2026 SSSA Program Planning Manual

SSSA
Soil Science Society of America

CANVAS
Where Crop, Agronomic, Environmental, and Soil Sciences Connect

Nov. 1–4, 2026 • Portland, Oregon
www.acsmeetings.org

Photo courtesy of Travel Portland.

Table of Contents & Contact List

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CANVAS 2026

Portland Dates & Deadlines

Nov. & **Dec.**	**Leaders/Chairs solicit symposia/topical session ideas from membership**
December 16	Deadline for 2025 program enhancement fund expenses
December 18	Symposia/topical session submission site opens
December 18	Special session, tour, and workshop proposals open online
January	2026 CANVAS website goes live
February 6	**Deadline for submitting symposia/topical sessions**
February 6	**Deadline for submitting grad student competition descriptions**
February 20	**Deadline for special session and Cross Divisional Symposia proposals**
March 10	Abstract submissions open online at www.acsmeetings.org
March 10	Committee meeting submissions open online
March 10	Early registration & housing opens online
March 27	**Deadline for tour and workshop proposals**
late April	Division Chairs check on submissions via Confex access link
June 9	**Early abstract deadline, 4:00 pm CDT**
June 23	**Final in-person abstract deadline, 4:00 pm CDT**
June 25	Scheduling webinar for Community Leaders, Section Chairs, and Division Chairs
June 25	Begin scheduling sessions in Confex
July 15	**Session scheduling deadline.** Confex access closes for all Leaders and Chairs. Date, time, estimated attendance, invited speakers, and presiders must be submitted by this deadline. Audio visual, catering, & room set requests must be submitted as well
August 6	All catering must be finalized
August - TBD	CANVAS Program Finalizing Meeting
late August	Presenters are emailed presentation time, date, and format
September 23	Final virtual abstract deadline
September 23	Early registration rate deadline
early October	Presenters are emailed presentation location, as well as time and date reminder
early October	Moderators notification email sent
October 7	Standard registration rate deadline
November 1-4	CANVAS begins in Portland, OR
December 8	**Deadline for 2026 program enhancement fund expense requests**

Planning the Meeting in Confex

Introduction

This manual is designed to guide Program and Division Chairs smoothly through the process of assembling your programs for the upcoming CANVAS event. Take the time to read through the manual and become familiar with the various sections.

The Headquarters Office is available to assist you as questions arise. Please contact us with your questions. Our goal is to make this busy year an enjoyable one as well. Comments about this manual as well as the overall program planning process are always welcome.

Entering Sessions in Confex

You will receive an email in late December with a link to submit your sessions. The sessions you enter will be used for authors to submit their papers. To submit a session you will need to enter the following information:

- Title of session
- Symposia/topical session
- Oral/poster session
- Invited/contributed papers or both
- Does it include a student competition?
- Section/Division cosponsor
- Community cosponsor
- Session description (this will show online)
- Organizer

It is a good idea to have "general" poster and oral sessions followed by your Division name for papers that don't fit a specific session topic. If a session contains a student competition, it is clearer for everyone if you include this in the session title. General oral, poster, rapid, and business meeting sessions will automatically be entered for every Division.

Symposia Sessions

A symposium is the major session of the week for a Division. It should focus on a key topic relevant to the Division and include invited speakers (at least one from outside the Societies). SSSA has a limit of two, two-hour symposia per Division. Because symposia include only invited speakers, a public call for volunteer papers will not be published online.

Invited Symposia Speakers

Invited symposia speakers (member and nonmember) do not have to pay the abstract submission fee.

The Division Chairs will receive a link to a special website requiring no payment when abstract submission opens. They must pass this link along to their invited speakers only. It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure those abstracts are submitted by the abstract submission deadline.

Nonmember Invited Speakers

Invited speakers who are not Society members will be emailed a "discount code" in early September that will allow them complimentary registration. It is the speaker's responsibility to complete their registration online in order for the fee to be waived.

Member Invited Speakers

Invited speakers who are Society members **do not** qualify for waived registration fees. They will receive an email in September reminding them to complete their registration form as normal with the fee. It is important to inform member speakers of this on the front end, as many individuals assume if invited, they will not have to pay registration.

Volunteer Abstract Submissions

Authors may submit their abstracts by internet only.
- Go to www.sciencesocieties.org/canvas/submit.
- Click the "Submit" option regarding the desired presentation format and follow directions.
- All abstracts require payment by credit card.
- Speakers will automatically receive an email confirmation of the submission.

Confex Session Scheduling

Please keep in mind these important scheduling dates:

June 23 — Final deadline for in-person abstracts
June 25 — Scheduling webinar
July 15 — Scheduling deadline

Review sessions across all Societies. Look for similar content and themes that could be combined or should be scheduled on different days. In late August, the ACS732 Annual Meeting Planning Committee and Headquarters Office staff will meet for a final review of the program.

