

SMBE conference guidelines (version March 2026)

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Statement of diversity

SMBE has a strong commitment to diversity. Organizers should place emphasis on scientists from diverse backgrounds (gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, career stages, geographic location, ethnicity, etc.) at every level of the meeting, including but not limited to the selection of plenary speakers, symposium organizers, and invited and contributed talks. Please ensure that this criterion is considered throughout the organization of the conference. Information on gender and career stage should be collected such that analysis of diversity is possible. Given the difficulty of making a review of contributed abstracts entirely blind to gender, our experience is that it is better to be open where local laws permit openness, i.e. to pass gender information or at least first names to symposium organizers together with a reminder of the nature of implicit biases.

Professional conference Organizer (PCO)

Each conference is organized jointly by SMBE, the Local Organizing Committee, and a contracted Professional Conference Organizer (PCO). The role of the PCO is described in its contract with SMBE.

Local Organizing Committee (LOC)

The SMBE conference Local Organizing Committee should include Local Organizers and two members of SMBE Council. The role of the Council members on the LOC is to make sure that the conference organizers adhere to these guidelines and to ensure communication between the Council and the LOC. Additionally, one organizer from the Council of the meeting from a previous year and one organizer from the Council of the meeting for the next year should be included as part of the LOC for the purpose of continuity.

The LOC will be required to sign a formal agreement with SMBE agreeing to its responsibilities.

The LOC should send any presentations it makes – usually their proposal and post-conference feedback – to Chris Lapine Chris.Lapine@kwglobal.com for archiving.

Size of conference

The conference can currently expect between 800 and 1,500 delegates, although we have seen considerable fluctuations in this number depending on factors such as convenience and cost of travel. Organizers are advised to make two alternative plans for a smaller and a larger conference - i.e. make plans for a smaller conference but include options to expand if registration numbers seem to indicate the meeting will be large. This should happen at the same location with options for a larger auditorium that can hold the entire conference. Conference attendance should be capped at 2,000.

Financing

It is very important that the meeting is fully costed, with costs borne by the meeting income from registrations plus potential grants obtained by the LOCs. The cost of the conference will not be covered by the Society beyond what was initially agreed. A rolling budget should be set up with precise costs and with frequent updates on income and expenditure. The budget should be based on reasonably conservative attendance projections based on previous years such that all other costs beyond those covered by the society will be paid by registration fees. Projections can be made to cover the range of expected attendance, from 800 to 2000 such that the event remains financially viable with a low attendance. Should costs exceed projections by more than 10%, and/or should attendance drop more than 10% what is required for budget neutrality, the Society must be notified immediately.

Three principal sources of income will support most expenses for the conference. 1) Registration fees 2) Contribution from SMBE to the overall budget 3) Sponsors and local grants. SMBE wants

to make the conference widely accessible, so it is essential that registration fees are kept to a minimum or that some measures are taken to facilitate participation from all, for instance, reduced fees for people from the Low and Middle Income Countries ([LMIC](#)). The LOC is thus encouraged to seek local grants and sponsorships. SMBE, however, requires that the sponsoring organizations share the same values as SMBE's and that sponsors are given less visibility than SMBE, which shall remain the main sponsor. MBE, GBE and OUP for instance should have more visibility than any other journals and publishers as their publication fees are the main source of income for the Society.

The LOC expenses will include minimally: The venue, the PCO, the meeting website, the registration platform, the fees for remote broadcasting, fees for invited speakers in the symposia (travel, hotel and free registration), food and drinks at breaks. The gala dinner fees are also covered by the LOC but this should be charged as a separate item in the registration process as we need to offer the opportunity for people to opt out given the cost of these events.

The Society will provide seed money, which will ultimately cover travel costs for the invited speakers. SMBE is committed to contributing 100,000 USD to the LOC budget. These funds can be made available at any time and used temporarily for other expenditures (such as reserving a venue). In addition, in the event that a short-term loan is required for down-payments on the venue and suppliers, then this can be arranged. Be aware that this loan will be issued in US dollars and all currency change costs, as well as the danger of currency fluctuations, must be borne by the conference.

In addition, several expenses will be covered by the SMBE directly and do not need to be included in the LOC budget: the Society will pay for on site childcare; the SMBE will also reimburse lodging and travel for: council, staff, editors and Fellows, 3 IDEA taskforce members and the various Young Investigator, Graduate Student Excellence, Undergraduate, Best papers and Faculty awardees. The registration fee and banquet costs are waived for these attendees (providing a waiver code) and should therefore be factored into projections of income from registration.

The number of awards may be changed with SMBE council approval but currently include

Graduate Student Excellence Awards	8 winners
Faculty Awards	4
Editors, Editors-in-Chief and Fellows	Between 50 and 150 depending on years
Council and staff	16
Young Investigators	14 in 2025, 21 in 2024
Best GBE and MBE paper Awards	4
Undergraduate Award	10
IDEA Taskforce members	3
Total attendees with waived registration and Gala dinner	150-250

From years to years the number of Editors, staff, council members and awardees who attend the conference vary (approximately between 100 to 200). These attendees should keep all receipts and claim their reimbursement after the conference. The SMBE reimburses up to 3000 USD for travel over 5 hours and 2000 for travel under 5 hours (in total for travel, hotel and other expenses). Hotel rooms should be set aside by the LOCs/PCOs for these attendees (council members, editors, staff, awardees) until a fixed date (usually April 1st), to ensure affordable costs for the Society. The attendees are responsible for booking their room themselves and will be reimbursed by the SMBE after the conference providing a receipt.

Once the conference over, the LOCs should send a final budget to the SMBE treasurer Treasurer.SMBE@gmail.com

PCO contract review by KGL

A contract should be made with the PCOs regarding the conference organization, budget and potential benefit sharing with the SMBE at the end of the meeting. This contract will be reviewed by the KGL company before acceptance. The contract should be prepared ideally 1 year and 9 months before the conference date.

