

## **Communication Strategies and Products for Water Research Foundation Projects**

The Water Research Foundation is committed to sharing research results and resources in a variety of ways to increase the value and application of our research for different audiences. Foundation-funded researchers are encouraged to utilize a mix of unique and progressive tactics to communicate project results. Below are some ideas to consider when developing the Communication Plan for a research project. Researchers are not limited to the suggestions below and are encouraged to propose additional/alternative communication strategies or products. Researchers should consider target audiences, costs, resources required/available, potential impact, and product longevity when developing the Communication Plan. Foundation communications staff members are available to discuss any related ideas or questions.

- Standard Water Research Foundation final report
- Non-standard final report
- Summary report or white paper
- Journal article
- Foundation blog post
- Webcast
- Web-based product or tool
- Software
- PowerPoint presentation
- Conference presentation
- Workshop or targeted briefing
- Targeted e-mail or press release
- Infographics

### **Standard Water Research Foundation final report**

A standard Water Research Foundation final report should be considered for many Foundation projects. The content and format requirements for standard Foundation final reports are set forth in the [Format-Style Guide](#). The Foundation publishes all standard final reports on the Foundation Website as an electronic (pdf) file, and also prepares and distributes printed copies of selected final reports. Printed final reports sometimes include electronic files or a CD-ROM with supplemental data, spreadsheets, photographs, and other types of information that are more appropriate to be viewed or utilized electronically. The Foundation will cover the costs of publishing, printing, and distributing the standard Foundation final report outside of the project budget.

### **Non-standard final report**

A non-standard final report could be formatted like a manual or workbook, and range in size from 6" x 9" to the standard Foundation size of 8 1/2" x 11". This type of report would most likely not follow the Foundation's style according to the *Format-Style Guide* and may consist of more color than normally used. Format and style details will be resolved on a project-specific basis. Similar to the standard final

report, the Foundation will cover the costs of publishing, printing, and distributing non-standard final reports outside of the project budget.

### **Summary report or white paper**

A summary report or white paper could be produced to more effectively present research results in a concise/condensed format when the results do not warrant a full Foundation report. There are no specific requirements related to report length or format, details, and delivery methods will be resolved on a project-specific basis. It is likely that summary reports and white papers will be made available on the Foundation Website and as a pdf, but when necessary, the Foundation will cover the costs of publishing, printing, and distributing summary reports outside of the project budget.

### **Journal article**

The principal investigator (PI) could submit an article to a journal as a project deliverable. Articles must acknowledge the Foundation for sponsoring the research. A journal article generally is not desirable as the sole final deliverable because the Foundation will either have to share or forfeit copyright of the information to the journal publisher. However, a journal article may be appropriate as a means to communicate the research results to a particular technical audience. The Foundation and AWWA have agreed to share copyright on interim project results for *Journal AWWA* and *IDA Journal*. If a journal article is planned before the final deliverable, the Foundation encourages researchers to publish in one of these two journals.

### **Foundation blog post**

Researchers could develop a post or a series of posts to be featured on the Foundation's blog. Blog posts can preview surprising results, highlight key lessons learned, summarize a compelling case study, etc. Typically, blog posts should be less formal/more conversational, range from 100 to 300 words, include links to related Foundation resources and encourage ongoing discussion by blog readers. Foundation blogging recommendations and guidelines can be obtained from the communications staff.

### **Webcast**

A Webcast (a live presentation delivered online) could be used by the PI to share project results directly with Foundation subscribers. Foundation Webcasts are hosted by the Foundation in coordination with the project research team. The Foundation will cover the cost of hosting project-specific Webcasts outside of the project budget.

### **Web-based product or tool**

Sometimes a research project results in the development of a Web-based product that can provide ongoing project updates, photos, videos, and discussion forums. However, only selected projects justify development of a Web site, Web tool, or Web application. There are costs and implementation details for the researcher and the Foundation to consider – therefore, a feasibility study should be submitted that addresses the costs and resources required for developing, testing, hosting, and maintaining a Web-based product. The Foundation and the researcher(s) should consider and agree on the following issues before the Web-based product is created: researcher has the resources, time, and budget to develop and test the product; technical support has been agreed upon; researcher will update the product when necessary over a set number of years; if the product is hosted on a researcher Web site, the site will either be able to authenticate Foundation subscribers or Foundation subscribers will be able to access the tool through a link from the Foundation's Web site. For additional information and guidelines on filling out the feasibility study, see the document "[Web-Based Product Criteria and Feasibility Study.](#)"

