects.

Examples of 'building' slides:



- *Slide Titles* – The title of your slide is another way to enhance your presentation. Just as with the bullets helping to direct the flow of the presentation, slide titles can help with the overall organization of the presentation. The purpose of the title is to capture the main point of the slide. This can be achieved by making the title easy to understand and with creativity. You do not want your participants spending time trying to figure out the meaning of the slide title. Think of it as a newspaper headline – describes story and gathers reader’s attention.

2.0 INSTRUCTOR PREPARATION

2.1 PRACTICE

It goes without saying that all instructors should practice every presentation they are delivering. You cannot deliver a successful presentation without practicing. We have heard all the excuses, “I do better under pressure,” or “my style is to wing it” and every once in a while these tactics work, but your best bet is to practice. There are a few different formats for practicing.

First, practice the actual script, meaning read the presentation word for word. You are looking for the flow of the presentation, are you able to pronounce all the words, check jokes, etc. Next, try to practice in the environment in which you will be presenting. The best way to do this is to utilize a speaker ready/practice rooms if possible. The more familiar with the environment the more comfortable you will be for the actual presentation. Then incorporate the medium you are using to deliver your presentation. Launch your slides and skip your notes. Think of it is a dress rehearsal. This will also allow you to practice body language, gestures, and product demonstrations, if applicable

Please note, when demonstrating a Web product, practice the timing ahead of time. The timing can be difficult to anticipate and it is critical you stay on track during your session. If you are doing product demonstrations consider a back-up plan as well. Remember Murphy’s Law; it tends to make an appearance during presentations.

2.2 VOICE PREPARATION

You have taken a lot of care and preparation when developing your presentation. You do not want to skip the most important part of your presentation, your ability to speak. It is important to train your voice as an athlete would train for a sporting event.

- The first thing to remember is to be in the best health possible. The way to achieve optimal health is by following a well-balanced diet, plenty of sleep and rest, an exercise routine.
- Drinking lots of fluids will also help to protect your voice. If your voice is faltering, try using steam to heal the voice.
- If you are going to be doing more than one session and spending a lot of time speaking at a CoHEsion Summit – rest your voice. The day before, try to rest your voice, possibly set aside time to be quiet.
- Use breathing to help you protect your voice. Breathe in and out through your nose. By breathing

through your mouth, your mouth becomes dry making it harder to speak and project your voice.

- Things to avoid - smoking and drinking alcohol, they tend to dry the vocal cords. Also be sensitive to air-conditioning – it too can dry you out.
- Avoid carbonated and caffeinated drinks. A few other foods and beverages to avoid: citrus fruits, chocolate, and dairy (make you sound nasal). Spices and salt – dry you out.
- Be careful of cough drops – stay away from ones with menthol.
- Do not clear your throat, cough, or gargle – they do not help.
- Try to avoid shouting and talking in loud environments leading up to your presentation.
- Also, note that while at a CoHEsion Summit the majority of the rooms will have microphones – use the microphones to spare your voice. You will be assured the audience can hear you clearly.

2.3 DRESS

Dress at a CoHEsion Summit is business casual – be sure that you wear something comfortable, yet appropriate. Do not wear tight shoes or clothes that will inhibit movement. Wear clothes that you like and make you feel positive. Do not wear clothes that will distract from your message. Comfortable clothes will allow you to focus on the message, instead of how uncomfortable you feel. Overall, you will feel better and more confident in comfortable shoes and clothes.

3.0 DELIVERING YOUR PRESENTATION

3.1 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

A message is not based solely on words. Non-verbal communication is taken into account and used to validate and confirm the verbal message. If the non-verbal does not match the verbal, there is confusion, at the minimum, and loss or credibility at the extreme.

Some key characteristics of an effective instructor are:

- Forceful and dynamic – speaks with energy, enthusiasm, conviction
- Commanding, yet professional – demands attention but handles him/herself well
- Sincere, warm, real, natural
- Knowledgeable

Be aware of your non-verbal communication. Positive non-verbal communication is achieved when your body compliments and supports the message you are intending to send. Try to maintain steady eye contact with the entire audience, but be sure not to stare. Watch your stance. Don't grip the lectern, or shove your hands in your pockets. Strive for a relaxed, natural stance. Also, avoid distractions like playing with change in your pockets or playing with your hair.

3.2 VERBAL COMMUNICATION AND USE OF LANGUAGE

The other aspect of conveying the message is the words you choose. Words can be selected to evoke emotions, to instill an image, to pass on information, but above all, they need to be chosen for clarity.

Make sure you choose the right words to explain what you are talking about and be sure to articulate. Since you will be speaking to a varied audience, be sure to speak slowly and clearly in the beginning - people need a few minutes to adjust to someone else's tone and inflection.

