LEAD TRACK CO-CHAIR AND ADDITIONAL TRACK CO-CHAIR GUIDELINES

Introduction

Track Co-Chairs play a key role in the development and organization of the Technical Program for the Conference. This document provides the guidelines for both the Lead Track Co-Chairs and the other additional Track Co-Chairs.

There are normally three Track Co-Chairs serving within each Track - except for Track 2 – HLW, which has five Track Co-Chairs. Being a Track Co-Chair is a three-year commitment where the first two years are spent observing, learning and assisting the other Track Co-Chairs in the development organization of the Track’s Technical and Panel Sessions. The third year is spent as the Lead Track Co-Chair managing that year’s Track Program development.

The Track Co-Chair commitments end in different years which provides for a “rotating” Lead Track Co-Chair assignment each year. The yearly cycle for a Track Co-Chair begins at the Thursday PAC meeting at the end of previous year’s Conference leading up to and during the Program Development Meeting (PDM) and continues until the following year’s conference. The three-year term ends on the last day of the WMS conference. A Track Co-Chair with an expiring term may run for an additional term. All Track Co-Chairs are elected by the Program Advisory Committee (PAC) Primary and Secondary Members of the corresponding Track by secret ballot.

Prior to and during the previous year’s Conference, the Track Co-Chairs lead the PAC Volunteers and Supporters to develop and confirm the program descriptions of the Track for the next year. The new Lead Track Co-Chair, with the assistance of the other Track Co-Chairs, organizes the Track Volunteers and Supporters to complete the tasks described on the following pages for conducting a successful Conference. It is important that the Lead Track Co-Chair act as the “leader” before, during and after the PDM so that all aspects of the technical sessions will be well organized, and each participant will know what is expected of him or her.

The Lead Track Co-Chair with the assistance of and in consultation with the other Track Co-Chairs lays out a plan and requests volunteers to perform the plan at each of the PAC meetings held, and through phone calls and emails prior to and after the meetings, to empower and delegate responsibilities to the volunteers, with the goal of organizing and conducting a successful Conference.

Topic Listing Revision for the Next Year’s Conference

During the late November/ December time frame, the WMS PAC Chair sends the upcoming Conference Topic Listing for that year with a request to modify, combine or delete Topic descriptions for the following year’s conference. (For example, in December 2023 the WM2024 Topic Listing was transmitted.) The Lead Track Co-Chair assumes the responsibility of organizing the timely review of the Topic Listing with the other Co-Chairs to make recommended changes or deletions and return the completed listing to Session Organizers for further action. After all the recommended changes have been incorporated, the updated Topic Listing will be sent by the WMS PAC Chair back to the Lead Track Co-Chairs and the entire PAC Members and PAC Supporters for review. Again, the Lead Track Co-Chair coordinates the review by their Track’s Volunteers.
Once comments are received, the Lead Track Co-Chair ensures that the final descriptions in his/her Track are agreed to by the other Track Co-Chairs, Lead Organizers and Additional Organizers for each Topic as well as other interested volunteers for that Track. After consensus is reached, the Lead Track Co-Chair sends the updated Topic Listing to the PAC Chair for review and publication for the PAC meetings at the WMS conference. The Lead Track Co-Chair will manage their Track’s volunteers until the Topic Listing is finalized with the Call for Participation. (Note: The PAC Chair can delegate the development of the topic listing to the Deputy PAC Chair.)

The Program Development Meeting (PDM)

The PDM is held in September and the Lead Track Co-Chair for each Track has the overall responsibility of:

- consulting with the other Track Co-Chairs, Topic Organizers and PAC Volunteers to ensure the required Abstract reviews have been completed in accordance with the Abstract Review instructions on the WMS website
- review and move unassigned abstracts to the appropriate topics within the Track before the PDM (Abstracts that are not suited for the Track should be transferred to another Track with concurrence of the receiving Track Co-Chair(s).)
- organizing the Abstracts that have been submitted into Topics and then Sessions.
- verifying that all Abstracts within the Track’s topics meet the expectations of each Topic Organizer
- working with the PAC Chair or Deputy PAC Chair to align sessions in a way that minimizes potential conflicts (e.g. scheduling people to be in two different Sessions at the same time, having a similar topic discussed at the same time, double booking Session Co-Chairs)
- working with other Track Co-Chairs to combine any half sessions with similar topics and transfer all applicable papers to other Tracks, as appropriate
- approving any transfers out of or into their Track, ensuring there is no duplication or communication problem across Tracks
- ensuring that all required oral, poster and panel session information is uploaded into the Topic Management site during PDM
- Ensuring complete accountability of all Abstracts received by the Track (i.e. no lost abstracts)

It is important to re-emphasize that the Lead Track Co-Chair act as the “leader” before, during, and after the PDM so that the preparation for the meeting, the meeting itself, and the work to prepare for the Conference will be well organized and each participant will know what is expected of them.

