

AHRI Speaker Selection Guidelines

For National, State, and Network Events

Purpose

To ensure all AHRI events reflect the highest standards of subject matter expertise, lived experience, and inclusive practice, these guidelines provide a unified framework for selecting and briefing speakers across all AHRI platforms.

The intent is to safeguard participants, support high-quality outcomes, and protect AHRI's reputation, without constraining volunteers or imposing unrealistic expectations. These guidelines are designed to be applied pragmatically and proportionately, recognising the diversity of AHRI events and the voluntary nature of much of the work involved.

AHRI has a long history of running well attended and outstanding events that are renowned for:

- Delivering relevant and meaningful content
- Being engaging and memorable.
- Meeting their audiences' needs
- Being professionally run

These guidelines help maintain those standards across all event types.

Proportionate Approach

AHRI runs a wide range of events, from small Network forums to large State and National conferences. Expectations should scale with the nature of the event.

When applying these guidelines, volunteers and staff should consider:

- Event type (Network event, State conference, National event)
- Audience size and profile
- Topic sensitivity or novelty
- Potential risk (e.g. distress, misinformation, reputational impact)

Not every event requires the same level of formality, documentation, or review. What matters is that reasonable, good-faith judgement is exercised in line with the risk and profile of the event.

Clarifying Risks

These guidelines primarily seek to reduce the risk of:

- Inaccurate, poorly grounded or misleading content
- Harmful or distressing material, particularly on sensitive topics
- Content that undermines inclusion, safety or trust for our audiences
- Reputational risk to AHRI

Volunteers are **not expected to validate technical accuracy in depth**. Instead, the focus is on sensible safeguards that protect participants and outcomes.



1. Guiding Principles

- **Rigour and Relevance:** Speakers should demonstrate appropriate expertise, professional credibility and/or lived experience relevant to the topic and audience.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI):** Speaker line-ups should aim for diversity across multiple dimensions (including, but not limited to, gender, cultural background, disability, neurodiversity and age). For DEI-focused topics, lived experience should meaningfully inform content design, either directly through speakers or via advise through engagement with AHRI's DEI Networks.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Speaker selection should be defensible and explainable if reviewed. This does not require formal or competitive processes for every event, particularly where speakers are sourced through professional networks. However, if questions arise, those responsible for selecting and engaging speakers should be able to explain how and why a particular speaker was engaged (at a level appropriate to the scale of the event).
- **Authenticity over Promotion:** Speakers are expected to inform, challenge and engage audiences rather than promote products, services or personal agendas. Limited contextual promotion may be acceptable where appropriate but must not compromise neutrality or learning outcomes.
- **Avoid Conflicts of Interest:** Volunteers should be mindful of personal or professional conflicts and manage these transparently. At Network level, reliance on professional relationships is understood and acceptable when managed in good faith. If in any doubt, volunteers can seek review of any perceived conflict or questions about conflicts through either State Councils or AHRI Volunteer Team staff.
- **Respect for Voluntary Contributions:** AHRI values speakers who contribute their time at reduced or no cost and recognises the goodwill this represents.

2. Speaker Selection Process

2.1 Identification

Speakers may be identified through multiple avenues and no single sourcing method is required.

- **Use multiple sourcing avenues:** professional networks, LinkedIn, AHRI Member Lounge, AHRI State Councils, sponsors, and past event feedback.
- **Ask other volunteers:** Post expression of interest on AHRI Volunteer Teams Channels.
- **Check the speaker Expressions of Interest (EOI) collected by AHRI:** Speakers approach AHRI regularly with their topics and expertise. These EOI forms are collated in the Volunteer Resource Hub and available for review by volunteers arranging State or Network events.
- **Check the central register:** AHRI shares a central register available for volunteers to review of past speakers who have been rated highly by the audiences at our State Conferences.
- **Collaborate with AHRI's five State Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Networks** to identify potential speakers from underrepresented or diverse communities. If you don't have existing connections, please contact the AHRI Volunteer Team who can help introduce you to a relevant DEI Network.
- **Connect with a relevant Network** group across all states listed on the AHRI Network Events page relating to specialist topic areas.
- **Research:** Magazine and online articles such as those found on *HRM* Online can be helpful to identify key voices on particular topics.

2.2 Evaluation Criteria

Before confirming a speaker, volunteers are encouraged to consider:



- Topic sensitivity (e.g. trauma, identity, contentious issues)
- Audience profile (experience level, expectations)
- Strength or novelty of claims being made

Where risk is higher, additional safeguards are encouraged rather than more complex selection processes.

