INFORMS Regional Analytics Conferences (IRAC) Guidelines

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Introduction

INFORMS Regional Analytics Conferences (IRAC) are regional analytics conferences held by INFORMS subdivisions/communities to serve specific geographical regions. These events are usually organized by chapters. For some chapters, e.g. the Chicago Chapter, these annual conferences are flagship events for the chapter.

Who has time to reinvent the wheel? This document provides proven tools for success when organizing IRAC conferences. Access sample timelines, checklists, emails, and more. Adapt samples to your needs or adopt as is.

Concerned Parties, Roles and Responsibilities

The primary concerned party in charge of organizing an IRAC is usually the relevant local Chapter. For example, for the Midwest area it is the Chicago Chapter, for the Pacific Northwest, it is the Seattle Chapter. The Analytics Society has been a strong supporter of IRAC, providing valuable thought leadership and sponsorship funding. Other INFORMS subdivision/community types can also organize an IRAC.

The primary concerned party, hereafter the “Primary Subdivision” can work in coordination with the other concerned parties. These can be:

- INFORMS Subdivisions Council
- INFORMS Meetings Committee
- Other INFORMS Subdivisions

INFORMS Paid Services

INFORMS encourages subdivisions to host meetings that align with their goals. Please reach out to Chelsea Teimoori to discuss what specific services are needed and an estimate of associated fees. The IRAC organizers should begin this conversation as soon as they decide they want to hold the conference.

Each Chapter determines upfront which of INFORMS paid services they plan to utilize for the conference. Fees for subdivision meeting, marketing, administration and sponsorship support

are billed based on direct labor rates and charge back expenses (at cost) attributable to event or activity. **INFORMS does not generate revenue or make money from these services/support.** Below are the categories for INFORMS Labor, as identified by INFORMS Meetings.

- Managed Meetings Labor/ Services (abstract processing, conference proceedings, conference hosting, etc)
- Marketing Support Labor (Design & production of website and marketing materials)
- Chapter Administration & Communications Support (Request for a mailing list and/or promo materials to be sent out)
- Sponsorship Support Labor - Sponsorships are sourced and handled by the local IRAC Committee directly. The INFORMS can assist with fulfillment and invoicing.

Risk and Revenue - Ownership and Sharing

Ownership of risk and revenue

The Primary Subdivision/Community assumes full ownership of both risks and revenue, as well as any potential losses.

The Primary Subdivision holds the exclusive responsibility for organizing the conference, with funding sourced from the Chapter funds. Other relevant stakeholders, fellow Chapters, Societies, or Sections may receive a well-defined share of the revenue as part of their involvement and contributions to the conference's success.

Revenue Share Agreement

A revenue share agreement may take the form of a Guaranteed Revenue Share or Revenue Share Based on Net:

- ***Guaranteed revenue share*** - Irrespective of the outcome of the conference, whether it happens or not, whether there is positive revenue or loss at the end of the conference, the concerned party is given a fixed and definite amount of money.

  e.g. Chapter A gets $1000 for their help in identifying and recruiting speakers for the conference.

- ***Revenue share based on net*** - The concerned party is given a fixed and definite amount of money based on if the conference generates profit. No distribution is made if the conference doesn't generate a profit.

e.g. Chapter B gets a percentage of conference revenue after expenses for their help in identifying and recruiting speakers for the conference. No distribution is made if the conference doesn't generate a profit.

Documentation of revenue sharing

Please use IRAC Revenue Share Agreement Form to document the revenue share agreement for IRAC. A Subdivision Officer must submit this form for each revenue share agreement made for the IRAC. This form goes to the INFORMS Subdivisions Council. This is to serve as documentation of the agreement and also avoids post-event confusion.

Some callouts regarding this form:

- The primary purpose of this form is documentation of verbal agreements between subdivisions and other INFORMS committees.
- Revenue share can be conditional (e.g. conditional on minimum number of attendees) however, such conditions MUST be documented via the form.
- This form should be used only for IRAC related revenue share agreements. All other kinds of contracts must follow the relevant INFORMS processes and procedures

Working with other Subdivisions

Working with other subdivisions and chapters is highly encouraged. The Subdivisions Council can help with connecting with others and connecting with resources.

An IRAC could be the first event a chapter's leadership has planned. Mature Chapters who have experience in organizing IRACs can help nascent Chapters as needed. The following Chapters have been hosting IRACs for multiple years:

- Chicago Chapter - 2016 - 2018 (branded as IMPAC), 2019 - 2023 and continuing (branded as IRAC)
- Pacific Northwest (Seattle Chapter) - 2018, 2021
- Cincinnati - 2023
- Atlanta - 2023

Timelines for IRAC Planning

Organizational milestones

Timeline	**Key Activity**
T - 8 months	Publish the theme of the conference Start speaker recruitment
T - 7 months	Confirm the details of the conference model and commit in writing. Submit the Revenue Share Agreement Form for each concerned party. Prepare initial conference budget (set event pricing)
T - 6 months	Complete Subdivision Meeting Proposal Form and return to Liz/meetings.
T - 4 months	Upload/send final collateral to INFORMS staff to start developing the Website. (see section below) Confirm sponsorship levels & confirmed sponsors Set event rates and categories based on budget Confirm meeting format (e.g., in person, virtual, hybrid) Internal Transfer Request Form - In the case of internal subdivision sponsorship
T - 4-6 weeks	Provide INFORMS staff with first name, last name, company affiliation, title, and preferred email for all event comps (e.g., speakers, organizing committee, etc.).
T - 1 month	Final go/no-go decision
T - 1 week	Speaker communications
T - 2-3 days	Attendee communications
T -	Conference date

Timeline	Key Activity
T + 1 month	Post event communications (e.g. slides, thank you, etc.)
T + 4 months	Finalize and close out conference budget

Final collateral to INFORMS staff to create Website

INFORMS staff needs the following details to create website:

- Event Title/Theme
- Event Description
- Detailed Agenda w/ Times
- Speakers & Presentations
- Names, Organization Titles, Presentation/Session Titles
- Types of Presentations (e.g., Keynote, Panel Discussion, etc.)
- Speaker photos
- Speaker bios
- Sponsors
- Sponsorship Options: Levels and Benefits w/ Pricing
- Sponsors Names/Logos
- Note Sponsor levels if applicable (e.g., Diamond, Supporter, etc.)

