



THE
Water
Research
FOUNDATION

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

2019 Roadmap Workshop on Prioritizing Permitting and Linkages Research in Water Quality (RFP 5038)

Due Date: Proposals must be received by 2:00 pm Mountain Time on Thursday, September 12, 2019

WRF Project Contact: Lola Olabode, M.P.H., BCES, lolabode@waterrf.org

Project Sponsors

This project is funded by The Water Research Foundation (WRF) as part of WRF's Research Priority Program.

Project Objective

The objective of this roadmap workshop is to produce a robust and comprehensive discussion to set research priorities for confirming linkages between receiving water quality, wastewater discharge, and other sources.

Budget

Applicants may request up to **\$75,000** in WRF funds for this project. WRF funds requested and total project value are an evaluation criteria considered in the proposal selection process.

Background and Project Rationale

The goal of WRF's *Receiving Water Linkages in Water Quality* research area is to enable the water quality community to fully participate in the development and implementation of water quality-based discharge standards for contaminants (principally nutrients) by developing independent methods for confirming linkages between receiving water quality, wastewater discharges, and other sources, consistent with targeting of ecosystem-based management outcomes.

The development of scientifically sound nutrient goals (e.g., TMDLs and site-specific numeric criteria) that produce ecologically relevant outcomes remains one of the highest-profile challenges facing states and the regulated community. WRF and its researchers, alongside State agencies, permit holders, and decision makers, have utilized the WRF *Nutrient Impact Modeling Toolbox (NMT)* as an option to link nutrient management strategies to ecological response indicators for aquatic systems. The NMT has over 40 modeling applications categorized by waterbody type, endpoint, and degree of success in defining nutrient targets that were accepted for regulatory purposes. The NMT helps users select modeling approaches based on a variety of factors, including type of system, response indicators of interest, and data availability. It also helps users understand the limitations and proper regulatory applications associated with the various modeling options. WRF researchers and the Colorado Monitoring Framework have also tested and demonstrated screening models for nutrients. Results to

date show that screening models are not highly accurate for predicting absolute levels of responses, and so uncalibrated screening models should not be directly used for setting nutrient wasteload allocations. However, these models can support a wide variety of other regulatory and non-regulatory activities, including prioritization of technology-based treatment tiers, exploring the benefits of nitrogen versus phosphorus reduction, and providing technical support to water quality trades or variances.

WRF and the Colorado Monitoring Framework have conducted two demonstrations and three case studies using the WRF NMT to date. In WRF project LINK4T17, a QUAL2Kw-based Stream Nutrient Screening Tool (SCREEN-NUT) was developed and applied to the three case studies to aid users in executing screening-level evaluations of stream responses to changes in nutrient inputs.

The LINK WRF Advisory Committee recently identified, ranked, and prioritized research needs for confirming linkages between receiving water quality, wastewater discharge, and other sources. Research needs were identified and sorted as “Linkages” and “Permitting” research.

The proposed roadmapping workshop will utilize a facilitated structure decision-making process to further identify, vet, and prioritize research and management needs, and establish short-, mid-, and long-term objectives and desired outcomes in an integrated, ecosystem-based management context. It may also include a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to systematically assess feasibility and set priorities in the context of WRF subscriber interests and needs and WRF goals and objectives.

Research Approach

This RFP is intentionally flexible in the workshop roadmapping approach to encourage creativity and originality from proposers. Proposers should describe how they will conduct the workshop roadmapping exercise to meet the objectives listed above. The approach proposed is intended to serve as a guide for producing a viable roadmap to integrate the Linkages and Permitting Research groups/groupings as directed by the WRF Research Advisory Council (RAC). Some elements may include:

- White paper describing trends of the field.
- Guidance roadmap document and research plan for the Advisory Committee in implementing the LINK research goals and achieving the goal accordingly.
- Harmonizing regulatory and non-regulatory management options and opportunities for improved efficiency and certainty of attaining anticipated outcomes.

Expected Deliverables

- Workshop summary report
- WRF guidance document
- White Paper for end-users
- Joint webcast with the Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA) and the Water Environment Federation (WEF)
- Outreach Product, Short Videos, etc.

Communications Plan

Please review WRF’s *Project Deliverable Guidelines* for information on preparing a communications plan. The guidelines are available at <http://www.waterrf.org/funding/Pages/proposal-guidelines.aspx>.

Conference presentations, webcasts, peer review publication submissions, and other forms of project information dissemination are typically encouraged.

Project Duration

The anticipated period of performance for this project is **6 - 9** months from the contract start date.