Scheduling in Confex

As Division Chairs, each of you will login to Confex with the email address and password you have on file with SSSA. Once logged in, you will be able to view all sessions you have created. Click on a session to view all the submitted abstracts it contains.

Planning the Meeting in Confex

Shortly after abstract submission closes, a webinar will be presented regarding session scheduling in Confex. The webinar will be recorded and available for reference.

Follow these six steps to schedule a session in Confex:

1. From your link, click on the title of the session you want to schedule. You will now see a list of the papers in that session.
2. Accept all papers by checking the boxes under the heading "Accept" (this is found just to the left of the abstract title). Click "Update" at the bottom to save.
3. Click "Non-paper Events" in the left control panel to add intro, breaks, discussions, adjourn, and freeform events (i.e., panel discussion).
4. Sort the abstracts and events with the numbering 1, 2, 3, etc. in the boxes under the "Order of Papers" heading.
5. Volunteer papers are 15 min. in length, so sessions will default to 15 min. Use the boxes under "Special duration" to enter times for other events (i.e., 5 min. intros or 60 min. business meetings).
6. Click "Schedule" in the left control panel to enter the date, time, and expected attendance for the session.

Papers in Sessions

The meeting space available is often limited. Volunteer oral sessions should be scheduled to fill a room for the whole part of a day (i.e., morning from 8 am–12 pm or afternoon from 1:30–4 pm). Be sure to include one 15-minute break in each part of the day. You may include two short sessions as long as you schedule them back to back so they fill a whole morning or afternoon. If a session does not have enough papers, either transfer papers to that session or transfer papers from that session to other sessions.

You may have a paper that does not fit into any of your sessions. If this happens, contact other Section or Division Chairs to see if they can accept it. If so, transfer the paper to the accepting Section/Division. You do not have to notify the author.

Session Transfers/Changing Formats

To transfer a paper to a different Section or Division in Confex, go into the session and choose "Transfer" on the left column and select the new Section/Division. To transfer a paper to a different session in the same Division, check the box under the "Transfer" header and select the new session from the drop down box on the bottom of the page.

You may change the format of presentations (oral/poster) if needed. You do not have to notify the author.

Scheduling Business Meetings

A business meeting will be automatically included as a session in Confex for every Division. You will be responsible for scheduling the time and date of the business meeting during the scheduling period. It is best if it follows your symposium or another popular oral session within your program.

Allow enough time for the Board Representative to brief members about significant Board items. The Division Chair will preside at the business meeting. The Headquarters Office will email the Chair regarding the submission of business meeting minutes.

Scheduling Moderators

A moderator must be assigned to each oral session in order to help keep it running smoothly at CANVAS. To add moderators, enter the session and click on "People" in the left column. Then click "Add a Person" and indicate that they are "Moderator". Moderators must be Society members. Some individuals may have schedule conflicts, so make sure they can make the session time. Selecting younger members and/or presenters already scheduled within the session as moderators is an excellent way to involve people in Society activities. Regional representation of moderators is strongly encouraged. Each moderator will receive an email with instructions before the meetings. Moderator support is also offered at CANVAS.

Scheduling Advice

Poster sessions are generally scheduled on Monday and Tuesday from 4:00–6:00 pm and on Wednesday from 2:30–4:30 pm. If possible, do not schedule oral sessions during this time.

Balance your oral and poster sessions equally over all the days to minimize conflict for your colleagues. Divisions should also be aware of their Society's awards ceremony and daily plenary while scheduling.

Miscellaneous Sessions

When planning an uncommon session, symposium, or evening program, include these sessions in your program. For any questions on miscellaneous session scheduling, contact Nate Ehresman. If a miscellaneous session will be organized by someone else, the Division Chair must make sure that person is informed of all deadlines and that constant communication is kept.

Tour and workshop proposals must be submitted online before the deadline. Information can be obtained from the website at www.sciencesocieties.org/canvas/tours-and-workshops. Tours and workshops should not be entered as sessions in your Division program.

CEUs, Session Promotion, & PEFs

Applying for CEUs

Why apply for continuing education units (CEUs)? Participants in the ASA and SSSA Certification Programs maintain their certification through continuing education.

Who are Certification participants? Participants include Certified Professional Agronomists, Certified Professional Soil Scientists, Certified Professional Soil Classifiers, and Certified Crop Advisers (CCA).

