Guidance on Proposing, Organizing, and Presenting SETAC Webinars: Best Practices and Things to Consider

Several years ago SETAC began presenting webinars as a way to communicate leading edge science to our members and other interested parties. As more groups begin to want to organize webinars, it is appropriate to revisit and update the guidance. Also, changes have been made to the software we use and the way we disseminate archival copies of webinars after the live event.

The Basics

Webinars are an electronic means to present lecture materials and support interactions between a presenter or presenters and a live audience. Using a viewer for PowerPoint slides and either an Internet or telephonic audio connection participants are able to view and hear a lecture in a digital forum. SETAC webinars typically consist of an introduction of the topic and presenters by the moderator, about 40 to 45 minutes of lectures, punctuated by short time periods for questions and answers, and a final summary followed by a somewhat longer period for Q&A. A feedback questionnaire is provided at the end so participants can provide commentary on likes, improvements, and suggestions for future webinar topics.

A few days following the live event the recording is made available on the SETAC website (Go to Publications and click on Webinars). Those who attended the live event are able to download and view a copy for no additional cost, while those who were not able to participate live can still obtain a copy of the webinar for a price. The Board of Directors decided that there should be a finite time period for charging for this access with the embargo time varying from six months to 18months depending on the type of individual or group (student, member, regional chapter, non-member).

The Process

The process of creating and presenting webinars consists of several steps:

1. Proposing and having a topic accepted
2. Identifying speakers
3. Creating an advertising plan and materials
4. Preparing the slides and speaker notes
5. Coordinating the assembly of the materials
6. Practice time and speaker/staff collaboration
7. Presenting the webinar
8. Posting the archive and managing follow up.

The following guidance provides more specifics on what happens during each of these steps and who is involved.

Webinar Topic Proposal and Acceptance

SETAC allows for a wide variety of topic proposers and topics. Although we have strong recommendations or even requirements to steering committees for using the webinar format to disseminate results of workshops and special science symposia/focused topic meetings, the fact is any SETAC member or group can propose a webinar. The main considerations are whether the topic is of interest to members (or other relevant audiences), is sufficiently current (or at least not overlapping with similar content from other providers), can be effectively delivered in a webinar format, and does not contain commercial or propriety information or messaging.

Topics may be proposed by individuals, committees, or advisory groups, with the expectation that the proposer is committed to support the webinar. In other words, random suggestions of topics without concomitant support to deliver the webinar will not be accepted. In order to suggest a topic, simply send a working title, general indication of timing, short topic description, and possible presenters to Bruce Vigon (bruce.vigon@setac.org).

Webinar proposers will be notified in a timely manner (target is within a couple of weeks) of the acceptance. In certain cases a response might be to suggest certain changes to the topic in order to make it more compatible with the above stated considerations. If there is a question regarding the topic, the Education and short Courses Committee may be asked for an opinion, although most of the time the staff will make the decision.

Identifying Speakers

Having the appropriate speakers is essential to a successful webinar. In fact, the reason why a participant may sign up for a webinar is the expertise and knowledge of the speaker(s). SETAC's policy is to try and have sectoral balance in the speaker group if possible. This is why drawing topics and speakers from past workshops is effective. If the topic is of global interest, it is also a plus if the speakers are not all drawn from one geographic unit. When a proposer provides the names of speakers it is recommended that they be contacted beforehand to ensure they are willing to participate. Given the typical duration of a SETAC webinar, the maximum number of presenters is limited to three, and even two may be sufficient, depending on the circumstances.

SETAC webinar speakers do not have to be SETAC members or members of a relevant Advisory Group. However, if the topic is derived from a SETAC supported activity, we strongly recommend that the speakers be SETAC members. When thinking about speakers, it helps to consider how the group of presenters will divide up the topic. For example, if a topic has both environmental fate and toxicological aspects, this may suggest a way to identify candidates. Likewise, if the topic is derived from a workshop, breakout group leaders may be good candidates for webinar speakers.