Approximate timelines

When	What	Notes
1 year and 9 months before the conference	Contract preparation between the PCOs and the SMBE.	
Last day of the conference of the preceding year.	Initial website goes live	Includes 1) venue; 2) dates; 3) opportunities for sponsorship; 4) composition of the organizing committee; 5) contact information for the conference organizer. 6) Projected dates for the various announcements to be made (see below).
10 months before the date of the conference.	Call for symposia opens. The deadline should specify timezone, and specify 11:59pm or 12:01am rather than midnight to avoid confusion.	See 'Call for symposia' below.
9 months before the conference	Hotel rooms are set aside for Editors, council, staff and awardees until a set date (usually April 1st)	This allows the Society to ensure affordable hotel costs for the members benefitting from travel reimbursement.
9 months before the conference	Call for symposia closes	
8.5 months before the conference	Notification of successful symposia	
8 months before the conference	Titles and short descriptions of all symposia should be placed on the conference website.	
8 months before the conference	Early bird registration opens	This deadline offers a discount on the registration fee. Past experience indicates that 50- 75% of delegates will take advantage of this early registration deadline. This should be taken into account in the budget. Early bird registration should be advertised to the society membership, in the society journals, through the social media, on EvolDir, etc.
7 months before the conference	Abstract submission and award applications open	Award details are subject to change by SMBE Council from year to year, need to coordinate in advance and often alter previous year's submission site.

6 months before the conference	Abstract submission and award applications close (though it is common to extend by one week, depending on number of submissions and hiccups in submission website).	Share Graduate Student Excellence Award applications with Past President and committee they assemble, undergrad awards with other designated Council member(s).
2-3 weeks prior to council decision of travel awards	Deadline for symposium organizers' talk selection	
2 weeks before early bird registration closes	Applicants notified of both award and talk decisions. These can go out in two separate emails as soon as the respective decisions are made. Additional talks may be awarded after the initial emailing, e.g. if moving a Fitch finalist out of symposium clears a slot.	This is essential to allow applicants time to register at Early Bird rate especially if they haven't received a travel/registration award. Some individuals who do not receive funding or are not selected for a talk will not register. There can be loss of many participants as a result. Consider that participants from some countries will need to apply for a visa, which can take a few weeks to a few months. Applicants could be asked upon registration, and notification timing adjusted accordingly.
4 months before the conference	Early bird registration closes, full price registration opens	
2 months before the conference	Full programme available online	
Until the conference begins	Full cost registration	Full cost online registration; allows delegates to submit an abstract, though as an additional encouragement to register early, it should be stipulated that late abstracts can be considered only for poster presentations.
Either on the penultimate day of the meeting or up to two days later	Post-meeting survey	To be emailed to all meeting participants and able to run on a computer, tablet, OR mobile device

Structure of the conference

Duration

The preferred conference length is at 3.5 days (not counting the day of the council meeting/opening reception). The conference typically starts on a Sunday (council meeting, then welcome reception) and ends on Thursday around lunch time. The LOC is encouraged but not required to organize Public Lectures on Evolution/Molecular Evolution either immediately before or immediately after the meeting. We also encourage the LOC to consider organizing workshops (see below).

Council meeting

One council meeting to be held in a room that accommodates the council plus outside participants (about 16 people altogether). Light breakfast, lunch, and all day coffee, tea, and light refreshments should be provided. This meeting will usually take place on the first day of the conference, starting at 8 or 9 am, ending approximately at 5 pm, and must end at least 15 minutes before any other scheduled events. The room should have an adequate audio (good microphones) and video system with a zoom setup to accommodate online participants.

Scientific content

Parallel sessions

With one exception (see below), there will be 5 parallel sessions at the conference. The LOC should have a (usually audible) mechanism to ensure that concurrent sessions stay on time and try to minimize similarity in content or theme of overlapping concurrent sessions.

Limitations of oral presentations per person

Each person is limited to one scientific oral presentation (either invited or contributed) for the entire annual SMBE meeting. If the same person is invited to several symposia, the person is given a choice of which symposium they would like to present. However, if outreach, educational and community-based symposia are planned, the above limitations do not apply to these talks. In other words, one may have a scientific talk *and* a different sort of talk.

Presenter information

Each presenter should have clear instructions on where their presentation is going to be held, when they have been allocated a speaking time, and how to upload their slides no less than two weeks before the conference.

Type of presentations

Plenary lectures

There should be 4-5 plenary lectures, typically one per day, without competing events or symposia, scheduled for one hour. The number of plenary lectures should be limited to keep costs down and maximize the number of multi-speaker symposia. Refer to the 'Statement of Diversity' above in the selection of plenary speakers.

One of these plenary lectures is the President Lecture. This lecture should not occur on the first evening after the President has just chaired Council meeting, but otherwise early placement is encouraged. SMBE has funds for this lecture to be published in MBE. The other plenary lectures are invited by the LOC and the invitees are usually fully funded in the meeting budget (registration fee, travel, and accommodation).

Symposia

There should be approximately 30 symposia organized in different types (see below), usually with no more than five parallel sessions. SMBE Council considers that if there are more than five parallel sessions, delegates feel they are missing too many talks (fewer than five is fine), which would restrict the intellectual breadth of the conference and participants' opportunities to speak at the conference.

Timeslots in symposia

Apart from plenary lectures and talks from invited speakers, recent conferences have settled on a structure where a 'unit' of time is 15 minutes. This includes time for questions (usually, 12 minutes for the talk and 3 minutes for questions and movement between rooms). This makes it especially important to have rooms in close proximity to each other. Invited speakers thus can be allocated 15 or 30 minutes. It is also prudent to remind symposium organizers that delegates frequently move between symposia, so it is useful to be sure that the layout of seating is conducive to movement between rooms.

