



## 2024 Unsolicited Research Program Instructions for Submission of Pre-proposals

The Unsolicited Research Program supports The Water Research foundation (WRF) in its mission by funding research projects that can be the catalyst for transforming our understanding of our water resources and our ability to protect and preserve them in a sustainable and cost-effective manner. WRF seeks pioneering research pre-proposals that will significantly advance knowledge and understanding in protection and enhancement of water quality or the water environment and that could fundamentally transform how WRF subscribers perform their work. WRF also considers pre-proposals that would take existing research to the next level of completion, resulting in practical solutions to water quality problems. Those pre-proposals with the best likelihood to advance knowledge and understanding and to provide relevant information for WRF Subscribers are invited to submit full proposals.

Pre-proposal packages for the Unsolicited Research Program must be submitted electronically to WRF **by 3:00 pm MT, March 28, 2024**. (Note: Submissions submitted after this date and time will be rejected).

Upon evaluation of the pre-proposals, a short list of proposers will be invited to submit full proposals for review and consideration. WRF will notify all proposers of the outcome of the selection process regarding their pre-proposal submission.

### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

#### a. Page Limits

The main body of the pre-proposal is **limited to three (3) pages** (excluding cover sheet and resumes) of single-spaced, 11-point font text with one-inch margins.

Specific page limits for all sections are provided below:

WRF Cover Sheet	1 page
Main body of pre-proposal including relevant references/citations	3 pages
Resume of Principal Investigator	2 pages
Resumes of Co-PI and key personnel (as applicable)	2 pages each

#### b. Submittal Instructions

All pre-proposals must be submitted in 1 PDF file, via an online form using this link: [forms.waterrf.org/cbruck/2024-UPPreproposalSubmission](https://forms.waterrf.org/cbruck/2024-UPPreproposalSubmission) by **3:00 pm MT, March 28, 2024**.

The electronic package must include:

- A completed WRF Cover Sheet, main body of pre-proposal, and resumes of PI, co-PIs, and key personnel (as applicable) in a single combined PDF document. Pre-proposal submissions are reviewed by WRF staff to ensure completeness.

Please note that when filling out the online form, you will be asked to indicate your proposal topic area by selecting a primary and a secondary topic area from a list of topics.

## 2. GUIDELINES FOR PRE-PROPOSAL PREPARATION

### a. WRF COVER SHEET

Use the "[Program Cover Sheet](#)" Form provided for the Unsolicited Research Program. The completed Cover Sheet must include the following elements:

- **Proposer Information**: Include the name, title, organization, address, phone number, and email of the Principal Investigator (PI). This is the information that WRF will use to contact you regarding the status and evaluation of your pre-proposal. Include the name, organization, and email of any Co-Principal Investigator(s) or Other Personnel (if applicable).
- **Project Information**
  - Title**: A concise title should be used to describe the project. It is recommended that no more than 65 characters and spaces be used.
  - Participating Organizations**: List all other organizations participating in the project that were not previously listed as a PI, Co-PI, or Other Personnel.
  - Project Period**: The anticipated duration of the project in months.
  - Foundation Funds Requested**: The total cost to WRF (i.e., requested WRF funding necessary for project completion). Standard funding requests range from \$25,000 to \$175,000 in WRF funds for the entire project period.
  - Cost Share/3<sup>rd</sup> Party Contributions Amount**: 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. Proposals that do not meet the minimum 33 percent of the project award will not be accepted. (The list of cost share and/or in-kind support and the entities that have committed funds is not included in the three-page limit).
  - Total Project Budget**: The Total Budget is the sum of the Foundation funds requested and cost share/3<sup>rd</sup> party contributions amount.
- **Type of Organization**: The type of organization applying for funding (for the PI only).

### b. MAIN BODY

The main body of the pre-proposal cannot exceed three (3) pages. Tables, graphs, and references essential to the presentation should be included in the three-page limit. The pre-proposal must include the following sections and information:

- **Project Rationale, Originality and Technical Significance**
  - **Statement of Importance**: Concisely state why the proposed research is of importance and relevant to the mission of WRF.
  - **State-of-Knowledge Supporting the Project**: Summarize the current state-of-knowledge regarding the scientific and technological advances in the proposed area. Make a case for the originality and innovation of the proposed research.
  - **Science/Technology Outcome Potential**: Describe how the proposed research is cutting-edge/breakthrough work and/or could lead to fundamentally transformative results.
- **Project Objectives/Design**

Describe the specific objectives that will be addressed by the proposed research. Briefly outline the project approach, experimental design, and procedures to be used to achieve stated objectives.
- **Project Deliverables**

Identify the expected project deliverables, including the final product(s) that will be developed. Describe potential opportunities to communicate the results.