The PAC Chair, Deputy PAC Chair and WM Staff are available to answer any questions about the PDM processes and discuss any suggestions for improving the Conference.

Call for Participation

After the Call for Participation has been issued, the Lead Track Co-Chair should email the other Track Co-Chairs, the Track’s PAC Volunteers, and Topic Organizers to ask them to review the Abstracts as they are submitted.
It is very important that the Abstracts be reviewed with at least 2 reviews recommending acceptance and properly slotted into the Topics before the PDM. If the review shows that an Abstract should be transferred to another Topic within the Track, the respective Lead Track Co-Chair must agree and move the abstract accordingly on the website (or request the WMS Staff to make the change). If the Abstract is better suited for another Track, the Lead Track Co-Chair must consult with the Lead Track Co-Chair of the other Track or PAC Chair to mutually agree to move the Abstract. A history report is available for all volunteers of the transfers made before the PDM including the date of transfer.

**PDM First Day – Sunday Afternoon**

On the Sunday of PDM, attending Volunteers for each Track should discuss exactly where the Track Abstract review stands and if any Abstracts need additional reviews. If possible, reviews should take place immediately so that all Track abstracts are complete, and each Track can thus begin the topic organizational process. If any abstracts must still be reviewed, the Lead Track Co-Chair should assign a volunteer to complete the review as soon as possible, but if the review extends to the second day it should be done in parallel with the activities noted in the next paragraph. The Track Co-Chairs should encourage all new participants to attend the “First-Time Attendee Orientation” generally held on Sunday in the early afternoon.

**PDM Second Day - Monday**

**Paper and Panel Session Development**

On Monday, the second day of the PDM, the Organizers review the Abstracts in the Topics to confirm topic assignment and to assign Final Status in the morning. At this point, the Lead Track Co-Chair verifies the target number of rooms for the Track and the allocated time slots based on the spreadsheet provided by the PAC Chair. Typically, over 25% of the abstracts received will likely go to a poster session or be merged with another Abstract. Keep in mind that full (typically eight papers) or half (typically four papers) oral sessions are dictated by the number of abstracts submitted and adjustments must be made accordingly. With the approval of the PAC Chair, an additional paper may be added to or deleted from a session. This point is very important because often the Track will have more Topics/Sessions rooms requested by the Organizers than there are available slots/rooms to hold the Oral Sessions. It may also be found that a Topic that was organized to be a full Session, must be reduced to a half Session because there are not enough full oral session slots (or vice versa). Comparing the target number of rooms for the Track to the number of possible Topics/Sessions will determine if Sessions must be combined and/or if there are too many Abstracts assigned to a particular Session. Working with the other Track Co-Chairs and volunteers, decisions should be made on combining Topics/Sessions before the Session scheduling organization begins in the afternoon so that efforts are not wasted by organizing Sessions that cannot be accommodated. It may be possible to add a Session slot assigned to another Track, but that other Track must agree to give up their slot. Most of the extra Abstracts will be directed to that Track’s poster Session or to another Track.

The Lead Track Co-Chair (with concurrence of the other Track Co-Chairs) should assign the allocated time slots to the Sessions as a first draft. Then as the organization process continues, it is possible that several drafts will be created until all abstracts are placed and each Session is finally assigned a specific date and time.
The Lead Track Co-Chair should review each topic through the Chair Site and request the other Track Co-Chairs to accept specific responsibilities for overseeing several Topics/Sessions and to request the other PAC Members, PAC Supporters, and Organizers in their Track to be responsible for specific Topics/Sessions. The Lead Organizer for a specific Topic should review and organize his or her own Session, ensuring that each abstract has had two acceptable reviews. If that individual is unavailable, then the Lead Co-Chair should request another person to accept the task to take over the job of organizing the Session. Each Session’s Abstracts must be placed in the order that they will be presented in the Session through input into the Topic Management > WM2025 – Oral & Poster Site.

Session input must include Session Co-Chairs and Paper Reviewer positions. Each person selected for these positions must be contacted by the Lead Organizer to confirm their agreement and commitment to serve in that capacity. The Lead Track Co-Chair should check to make sure the invitations are extended.

Please note that the Lead Track Co-Chair and the PAC Chair must approve any recommendation for combining or rejecting papers and complete the required forms, which may be obtained from the WMS Staff table. The Lead Track Co-Chair must review all combined requests (WM27) to make sure that the authors have been contacted and agree to combining their abstracts, and to review rejected abstracts forms (WM28) for an appropriate and technically correct response. Rejecting an Abstract is not encouraged as it is the policy of WMS to work with authors to improve their Abstract and if possible, transfer it to another Track, or place it in the non-paper poster session.