There are 6 types of symposia with oral presentations plus a poster session:

- 1-Specialized symposia (majority)
- 2-Award symposia
- 3-Open symposia
- 4-LOC-run thematic symposia
- 5- Associate Editors' symposium
- 6-IDEA symposium
- 7- Poster sessions

1-Specialized symposia

This type of symposium should occupy the largest space on the schedule, typically 4 of the 5 parallel sessions daily. These are led by participants and selected by the LOC. These symposia are organized by 2 people from the community who select an invited speaker and select talks from the abstracts submitted to the conference. The organizers are selected through a call for symposia and the selection is advertised early so people can choose which symposium they would like their abstract to be considered by.

Call for symposia

Two distinct descriptions should be solicited in the symposium call: one terse and so suited for use on the conference website to help attendees decide where to submit their presentation abstract, and another additionally "selling" the timeliness of the symposium to facilitate evaluation by the LOC.

The call for symposia should indicate that if a symposium is selected, one invited speaker will have their registration fee, reasonable accommodation and travel costs covered by the conference (at the level of approximately \$2000 per invited speaker against receipts; adjusted reimbursement for intra- and intercontinental travel is allowed but capped at \$3000). The support for invited speakers must be maintained by the LOC under all circumstances. In the invitation letter, it should be stated that invited speakers traveling inter-continental should be encouraged to stay longer than the 3-4 days of the conference, to engage more intensively in exchange with the community they are visiting, for example by giving lectures in other universities and institutions, or extended stays with collaborators (it should be clear, however, that this extension cannot be funded by SMBE).

At most one confirmed invited speaker per symposium should be allotted for each symposium. While it is likely that some symposium proposals will cover similar topics from year to year, we strongly encourage trying to cover as many topics covered by SMBE as possible and to limit

the overlap of invited speakers with those of the previous 2-3 years. This can be stressed in the call for symposia.

Selection of the symposia by the LOC

Most symposia are selected by the LOC on the basis of proposals, and depending on whether the same topics were covered by symposia at recent SMBE meetings. Symposia should reflect the broad range of interests in the SMBE community, not simply the most popular topics. The LOC may choose to organize their own symposia, following the symposium organizer guidelines at the end of this section, to fill in perceived gaps.

Symposium proposals should include a summary of the topic, why it is timely for the SMBE meeting, and which speakers have been invited and confirmed. If there are two or more proposals on the same topic, the LOC has a choice of selecting one proposal or merging two or more proposals. Merging two or more symposia either reduces the number of invited speakers that can be supported by SMBE or the number of slots available for contributed talks and is therefore discouraged unless the number of invited speakers can be reduced.

Each symposium organizer can only select one talk from her/his own research group. That includes his/her own talk. In the event of too few submissions, exceptions to this rule may permit one additional talk from the organizer's group, but only after consultation with the LOC. This should be outlined in the call for symposia.

Symposia receiving more abstracts should be assigned longer blocks of time than those receiving fewer, so when similar symposium applications are received, it is best to either choose one of them, or else engineer a voluntary merger, rather than require participants to think strategically about which closely related symposium to submit the same abstract to.

Selecting speakers by symposium organizers

It is acceptable for a delegate to be allowed to submit their abstract to more than one symposium (though logistically, it is probably best to restrict this to two symposia). However, the exact details of this process are to be worked out by the LOC. In the end, the LOC will match delegates and symposia and communicate to both the symposium organizers and the delegates the outcome of this process.

Each symposium of contributed talks will select its preferred speaker list from the list of contributed talk abstracts, taking speaker diversity into consideration (gender, ethnicity, national origin, etc.; see Statement of Diversity above) as well as a range of career stages (student/postdoc/junior/senior investigators). The LOC is responsible for ensuring that symposium organizers adequately address diversity. If the organizers do not adequately address diversity, the LOC may take action up to and including substitution of speakers.

Alternate speakers should be chosen for all symposia, to allow prompt substitution if a speaker gets "promoted" (e.g., to a GSEA), or is unable to attend the conference.

Final composition of symposia must be determined *before the Early Bird registration closes* as it affects many scientists' travel funding, and no later than 4 months before the conference.

Award symposia

Links for applying to the various awards should be provided in the conference website at the time of abstract submission : Graduate Student Excellence Awards, Young Investigator Awards, Undergraduate Awards, Caregiver Award. Links will be provided by Chris Lapine Chris.Lapine@kwgglobal.com

It should be made clear on the website that people can apply to either the Graduate Student Excellence Award or the Young Investigator Award, but not both.

The organizers will give advice on affordable restaurants for two Editors' dinners (one dinner for GBE and another dinner, usually on a different evening, for MBE). EICs will be responsible for payment of the dinner to be reimbursed by SMBE and it will not be drawn from the conference budget.

Graduate Student Excellence Award (GSEA) symposium

The symposium occurs as an exclusive event when no other events or symposia are taking place.

Graduate students of any stage, and postdocs in their first year of their first postdoc are eligible to apply to present their work in the GSEA Symposium, which is a plenary symposium. A committee is convened each year by the President-Elect to select 8 talks from the submitted abstracts. Participants who want to participate in this competition must indicate it during abstract submission and the LOC will transmit this information to the Council members involved in the selection.

The President will moderate the GSEA Symposium..

Faculty awards symposium

There may also be a separate symposium for recipients of the Faculty Awards. Recipients of these awards should all be given the opportunity to speak at the meeting, either in the special symposium, or in slots set aside for them in an Open Symposium. The Council members responsible for these awards should be informed of the latest dates that lectures can be incorporated into the programme.

Faculty award recipients are expected to present in these symposia if the LOC elects not to have a faculty awards symposium. All other selections are at the discretion of the LOC.

This type of symposium does not have invited speakers.

3- Open Symposia

The LOC is strongly encouraged to include several Open Symposia at which ground-breaking work not covered by the accepted symposium topics can be presented. It could be, for instance, one of the 5 parallel sessions in one or two days. LOC members are expected to chair these symposia. Talks selected in Open Symposia most of the time are not related to a specific topic and are selected for these symposia for this reason.