When evaluating the selection of a speaker, consider some or all of the following factors:

- **Demonstrated subject matter expertise or credibility**, qualifications, past research publications or lived experience (depending on the topic). Note that for DEI topics, the co-design elements at 2.3 should be considered carefully.
- **Alignment with AHRI's values and the event objectives.**
- **Ability to engage audiences respectfully and inclusively.**
- **Content that has meaningful insights**, information or interactive learning design that will add value to attending an AHRI event.
- **Diversity should be embedded as a core principle.** Aim for speaker lineups that reflect balance across gender, ethnicity, dis/ability, and other dimensions in every session, not just on diversity topics. It is important to consciously consider whose voices are missing to ensure a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and demographics are represented.

2.3 Co-Design Elements for DEI topics

DEI topics are of great interest to many of AHRI's audiences at all levels, however topics may carry heightened risk of sensitive material and/or content that if not delivered carefully could undermine inclusion, safety or trust for our audiences.

- **Subject Matter Expertise and Credibility:** When delivering DEI topics, speakers must demonstrate genuine expertise in their topic, whether this is through formal credentials (e.g., academic research), professional credibility through long term specialisation and/or through personal lived experience. For some topics within DEI, personal lived experience and direct community engagement is as valued as formal qualifications or professional experience. When selecting speakers for DEI topics, this genuine expertise should be assessed before any engagement is confirmed. Consider reviewing the proposed content in advance of engagement, or ensure you have strong recommendations or references on the speaker's ability to deliver this content expertise.
- **Representation and Lived Experience:** If a session focuses on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion it is important that the speaker(s) as a whole reflects diversity. This doesn't mean every individual must come from a diverse background, but there should be a mix of perspectives across the lineup. Where a speaker can also share relevant personal experience on the issue being discussed and has the capability to present effectively, that should be seen as a strength.
- **For panels regarding workplace initiatives**, consider using a moderator or facilitator with lived experience of the workplace issue being presented, or a qualified professional expert if the panel itself does not have lived experience in that issue.
- **Leverage our existing State DEI Networks experience**, or other specialist Networks, to help assess speakers for lived experience, qualified expertise and/or relevancy if you are not confident.

2.4 Transparency of process

- **National Events Team:** AHRI staff involved in selecting and developing programs for speakers and content at the National Events will follow these guidelines prior to engaging speakers.



- **State Events Team:** AHRI staff involved in managing and coordinating support for State Conferences can assist State Councils in ensuring these guidelines are followed. State Councils and other state volunteers involved in selecting speakers and developing content should be able to confirm that these guidelines are followed prior to engaging speakers.
- **Network Forums:** Network Convenors and Committees should follow these guidelines prior to engaging speakers for Network events. When submitting an Event Request Form, the responsible Network Convenor volunteer should confirm that they have followed these guidelines in selecting the speaker, and that they have considered the co-design elements for any DEI topics. This will be a specific question on the Event Request Form.

3. Speaker Briefing and Support

- Provide a comprehensive briefing to speakers before the event including:
 - Event objectives, audience demographics, and session format.
 - Accessibility expectations and inclusive language guidance.
 - Technical setup, rehearsal schedules, and contact points.
 - Provide any AHRI branded presentation templates or particular promotion slides that are required to be used.
- For DEI topics, consider seeking assistance from one of the DEI Networks in reviewing session content in advance to assess suitability for sensitive topics or those carrying more risk.
- Address accessibility and equipment needs early: Ask speakers upfront if they require any accommodations or special arrangements.
- Embed speaker selection checkpoints into event planning timelines e.g., at least 16 weeks out for State Conferences.

4. Feedback and Continuous Improvement

- Collect structured feedback from attendees and speakers post-event. This is done through AHRI staff and will be provided to volunteers once collated.
- Hold a post-event debrief with stakeholders: Once the feedback is received, reconvene your planning committee or stakeholder group. Discuss the feedback candidly and use it to assist in planning future events.
- Review speaker performance and audience engagement metrics.
- Use insights to refine future speaker selection and briefing processes.

Roles and Responsibilities

These guidelines are intended to enable confident judgement, not constrain it. Applied proportionately, they support volunteers to deliver high-quality, safe and inclusive events while recognising the realities of volunteer-led delivery.

Network Convenors and Committees

- Apply these guidelines in good faith for their own events
- Conduct a proportionate risk sense-check
- Brief speakers appropriately
- Escalate or seek advice where uncertainty exists

State Councils

- Maintain a higher-level view across Network Events and State Conferences



- Consider balance, diversity and risk across the annual portfolio, not event-by-event
- Apply these guidelines in good faith for their own events, including State Conference program creation and speaker selection

AHRI Staff

- Support and advise volunteers when requested
- Provide clear guidance on how to run events through Network Forum handbooks and State Conference materials
- Maintain central folder of EOIs received and the central speaker register
- Escalate issues where appropriate

