Tips for Panel Discussions

- Find out as much information about the format, timing, audience and other participants as possible in advance.
  - What other opinions will be represented, and by whom?
  - How familiar is the audience with the issue?
  - Is this likely to be a fact sharing session, or is it more controversial or contentious? How much time will each person have, and who will moderate the session?

- Be Prepared
  - Determine three key messages relevant to your audience.
  - Think about anecdotes, stories and examples that illustrate your messages and practice telling them.
  - Anticipate questions and prepare concise responses that answer the questions directly.
  - Create a short, meaningful introduction of you for the moderator to use.
  - Familiarize yourself with the other panelists’ backgrounds and positions on the issue.
  - Prepare 30-second closing remarks.

- Be conscious of how you look when you’re not speaking. Resist fidgeting, swinging your foot, or making facial expressions that signal disapproval of others’ remarks.

- Interact politely with the other panelists during the discussion.

- Avoid acronyms and technical jargon.

- Phrase your talking points in bumper sticker language.

- Use “bridges” to navigate the discussion and bring it back to your messages.
  - “I’d like to address that question…”
  - “Let me add something to that idea…”
  - “We take a different perspective at my company…”
  - “It is not a question of personal opinion. It is an issue of fact. The fact in this case is…”