This type of symposium does not have invited speakers.

4- LOC-run thematic symposia

While we want to maximize the diversity of topics represented through the Open Symposia, it is also possible that very popular and timely topics are not covered by the symposia that were submitted by the participants and selected by the LOC. In this case, the LOC is encouraged to organize one to three thematic symposia based on the submitted abstracts to ensure these topics are presented.

This type of symposium does not have invited speakers.

5- Associate Editors' symposium

As a thank you for service, an incentive for attendance, and given a history of high quality, the inclusion of a symposium exclusive to MBE and GBE Associate Editors is encouraged, as a specialized form of an Open Symposium in one of the 5 parallel tracks of half a day. Presenters will be selected by the journal Editors-in-Chief from among Associate Editors who have submitted abstracts but who were not accepted by a specialized symposium. The Editors-in-Chief will chair. The LOC should contact the EiC to plan this event.

6- IDEA symposium

The IDEA symposium can take up to two hours (based on former editions). A possible format could be a 20-25 minutes invited speaker talk, four selected talks of 15 minutes, and a 30 minute open discussion. As other parallel symposia, there could be financial support and free registration for the invited speaker, but this should be provided by the LOC as the SMBE already covers free attendance up to three IDEA members. The IDEA symposium should appear as an option during abstract submission.

A possible description to include in the conference official website could be:

“Advancing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility in Molecular Biology and Evolution - The XXX SMBE IDEA Symposium celebrates the ongoing commitment of SMBE to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and diverse scientific community. This symposium underscores our mission to confront systemic inequities, including racism, ableism, sexism, colonialism, and other forms of exclusion, while empowering underrepresented and minoritized groups in the fields of molecular biology and evolution. The symposium will feature an update on the IDEA committee’s activities over the past year and an invited speaker with expertise in the field of DEI. We will also be hearing from previous IDEA grant awardees. We invite abstract submissions that highlight community-driven efforts to broaden participation, dismantle barriers, create a more welcoming environment for scientists of all backgrounds, career stages, and geographic locations, and/or advance inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in molecular biology and evolution and related fields. Education-related works are also welcome, as they play an important role in shaping the future of our scientific community. The symposium will close with a discussion with speakers, symposium organizers, and attendants. Through these discussions, we aim to share innovative practices, celebrate achievements, listen to the needs of our membership, and inspire actionable change in our scientific community and beyond.”

7- Poster sessions

Poster presenters frequently feel that they do not get adequate opportunity to present their work, so it is important that each poster presenter is given enough time both to talk to other delegates and to have the posters visible (at breaks, etc.). Poster sessions should have accompanying refreshments and each poster should have at least two sessions when they are available to be seen. This can be done for instance by having two poster sessions that are split in two parts, for even and odd number posters. Although not always possible, it is desirable to have sufficient space that all posters can be viewed throughout the meeting, so that participants (and poster judges) have plenty of opportunity for viewing. The website should indicate when posters can go up. Poster space should only be made available to participants who have registered and sent payment, to minimize “no-shows.” Obvious, easily read signage is required to help delegates navigate the poster sessions to find the posters in which they are most interested. Grouping posters by symposium and/or subject area is highly desirable where possible. Posters submitted by undergraduates should not be segregated into an undergraduates-only area, but we encourage marking them with a “don’t bite the newbie” or similar flag.

Other activities and presentations

The organizers should include in the conference program the following events:

- Council meeting on the first day of the conference (usually Sunday) from 9am until the start of the meeting (5pm or 6pm). A room with good microphones and video is advisable for remote council members to attend online if needed.
- Catering for council members and staff (approximately 20 people) will be required for the entire day (coffee breaks and lunch). This should be accounted for in the conference budget.
- GBE Editors meeting: please book a room for the Editor's meeting (30-40 people), usually at lunch time.
- MBE Editors meeting: idem, usually on a different day.

- SMBE Business meeting: idem, usually on a different day from editors meetings.

Workshops

The LOC is encouraged to organize workshops on career development and other topics of interest for the community, but these should be outside of the periods allocated to the symposia and keynote addresses.

Social events

Please provide vegetarian/vegan options (and other frequent dietary restrictions such as gluten free, nut free and dairy free options) with all catering. Please provide quality non-alcoholic beverages as alternatives at events where alcohol is served.

Breaks and catering

It is expected that the conference will provide morning coffee break, lunch on all days, afternoon coffee breaks on each day, preferably with some small snack (fruit, cookies, pastry, etc.), and refreshments at poster sessions.

Welcome reception

This typically provides ample snacks, enough for all participants, in addition to one drink ticket. Additional drinks can usually be purchased at the bar.

Gala Dinner (banquet)

Delegates can choose to pay extra for this dinner or choose not to attend.

Awardees present at the meeting, including all GSEA and undergraduate mentoring program participants, should receive free Gala tickets from the LOC. A few venues include an after-dinner speaker, and some venues include dancing. Drink tickets may be provided at registration for the Gala, with additional drinks available for purchase.

Awards Ceremony

A period of 20-30 minutes should be set aside for an Awards Ceremony in the middle of the last morning (to allow enough time for decisions to be made on poster prizes and to maximize attendance), typically adjacent to a plenary talk to maximize the number of attendees in the room. This ceremony is usually combined with an invitation to the next meeting (10-15 minutes) presented by a representative of the LOC for the following year.

Post-conference survey

Each delegate should be invited to evaluate the conference using an online form that can be completed either on a computer, tablet, or smart phone. The survey should be organized by the PCO and its content checked by the SMBE Council representative before distribution.

Certificates of attendance

Some delegates will require a certificate of attendance for their home institutions or for funding agencies that have supported their travel. These certificates should be provided on request and made available at the conference venue or sent after the meeting.

Post meeting reporting

Meeting organizers are required to provide a summary document to the Council after the meeting, including the diversity statistics of the meeting participants, (gender, geography, and career stage). Therefore, providing the option for participants to self-identify as part of the registration process is desirable.

