

Workshop guidelines

This document is designed to lay out guidelines and format options for IFPA workshops. The original purpose of the workshops was to provide an alternate mode of communication in which there could be greater participation by a smaller group, pulled together around a fairly specific topic or area of research. The IFPA Executive Committee is circulating these guidelines to make sure that potential organizers understand what is being asked of them. A problem that has occurred in the past is workshops that adopt the symposium or plenary format, i.e. a series of talks on a broad topic, a format which is already in use at the meeting plenary sessions. Conference organizers set up an extensive review and selection process to select the best, contributed material for talks or to devise plenary sessions involving invited speakers. Adding further (“workshop”) plenary sessions does not fulfill the role envisioned for the workshops. We would ask that workshop organizers conform to the IFPA guidelines described below which are designed to ensure that the workshops live up to their original purpose.

The guidelines are an attempt to better structure the workshops. This is not an exhaustive list of possibilities but rather an indication of the type of event that we are looking for. An important part of this process is submission by the workshop organizers of a draft of their workshop to the IFPA Conference Committee for comments and suggestions prior to implementation. The ideas below include types of workshop (i.e. the intention of the workshop), the workshop format and other suggestions that might be beneficial or of relevance.

1. Workshop types

- a. Teaching: Workshops designed to teach a specific content area or technique to New Investigators (and others) or to a broader audience using experts in that content area
- b. Specific problem areas: Workshops addressing questions or controversies i.e., a very specific questions or problem that should be clearly described prior to the workshop
- c. Definitions: Workshops called to define a specific question or problem either of scientific content or technique with the aim of coming to a consensus and/or producing an outcome statement.
- d. Debates: A workshop addressing current or controversial topics designed to contrast two or more specific positions on a topic.
- e. Advances: A workshop assembled to produce new ideas and suggestions for advances or methods in a particular field, where the current problems and barriers to progress are described in advance.

2. Workshop format

- a. Teaching lectures: The traditional teaching format, preferably augmented with handouts, references, copies of the presentation slides etc.
- b. Groups: A workshop in which the audience breaks into groups to address questions in a setting that encourages participation. This would be suitable for workshops addressing advances, techniques, definitions or specific problems. Reassembling to synthesize a summary, a collection of answers or stages of a technique
- c. Experience-led: Groups of younger researchers led by an experienced investigator in exercises developing questions, devising experimental approaches, discussing alternate methodologies, similar to grant development
- d. Problem discussion: Workshop where a specific problem/question is posed and various techniques can be employed to formulate answers, including groups, brainstorming sessions

- e. Debates: Traditional, more adversarial approach to different views on a specific topic, preferably involving audience questions and participation

3. Other potential aspects for consideration

- a. Outcomes: Is there a desired outcome to the workshop process? Will it result in an agreed technical procedure, research design or models, a consensus or definition, an agreement on the way forward in a particular field? And will this involve further dissemination by means such as publication? Preferable if these questions/outcomes are announced in advance.
- b. Pre-circulation: Can the workshop process be aided by advance preparation? Will the circulation of questions, ideas, proposals, slides etc. prior to the workshop prepare the participants and allow for more intense discussion with less need for background at the workshop?
- c. Recording and dissemination: Will the workshop allow for production of a teaching series, of state-of-the-art lectures or articles, technical handouts or proceedings? Should we be making videos, recordings etc? Can these be published, circulated, made available via the web or a forum/discussion group?
- d. Control: How is the workshop going to be controlled? Is there a moderator who can keep the group together, ensure discussions remain focused or move them to useful endpoints? Do these endpoints need to be clear in advance?

The idea is that workshop organizers will provide the IFPA Conference Committee with a description of their workshop in terms of its subject matter, workshop type, format and other aspects, allowing for consideration and approval. The guidelines above are not all-inclusive and new ideas for workshops are always welcome. The essence is to provide a means of learning, discussion and problem solving in which there is broad audience participation in a manner differing from the other elements of the meeting.