References and Resources

The following chart lists completed reports and ongoing research efforts for WRF's [Receiving Waters](#) research which also highlights related “Research at a Glance” that may be helpful to proposers. It is not intended to be comprehensive, nor is it a required list for consideration.

https://www.werf.org/c/KnowledgeAreas/UseAttainabilityAnalysis/Receiving_Waters_Research_at_a_Glance_and_Executive_Summaries.aspx

Completed Projects	Executive Summary	Project Number	Release Date
Modeling Guidance for Developing Site-Specific Nutrient Goals		LINK1T11	2015
Modeling Guidance for Developing Site-Specific Nutrient Goals – Demonstration: Boulder Creek, Colorado	Download	LINK2T14	2015
Linking Receiving Water Impacts to Sources and to Water Quality Management Decisions: Using Nutrients as an Initial Case Study		WERF3C10	2010
Ongoing Research			
Guidance on Data Needs for Scientifically Sound Nutrient Goals Using Mechanistic Models Contract Award News Release Abstract (PDF)		LINK3R16	2019
Modeling Guidance for Developing Site Specific Nutrient Goals – Demonstration: Screening-Level Application Contract Award News Release LINK IAT Summary (PDF)		LINK4T17	2019

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals:

- Understanding the Problem and Responsiveness to RFP (maximum 20 points)
- Technical and Scientific Merit (maximum 30 points)
- Qualifications, Capabilities, and Management (maximum 20 points)
- Communication Plan, Deliverables, and Applicability (maximum 15 points)
- Budget and Schedule (maximum 15 points)

Proposal Preparation Instructions

Proposals submitted in response to this RFP must be prepared in accordance with the WRF document *Guidelines for Research Priority Program Proposals*. The current version of these guidelines is available at <http://www.waterrf.org/funding/Pages/proposal-guidelines.aspx>, along with *Instructions for Budget*

Preparation. The guidelines contain instructions for the technical aspects, financial statements, indirect costs, and administrative requirements that the applicant must follow when preparing a proposal.

Eligibility to Submit Proposals

Proposals will be accepted from domestic or international entities, including educational institutions, research organizations, governmental agencies, 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 approved no-cost extensions are not eligible to be named participants in any proposals. Direct any questions about eligibility to the WRF project contact listed at the top of this RFP.

Administrative, Cost, and Audit Standards

WRF's research program standards for administrative, cost, and audit compliance are based upon, and comply with, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Grants Guidance (UGG), 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 WRF's *Guidelines for Research Priority 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 research and financial staff should review the detailed instructions included in WRF's *Guidelines for Research Priority Program Proposals* and consult the *Instructions for Budget Preparation*, both available at <http://www.waterrf.org/funding/Pages/proposal-guidelines.aspx>.

Budget and Funding Information

The maximum funding available from WRF for this project is **\$75,000**. The applicant must contribute additional resources equivalent to at least 33 percent of the project award. For example, if an applicant requests \$100,000 from 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. The applicant may elect to contribute more than 33 percent to the project, but the maximum WRF funding available remains fixed at **\$75,000**. **Proposals that do not meet the minimum 33 percent of the project award will not be accepted.**

Consult the *Instructions for Budget Preparation* available at <http://www.waterrf.org/funding/Pages/proposal-guidelines.aspx> for more information and definitions of terms.

Period of Performance

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 encourages participation from water utilities and other organizations in WRF research. Participation can occur in a variety of ways, including direct participation, in-kind contributions, or in-kind services. To facilitate their participation, WRF has provided contact information, on the last page of this RFP, of utilities and other organizations that have indicated an interest in this research. Proposers are responsible for negotiating utility and organization participation in their particular proposals. The listed utilities and organizations are under no obligation to participate, and the proposer is not obligated to include them in their particular proposal.

Application Procedure and Deadline

Proposals are accepted exclusively online in PDF format, and they must be fully submitted before 2:00 pm Mountain Time on Thursday, September 12, 2019. All proposal documents must be compiled into two (2) PDF files consisting of your technical review documents and your financial review documents. All forms and components of the proposal are available in the *Proposal Component Packet* zip file on the proposal website at <https://proposals.waterrf.org/Pages/RFPs.aspx>. An FAQ and a tutorial are also available. A login is required to access the proposal website and download the packet. Proposers are encouraged to create logins and verify the validity and compatibility of the system well in advance in order to avoid last-minute errors or delays.

The online proposal system allows submission of your documents until the date and time stated in this 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 RFP and WRF's administrative, cost, and financial requirements may be addressed to the WRF project contact, Lola Olabode at 571-384-2109 phone or lolabode@waterrf.org. Questions related to proposal submittal through the online system may be addressed to Caroline Bruck at (303) 347-6118 or cbruck@waterrf.org.

Utility and Organization Participants

The following utilities have indicated interest in possible participation in this research. This information is updated within 24 business hours after a utility or an interested organization 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.)**

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