Awards (see <http://www.smbe.org/smbe/AWARDS.aspx>)

SMBE provides several types of pre-conference awards, which should be administered via the conference abstract submission system. It is essential that time is allowed for awardees to be chosen and applicants notified before Early Bird registration closes so that attendees can

make informed financial decisions about registration options and travel; a minimum of three weeks is required and more is preferable.

Those receiving awards that include travel need to pay in the first instance and will then be reimbursed by SMBE according to the terms of the particular award. Wherever possible, registration will be awarded up front via a free registration code, to avoid having award recipients waiting for reimbursement. To be eligible for an award, applicants must be SMBE members.

SMBE's Faculty, Best Paper, and GSE awards are presented at the Awards Ceremony. Faculty and Best Paper awardees, as well as all eight GSEA presenters, should receive free Gala Dinner tickets. Poster award winners will only receive complimentary dinner tickets if the award ceremony is during the Gala Dinner.

1. Faculty awards

Faculty award-winners are reimbursed for registration and travel to the meeting. SMBE Council will select award winners, with public information on who won available well in advance.

2. GSEA

All those selected to present in the GSEA (i.e., the eight finalists) are eligible for a free Gala Dinner ticket and free registration provided by the LOCs/PCOs. The SMBE will reimburse these awardees for travel and accommodation. The Council will appoint two separate committees, one to review the initial applicants to the GSEA symposium and another to determine the winner among the finalists (see timeline above).

3. Undergraduate travel and mentoring awards

SMBE will reimburse travel and accommodation costs of these awardees. The cost of registration and the banquet ticket will be waived by the LOCs/PCOs. Ten undergraduate travel and mentoring awards are available each year to undergraduate students submitting abstracts.

One or two SMBE Councilors assigned by the Council will take charge of selecting undergraduate awardees, while keeping in mind our DEI goals. That Councilor(s) will find a mentor for each student receiving an award so that they can be guided before and during the conference. The organizing Councilor(s) will also arrange first-night dinner for all students, their mentors and themselves.

The PCO should also reserve banquet tickets for the awardees (to be waived) and the LOC should liaise with the Councilors in order to find an appropriate venue for the mentoring dinner, to take place during or after the opening reception.

4. Young Investigator (graduate and postdoc) travel awards

SMBE will pay for reasonable travel and accommodation costs for Young Investigator awardees.

SMBE provides graduate and postdoc travel awards (typically about 20-25 in total) for the purpose of enhancing gender and geographic diversity, when known, as well as rewarding merit. The awards are chosen from eligible applicants who are SMBE members and who have expressed a desire to be considered for such awards. The Past-President will head a committee to determine the awards, in a combined process with the GSEA and Registration awards.

5. Best GBE and MBE papers awards

Award recipients (1-2 for each journal) receive registration waivers and free Gala tickets from the LOCs/PCOs. Their travel and accommodation cost will be reimbursed by SMBE.

6. Caregiver awards

SMBE recognizes that many members are also caregivers and that these personal responsibilities can present a major challenge to attending scientific meetings, and hence to career advancement. Caregivers know best how to care for their own relatives and what their needs are. In some cases, members may themselves require a caregiver so that they can attend the meeting. Any SMBE member who has a child, cares for a dependent adult at the time of the conference, or is in need of personal assistance, and is also attending the SMBE annual meeting, may apply for this award. If the member has already been chosen for another travel award or giving an invited presentation in a symposium, the member may still apply for this additional funding. Priority will be given to applicants who have demonstrated need and/or are in early stages of their academic careers (e.g., graduate students, postdocs, pre-tenure or within 6 years of starting their first independent lab). Caregiver awards are limited to one per family. The SMBE Business Office will be in contact with all recipients to help with the collection of the required documents.

Information about Carer awards should be included in emails promoting conference registration. Applicants should be informed to email the person responsible for the current year at the same time that they register for the conference, and payment for registration should be organized such that applicants are not deterred from registering because of uncertainty about child care provision, e.g. by allowing payment by postdated bank transfer.

Registration

The registration site should be structured so that registration is only possible after accepting our policies on harassment, discrimination and liability. We encourage the development of questions to solicit disability accommodations. We suggest the use of questions such as “do you need a chair next to your poster?” that solicit positive answers from those who do not identify as disabled, but may be pregnant or elderly.

Payment for registration

The online registration system should accept all major credit and debit cards using the conventional inputting mechanism. Credit card fees charged to the conference should be less than 3% per transaction.

Registration fees

SMBE members receive discounted registration. The discount for SMBE members must be at least \$30, but a higher differential between member and non-member registration is encouraged. Students and postdocs should be given a further discounted registration rate as well; the discount should be larger for graduate students than for postdocs. The conference registration page should allow conference delegates the opportunity to join SMBE on the spot, e.g. by linking to the SMBE website membership page in a new window (currently <http://www.smbe.org/smbe/MEMBERSHIP.aspx>). Finally, while most registrants will use the website, it should also be possible to register onsite ('walk-ins').

Registration data

Registration data, including lists of delegates, should only be given to SMBE officials and used for SMBE business. Third parties, including organizers of future conferences, must not be given the lists without express permission from SMBE. Personal data should not be collected unless needed (e.g., legal name might be needed for visa-related letters, but professional name is sufficient in all other cases) or helpful for the aim of promoting diversity.

Data on how attendees plan to travel (airplane, train, car) and city of origin for travel should be gathered upon registration in order to estimate the carbon footprint of the meeting. The carbon footprint of catering should also be provided. Both should be minimized. It is possible, for example, to give some discount for those who join the conference after more than 8h by train. Attendees should also be able to indicate whether they combine intercontinental travel with an

extended stay and visit to additional research institutions. This will help measure whether travel is associated with exchanges of greater quality.

Registration data on career stage should be collected to determine eligibility for undergraduate/graduate student poster and talk awards, and allow SMBE to maintain a participant database with student or postdoc status recorded. The conference organizers must maintain a database of participants with this information, as well as abstract numbers and titles as separate entries, email addresses, affiliations, etc.

