

COABE Conference Session Planning Guide



Plan with Purpose. Present with Confidence.

Use this guide to move from your accepted session idea to an engaging, well-organized conference experience. Think through what participants should learn, how they will engage, and what they should be able to take back to their work.

1 Start with the Destination

My session topic:

By the end of my session, participants will be able to:

The most important takeaway I want participants to remember is:

After the conference, I hope participants will use what they learned to:

2 Know Your Audience

Think about who will be in the room, and what will make this session valuable to them.

Who is this session designed for?

☐ Instructors ☐ Program leaders ☐ Administrators ☐ Support staff ☐ Researchers ☐ Other

What might participants already know about this topic?

What challenge, question, or need does this session address?

3 Build the Experience

Rather than asking "What am I going to cover?" ask: "What do I want participants to experience?"

OPEN - Get them interested.

How will you introduce the topic and connect it to participants?

ENGAGE - Help them learn and participate.

What key ideas, examples, demonstrations, discussions, or activities will participants experience?

CLOSE - Make the learning stick.

How will participants reflect, identify a takeaway, or decide what they will do next?

4

Plan for Engagement

A strong conference session gives participants opportunities to think, respond, discuss, practice, or apply—not just listen.

Choose the strategies that fit your session:

- ☐ Poll or audience question
- ☐ Reflection
- ☐ Hands-on practice
- ☐ Collaborative activity
- ☐ Pair/share or small-group discussion
- ☐ Scenario or case study
- ☐ Demonstration
- ☐ Q&A / Other: _____

Where will participants actively engage during my session?

What will participants actually DO—not just hear or see?

5

Map Your Session

Time	What will participants learn or do?	Presenter notes / resources
Opening		
Closing		

Time check: Have I allowed enough time for interaction, transitions, questions, and the closing?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ I need to adjust my plan.

6

Prepare Your Presentation & Resources

Before the conference, make sure your materials support—not compete with—your presentation.

- ☐ Slides are clear, readable, and accessible.
- ☐ Visuals support the message rather than decorate the slide.
- ☐ Activities have clear instructions.
- ☐ Links and QR codes have been tested.
- ☐ Handouts and resources are ready to share.
- ☐ Technology has been tested.
- ☐ I have a backup plan if technology does not cooperate.

Resources I want participants to leave with:

7 Finish with Purpose

Participants should leave knowing what matters and what they can do next.

My three key takeaways:

1.

2.

3.

One action I want participants to consider after this session:

How participants can continue learning or connect after the session:

Final Presenter Check

- ☐ Is it clear? Can participants easily identify the purpose and key ideas?
- ☐ Is it engaging? Are participants doing more than listening?
- ☐ Is it useful? Will participants leave with something they can apply?
- ☐ Is it accessible? Can everyone meaningfully participate?
- ☐ Is it realistic? Can I comfortably accomplish this within my allotted time?

Your goal is not to fit in more content.
It is to create a meaningful learning experience.