

# Creating a great virtual poster: Guidance for GWF HQPs

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the GWF Annual Open Science Meeting (GWF2020) is taking place as a series of virtual events this year. We kicked off GWF2020 on May 13<sup>th</sup> with an [online national water policy panel discussion](#). A compendium of abstracts is now published online, and the poster session gallery will be populated and shared publicly over the month of June.

If you would like help creating a great virtual poster for the online poster session, the GWF KM Team has produced this guidance document that offers a list of considerations, tips and helpful resources.

## Consider the opportunity

- **Access to a large audience** - the GWF Core Communications team will be promoting the online poster session including through social media and the network email list of over 2000 people from academia, government, non-profit and Indigenous organizations, and industries who have broad interests in Canadian water issues.
- **A long-lasting summary of your research** - You will receive a link to your poster that will remain active throughout the life of the Global Water Futures program (through August 2023), enabling you to direct potential employers, partners and stakeholders to a visual summary of your research.
- **Easy-to-use tools for effective communication** – You have access to a sophisticated platform that enables you to use pictures, video, audio, external links and more to communicate your message in a dynamic and engaging way (iPoster is the same platform used by the AGU Fall Meeting).

## What you should think about as you develop your poster...

### First, create content for [your intended audience](#)

- GWF's extensive science program means that it can be difficult to predict who will view your online poster, just like at an in-person conference. However, because you'll have a direct link to your poster, you can bring it to the attention of whoever you want. This offers you an opportunity to develop your poster message and design to engage your intended audience.
- Who is your audience? Think about who you want to explain your research to. Your audience could be another research group, a science user you've partnered with or would like to partner with, or even a potential employer. Maybe there is a specific sector or government department that you think would be interested in your research. Different audiences are interested in different elements of your research so identifying an audience will be able help you decide what information is most important and which content requires the most emphasis.

## Second, determine the type of poster you would like to create

- The traditional format for scientific posters includes headings such as introduction, methodology, results and discussion. This might be a great format to use if your audience is primarily from academia.
- If your primary audience is outside of academia, you could consider using a different format to present your information. The GWF Knowledge Mobilization Team has called this style a Research Impact poster where the emphasis is not on how you did your research but its potential applicability. This style is often heavy on infographics and light on methodology. See the Resources section below for more specific tips on how to create a Research Impact Poster.
- Regardless of the type of poster you choose, this is an opportunity to be creative and apply your skills in effective science communications. Everyone benefits from a good poster.

## Third, Develop your message

- Online posters mean you will not be there to explain the content to the viewer. Each element has to be presented in a self-explanatory way. It is important try to use your limited space to telling one clear 'story' of your research.
- The following recommendations are generally good-practice when developing a poster that presents your science story but become even more important when the information is presented virtually:
  - Use simple and clear language. Avoid jargon and acronyms which might not be understood by everyone reading your poster.
  - Consider using bullet points. This makes it easier for the reader to skim and quickly digest content.
  - Use clear visuals to illustrate your messages. Ensure the pictures and graphs you chose are self-explanatory (or are explained clearly) to someone who may not be an expert in your field. Only include visuals that compliment the message you are trying to convey.
  - Draw readers to your poster quickly by using a short, engaging title that will encourage them to click further.
  - Use headings to break up text. Headings posed as statements or questions can add to your content rather than simply taking up space.
  - Don't be afraid of white space. Dense content and pictures can be intimidating and tiring to the reader. Less is more, especially on a screen.

## Resources available

- The AGU has a series of *Sharing Science* webinars available. [This webinar, "What is your Science Message"](#) is particularly good at helping you identify your audience and craft an appropriate science message for them.
- The University of Waterloo's SWIGS (Students of the Water Institute Graduate Section) developed a training session for creating research posters. The slide deck will help you develop your virtual research poster.
  - Download the "Creating great research posters" slide deck authored by UW graduate students Hillary Quinn-Austin, Laura Neary and Courtney Robichaud and GWF KM Specialist, Nancy Goucher.

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## Technical resources

GWF is working with iPoster Sessions to support the virtual poster format. For technical support, please visit the links provided in your email invitation.

## Looking for more input?

Participate in a Live Q&A virtual drop-in on **Thursday, June 11 at 12 pm CT (2 pm ET)** hosted by Nancy Goucher and Stephanie Merrill of the GWF Knowledge Mobilization Team. This will be your chance to:

- Get real-time input on your draft content and/or poster (through the screenshare function)
- Get inspiration from your peers by seeing how they intend to present their science message

If you would like to attend the virtual drop-in, [please register here](#).

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*Poster submission deadline: June 15*

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