In addition to being expert on the aspects of the topic, webinar presenters should be compelling speakers. The setting for delivering an interesting and attention-grabbing talk in front of a computer screen is a bit different than giving a talk at an annual meeting or even a classroom lecture.

Creating an advertising plan and materials

Like any business activity, webinars are only able to be successful if potential participants know about them and are sufficiently informed to be willing to pay to learn about the topic. The SETAC office publications staff, working with the science manager, will actually prepare the advertising description and place the advertising where it will attract potential attendees. However, webinar proposers or tentative speakers will be consulted to identify key aspects of the topic that should be communicated to attract attendees and, to confirm biographical details and to suggest possible audiences or groups with whom SETAC should communicate to ensure good participation. This latter point is especially important as often the most important audiences may be from professional or technical groups other than SETAC.

Preparing slides and speaker notes

SETAC's webinar offerings need to present a professional image and to ensure that the material presented is clear and readily viewable by both the live audience and post-webinar purchasers. There is a requirement to use the SETAC slide template, which we will provide to you at the organizing kick off, and to coordinate the development of the materials with the office staff. There are several steps involved in this process:

- *Create a webinar outline* (including speaker assignments for the various sections) – Speakers are requested to develop a detailed topical outline for the webinar. This does not have to be at the individual slide level, but needs to be sufficiently specific to identify all points that the presenters want to make. The science manager may make some comments on the draft outline but it is up to the presenters to decide what are the key elements and to provide for a logical flow to the presentation, including where breakpoints should occur for intermediate Q&A and to change speakers. Note: we prefer if each segment of the webinar be presented by a single speaker and that the segmentation does not result in a high frequency of speaker turnover. Ideally, each speaker talks once (except for the group Q&A at the end).
- *Develop a draft slide file* – working individually or as a team, speakers need to create a draft of their slides. In doing so they are required to sign a copyright release form. What this does is ensure that the speaker has secured permission to use any copyrighted material that is placed on the slides. The release form is available from the SETAC office and final approval for the webinar is contingent on its execution and securing the necessary rights. Although it is not necessary to complete at the time of preparing the drafts slides, each slide must be annotated in the notes section. The reason for this is two-fold. The most important reason is that once scheduled it is not possible to cancel a webinar. Thus, if a speaker should be unavailable on the day of presentation, the notes make it possible for one of the other presenters or the moderator to cover the material. A second reason for having

notes is to increase the smoothness of the presentation. Although the idea is not to read the notes, having notes and using them to practice helps with timing and the delivery. Regardless of your expertise with preparing and using PowerPoint or other presentation media, there are certain features or capabilities that need to be modified or cannot be used in webinar presentations. We will review those with the presenter team and make suggestions for work-arounds where needed.

Coordinating the assembly of the materials

- *Create a final slide file* – the office staff will schedule a couple of calls intermediate to preparing the draft and final slide files to refine the materials and make sure all members of the team agree on the content. A final slide file along with final speaker notes should be created and sent to the office sufficiently ahead of the webinar to allow it to be checked for format and set up ready to run. If you want us to set up a document repository so that a collaboration version of the slide deck can be maintained, we can do that.
- *Handouts or other distributable materials* – occasionally, webinar presenters would like to have materials either pre-distributed to registrants or (preferably) available for download when participants log in for the webinar. These materials can range from publications relevant to the topic to additional reading lists to supplemental information not part of the slides. Subject to the above copyright requirements, such materials should be provided to the office in advance of the date of the webinar, preferably in pdf format.
- *Preset Questions and Answers* – although the nature of webinars is to be as interactive and spontaneous as possible, it is SETAC's practice to control and manage audience interactivity. We do this in a number of ways. One of the important ones is having a set of "back pocket" questions and answers that the presenters prepare. Questions are taken from the live audience via a text dialogue viewable by the moderator. The moderator and presenters can communicate via private instant messaging. Should a presenter not feel they are able to field a question posed by the audience through the moderator, one of the alternative questions is posed by the moderator. (This is transparent to the audience who cannot see the questions being submitted.)