- References cited to support the pre-proposal must be provided within the three-page limit.
- **Qualification Statement**
  - Provide names and background of the key individuals involved in the project. Include relevant research and other professional experience and demonstrated abilities.
  - A two-page (maximum) resume may also be included for the PI, Co-PIs, and any other key members of the proposed project team.
- **Timeline**  
Indicate the proposed duration of the project.
- **Proposed Budget**
  - Funds Requested: Indicate the total amount of funds requested from WRF and describe how they will be used for the proposed work.
  - Other Support: 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. Provide a list of cost share and/or in-kind support and the entities that have committed funds (or services) for this research (not included in the page limit).

Note: If a pre-proposal team is invited to submit a full proposal, the team will need to substantiate their indirect costs by providing the highest level available from the following descending four levels of agreements and statements in accordance with Federal cost principles:

- § U.S. Federal government agency **approved** Indirect Cost Negotiation Agreement/Determination OR Audited Statement of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits and General Overhead (for-profit entities are required to comply with 48 CFR 31.2)
- § Reviewed Statement of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits and General Overhead in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services (SSARS) issued by the AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) (for-profit entities are required to comply with 48 CFR 31.2)
- § Compiled Statement of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits and General Overhead in accordance with SSARS issued by the AICPA (for-profit entities are required to comply with 48 CFR 31.2)
- § Election to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs in accordance with 2 CFR 200.414

**c. RESUMES**

Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator (PI), Co-PIs, and key personnel (if any). Each resume cannot exceed two (2) pages. Resumes are not counted as part of the three-page limit of the main body of the pre-proposal.

**3. PRE-PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The pre-proposal evaluation criteria are as follows:

- **Technical and Scientific Merit**

Are the research results likely to significantly advance knowledge?

- **Project Originality**

Is there a case made for originality and/or innovation?

- **Technical Approach**

Will the research approach ensure the study goals will be met?

- **Significance and Value of Research**

Is the research concept compelling, transformative, and timely? Does the proposal provide good value for the amount of funding requested?

- **Project Schedule and Qualifications of Key Personnel/Organizational Capacity**

Is the schedule realistic for the work described? Do the key personnel have the necessary experience and expertise? Does the lead organization have adequate resources, capacity, and capability?

#### 4. PROPOSER ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBILITIES

If a contract is awarded as a result of this pre-proposal and the subsequent full proposal, the proposer's organization becomes a WRF contractor and assumes legal and financial accountability for the awarded funds and for performance of the supported activities. The proposer's organization is responsible for verifying the accuracy, validity, and conformity of information in the proposal.

#### 5. WRF POLICIES AND CONTRACTUAL CONDITIONS

The proposer should review and agree to WRF policies and conditions. The project will be funded and conducted as a contract, not as a grant. An example of WRF's standard [Project Funding Agreement](#) is available online. Highlighted policies include the following:

- **Deliverables**

Interim and final deliverables are required. Frequency of reporting will depend on agreed-to milestones of the research being conducted or the demonstration being performed. WRF will establish a technical Project Advisory Committee to review and provide comments on all deliverables. Final deliverables must be provided following WRF's established guidelines.

If a web tool is being proposed (e.g., website, spreadsheet, etc.), proposers must follow the criteria outlined for web tools presented in the [Web Tool Criteria and Feasibility Requirement for The Water Research Foundation Project Deliverables](#).

- **Copyright**

WRF requires assignment of copyright for the draft and final deliverables generated in connection with the research.

#### 6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Please visit our website for answers to [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) for pre-proposals under the 2024 Unsolicited Research Program.
- Questions relating to proposal submissions should be directed to Jeff Moeller at [jmoeller@waterrf.org](mailto:jmoeller@waterrf.org). Questions related to the online form should be directed to Caroline Bruck at [cbruck@waterrf.org](mailto:cbruck@waterrf.org).

# WRF Unsolicited Research Program Pre-proposal Checklist

## INTERNAL TO WRF PURPOSES

WRF Pre-proposal Tracking No: \_\_\_\_\_

- 
- Received by 3:00 pm MT, March 28, 2024.  
 Yes       No
  - Pre-proposal contains **electronic** PDF of entire proposal.  
 Yes       No
  - **WRF cover sheet** completed.  
 Yes       No
  - **Main body** of pre-proposal is limited to **3 pages** (excluding cover and resumes) AND contains the sections below:  
 Complies       Does NOT comply      Deviations \_\_\_\_\_

**Main Body** of pre-proposal must include the following sections:

- **Project Rationale, Originality, Technical Significance** included.  
 Yes       No
- **Project Objectives/Design** included.  
 Yes       No
- **Deliverables** included.  
 Yes       No
- **Qualification Statement** included.  
 Yes       No
- **Timeline** included.  
 Yes       No
- **Proposed Budget** included.  
 Yes       No
- **Resumes** of PI, Co-PIs, and key personnel (as applicable). Each resume cannot exceed two (2) pages.  
 Yes       No  
Deviations \_\_\_\_\_
- Check **System for Award Management (SAM.gov)** exclusion list.  
 Done