Process for finalizing meeting date

Liz Hood serves as liaison with customer service to set up meeting dates and provide marketing with a registration link for the website (4 months prior to the event date).

- Set registration rates and early bird deadline
- Maximum attendance for venue to avoid over selling

Once Liz Receives completed Meeting Request Form, she vets meeting dates with the VP of Meetings to affirm policy and approval or recommend alternate date options. Give INFORMS Team a heads-up regarding dates. Liz reaches out to conference organizers to confirm once meeting date(s) are approved.

Detailed timelines

The suggested detailed timelines and task list can be found at

IRAC Conference timeline - Template.xlsx

Guidelines for choosing IRAC dates

Please consider the following when choosing a date for IRAC.

- (Required) Do NOT select a date that is within (before or after) two weeks from a major INFORMS Conference, specifically the Business Analytics Conference in the spring and the Annual Meeting in the fall.
- Avoid conflicts with major local analytics conferences
- Avoid spring breaks and semester end / finals week and summer vacations for local schools and universities. It makes it very difficult for the student community to attend.
- Avoid long weekends and holidays

Speaker Planning

Types of speakers

As soon as a theme for the conference is decided on, it is recommended that you start speaker planning. Typically, the types of speakers include:

- Keynote speaker(s) for the conference
    - Try to go for someone who is a great speaker, has had great impact in the field and has good name-recognition (either for themselves or for the organization they are part of)
    - Typically, one key note per day is recommended.

- Track keynote speakers, if there are tracks
    - These are keynotes for the track(s). They are experts in the field

- Individual speakers

- Panelists, if there are panels

The same person can fulfill multiple roles - e.g. as a speaker and a panelist. It is encouraged to have some, especially with panels and speakers because it helps bring together the conference theme as a whole. Also, as a practical note, it is easy to fill in panelist spots. On the other hand, panelists spots can be used as a good buffer for managing speaker time slots. If you are in the happy situation where you have too many good speakers, some of them can be put in a panel.

Sourcing Speakers

The following are excellent resources to find good speakers

- INFORMS Speakers program
- Past speakers from local events
- LinkedIn and connections
- Professions and Academics from local universities and schools
- Other professional connections

Speaker benefits

IRAC Speakers and panelists typically do not get paid. The following are ideas to help support speakers:

- Speakers registration fee can be waived. These will be counted as complementary registrations and speakers and panelists can attend the whole conference.
- Token gifts, like a coffee mug or a placard, can be funded from the IRAC budget.
- Parking expenses can be covered by the IRAC budget.
- INFORMS typically does not reimburse travel costs for speakers. An exception can be made for keynote speakers, provided this has been budgeted well in advance.

Timelines

- Make sure that the keynote speaker is decided well in advance so that it can be marketed well.
- Finalize the speakers at least 2 months in advance of the conference so that the agenda can be finalized and published.

Diversity

- Please make sure that the speakers (including keynotes, track keynotes, individual speakers and panelists) represent a diverse group.
- The DEIJ officer of the subdivision should pay special attention to make sure that minorities and other under-represented groups are well-represented.

Materials to be collected from the speaker

The following are the materials needed from speakers and panelists:

- Short Bio
- Profile picture
- Title and abstract (if speaker)
- 3 - 4 key takeaways from the talk

- Speaker consent agreements
    - General agreement - Media_Release_&_Code_of_Conduct_Agreement.pdf
    - Agreement if they don't want to be recorded - Media_Release__Code_of_Conduct_Agreement - Do Not Record.pdf

Sponsorships

It is important to secure sponsorships early for a net revenue positive IRAC. Corporate organizations, schools, and even other INFORMS Subdivisions can be sponsors of IRAC.

It can be effective to put together sponsorship tiers with varying degrees of benefits. An example of sponsorship tiers is given in the table below:

Level	Diamond	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Cost	$3,000	$1,500	$1,000	$500
Sponsorship Benefits				
Networking Event Sponsor	✓			
Coffee Sponsor	✓	✓		
Table/booth during in-person day of IRAC (Regional Conference)	✓	✓		
Logo included on promotional emails	✓	✓	✓	
Complementary registrations	4	3	2	1
Recognition during Opening Plenary	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognition on Conference Homepage and in follow-up message to attendees	✓	✓	✓	✓

Marketing

It is also extremely important to start marketing the conference as soon as possible. Once the conference theme and dates are finalized, save the dates can be sent out.

Having a focused social media campaign positively impacts conference registration. You can partner with sponsors, local colleges and INFORMS National for better reach.

Other resources

- 2022_Memo_Fee for Services_INFORMS Meetings Department_Regional Analyti…
- IRAC Revenue Share Agreement Form
- Template Google Folder Structure to organize IRAC
- INFORMS Speakers Program - if you need to get started with a curated list of speakers
- Media Release Forms
    - General agreement - Media_Release_&_Code_of_Conduct_Agreement.pdf
    - Agreement if they don't want to be recorded - Media_Release__Code_of_Conduct_Agreement - Do Not Record.pdf