Solicited RFP

Design Considerations for Integrating Public Engagement at Demonstration Facilities, RFP #4979

Project Objective/Research Question
What are the best practices for integrating public education and engagement elements at potable reuse demonstration facilities?

Budget
Proposals may request WRF funds for $50,000. WRF funds requested and total project value will be criteria considered in the proposal selection process.

Background
Across North America, more utilities are considering potable reuse as a critical strategy for water supply diversification and improved supply reliability. The technology to reliably produce safe advanced treated water that meets or exceeds drinking water standards exists today and will likely improve over the coming years. While technical and engineering challenges are always important considerations for developing alternative water supplies, public acceptance of potable reuse has proven to be especially critical to the success of these projects.

A 2015 report, Model Communication Plans for Increasing Awareness and Fostering Acceptance of DPR, conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups to determine effective messaging to help the public understand water reuse. This study identified high-level strategies for utilities to build strong relationships with their customers by keeping them informed on issues that apply to them. Some of these strategies include:

- Develop trust (build relationships, offer plant tours)
- Be consistent with outreach (start early, continue throughout project)
- Provide information about potable reuse and where it is in use to increase familiarity
- Be consistent with messaging and terminology
- Instill confidence in the quality of water (talk about the treatment process)
- Be transparent (discuss costs, water quality, safety, environment)
- Be prepared (for tough questions and misinformation)

The focus groups and telephone survey showed that, after receiving additional information about potable reuse and the multi-stage treatment process used to make the water safe to

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drink, most participants became more comfortable with the idea of potable reuse. These findings indicate that public engagement is an effective tool for increasing acceptance of potable reuse, and that further work should be completed to ensure efficient and successful outreach programs.

Demonstration facilities can be effective at increasing public awareness and education by introducing the public to the treatment process in an interactive and engaging way. Design considerations include optimizing traffic flow for group tours, designing interactive educational stations or displays, and installing water tasting stations.

This project will build upon previous research to develop a guidance manual documenting best practices for integrating public education and engagement elements at potable reuse demonstration facilities. While this effort is focused on providing guidance to agencies that are implementing potable reuse demonstration facilities, the recommendations will also be applicable to the design of public outreach components for full-scale facilities.

**Research Approach**

*The following approach is not required, but was developed as a possible approach. The Project Advisory Committee is interested in other research approaches if they will meet the objectives of this RFP.*

**Task 1: Gather case studies of WRF subscribers and municipalities with existing demonstration facilities to identify best practices and lessons learned.**

- These sites could include wastewater and drinking water utilities in addition to advanced water treatment facilities.
- A limited number of case studies should be selected for more in-depth interviews to better understand successful practices and processes
- Proposals should describe how the team will select, review, and present these case studies.

**Task 2: Develop a Best Practices Guidance Manual of Design Considerations for Integrating Public Engagement at Demonstration Facilities**

- Highlight design elements that have been effective in increasing public education, awareness, and acceptance of advanced treatment processes and potable reuse.
- Provide guidance on how to decide what informational content to include in a demonstration facility based on physical, financial, and technical constraints of the project (e.g., location, target audience, available space, project goals, etc.) This could be structured as a decision matrix.
- Provide recommendations for existing materials that could be accessed by utilities implementing new demonstration facilities. These can include videos, graphics, maps etc. that demonstration facilities can use.
- Make recommendations for future resources that should be developed.
Selection Process and Criteria

Selection of proposals is a very competitive process. Proposals will be reviewed by WRF and the Project Advisory Committee. This review team may be complemented as needed by subject matter experts. As part of the evaluation process, WRF reserves the right to request interviews, either via conference call or in person, with qualified proposers if necessary.

Proposers are encouraged to develop and submit research plans that meet the research goals of this RFP, provide sufficient details of their budgets, as well as schedules and milestones that can successfully deliver on the stated research goals, objectives, and tasks that are proposed.

WRF will evaluate proposals on the following components:

- **Understanding the Problem and Responsiveness to RFP (20%)**
  Does the proposal adequately explain the problem? Does it reflect knowledge of the issue and how solving the problem will benefit the water industry? Have the RFP objectives been adequately addressed? If proposed objectives differ from those outlined in the RFP, do the stated objectives address current or future needs of the water industry? Are data quality objectives specified?

- **Technical Approach and Scientific Merit (40%)**
  Is the proposal prepared with supportive information and is it self-explanatory and clearly understandable? Is the proposed effort technically defensible? Is the approach practical? Can the project objectives be achieved in the stated time period with the allotted personnel and budget?

- **Management and Communication Plans (10%)**
  Are the roles, responsibilities, and assignments clear? Do the supporting organizations on the team have complementary skills? Does the lead organization have adequate resources to provide the appropriate level of management, oversight, and project implementation? Is the Quality Assurance/Quality Control Plan acceptable? Are schedules and deliverables clearly defined?

