

Pre-Event Preparation

In preparation for the 4th annual Western Consortium for the Grand Challenges, a planning committee was formed comprising deans and professors from schools of social work who had been a part of previous Consortium events, had indicated interest in participating in planning, and those who had hoped to amplify the goal of the Grand Challenges in their schools and in the West. The planning committee met monthly, with assigned deliverables between meetings. The event theme emerged from conversations based on feedback from past Western Consortiums, and the planning committee hoped to highlight the variety of work being done on the Grand Challenges for Social Work. Ultimately, the focus for this Consortium event was determined to be “community and academic partnerships” in relation to the Grand Challenges of Social Work. Originally, the Consortium was planned as an in-person event, however in order to increase accessibility of the event to community members and academics from smaller schools, the event pivoted to a virtual format.

To organize tasks and deliverables, event coordinators kept a running [Excel](#) document to prioritize and delegate tasks throughout the planning process. Members reached out to potential community and academic partners to be speakers as early as six months prior to the event date, providing information about the consortium, the formatting of this year’s event, and to confirm speaker interest.

The anticipated audience of the event was determined to be mainly academic and community partners. In order to honor audience time and incentivize attendance, the planning committee ensured Continuing Education Units (CEUs) would be available to those interested in obtaining credit for event attendance. At this stage, the committee approved a draft agenda for the 2-day event. After further discussion, concern arose around the level of attendance for a two-day virtual event. At this point, the committee pivoted to a single, full-day (8 hour) event structure, and updated confirmed event speakers on this change.

An invite list was created, including Deans and Chairs of Social Work programs in the West, past consortium attendees, and students and individuals involved in Grand Challenges work and research. The agenda was finalized and invitations were sent out containing a registration link and attached information including: the final agenda, speaker bios, and [history of the event](#). Event wording and visuals were based on the [2019 3rd Western Consortium](#). Invitations encouraged recipients to extend invites to organizations or members of their own

community who might also be interested in attending the event. Planning members coordinated with the national Grand Challenges for Social Work staff to advertise the Western Consortium event on the national Grand Challenges website. [Canva](#) and shared [Google Documents](#) were used throughout the pre-event process in order to design slides and graphics for the event materials. Event organizers utilized tools and images from their respective university programs, and provided promotional materials [found on the Grand Challenges website](#).

At this time, the planning committee worked to finalize {workshop and breakout room questions} to guide discussion, and reached out to speakers asking them to send over any presentation materials they would be using. Simultaneously, members worked to create interactive activities throughout the event using a subscription to [Mentimeter](#). Mentimeter allowed for real-time audience participation throughout the event including: live reactions, themes, word clouds, and polls.

A slideshow was created to compile all materials (including speaker slides, breaks, and activities) in sequential order, and a script with tech cues was created for facilitators. The planning committee designed questions for the Q & A portion to highlight speakers' work and expertise, while also maintaining focus on the Grand Challenges. At this time, the post-event survey was finalized and post-event emails were drafted. A week before the event, a tech run through was completed and final tweaks were made on the script.

During Event

Facilitators and speakers arrived one hour prior to the event on the day of, with the buffer time spent ensuring that videos and microphones worked properly and checking that everyone understood their roles and order in the event. The tech facilitator made sure that the event was recorded and that he had access to all event materials. In case of timing discrepancies, buffer slides were present throughout the presentation. The tech facilitator was given discretion to utilize these slides if needed. As the event began, the tech facilitator admitted participants. The planning committee utilized a 'closed event' structure so that only participants who pre-registered were able to join. This was done in order to ensure that the event ran smoothly, without disruptions. Each section and panel had multiple facilitators and moderators to manage

the flow of the event. Throughout the event, the timekeeper sent time updates to speakers and facilitators. The chat facilitator tracked the chat to make sure that comments from participants weren't missed and highlighted relevant and important questions during the paneled Q & A section.

Post-Event

Following the completion of the event, Thank-You notes were sent out to speakers, planning committee members, and event attendees in the next couple of days. The post-event survey link was attached to the email, and compensation was disbursed to event speakers. The planning committee scheduled one final meeting to discuss deliverables and compilation of event information. CEUs were disbursed at this time to attendees. The tech facilitator worked to edit the event script and recording to make it accessible for all attendees. Event recordings, split up into the morning and afternoon session, were shared with attendees. In the month following the event, following the gathering of all materials, work on this toolkit began.

Hope for a Collaborative Future

We hope this document, outlining the planning process for the Fourth Western Consortium for the Grand Challenges for Social Work, serves as a valuable guide and tool for future organizers. While not an exhaustive, step-by-step approach, it provides a comprehensive overview that can be adapted to different event structures and types.

The Grand Challenges for Social Work work to shape a brighter future by [identifying social challenges, guiding scientific research, and developing culturally relevant solutions](#). There are many ways to get involved, including: [following the newsletter](#), collaborating with community and academic partners, and participating in research or advocacy related to the 14 Grand Challenges. If you'd like to be involved in future Grand Challenges event planning, please reach out to your university, connect with community partners and researchers to see what Grand Challenges related work is being conducted, and learn about current initiatives such as the [Go Grander campaign](#) from the [national Grand Challenges](#).