**Posters**

Abstracts that cannot be accommodated in an Oral Session or which are better suited for a visual display should be placed in the Poster Session. Note that some Authors may have requested that their abstract only be considered for an Oral Session or only for a Poster Session. If they requested to only be in a Poster, be mindful not to place them in an Oral Session, and if they requested Oral Session only, these requests should be honored if it is an acceptable abstract if at all possible. If space does not permit for an Oral Session, place them in a poster session and the WMS staff will provide the author the option to withdraw or remain as a poster (and see if an oral slot later opens.) An abstract moved from an Oral Session to a Poster should be considered as a potential fill-in for the Oral Session should any paper be withdrawn. Please send a list of these abstracts to Lisa, lparenti@wmsym.org.

The Lead Track Co-Chair should ask an individual(s) to be responsible for the Posters and provide that person(s) with all the information associated with that Track. That person will also track and complete the necessary paperwork as new Abstracts are added. The Poster person for each Track should be listed as Lead Organizer and possible Judge for that Poster Session and work with the PAC volunteers in leading and participating in the Poster Sessions for all Tracks. In addition, the Poster person should ensure that the WMS Staff knows that he/she has volunteered and will be responsible for the Posters during PDM, and after the PDM for the paper reviews for the Best of Conference awards.

**Panel Sessions**

Invited and Pre-selected Panel/Roundtable Sessions are not treated the same as Abstract/Paper Sessions because their room layout and allocations are predetermined the month before the PDM. The Lead Track Co-Chair should discuss with the other Track Co-Chairs and the Lead Panel Organizers the specific
rooms assigned to the panels and the allocated time slots. This information will appear on the Track Targets spreadsheet discussed previously. The Lead Panel Organizer should input the names of the Panelists (invited and/or confirmed), the Panel Reporter, Additional Organizers, and the Panel Session Co-Chairs into the Topic Management > WM2025 – Panel Site if this has not already been completed prior to arrival at the PDM.

**Conference Session Layout Planning at the PDM**

The last activity/meeting on the second day (Monday) of the PDM is the Session layout discussion and planning. Proposed Sessions are displayed to allow all Track Co-Chairs to simultaneously review and critique a day-by-day schedule of the Preliminary Technical Program. Lead Track Co-Chairs must review (with the help of the other Track Co-Chairs and volunteers) the layout of the Track’s Topics/Sessions to ensure it meets the intent of the Track and attempt to identify conflicts with concurrent Sessions of both people and topics that would be similar in nature. Movement of Sessions from one time slot to another or movement of people to different Sessions must be agreed to by the Lead Track Co-Chairs involved and approved by the PAC Chair. Lead Track Co-Chairs are responsible for reviewing Topics to ensure all information has been completed and is in the proper order. They will need to print a Download Summary for their Track from the Topic Management Site (TMS) for future reference.

**After the PDM**

After the PDM, the Lead Track Co-Chair requests the other Track Co-Chairs to perform specific tasks and manages the Lead Session Organizers to ensure that Paper Reviewers complete the reviews per the posted deadlines. However, all of the Track Co-Chairs are able to review papers which can be found in the Topic Management > WM2024 Oral & Poster Site in the event a Lead Session Organizer or the assigned Paper Reviewer is unable to complete their reviews. Completion of the paper reviews is extremely important to ensure an excellent Conference.

**During the Conference**

PAC meetings are scheduled before and toward the end of the Conference. The Track Co-Chairs are expected to attend and the Lead Track Co-Chair should provide guidance in discussions of how the Track is organized for that year and work with the next year’s Lead Track Co-Chair, Organizers, PAC Members and Supporters to revise the Track and Session descriptions for the next year. It is best to request volunteers to review and rewrite the Topic descriptions or suggest new Topics. These will usually be written during the week and provided to the Deputy PAC Chair for a consolidated write-up by Tuesday at 1700. Then in the Thursday luncheon meeting at the Conference, the Lead Track Co-Chair will present the results of any changes or confirmation that last year’s Topic descriptions are acceptable. If for some reason the Lead Track Co-Chair cannot attend the meeting, they should request that one of the other Track Co-Chairs take this responsibility. If no Track Co-Chairs are available, then a PAC member from that Track should stand in for the Lead Track Co-Chair.

Lead Track Co-Chairs or their designee should attend each of the Presenters’ Breakfast. The Lead Track Co-Chairs may have to designate or fill in for missing Session Co-Chairs.