

Water Research Foundation

Research Program Restructuring: FAQ

Q. What changes are you making?

A. We are reducing the number of discrete research programs from six to three. Going forward, the research programs will be structured as follows:

- **The Focus Area Program** will identify a limited number of broadly relevant subscriber issues and solve them with a targeted, multi-year research response. This program incorporates and replaces the Solicited and Strategic Initiative Programs.
- **The Emerging Opportunities Program** enables the Foundation to respond quickly to emergent subscriber challenges and research ideas identified throughout the year. This program replaces the Unsolicited, Rapid Response, and Partnership programs.
- **The Tailored Collaboration Program** enables the Foundation to respond to subscriber issues that may be more limited or regional in impact. This program is unchanged under the restructuring.

Q. Why are you making these changes?

A. We're making changes in response to subscriber feedback and their changing needs. We want to better serve our members and maximize the value of their subscriptions.

Q. What do you hope to achieve by this restructuring?

A. We expect this restructuring to accomplish the following goals:

- Focus research efforts on solving the most pressing subscriber problems more completely
- Minimize the timeframe from identification of need to delivery of results
- Reduce the amount of time our volunteers and staff must commit to planning research without compromising the quality of the results

Q. What other changes are being made?

A. In addition to restructuring the research program, the Foundation is making changes that will improve the effectiveness of our communications. This includes more effectively summarizing research results, better explaining their importance to subscribers, and tailoring our work products and communication efforts to the needs of our different subscriber audiences.

Q. When will the changes take effect?

A. The changes will take effect immediately, but the full transition will take several months to complete.

Q. Is overall research funding being impacted as a result of this restructuring?

A. No. Overall research funding will not be impacted. The funds will be distributed as follows:

- The Focus Area Program will receive 60% of the overall annual research budget.
- The Emerging Opportunities Program will receive 20% of the annual research budget.
- The Tailored Collaboration Program will receive 20% of the research budget.

Q. What is the total research budget for 2011?

A. At its January meeting, the Board of Trustees approved a research budget of \$8.5 million for 2011, which will be used to support 31 projects. Additional information about the projects can be found on the Foundation website.

Q. How can we get involved in research planning?

A. We'll continue involving volunteers, and seeking and responding to feedback from subscribers, researchers, and other stakeholders, in order to improve the value of our research programs. We're currently defining research planning processes under the new program structure and will be announcing opportunities to participate in these processes over the coming months.

Q. I am a subscriber and have an issue that the Foundation may be able to help with. Who can I contact?

A. Your utility's Senior Account Manager is your primary point of contact for questions, suggestions, or information. We value your continued involvement and appreciate your feedback and suggestions.

Q. How can I submit ideas to the Foundation for funding consideration?

A. You can submit ideas for funding consideration as you did under the old system. We are currently developing proposal submission guidelines for the new programs and will be making these available shortly.

Q. What if I have a research idea that doesn't fit under one of your new focus areas?

A. The Unsolicited Program isn't being discontinued; it's being incorporated into the Emerging Opportunities Program. You can follow standard submission procedures, as you have in the past. Guidelines for submitting proposals under the Emerging Opportunities Program will be available on our website shortly.

Q. When will RFPs for the new Focus Area Program be available?

A. RFPs will be posted on the Foundation website at various times throughout the calendar year. We anticipate that the first RFPs under the Focus Area Program will be issued in early 2012.

Q. Who do I contact if I have further questions?

A. Please contact Chris Rayburn, the Foundation's Director of Subscriber and Research Services (303.347.6188, crayburn@WaterRF.org), with any additional questions you might have.