Panel Discussions

If you’re invited to speak on a panel before an audience or to moderate a panel, here are some tips to keep in mind:

FOR PARTICIPANTS
- Have the ground develop a plan for discussion beforehand.
- Establish a physical space appropriate to the needs of the participants and presentation.
- Develop visual or audio aids.
- Try to stick to predetermined discussion outline.
- Contribute frequently.
- Make contributions brief and focused.
- Avoid repetition of or dwelling on points.
- Listen closely and indulge in polite disagreements or responses.
- Appear competent and knowledgeable.
- Manage nonverbal communication such as body language and eye contact.

FOR MODERATOR
- Open with an attention getter.
- State and give a brief overview of central discussion questions.
- Introduce panelists.
- Initiate beginning of discussion.
- Ask questions to introduce topics or gain clarification and detail.
- Keep the group on topic.
- Make summary statements.
- Offer information or statements to spark discussion during lulls.
- Mediate any conflicts that arise.
- Balance communication and number of contributions between panelists.
- Summarize discussion at end.
- Close emphatically and appropriately.