### **Software**

Software may be a desired option to allow end users to calculate information based on their system- or organization-specific data. The Foundation and the researcher(s) should consider and agree on the following issues before the software is created: researcher has the resources, time, and budget to develop

and test the software; technical support has been agreed upon; demonstration of beta software showed user acceptance; minimum system and technical requirements of users, etc. For additional information and considerations, see the document “[CD-ROM and Software Criteria for Water Research Foundation Project Deliverables.](#)”

### **PowerPoint presentation**

A PowerPoint presentation could be developed that summarizes the main findings of the project and their relevance to Foundation subscribers. The presentation would be made available to subscribers as an effective means for them to share information about the project within their utility or organization. A PowerPoint presentation generally will not be the primary final deliverable for a project, but may be a very effective supplemental deliverable for disseminating results to a broad audience within the Foundation’s subscriber base.

### **Conference presentation**

The PI may propose to present research results at a conference(s). Similar to the above description for journal articles, a conference presentation generally is not desirable as the sole final deliverable because the Foundation will either have to share or forfeit copyright of the information. However, a conference presentation may be appropriate as a means to quickly release the research results to a particular technical audience prior to the publication of a final report or similar final deliverable. Presentations must acknowledge the Foundation for sponsoring the research.

### **Workshop or targeted briefing**

The PI may propose to present project findings or demonstrate tools developed through a project to a particular audience(s) via a workshop or briefing. This may be in conjunction with a conference or other organized event, or may be a stand-alone activity scheduled specifically for this purpose. Such meetings may be an effective and efficient means to transfer project results to specific target audiences. The project proposal should factor in the cost and resources of arranging, preparing for, and traveling to present any planned workshop or briefing.

### **Targeted e-mail or press release**

The Foundation can announce or highlight project results via broadcast e-mail or press release to our subscribers and other stakeholders. Consideration should be given to whether the length and format of the material is appropriate for e-mail, which is most effective when used for shorter amounts of text (e.g., one page) and/or links to information contained on the Foundation’s Web site. Targeted emails and press releases will be coordinated by the Foundation in conjunction with the project research team and related costs will be covered by the Foundation outside of the project budget. Please note that the Foundation cannot provide subscriber email addresses or other subscriber contact information to researchers. The Foundation also does not have access to membership contact lists for other organizations, including AWWA.

### **Infographics**

Some research results can best be shared by infographics (visual representations information, data or knowledge). Infographics can help present complex information quickly and clearly to technical and non-technical audiences. Infographics can be (1) the same as typical figures in a research report, (2) created outside the report to provide an overview of project results, or (3) convey information from multiple sources or concepts beyond the scope of a single research project. The use of infographics can stand alone or add value to many of the communication tactics described above.

## General Considerations and Requirements

- A research project may warrant more than one communication strategy and/or product. Tactics may be combined, such as standard final report and Webcast, non-standard final report and conference presentation, software and white paper, and so forth.
- Interim communications (i.e., prior to completion of research and submittal of the final report or other deliverable) are encouraged where appropriate. Any interim communication activity must be coordinated through the Foundation, and the associated content must be reviewed by the project advisory committee (PAC) prior to dissemination.
- Determination must be made during project contracting that the costs of proposed deliverables are available in the project funds. If any costs or resources are to be absorbed by the Foundation, the Foundation must approve this prior to the start of the project.
- The research team should have the technology, equipment, time, budget, and staff resources to develop, test, review, and produce any proposed deliverable. If Foundation staff and/or resources are required, the Foundation must approve the extent of involvement and any associated costs prior to project start.
- The Foundation must review (and/or test as appropriate) and accept all deliverables prior to dissemination.
- All printable document pages (e.g., PDFs), whether on a CD-ROM, Web site, etc., must include the following footnote: **Source: [report title] by [author] © [year] Water Research Foundation. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.**
- Intellectual property agreements must be in place to cover final deliverables.
- PI must obtain copyright permission to use third-party materials, graphics, or other information.
- PI resources should be available for after-delivery support of the deliverable. If the Foundation is to handle support, the Foundation must approve the extent of support and any associated costs prior to project start.
- The Foundation should be recognized as the sponsoring organization of the research, as outlined in "[Guidelines for Supporting Resources](#)." The Foundation logo should be displayed on all deliverables.