- **Budget and Schedule (10%)**
  Is the budget within the advertised budget for the project? Has the applicant provided appropriate (at least 25%) and significant in-kind contributions to the project? Is the level of effort allocated to each task logical? Is the indirect cost rate reasonable (35% or less is competitive) and has it been detailed in the proposal? Is the schedule realistic? Do the proposed budget and schedule match funding needs to milestones and demonstrate the value of the research relative to the proposed cost?

- **Qualifications of Organization and Key Personnel (10%)**
  Does the lead organization have demonstrated experience and expertise in the issues and objectives discussed in the RFP? Do the key project personnel have experience in the proposed area of research? Have key personnel committed an appropriate amount of time to the project? Are drinking water and wastewater agencies involved?

- **Staff Evaluation and Input Based on Past Performance (10%)**
Proposal Preparation Instructions

Proposals submitted in response to this RFP must be prepared in accordance with The Water Research Foundation’s document Guidelines for Focus Area Program Proposals. These Guidelines are applied to the Solicited Program as well. The most current version of these guidelines is available at: http://www.waterrf.org/funding/ProposalDocuments/GuidelinesForFocusAreaProgramProposals.pdf. The guidelines contain instructions for the technical aspects, financial statements, and administrative requirements that the applicant must follow when preparing a proposal.

Please note that the selection criteria listed here are different from those listed in the Guidelines for Focus Area Program Proposals document. The selection criteria in this RFP will be used to evaluate the proposal.

Eligibility to Submit Proposals

This RFP solicits proposals from all technically qualified applicants, including educational institutions, research organizations, federal or state agencies, municipalities, and consultants or other for-profit entities.

WRF’s Board of Directors has established a Timeliness Policy that addresses researcher adherence to the project schedule. The policy can be reviewed at http://www.waterrf.org/funding/Pages/policies.aspx. Researchers who are late on any ongoing WRF-sponsored studies without an approved no-cost extension are not eligible to be a named participant in any proposal. If you have any questions about your eligibility for WRF projects, please contact the WRF research staff listed at the bottom of this RFP.

Administrative, Cost, and Audit Standards

WRF’s Solicited Research Program standards for administrative, cost, and audit compliance are based upon, and comply with, Office of Management and Budget Uniform Grants Guidance, 2 CFR Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, and 48 CFR 31.2 Contracts with Commercial Organizations. These standards are referenced in the WRF’s Guidelines for Focus Area Program Proposals, and include specific guidelines outlining the requirements for indirect cost negotiation agreements; financial statements; and the Statement of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits and General Overhead. Inclusion of indirect costs must be substantiated by a negotiated agreement or appropriate Statement of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits and General Overhead. Well in advance of preparing the proposal, your financial staff should review the detailed instructions included in WRF’s annually released Guidelines for Focus Area Program Proposals.
Budget and Funding Information

The funding available from WRF for this project is $50,000. A minimum of 25 percent of the total project value must be contributed by the applicant (i.e., the applicant’s minimum contribution must equal one-third of WRF funds requested). 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. The applicant may elect to contribute more than 25 percent to the project, but the maximum WRF funding available remains fixed at $50,000. Proposals that do not meet the minimum match of 25 percent of the total project value will not be accepted.

Period of Performance

The proposed project schedule should be realistic, allowing ample time for the preparation of final reports and for review of project results. It is WRF’s policy to negotiate a reasonable schedule for each research project. Once this schedule is established, WRF and its sub-recipients have a contractual obligation to adhere to the agreed-upon schedule. Under WRF’s No-Cost Extension Policy, a project schedule cannot be extended more than nine months beyond the original contracted schedule, regardless of the number of extensions granted. The policy can be reviewed at http://www.waterrf.org/funding/Pages/policies.aspx.

Utility and Organization Participation

WRF is especially interested in receiving proposals that include both participation and contribution of resources from water utilities and organizations in the research effort. Information on utilities and/or organizations that have indicated an interest in participating in this research project are listed on the last page of this RFP. While WRF makes utility and organization participation volunteers known to applicants, it is the applicant’s responsibility to negotiate utility and organization participation in their particular proposal, and the utilities and/or organizations are under no obligation to participate.

Application Procedure and Deadline

Proposals are now being accepted exclusively online in PDF format. Proposals must be submitted before 2:00 PM Mountain Time, Wednesday, December 19, 2018. All the forms and components of the proposal are available online in the “Proposal Component Packet” zip file. A login is required to download this packet and use the proposal website. This information is available at https://proposals.waterrf.org/Pages/RFPs.aspx.

The online proposal system allows submission of your documents until the date and time stated in the RFP. To avoid the risk of the system closing before you press the submit button, do not wait until the last minute to complete your submission.
Questions to clarify the intent of this Request for Proposals and WRF’s administrative, cost, and financial requirements may be addressed to the Research Manager, Katie Henderson, at (303) 347-6108 or by e-mail at khenderson@waterrf.org.
UTILITY AND ORGANIZATION PARTICIPANTS

The following utilities have indicated an interest in possible participation in this research. This information is updated within 24 business hours when a utility submits a volunteer form and this RFP will be re-posted with the new information. (Depending upon your settings, you may need to click refresh on your browser to load the latest file.)

N/A