

2024 Tailored Collaboration Program FAQs

The 2024 Tailored Collaboration (TC) Program [Pre-proposal Guidelines](#) are available on WRF's website.

PROJECT IDEA

Q: Is our idea suitable for the TC Program?

A: The TC Program is open to any idea that interests a water utility. The program supports research projects that may be local or regional concerns and are broadly applicable to WRF subscribers. However, a topic of specific interest to only the sponsoring utility (for example, developing a capital improvement plan for that particular utility) is unlikely to be funded through the TC Program. If you would like further information on the suitability of your idea for the TC Program, you can contact the [Regional Liaison](#) for your area.

Q: I have an idea, but unsure how to proceed. What is a good first step?

A: We encourage you to contact the [Regional Liaison](#) for your area to discuss your idea.

Q: We have an idea, but we do not have enough funding. Can WRF help us to find additional utilities that will be willing to put cash into the project?

A: We encourage you to contact the [Regional Liaison](#) for your area to discuss this. Regional Liaisons are often familiar with other utilities that may be interested in similar ideas.

Q: We have been told that a TC project must address water quality issues, but we want to propose a project to address management needs. Will our project be considered for TC funding?

A: Yes. The TC Program is open to any idea that interests a water utility.

FUNDING

Q: Do we need to have our cash funding available when we submit our pre-proposal? When is the cash match due to WRF?

A: No, you do not need to have your cash match available when you submit your pre-proposal. The cash match is due to WRF upon execution of the funding agreement. Under the current program schedule, contract negotiations are completed in December/January. WRF's disbursement of the project funds will be subject to WRF first receiving full corresponding payment from all co-funders.

Q: Does WRF match cash contributed by non-utility subscribers?

A: Yes, WRF matches cash coming from any WRF subscribers.

Q: Can a non-subscriber contribute cash to the project? Will WRF match this cash?

A: Non-subscribers can contribute cash to projects; however, this cash is not typically eligible for the WRF match. Funding contributed by organizations not eligible to be WRF subscribers (e.g., nonprofit organizations or government agencies) may qualify for WRF matching funds; proposing teams must obtain approval from WRF's Chief Research Officer to count these contributions toward cash matches. The [Regional Liaison](#) for your area can help you with this process.

Q: Are grants and awards from other institutions eligible for the cash match?

A: No, grants and awards from other institutions are not eligible for the cash match.

Q: Does WRF provide a cash match for the in-kind contributions?

A: No, there is no matching of in-kind contributions.

Q: We have a subscriber providing cash funding for a project; however, the subscriber cannot give this money directly to WRF. If the subscriber pays out cash to another party, will those payments be eligible for the WRF cash match?

A: No. WRF will only match cash contributions that are paid directly to WRF.

Q: Is there a limit on the number of organizations providing cash to the project?

A: While there is no limit, WRF will sign a Letter of Agreement (LOA) with each organization providing cash to the project. Having many organizations providing cash to the project may delay the start of the project due to contract negotiations. Please ensure all funding organizations have received approval for cash contributions from their various boards or commissions before submitting your pre-proposal to expedite contract negotiations.

Q: It looks like the subscriber's cash for a TC project has to be paid to WRF. How is that done?

A: If you have a winning proposal, an LOA will be put in place with the subscribers providing cash to the project. These LOAs allow for the transfer of money to WRF, normally done with an invoice from WRF to the subscriber. If your organization has a purchase order (PO) process, that will be noted in the LOA, and the internal processes for developing a PO should be followed so that the PO number can be cited on the invoice sent by WRF to the subscriber.

PROGRAMMATIC

Q: Should I read the [Tailored Collaboration Pre-proposal Guidelines](#)? Do they change from year to year?

A: Yes. We update the guidelines annually and post the revised version on our website in early February.

Q: What is Sponsoring Utility?

A: The Sponsoring Utility is defined as a WRF subscribing utility that initiates a proposed project. A utility's current subscription must be in good standing in order to sponsor a project.

Q: Can a non-utility subscriber sponsor a TC project?

A: No. The sponsor of a TC project must be a utility subscriber.

Q: How many TC projects can a utility sponsor in a given funding year?

A: A utility can sponsor only one project per funding cycle. However, the utility may provide support to other projects.

Q: Is the sponsoring utility required to provide cash to the project?

A: No, the sponsoring utility is not required to provide cash to the project.

Q: Can the sponsoring utility participate in other projects?

A: Yes. The sponsoring utility can participate as a utility participant and provide funding to other projects.

Q: Where can I see a list of WRF subscribers?

A: Subscribers are listed on the [WRF website](#). We encourage you to reach out to the [Regional Liaison](#) for your area, as they may have information not yet presented on our website.

Q: Are in-kind contributions required for a TC project?

A: No minimum in-kind contribution is required for sole-sourced TC projects, though such contributions are welcome. However, if a TC project uses the RFP process, a 25% in-kind match will be required from the awarded team.

Q: Can we modify the budget outlined in the pre-proposal when we submit the full proposal?

A: Yes, minor budget adjustments at the full proposal stage are common.

Q: We anticipate multiple organizations funding our TC project. Do we need a commitment letter from each organization for the pre-proposal?

A: No. While the co-funders you are working with should view the pre-proposal as a probable commitment of funds, a signed letter of commitment from each of those subscribers to provide the funding is not necessary at the pre-proposal stage. However, such letters of commitment are required for the full proposal. Each commitment letter should stipulate the total cash amount to be provided to WRF, as well as any in-kind amount.

Q: We missed the deadline for the pre-proposal. Can we submit a full proposal and be considered for funding?

A: No. You must submit a pre-proposal by the pre-proposal deadline in order to be considered for funding, and you must then be invited to submit a full proposal.

Q: Are we required to submit a detailed project budget with our TC pre-proposal?

A: No, a detailed budget is not required with a pre-proposal. For more information, please see the [Tailored Collaboration Pre-proposal Guidelines](#).

Q: We submitted a pre-proposal last year, but the idea was not selected for full proposal submission. Can we submit the same idea this year?

A: Yes. However, we urge you to consider the feedback you received on your pre-proposal last year and ensure you have addressed the primary concerns identified with that pre-proposal before resubmitting the idea.

Q: Our utility sponsored a project that received funding last year. Are we eligible to sponsor another TC project this year?

A: Yes. A utility subscriber is eligible to sponsor one project every funding year.

CONTRACTING

Q: What type of agreement will co-funders sign?

A: All co-funders will execute a simple Letter of Agreement (LOA) for their contributions. A sample LOA is available on WRF's [contract materials webpage](#).

Q: What type of agreement will the research team's organization sign?

A: For a project selected for funding, a Project Funding Agreement must be established between WRF and the Principal Investigator's organization. A sample WRF Project Funding Agreement is available on WRF's [contract materials webpage](#).

Q: What is the WRF policy on intellectual property and patenting?

A: Please review Section VI, IP RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION in WRF's standard Project Funding Agreement. A sample WRF Project Funding Agreement is available on WRF's [contract materials webpage](#).