

# Speaker's Guide

## The Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute



### Introduction

The vast majority of your audience are land use professionals who are seeking immediate application of your wisdom and expertise. They do, however, vary in experience, so be sure to define legal and technical terms and acronyms. Please also remember that your audience will be composed of people from throughout the Rocky Mountain West and beyond; do not limit your remarks exclusively to Colorado unless you are on a Colorado-specific panel. Finally, please bear in mind that the best speakers are those who are the most enthusiastic and animated about their topics!

### Guidelines

#### Understand Your Assignment

Be certain that you fully understand your assignment. Don't hesitate to question your session moderator or RMLUI staff about the program's scope and purpose. Find out who the other speakers are and how you fit into the full program. We encourage you to discuss your topic with other session speakers. We encourage session organizers to have a conference call with all the speakers. This will avoid repetition with other presentations and avoid omissions in coverage.

#### Understand Your Audience

You will be talking to an audience with a wide span in age and experience. But there are some common characteristics that you should remember in preparing your talk.

1. As adult learners, your audience wants speakers who are interesting and entertaining, but the primary desire is for practical, realistic suggestions. The audience is impatient or dissatisfied with speakers who rely on too many jokes, personal anecdotes, or lengthy descriptions of past triumphs. Nor does the audience want to listen to show and tell.
2. Second, conference audiences attend because they feel pressures in their current work for useful and up-to-date information. The audience is looking for immediate application. Therefore, your talk should emphasize the problems and concerns of one who has experience with the subject. You should cover procedural steps, policy issues, and implementation tools, and problems. Think of your position as one who is giving useful advice.

#### Approach to the Subject

- Get to the point of your presentation quickly

- Cover the important topics
- Discuss typical problems
- Avoid discussing unique or atypical situations
- Describe techniques to be used, methods of handling problems, and pitfalls to avoid
- Emphasize what is transferable to another community
- It is more effective to put significant ideas across thoroughly than it is to skim across a long history
- In short, most presentations are only 15-20 minutes.

### Use Visual Aids

We highly recommend the use of PowerPoint presentations. Be sure to read our Visual Presentation Guide for how to prepare a strong PowerPoint presentation. The use of visual aids provides emphasis and lasting effect of your presentation. Something as simple as a brief quote, a diagram, or a form can add immeasurably to the educational soundness of your presentation.

### Your Delivery

- **Your delivery should be carefully planned**, but you should not read your talk. Speak from notes.
- **Speak loudly enough for all to hear.** Public address systems vary. Some microphones require you to stand very close and others work best if you keep your distance. Please treat each microphone as a new challenge and ask your audience if it can hear you clearly.
- **Budget your time.** You have been allotted a certain amount of time. Plan to use all of it, but do not overrun your time. If you are asked to speak 15 minutes, don't begin with notes or an outline that will take an hour to cover and expect to condense while you are talking. Your audience will know that you are fumbling; you are not going to fool anyone. Edit your notes or outline to what you can deliver in the allotted time.
- **Refer the audience to other helpful sources of information** you may know about.
- **End with a bang**— not a yawn. Your final words should be as well chosen for effect as your opening words. There are few better ways of ruining a good presentation than a meaningless close such as "Well, I guess that's all I have to say." Have a good conclusion and deliver it with all of the punch you have.

### A Few Important Don'ts

- **Do not use profanity or tell off-color stories** or tell stories in which certain racial, ethnic, gender, or religious groups are derogated. Never underestimate the unintended damage that can be done to your presentation by comments or remarks that are misunderstood or misinterpreted by your audience. It is better to omit a questionable remark than to risk destroying your credibility.

- **Never apologize.** Never throw a damper on the audience's interest by opening your talk with apologies of any kind. YOU were selected, and the audience is there to hear you. The audience wants you to think highly of yourself and to do well. Any psychologist will tell you that one of the chief desires of an audience is to be a part of a successful program.
- **Do not read your talk!**
- **Do not begin by criticizing any handout materials** or the value of your presentation and knowledge. Never begin by saying that "Everything that I say will be in your handout." That is sure way of killing interest in your talk.

### Conclusion

You cannot over-prepare. Every hour you invest in organizing what you want to say and perfecting your skill in saying it will reap abundant returns from your audience. Our audiences are knowledgeable and critical; and they are also extremely appreciative of well-prepared and carefully presented presentations. All the best! Prepare, rehearse, and then sit back and enjoy giving a polished presentation.