Registration should include self-identification items as follows:

- career stage (faculty, postdoc, graduate student, undergraduate, other, prefer not to say)
- if local laws allow, gender (female, male, non-binary/third gender, prefer to self-describe, prefer not to say)

Registration giveaways at the meeting

Printed conference material should be kept to a minimum. Sponsors should be encouraged to provide advertisements and information on the conference website or app or instead of printed flyers.

Badges

Each delegate should be provided with a badge. This must not include advertising promotion for any journal or society other than MBE/GBE and SMBE, though non-journal sponsors may sponsor lanyards. Badges should give names in large letters, and also give affiliation, printed on both sides – additional information is typically not necessary. An exception is badges that designate Editors and Associate Editors of the journals as well as a separate designation for Council members, and/or LOC. These have traditionally taken the form of sticky ribbons added to badges. Badges should preferably be made of environmentally friendly materials.

Other swag (bags, bottles, USB thumb drives, etc.)

Should be kept to a minimum to reduce environmental impact and should avoid advertising for journals directly competing with society journals.

Conference website, programme, and app

SMBE conference promotion should consider environmental impact and minimize the use of printed materials.

Website

Must include

- promotion of Travel and Carer awards
- SMBE policies on harassment and broadcasting (text in Appendix to this document)

All images either posted online or used in emails related to the conference should be approved by the Council liaison and take gender balance and diversity into consideration regarding the people shown in the images. When possible, images from actual previous SMBE meetings should be used.

Programme

The timetable should ideally be available in three formats:

- “at-a-glance” format, simply detailing the session/symposia times and locations.
- a more detailed version with each speaker shown in column format so that parallel talks are on the same row. This helps participants plan their schedule. Once the meeting starts, it should be updated live online (or at least daily), since changes do arise.
- a detailed online-only booklet with each speaker listed along with all co-authors,

affiliations, and abstract.

Be sure that all authors are visible in the complete online program, not just the presenting author, since many people choose to attend a talk based on the laboratory or senior author. It is helpful if this information can be provided in column format.

The programme should include SMBE policies on harassment and broadcasting (text in Appendix) and an email contact to report any violations of these policies.

The most updated printed or printable conference programme should be the version with concurrent sessions in columns and concurrent talks in rows to make it easy to choose a path.

Additional requirements for the online programme

A participant list should be provided in the web programme.

The entire conference program, complete with timetables, should be made available for download to laptops or mobile devices, usually in PDF or Excel format.

The online programme should also contain all the logistical details for the conference, including the best and most cost-effective means of ground and air transportation to the meeting location.

Essential conference app features for successful use in the conference

- Available in both iPhone and Android formats
- Usable offline, since many travelers do not have a data plan and some hotels charge fees for wifi. Wifi quality can also be unreliable at large meeting venues.
- If possible, should not require registration (unless necessary for those who want to customize it, for example to create a personalized program)
- Updateable and updated daily
- Include first author name, surname, and talk title, hyperlinked to abstract with all authors.
- Allow announcements
- Include SMBE policies on harassment and social media (text in Appendix) with quick email link to report violations
- Include a quick link so that a poster presenter can invite another meeting participant to their poster. (This should not require composing an email each time.)
- Include, if possible, the ability to create a personalized schedule, selecting talks and/or abstracts to attend, by clicking on (such as “liking” or saving to schedule) either the talk title, speaker name, or abstract from any of its views. This may include the option to set reminders. Reminders, alerts, or notifications (for example of poster sessions closing or a talk about to start) should always be **inaudible**.

Developing the use of either the conference or app or a simple physical noticeboard is encouraged to help match participants seeking postdoc positions with PIs offering them.

Venue

The venue should be fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Rooms

The conference venue should have at least one room that can hold at least 80% of delegates. Past experience indicates that for the plenary talks approximately 80% of the delegates will attend.

Therefore, it is preferable that there is a room to hold this number. If this is not possible, then there should be a facility to relay the plenary lectures to another comfortable room via video link.

The venue should additionally have enough rooms for all parallel sessions and these should be sufficiently large to accommodate approximately one third of the conference, given the difficulty in predicting the numbers of delegates that attend any given talk. The rooms should be located no more than a 1-2 min walk from each other and have seating or aisles arranged to facilitate movement between sessions.

Kindly ask the venue to refrain from using air freshener during the conference in all locations, including registration desk and lobbies. Some participants are allergic to it and it exposes all participants to poor air quality.

Free, secure wifi should be available throughout the venue.

Onsite childcare

Organizers will arrange for onsite (in the same building as the conference) childcare, as this is an issue of great importance to the members of the Society. SMBE will help defray the cost of childcare. Please communicate early and often with the Society as to the costs, barriers and opportunities for child care. Ideally, the onsite location should be no more than a five-minute walk from the sessions, but not right next to a room where there are talks, to provide quick access to parents and let children be children, while also keeping the noise level during presentations acceptable.

Speaker set-up

There should be a set-up room for speakers to upload and check their presentations. The preferred presentation file format is pdf, but ideally both Powerpoint and Keynote should be accepted. Both modern (current OS) Apple and PC computers should be provided for presenters.

Insurance

The LOC is responsible for liaising with SMBE and the PCO to ensure that all insurance requirements are met.

Online attendance

To facilitate accessibility to the conference, the LOC should allow for virtual participation if financially possible. We minimally expect talks to be accessible online in real time (accessible with registration fee) or recorded and made accessible after the event to members of the society. Depending on the format chosen, the registration and abstract submission system should request information from the participants regarding their willingness to share their talk online.

Safe SMBE and SMBE Allies

Since 2023 we introduced the **SMBE Code of Conduct Training Program** (for more information about the code of conduct please see the Appendix below), where interested parties were able to gain training in how to spot and manage situations involving violations of our code of conduct during the meeting, serving as **Allies** for attendees in need.

