**Guide to Guest Speakers**

**Introduction**

This guide is meant to inform you on finding guest speakers for your next event. We received feedback from surveys and reports, and many Chapter Leaders requested advice on where to find speakers and how to secure them to enhance your chapter events. Here you will find information on where to look for speakers, how to reach out to them, and how to communicate with them.

**Overview**

The topics discussed in this guide include:

* The Importance of Speakers
* How to Start
* Where to Look for a Speaker
* How to Contact a Speaker
* Important Tips

**The Importance of Speakers**

Guest speakers can be invited to your event to present information as subject experts or simply to share their experiences with a certain topic. A guest speaker can entice more members to attend your event and introduce your chapter members to a fresh, interesting perspective on an issue.

**How to Start**

**Choose a topic. Consider these suggestions:**

* Choose a topic or issue specific/relevant to your community.
* Choose a topic based on a current UN initiative or Sustainable Development Goal.
* Choose a topic relating to one of your chapter’s programs or partnerships.

**Decide what type of event you’d like to plan.**

* Panel discussion, roundtable, training session, topical presentation, fundraiser, awards night, open-community activity, etc.
* Virtual or in-person
* Open to members or the full community
* Audience demographics
  + Broad reach open to all types of audiences
  + Narrow reach specific to a certain demographic, such as age or gender
    - For example, an event for Young Professionals or to empower young females in STEM

**Decide how your speaker will fit into the picture.**

* Introductory or closing remarks, full panelist, moderator, special guest, etc.

**Where to Look**

**Study your event plans to hone in on a speaker**

* Your topic, type of event, and the function of your speaker should help you decide what kind of speaker to look for.
  + Will your speaker be from a relevant nonprofit organization?
  + Will your speaker be a field worker or an international worker?
  + Will your speaker share their expert knowledge or will they empower your audience with a personal narrative?
  + Will your speaker discuss what their organization/company is doing for the issue, or will they provide a more broad global perspective on the issue?
  + Will your speaker directly represent your audience demographic?
    - For example, if your event is for females in STEM, will the speaker be a female in STEM?

**Start within your own community.**

* A speaker from your local community is easy to contact, close by, may already be familiar with your chapter, and will have more knowledge on the current situations of your community.
* Create an excel database of the organizations and businesses in your area that have a mission or value relevant to your chapter.
  + Include what that mission, value, or cause is and record the contact information for each organization.
  + Reference this database to find a potential speaker (or a future partnership).

**Scan your personal network or that of other chapter members.**

* If you, a member, or a board member is involved with your topic of interest, start there.
  + What if you don’t know this information yet?
    - Consider sending out a survey to your members asking them what causes/SDGs they are passionate about, what organizations they may represent, what their occupation is, etc.
    - Create an excel database to inventory this information and update it when new members join. (Even if a member leaves, they could still be a suitable guest speaker.)
    - Reference this database for ideas on your next event and speaker.
* Are there any UNA members/National Council members outside of your own chapter who could speak on this topic?
* Explore your chapter’s email list or your existing partnerships with local community organizations for ideas.
  + Consider local groups like Rotary Clubs.
  + Consider an educator from a local school/university.
  + Consider a staff member from your local government office who has knowledge about your local representative.

**Make a connection with someone new.**

* Contact other UNA Chapters or members through social media, UNA Forum, or email.
* Contact someone through professional networks like LinkedIn.
* Search for a speaker on a speaker search engine (please note: these speakers may be more expensive).

**How to Contact a Speaker**

**What to include in your message:**

* Share the details of your event, the goal of the event, how you want to incorporate the speaker, and why you believe they are a good fit for your event.
  + By telling them why they are a good fit, you are giving them context on what personal skills or experiences they should discuss at your event.
* Indicate date and time of event, as well as the location or if it’s virtual.
* Indicate when you would like their response by.
* Discuss compensation, if any.

**Send invitations out in stages:**

* Begin with your top choice candidates, wait for a reply, then send out next choice candidates accordingly.

**If your speaker confirms:**

* Follow up in an email or a brief call to explain further details:
  + About the event
  + What you expect of them
  + Brief context on the UNA and its mission if they are unaware.
  + Logistics (travel, day of details, etc.)
* Request any information you may need from them:
  + Contact details
  + Headshot and biography
  + Presentation slides
  + Photo release form
  + Social media handles (to include in your own promotional marketing)
* Ask your speaker to publicize your event and their appearance at your event on their social media to help build awareness around your event.
* Nearing the event, send them an email reminder.
* After the event, send a thank you email.

**Important Tips to Keep in Mind**

* Find a speaker with a tie to the UN or to a **UN initiative/topic** to keep it relevant to UNA.
* Consider a **creative professional** as a speaker to share their work that relates to the topic (poem, song, art, writing, etc.).
  + Consider **creative events** that differ from the traditional one-hour panel or Q/A. A creative event that features a creative speaker will stand out among other events.
* Take advantage of **virtual events**. Your speaker may be more available/inclined to speak at your event if they do not have to travel.
* While you are researching speakers, make sure to create a list of more than one speaker, and rank your speakers on your first choice speaker, second choice speaker, and so on.
  + It is important to have **backups**, even after your speaker has confirmed. Be prepared in case your speaker cancels.
* Before you contact your speaker, try to **find videos or recordings of them speaking** to get a good picture of how they might fit into your event.
* Don’t feel like you need a grand event with an expensive, well-known speaker.
  + A **passionate community member** can have as much valuable knowledge and expertise, and has a greater **personal connection** to your members.
* If you don’t have traditional compensation to give to your speaker, consider **stressing other incentives** such as:
  + Travel/food paid for (if it’s an in-person event)
  + Publicity and promotion of their work through your social medias and chapter network
  + Opportunity to network with other inspiring co-speakers
* Make sure to advertise your speaker in your announcements and **social medias** to attract your audience.