Practice time and speaker/staff collaboration

- *Dry run* – with the SETAC webinar software we are limited in being able to provide log in access and individual practice space (a "green room") on the system. Instead, approximately one week before the webinar, we will schedule a dry run session for all webinar presenters and the involved staff. This will give the presenters an opportunity to learn the features of the webinar software and run through the material in a realistic environment, but sans audience.
- *Tweaks to the "final" slides* – should the dry run call for some minor changes to the slides or notes, these can be accommodated. However, no major changes or introduction of new material will be permitted.

- *Speaker/staff collaboration* – in addition to the dry run time the involved office staff will be available during the final week or two pre-webinar for consultation or suggestions.

Presenting the webinar

- *Getting started* – about 30 minutes before the actual start time of the webinar, one of the SETAC office staff will initiate the system. When registrants log in, they will see a short SETAC slide show consisting of the advertizing for the webinar and some selected information about SETAC (how to become a member, upcoming workshops and meetings, etc.). When registrants pay they will be given a log in that differs from that used by the moderator and presenters.
- *Initiating the webinar* – about 2 to 5 minutes before the start time, we will do a sound check. Presenters are urged to use headsets rather than the microphone on their computer or the handset on their telephone. We do prefer using a land line phone because the audio quality is better, but VOIP is also available. Screen control at this point will be with the moderator and we will switch to the title slide of the actual webinar.
- *Moving Forward* – at the start time the moderator will welcome the audience, provide a word about SETAC, give some basic groundrules and introduce the first presenter. After each segment (depending on the timing flow), the moderator will allow for a Q&A period of typically 5 minutes. At the end of the webinar, a longer period of 10 to 12 minutes is allowed.
- *Finishing Up* – at or close to the ending time the moderator will thanks the presenters and the audience and will close the webinar with a few remarks. This is followed by putting up a survey questionnaire to elicit feedback and suggestions.

Posting the archive and managing follow up

- Within a few days after the live event, the archive file containing the slides as screen captures and the audio is posted on the SETAC website. As noted those signed up and paying will be able to access this for free and anyone not able to attend live may purchase the archival version.
- Any additional follow up is at the discretion of the moderator or the presenters, depending on their preferences and the nature of the query. In the past we have, for example, had presenters who wanted to provide follow up responses to all o the audience questions submitted. These responses were posted as supplemental material for download from the webinars page of the SETAC website.

The Timeline

Days	Activity/Milestone	Description
0	Contact proposer/lead presenter to initiate planning	Initiate conversation on content, process and co-presenters
2	Develop initial working title, abstract and target audience statement	Working materials to begin creating the advertising/marketing campaign for the webinar series and the first offering
3	Coordination telecon	Discuss the format, content, and delivery
4	Confirm/revise title, abstract, audience intent; identify groups/databases for advertising	Complete the preliminary materials to get our marketing/advertising campaign development underway
7	Confirm additional presenters and topical coverage/distribution	Complete the presentation team and assess the optimal way to present the topic
8	Develop preliminary marketing/advertising plan/materials	Create advertising materials as part of a strategy plan on how SETAC will gain visibility/participants for these events
14	Presenters submit draft copy of webinar outline	First draft of both slides and presenter notes/scripts for review and comment
17	Telecon w. presenters	Discuss topical coverage, draft materials, anticipated audience, and logistics
21	Setup Registration for event	Setup online registration for event (cost, sponsor…)
21	Review and comment on draft webinar materials	Includes slides and notes
24	Distribute/post first round of advertising info	
31	Coordination telecon	Discuss the format, content, and delivery
45	Review and approve final set of webinar materials	
45	Coordination telecon	Discuss the format, content, and delivery
56	Distribute final advertising info	
57	Complete info-mercial slides	Update 4 to 6 slides advertising SETAC/webinars for attendees to view prior to start of webinar
59	Practice session w. presenters	Dry run in SETAC Webinar Software environment
63	Final review/feedback w. presenters	
66	**Deliver Webinar**	
74	Post-webinar processing	Generate post-webinar tracking, evaluation materials, list of attendees and post recording of the webinar
81	Prep briefing for Board/SWC	