Each year, we ask that at least one of the symposium organizers for each symposium, along with additional volunteers, receive allyship training and are able to serve as allies during the conference.

Those who participate in Allies training will be designated with a badge ribbon (we ask that the conference organizers coordinate with council to have ribbons provided for SMBE Allies) at the meeting so that attendees can quickly identify Allies.

Appendix 1: SMBE policies

SMBE Code of Conduct

SMBE is dedicated to providing a safe, hospitable, and productive environment for all members. Accordingly, SMBE prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment (including among members, volunteers, and staff) in all Society activities, including events (online or in person), journal correspondence, social media, etc). Behaviour that undermines the integrity of intellectual discourse is an impediment to scientific progress and will not be tolerated.

Accordingly, the Code of Conduct applies to all members of SMBE, including members, volunteers, staff, vendors, and to all participants in all Society activities, including events (online or in person), journal correspondence, social media, etc):

SMBE membership and/or participation in its virtual and in-person meetings, conferences, and events constitutes an agreement to adhere to the Code of Conduct. These policies cover member conduct in all professional and educational settings and related environments and in relation to both members and non-members. These settings may include, but are not limited to:

- Any professional workplace, networking event, or activity;
- Conferences, meetings, discussion panels, and other activities at SMBE-affiliated or sponsored meetings, in-person and virtual;
- Oversight and adjudication of written and verbal communications;
- Educational environments, including formal and informal educational spaces, transport vehicles, and housing associated with them;
- Informal spaces where there are social activities with SMBE members;
- Informal and professional social networking sites and online platforms both affiliated and not affiliated with SMBE.

Expected Behavior:

Members and participants in all professional, social and educational settings covered by the Code of Conduct shall:

- Treat all members, participants, attendees, staff, and vendors with respect and consideration, valuing a diversity of views and opinions.
- Treat others with dignity and respect, regardless of their own or another's race, color, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, religion, age, marital status, parental status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, body size, socioeconomic background, educational background, disability, military service or veteran status, or other descriptive category/individual characteristic will not be tolerated.
- Neither harass nor request nor accept inappropriate favor from students, employees, or colleagues.
- Give fair and equitable consideration to all members, volunteers, staff, vendors, and to all participants in all Society activities, regardless of their race, color, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, religion, age, marital status, parental status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic background, educational background, disability, military service or veteran status, or other descriptive category/individual characteristic.
- Communicate openly with respect for others, critiquing ideas rather than individuals. Members shall avoid personal attacks directed toward other SMBE members, participants, attendees, staff, and vendors.
- Not attempt to injure the reputation of or professional opportunities for others by false, biased, or undocumented claims.
- Not practice, incite, encourage, or condone prohibited behavior, as listed in section V below, including but not limited to harassment in any form.
- Respect the rules and policies of the meeting/event venue, as well as any other

applicable meeting or generally applicable codes of conduct in SMBE co-sponsored meetings and events. Meeting or event attendees found to be in violation may be asked to leave the event and associated hotel accommodations without warning or refund and at cost to the attendee.

Prohibited Behavior:

Behaviors that are prohibited and which may result in consequences when a violation of the Code of Conduct is found include:

- Harassment in any form, including sexual harassment, denigrating jokes, stereotyping, or a recurring pattern of microinvalidations, microassaults, microaggressions, and microinsults;
- Physical abuse or intimidation, including disregard for another's safety;
- Verbal or written abuse or intimidation (in-person or remotely), including but not limited to: harmful or negative comments related to race, color, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, religion, age, marital status, parental status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, body size, socioeconomic background, level of education, disability, or veteran status;
- Violating the previously communicated (verbally or nonverbally) physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries of others through the continuation of otherwise prohibited behaviors or through verbal or written comments founded on any personal aspect of another individual;
- Photographing, recording, or video-taping of others and/or the dissemination or distribution of photographs, recordings and video-tapings of others without their consent;
- Violating the broadcasting policy by engaging in the following prohibited behaviors
 - Disrespectful communication that does not support the communication and discussion of science;
 - Directly reproducing visual materials (e.g., no posting of photos of slides or posters) unless permission is obtained from the presenter or if they have already made this information freely available in an open-source forum.
 - Copying or taking screenshots of session recordings, Q&A, or session chat activity taking place in the virtual space without express permission; and
 - Sharing presentations, postings, and messages which contain promotional materials, special offers, job offers, product announcements, or a solicitation for services that have not been expressly approved through a partnership agreement.
- Display or distribution of images or recordings involving provocative behavior, bigotry, nudity, sexual activities, or physical force against oneself, another person, or a community, including inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in public spaces or in presentations;
- Intentional, unwelcome physical behaviors (in-person or remotely), including but not limited to stalking, physical contact, and aggressive or intimidating displays and/or body language;
- Threats (implied or real) of physical, emotional, professional, or financial harm, including threatening or stalking any attendee, speaker, volunteer, exhibitor, SMBE staff member, service provider, or other meeting guest;
- Ethical violations as defined in Section I above;
- Retaliatory behavior during or after the reporting process by any individuals involved in a potential violation of the Code of Ethics and Member Conduct, including the reporting party/target/victim, witnesses, and those reported to have engaged in prohibited behavior(s); and
- Any other behaviors that may reasonably be assumed to have the effect of creating, contributing to, or maintaining an environment that is hostile toward or damaging to a person or group.

Reporting Process:

Any SMBE member or anyone participating in an SMBE-sponsored event can report harmful behavior or a potential violation of this code to the Safe Behavior Officer at safeconferences@gmail.com, or in person to the named on-site safety officer.

When responding to a report, SMBE will prioritize respecting each person's safety and confidentiality while also protecting the SMBE environment. SMBE's SMBE Council has contracted with an external Safe SMBE Officer to offer confidential reporting to SMBE participants who feel uncomfortable making an internal complaint. The reporting party's identity will be kept confidential if they so wish, until and unless there comes a time that disclosure is needed to address the problem, and they agree to the disclosure of their identity.