How do people apply for Board Approved CEUs? There are three steps you must follow:

1. Complete the CEU Application Form available on-line at www.certifiedcropadviser.org/ceus.
2. Relate each talk to a CEU Standard. The CEU Standards Booklet PDF is located on the same website listed above.
3. Include the session agenda and provide a list of speaker names and biographies.

The Oregon CCA Board will review your application.

Promoting Sessions

There are a couple ways to promote sessions to potential authors and/or attendees.

1. **Division Circles**—session organizers can develop an announcement to be broadcasted to members via Circles channels. Circles entries must focus on Division activities and business. Sending job announcements and promoting other Societies' meetings is prohibited. You can receive your Circles information by emailing Membership (membership@sciencesocieties.org).
1. *CSA News* **magazine**—highlight the topic(s), day, and time of the session to promote. Email your promotional text to news@sciencesocieties.org and consider including a photo if possible. There is no charge for this service. When writing the call for papers, make sure to mention the lead Division and the full title so authors can choose it when submitting their abstract. Email news@sciencesocieties.org for further details.

Program Enhancement Funds

Program enhancement funds (PEFs) are provided for each Division to enhance the quality of their program, encourage the involvement of meetings participants, and recognize excellence during the current or previous CANVAS programs. Each Division Chair will receive an email in early-February indicating available funds for 2026. PEFs should be utilized in the year they are awarded, as balances do not roll forward into the following year.

SSSA Cross Divisional Symposia

Any SSSA member can request funds by filling out a Cross Divisional Symposia Proposal Form. After the request deadline on February 20, the S711 committee will review the forms and make decisions for funding distribution. Notification of funded proposals will be made by late-March.

Division PEFs

These funds are generally requested by symposia or topical session organizers. It is at the Division Chair's discretion to approve the use of funds. Please remember to track your funding promises so that you do not exceed your PEF budget.

Appropriate Uses for PEFs

Appropriate uses for PEFs include, but are not limited to:

- Paying expenses/awarding stipends to invited speakers (member and nonmember) of symposia.
- Monetary awards for outstanding accomplishments or graduate student awards.
- Funding food and drink events.
- Supporting professional tours or workshops.

Division Donation Links

"Donate" links are posted on the Division website (https://www.soils.org/membership/divisions) so sponsors can donate to program enhancement funds online. Chairs can also post the URL to their Circles to encourage donations.

Additional Funding

If a Division Chair has exhausted their funds, they can contact cosponsoring Divisions for financial assistance. They may also want to call on other societies, organizations, and companies that share a common interest in the program. Before contacting anyone about a financial contribution to your session, discuss your needs with the Director of Finance.

If the Division has a grant for the session, Headquarters will process the grant and distribute the funds according to the Chair's directions. The Societies will retain up to 10% of the grant to cover administrative fees.

PEF Reimbursements

Please inform Nate Ehresman as you promise the use of funds to individuals. He will assist in managing PEF budgets throughout the year.

After CANVAS, the Division Chair must submit all payment requests with original receipts to Nate Ehresman. Please submit all of your requests together and include a final amount to be paid to each speaker. Requests must be received no later than December 8. Payments will not be made after this date.

Food Functions & Tours

Food Functions

All catering requests are submitted while scheduling sessions. Requests must be entered into their appropate sessions by July 15; to be finalized by August 6. This includes receptions, social hours, cash bars, etc. When submitting a food function, be sure to include session title, date, time, budget, number of people, and a description of what is envisioned. Entering a food function online does not ensure the function has been officially scheduled.

Tour Policies and Procedures

All tour proposals must be submitted online by the March 27 deadline. The tour organizer is responsible for planning, submitting, and organizing the tour.

Tour Organizer Responsibilities:

- Make arrangements for the tour program, tour guides, meals, snacks, or other activities during the tour. One complimentary tour guide per bus will be provided. Additional space must be submitted with costs.
- Inform Headquarters of the expected costs with all aspects of the tour (meals, handouts, entrance fees, etc.). Include arrangements the organizers make with outside groups and businesses.
- Prepare a promotional description of the tour. Headquarters will put this in *CSA News*, News Flash, the website, and the program.

Headquarters Responsibilities:

- Arrange transportation and housing (if applicable).
- Determine ticket price based on expected tour costs provided by tour organizer.
- Sell and distribute tickets and receipts.
- Provide advance payment or reimbursement of tour costs (invoices/original receipts required).

Refund requests must be submitted in writing to the Headquarters Office. Pending approval, refunds are processed after CANVAS.

Thank you for helping create an exciting 2026 program. See you in Portland!

Photo courtesy of Travel Portland.

Session Formats: Regular, Rapid, and Innovative

https://www.sciencesocieties.org/canvas/planning

Oral Session:
The "normal" oral session format is comprised of contributed submissions. 15-minute presentations are scheduled back-to-back with a 15-minute break for attendees every 90 minutes.