The following techniques help to increase clarity:

- Be careful about jargon. You must be certain that your audience understands the terminology you use. An analysis of your audience will help you gauge their level of understanding, but when in doubt, use the simplest terms possible and verify that your audience understands.
- Don't use profanity or remarks deriding specific ethnicity or gender.
- Watch out for language mannerisms that will throw off your listeners.
- Be sure you are using the correct pronunciation of the words you choose.
- Use specific language to avoid ambiguity and confusion.

3.3 SPEAKING NOTES

Notes are intended to help you remember key portions of your presentation. It is recommended that they not be the entire 'transcript' of what you will say. Presenting in this fashion will often result in a stiff, uncomfortable, and flat presentation.

If you have notes, remember they should be used as a guide. The tendency is just to read your notes, but you want to do this as little as possible. Try using index cards instead of paper. They will help you stay organized and on track, or to remember key quotes or numbers. If you are going to use cards, number each card (in case you drop them or get them mixed up), write large enough so that you only have to glance down to see words, and list only key information (bullet points or short phrases – no complete sentences). You can place your note cards on the lectern or table -a quick glance should be all you need to get to the next point.

3.4 DEALING WITH AUDIENCE DISTRACTIONS

You are going to be distracted during your presentation. That is a fact. Some common types of distracters are talking, door slamming or laughing. The most important thing to remember if you have a distracter in your audience is to keep returning to your topic. That will put you and your audience back on the same page.

If you find that you need to address the distraction, you should first think through why this person is interrupting your presentation -what are their motives? Identifying motives helps you select how to handle the individual. Some ways to address the distracter are to:

- *Vent* – allow them to get something off their chest, so they can focus on the message. This is probably not an option at CoHEsion, but if you do allow it, be sure not to let the venting go on for too long. In any case, don't let the audience vent if you don't think you can control it.
- *Parking Lot* – acknowledge that the distracter has a point. Verbalize that point in specific terms. State that it is outside of the scope of this presentation. Write it in a parking lot, which is a flip chart or other note pad. Promise to address the point at a later time, even if it is post-session or post-conference.
- *Use the Audience* – allow audience members to respond to the comments the distracter makes. Do this if you are confident that the audience is on your side and wants to move on with the presentation. This is not done to embarrass the distracter, only to let him/her know that many do not share their view.

After addressing the distraction, be sure to return to your presentation. Remind the audience where you left off and what you had already discussed. Bring the momentum of the presentation back to where it was.

3.5 PRESENTATION SUMMARY

The summary is your opportunity to hammer home the key parts of your message and make sure the message is conveyed. Make your summary concise. Reiterate main points. Give conclusions and recommendations. Ask for specific action. Close with a punch and then transition to the question and answer session.

4.0 QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS

Every CoHEsion session should conclude with a question and answer time. This is a great way to validate your knowledge on the subject and allow your presentation style to shine.

When developing your presentation, allow for at least 10 – 15 minutes for the question and answer session. As you are developing the question and answer session, it is a great idea to anticipate the questions your audience will be asking. Practicing your responses to these questions will ensure your success during the presentation.

Please follow the steps below when addressing or answering questions

- Pause for 10 seconds
- Ask participant to stand up
- Repeat the question
- Think before you speak
- Avoid humor, sarcasm, and negativity
- Ask the participant if you have answered his / her question

Be very careful when answering with humor, sarcasm, or negativity. You must think about what is appropriate for the audience and the setting. If you are uncertain, better to leave it out.

As prepared as you are for the question and answer session, you can still experience problems. These problems involve audience members who ask confusing, inappropriate, and sometimes annoying questions. To counteract confusing questions, ask the participants to repeat the question. Involve other participants to help explain what the question was intended to ask. Rephrase the question, and then proceed to your answer. It is critical to validate the question prior to answering a question – particularly confusing questions.

Inappropriate and annoying questions can be dealt with in a similar manner. We suggest asking the participant if they would like to discuss the issue off-line or perhaps make it a parking lot issue. Remember when putting an issue on the parking lot list to gather business cards and contact information from your audience members.

Finally, if you do not know the answer to a question, simply tell the audience, “I do not know but I will get an answer to you within 24 hours. Please leave your business card or contact information with me before you leave.” You never want to guess at an answer. Simply explain that you don’t have the answer and promise to follow-up. Then make sure you follow-up. Not following up will ruin the credibility you built during the session.

During the preparation process, you can get so wrapped up in developing and practicing your presentation that you forget your audience is there to gain your personal knowledge. They are not attending your session to see your slides or watch your demo, rather to experience these things with an experienced presenter and subject matter expert. The attraction is the information and knowledge sharing that you are offering. If you are relying simply on the slides, the participants can get that information online. Attendees want to hear your personal experiences, expert tips, and advice.

5.0 EVALUATION

All attendees will be asked to complete an online evaluation for each session attended. Your colleagues will evaluate you on the following criteria: knowledge of topic, delivery style, use of time, organization of material, value of presentation, and effectiveness of visuals.

6.0 COHESION CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions, please contact your *Track Chair* or *Program Committee Chair*.