There is no absolute deadline or statute of limitations for reporting potential violations to SMBE (including for violations that occurred prior to the establishment of this code). Reporting parties are encouraged to come forward at any time so that any harm to reporting parties may be addressed and that a safe and inclusive environment for all members can be maintained.

SMBE will ensure the timely investigation of reported allegations. A report initiated in writing to the Safe SMBE Officer will be acknowledged and reviewed in a timely manner. At the reporting party's request and if appropriate, the Safe SMBE Officer will initiate a preliminary investigation and will recommend to the SC whether to continue with a full investigation.

Consequences for a violation of the code may include, but are not limited to:

- a verbal or written request to cease and desist conduct in violation of the code
- removal of messages and solicitations in violation of the Virtual Conduct Policy and banning the sources of those solicitations.
- removal from a conference, a meeting, a room, or an event, virtual or in-person, without warning or refund; or a ban on future attendance at conferences or events
- limiting rights to participate in SMBE activities, committees, or leadership for a specified time, including specified remedial actions.
- suspending members from SMBE leadership or membership for a designated time or with conditions for participation, up to and including expulsion from SMBE membership.

Procedures for Reviewing Reported Violations of the Code of Member Conduct

Reporting Procedures

A Safe SMBE Committee (SC) will be formed by SMBE Council annually. The composition of the SC will either be solely a subset of council or have broader representation with both council members and other SMBE members. A third-party Safe SMBE Officer is contracted annually to work with the Society on supporting Allyship training, receiving Code of Conduct violations, and conduct investigations.

Either the Safe SMBE Committee (SC), or the Safe SMBE Officer receives a report through one of the various available reporting channels listed here.

- Recipients of a report (SC or Safe SMBE Officer) notify the other that a report has been submitted and bring relevant SMBE leadership into the loop, as minimally necessary to maintain safety, confidentiality, or further escalation of conflict.
- Once a report is received, the Safe SMBE Officer will conduct a preliminary investigation to determine if the conduct reported is a potential violation of the Code. The Safe SMBE Officer will also conduct preliminary investigations upon request of an SMBE Ally, SMBE officer, or SMBE staff member.
- Some reported conduct can be handled without additional investigation or a formal investigation process, particularly when the reporting party does not wish to proceed with a formal report or when the nature of the matter lends itself to being handled immediately.

- When the preliminary investigation is complete, the Safe SMBE Officer will make a recommendation to the SBC as to whether a full investigation should take place. If the SBC so recommends, the SBC will notify the accused, who will have 7 days to respond.
- If a full investigation is recommended, SMBE may place an immediate hold on the accused/participant's membership, who will not be permitted to participate in meetings and events until the investigation is complete. Decisions on placing such an immediate hold will depend on the severity of the incident.
- The Safe SMBE Officer will conduct a full investigation in conjunction with the SBC, to include interviewing parties and witnesses and reviewing relevant documents.
- When the investigation is concluded, the Safe SMBE Officer will prepare an investigation report for the SBC's consideration.
- The SBC will consider any conflicts of interest and agrees to keep the identity of the parties (if known) confidential.
- The SBC will discuss the report, deliberate as to consequences, and make a recommendation to the SMBE Council.
- The SMBE Council will consider any conflicts of interest and agrees to keep the identity of the parties (if known) confidential.
- The SMBE Council will issue a determination with consequences for any member found to have violated the Code and will notify all parties in writing of the outcome, working with the Safe SMBE Officer if necessary to preserve the reporting party's identity. The range of consequences may include, but are not limited to those listed in the **Code of Conduct**
- A member or participant found to have violated the code and subject to consequences for their membership or participation in SMBE may submit a petition for reconsideration to the SMBE Council on the following grounds: 1) the conduct was wrongly decided to have violated the code; 2) bias or misconduct affected the outcome; or 3) the consequences were disproportionate to the seriousness of the violation. The petition of 500 words or less, with justification for the appeal and new evidence or a narrative explaining why previous evidence should be reconsidered, must be submitted to the SMBE Council within seven days and will be heard at the next regularly scheduled SMBE Council meeting. The reconsideration decision will be final, and if denied, any consequences for the member/participant's violation will be immediately carried out.
- If there are consequences to further participation in SMBE, such as a ban on particular activities, such as participation in meetings and events, eligibility for leadership, honors or awards, or a suspension or expulsion from membership, the relevant SMBE staff person will be notified, subject to confidentiality, to carry out the consequences.
- A designated SMBE staff person will keep a confidential record of all reports so that a member/participant's conduct may be considered as part of a pattern in the future, even if not the subject of a formal process or if the first report is not determined to be a violation warranting consequences.

Broadcasting policy

The SMBE Annual Meeting supports the communication and discussion of science. Information presented at the Meeting (in oral or poster format) may be reported and discussed by attendees and science writers via blogs, Bluesky, or other formats, **unless** any of the authors requests otherwise. We do request that communications are respectful and do not directly reproduce visual materials (e.g., no posting of photos of slides or posters) unless permission is obtained from the presenter or if they have already made this information freely available in an open-source forum. If a presenter does not want information from his/her presentation to be photographed at all, or broadcast, they should make this clear in their talk/poster and we ask that attendees respect this. If you have questions or concerns about this policy, or would like to report an abuse of it, please contact any member of the Local Organizing Committee or email [email address for that year's conference PCO].

Appendix 2: Call for proposals for conference

The President-Elect issues a call for proposals four years (e.g. call issued in 2017 for meeting in 2021) before the conference year. Conferences will alternate once every two years, with Global conference on odd years (a single large conference taking place in one city, following the rotation North America/Europe/Rest of the world) and Extended Regional meetings on even years (up to 5 small-scale meetings, one per continent).

Applicants will be required to submit written proposals following a standard template to SMBE Council. Applicants are required to work with SMBE's designated PCO.