Poster Session:
This is the "normal" poster session format. Posters are posted all day by the presenter, however the "session" is scheduled for two hours (generally 4-6pm on Monday and Tuesday/2:30-4:30pm on Wednesday). During this time, the presenter will stand by the research to explain/interact with attendees.

Symposia Session:
Two-hour sessions containing presentations by invited speakers. Often comprised of three speakers at 40 minutes each or four speakers at 30 minutes each, no scheduled breaks for attendees are required. Divisions can each hold two per year/Sections and Communities can each hold one per year. Invited speakers of these symposia receive waived abstract fees.

5-Minute Rapid Oral Session:
Comprised of *only* oral submissions for authors who wish to present their research/material in a quick five-minute oral format. Ten presentations are scheduled back-to-back with a 10-minute buffer/Q&A period following.

Poster and 5-Minute Rapid Oral Session:
Although scheduled as a rapid oral session, this session is comprised of presentations *both* oral and poster in format. This is more for authors who would like to give a quick oral commercial/teaser for the poster format they will be presenting in a later poster session.

Roundtable Session:
This format includes an invited speaker who presents a hot topic for the session attendees. After giving the presentation (anywhere from 20-30 minutes), the speaker turns the floor over to the participants for discussion.
The C-6 Division has used this format effectively within their symposia the past few years.

Panel Discussion Session:
Similar to the Roundtable format, the Panel Discussion format uses several experts to present a topic to attendees instead of just one. Each expert is given approximately 10 minutes to present their contributing information. Once all experts have contributed, the floor is turned over to the participants for questions/discussion.

Debate Session:
This format is generally comprised of a moderator and two invited two-presenter teams. The moderator states the positions and then allows the teams to each persuade the attendees. Each speaker receives approximately 10 minutes (20 minutes per team). The moderator then recaps the major points and opens the floor for questions/discussions.

Session FAQs

What is the difference between a General/Topical Session and a Symposium?

General/Topical Sessions:
-No limits on how many general/topical sessions a program can have
-No time limit on how long the session can be
-Accepts contributed and invited presentations
-Can contain any combination of member and non-member presenters
-Can be oral or poster in format
-Can contain 5-minute rapid presentations
-No complimentary benefits for presenters

Symposia:
-Each Section and each Community can only have one symposium session in their program
-Each Division can only have two symposia
-The session can last no longer that two hours
-Invited presentations only
-Should contain at least one non-member presenter
-The sessions are oral in format
-Does not contain 5-minute rapid presentations
-Both member and non-member presenters receive waived abstract fees

How many symposia can I create for my program?
CSSA and SSSA Divisions are each allotted **two** 2-hour symposia. ASA Sections and Communities are each allotted **one** 2-hour symposium. If you would like to have additional symposia, consider "cosponsoring" with another Division/Section/Community that has not used up their allotted number of symposia.

How many symposia can I cosponsor?
You can cosponsor as many symposia as makes sense for your group's interests. *Please ensure that Chairs/Leaders agree to a session's cosponsorship before listing their group as a cosponsor for your session.*

There is no financial obligation to split costs on a cosponsored session. Generally, it just means the topic interests more than one group, and this is a way to boost attendance for the session.

That being said, Communities/Sections/Divisions will sometimes share costs if trying to make the session a bigger event than they normally can afford on their own. They can also share the workload if unable to financially assist. These details are left to the Chairs/Leaders to work out.

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Notes

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SSSA Meeting Planning Process

2025 — Nov, Dec

2026 — Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Nov

Portland, OR — Nov. 1 – 4

Special Session Proposals: Dec. 18 – Feb. 20
Tour & Workshop Proposals: Dec. 18 – March 27

Symposia/Topical Sessions Entered in Confex: Dec. 18 – Feb. 6

Solicit 2026 Session Ideas from Members throughout Nov. & Dec.

Dec. 16 2025 Program Enhancement Expense Receipts Deadline

Chairs look for session overlaps Feb-Mar

February 20 Cross Divisional Symposia Proposals Deadline

March 5 Symposia/Topical Sessions Viewable Online

Abstract Submission Open March 10 – June 23
- Early Abstract Submission Deadline: **June 9**
- Virtual Submission open through **September 23**

Scheduling Webinar: **June 25, 1:00 pm** Central Time

Session Scheduling in Confex for Divisions: June 25 – July 15

July 15 Final Scheduling Deadline for Chairs. Catering requests due.

Annual Meetings Planning Committee Meets to Finalize Program: August - TBD

Catering Finalized Deadline: Aug. 6

Dec .8 2026 Program Enhancement Receipts Due