2024 Unsolicited Research Program
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: What are the match requirements for the Program?

A: The applicant must contribute additional resources equivalent to at least 33% of the project award. For example, if an applicant requests $100,000 from The Water Research Foundation (WRF), an additional $33,000 or more must be contributed by the applicant. Acceptable forms of applicant contribution include cost share, applicant in-kind or third-party in-kind that comply with 2 CFR Part 200.306 cost sharing or matching. Proposals that do not meet the minimum 33% of the project award will not be accepted.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for funding?

A: Any academic, consultant, utility, or non-governmental organization in good standing may submit.

Q: Can I resubmit a proposal that was submitted to another WRF program?

A: You may if it meets the Unsolicited Research Program requirements. Indicate on the cover sheet if you have submitted to another program or have an existing research project funded by the Foundation. For the Unsolicited Research Program, you do not have to be a WRF subscriber to submit a proposal.

Q: Who reviews the proposals?

A: Proposals are reviewed by the WRF Research Advisory Council, with support from additional experts as needed.

Q: What is the level of funding for the Program?

A: The program routinely receives 10% of WRF's allocated research budget each year and launches every other year.

Q: What is the standard request from the program?

A: Standard funding requests range from $25,000 to $175,000 in WRF funds for the entire project period. Most projects are completed within one to two years.

Q: How competitive is the proposal process?

A: WRF typically receives about 50-150 pre-proposals for consideration.

Q: Several potential investigators/proposers have asked me to join their team. Can I team up with more than one proposing team?

A: Yes.

Q: Are references (cited literature) part of the three-page main body pre-proposal limit?

A: Yes. Proposers can provide key references to support their pre-proposals; however, this is part of the three-page limit. Proposers selected to submit full proposals will be asked to submit this information (this will not count against the full proposal page limit).

Q: Are the WRF budget sheets required for the pre-proposal?
A: No, at the pre-proposal stage the budget items on the coversheet are required. Proposers selected to submit full proposals will use the WRF budget sheets to submit this information (this will not count against the full proposal page limit).

Q: Are letters of support or commitment needed for the pre-proposal?
A: No, not at this stage. If applicable, provide a list of other entities that have committed funds (or services) for this research or that are being pursued for collaboration in the pre-proposal. Proposers selected to submit full proposals can provide letters of support at that time (this will not count against the full proposal page limit).

Q: Does WRF pay indirect costs?
A: Yes, WRF allows researchers to include the indirect cost rates of their universities/organizations. Note that some researchers/universities lower their rates (usually for non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations such as WRF) so more funds go directly to research.

Q: Are organizations outside the U.S. eligible to submit a pre-proposal?
A: Yes. All proposers must follow the 2024 Unsolicited Research Program Instructions for Submission of Pre-proposals.

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.

Q: When do research projects selected for funding typically start?
A: Projects are anticipated to be contracted in the fourth quarter in the same calendar year that they are funded. Research projects may begin January of 2025 (the following year).

The requests for pre-proposals are launched in January, pre-proposal submissions are accepted in March, invitations to submit a full proposal are made in June, selection awards are made in September, and research projects are contracted by December.

Q: When and how will proposers be informed of the decision?
A: All proposers submitting pre-proposals will be informed by email in June 2024 of a decision.

Q: What is the schedule for the 2024 Unsolicited Research Program?
A: We agree it is important to plan considering the following key dates:

1/18/2024	Program launch (This is the opening date for accepting pre-proposals).
3/28/2024	**Deadline for pre-proposals (by 3:00 pm MT)**
6/10/2024	Pre-proposal selection notifications, and shortlist full proposal invitation.
7/25/2024	Full proposals due.
9/19/2024	Full proposal selection notifications.

Please check back for more updates on Frequently Asked Questions.

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