



Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Collaborative Forum on Microplastics Research (5318)

Purpose:

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) aims to seek professional facilitator service to implement a Collaborative Forum on Microplastics. The objectives of this forum are to:

- Capture the state of the science concerning microplastics in water
- Build institutional knowledge of microplastics in the water/wastewater utility community
- Foster increased collaboration and coordination among microplastics researchers
- Harmonize best practices for microplastics research study design and implementation
- Identify microplastics research needs

Budget

Applicants may request up to \$15,000 in WRF funds for in-person facilitation service on March 5-6 in New Jersey.

Duration: Two-day forum

Deliverable

- 2-4 Page Synthesis Document on Microplastics
- Facilitation Guide
- Onsite facilitation
- Forum summary

Evaluation Criteria

Competitive candidates will demonstrate experience and qualifications in the following areas:

- Understanding of the challenges associated with microplastics in water and wastewater.
- Knowledge about microplastics to drive the conversation is desired, but not required.
- Proposed approach for the execution and completion of the project objectives.
- Qualifications of key personnel regarding the purpose and objectives of the stakeholder collaboration and engagement.

Background and Project Rationale

In 2018, the State of California enacted Senate Bill (SB) 1422: “Microplastics in Drinking Water,” mandating not only the establishment of a statutory definition of microplastics but also the development of a standard method, the accreditation of laboratories and a framework for four years of monitoring in drinking water supplies, explicitly requiring the public disclosure of results. With the definition and two approved analytical methods in place, the state is poised to issue monitoring orders to water systems as early as the fourth quarter of 2024. Likewise, the state of New Jersey has enacted legislation mandating a similar program for assessing microplastics in drinking water supplies, and the New York City Council has also considered taking action. Collectively, these three jurisdictions encompass 55 million people

(about 17 percent of the U.S. population) whose drinking water supplies could be monitored for microplastics in the near future. Measures to evaluate point source control could closely follow, extending the potential regulatory impact to wastewater utilities. Consequently, there is a broad and growing public concern about microplastics, with potential regulations coming down the pipeline that could benefit from additional research.

Although there is a substantial and growing body of literature on microplastics as it pertains to water and wastewater utilities (including five projects supported by The Water Research Foundation [WRF]), there are still many key unknowns and important questions to be answered for the industry to understand the full extent and impact of the problem. Moreover, outside of the WRF research on microplastics, research efforts conducted to date have been largely uncoordinated and siloed, using a wide array of methods and practices that have made disparate findings challenging to reconcile. Despite the increasing interest in microplastics from regulators and the public, there is minimal institutional knowledge about microplastics among the utility community. However, unlike the abrupt emergence of many new contaminants that force utilities into a reactionary position, the relatively slow evolution of microplastics understanding and regulatory pressure affords a unique opportunity to proactively prepare for potential impacts. Thus, a collaborative forum for utility stakeholders to discuss the state of the science, challenges, and key questions about microplastics, as pertinent to water and wastewater supplies, would be a timely, critical, and invaluable service to the water sector.

Forum Approach

The research forum will include the participation of invited utility, academic, regulator, and engineering consultant stakeholders engaged in microplastics issues; other strategic stakeholders from outside the water/wastewater field may also be invited. The forum will be organized by key research topic areas, including sampling and analysis, occurrence, treatment, toxicology/health effects, regulatory environment, and communications. For each of the six topic areas, a series of 15-20-minute presentations will provide updates on the latest advancements and state of the science, designed to serve as both a briefing and common platform of understanding, as well as a seed for discussion. A subsequent 30-minute facilitated discussion among the forum participants (**not** just the speakers) will capture key points, challenges, questions, and research needs relative to that topic. After completing each of the six topic area modules, a concluding session will review the highlights of each preceding session and discuss approaches and priorities for increased microplastics research collaboration.

Below is a sample agenda for the event. The identified facilitator will work closely with the steering committee (WRF staff members and four industry experts) to finalize the agenda and facilitation plan.

Day 1:

Agenda	Time Allocation
Introduction	60 minutes
Topic 1: Toxicology/Health Effects	1 hour
Facilitated Table Discussion	30 minutes
Break / Networking	30 minutes
Topic 2: Occurrence	1 hour
Facilitated Table Discussion	30 minutes
Lunch	1 hour
Topic 3: Sampling	1 hour
Facilitated Table Discussion	30 minutes
Topic 4: Treatment	1 hour
Facilitated Table Discussion	30 minutes
Wrap Up	30 minutes

Day 2:

Agenda	Time Allocation
Introduction	30 minutes
Topic 5: Regulatory Environment	1 hour
Facilitated Table Discussion	30 minutes
Break / Networking	30 minutes
Topic 6: Communications	1 hour
Facilitated Table Discussion	30 minutes
Lunch	1 hour
Wrap Up	1 hour 30 minutes

Scope of Work

1. Work with the Steering Committee to develop the forum agenda and facilitation guide.
2. Complete a desk review of microplastics resources (including major WRF, WEF, and AWWA publications) and develop a 2–4-page synthesis document that can be sent to forum participants as pre-forum reading.
3. With the assistance of the steering committee, facilitate a two-day forum and capture notes throughout the forum.
4. Develop a final report summarizing the forum, synthesizing the findings by topic areas, describing the breakout discussions, and identifying existing challenges, questions, and research needs discussed during the forum.

References and Resources

Alspach, B., P. Tennyson, and D. Metz. 2024. *Developing Strategic Consumer Messaging for Microplastics in Drinking Water Supplies*. Project 5155. Denver, CO: The Water Research Foundation.

<https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/developing-strategic-consumer-messaging-microplastics-drinking-water-supplies>.

Fahrenfeld, N. Forthcoming. *Defining Exposures of Microplastics/Fibers (MPs) in Treated Waters and Wastewaters: Occurrence, Monitoring, and Management Strategies*. Project 5088. Denver, CO: The Water Research Foundation. <https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/defining-exposures-microplasticsfibers-mps-treated-waters-and-wastewaters>.

Alspach, A. Forthcoming. *Fate of Microplastics in Drinking Water Treatment Plants*. Project 5185. Denver, CO: The Water Research Foundation. <https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/fate-microplastics-drinking-water-treatment-plants>.

Cook, C. Forthcoming. *Impact of Solid Stream Treatment on Microplastics in Biosolids*. Project 5221. Denver, CO: The Water Research Foundation. <https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/impact-solid-stream-treatment-microplastics-biosolids>.

Application Procedure and Deadline

Please send RFQ submittals to Caroline Bruck (cbruck@waterrf.org) and cc Sydney Samples (ssamples@waterrf.org), Subject Line: RFQ5318 for Professional Facilitation Service; Phone: 303-347-6118. A Statement of Qualifications must be submitted as a single (one) PDF file before 11:59 pm Eastern Time on Friday, December 20, 2024.

Submission Requirements for Statement of Qualifications

Please include the following items in your response:

1. Proposal cover sheet: <https://www.waterrf.org/proposal-guidelines#RPP-proposal-coversheet>
2. Letter of Interest detailing how the respondent(s) meets the above criteria and a proposed work plan/approach. This should aim for two pages but not exceed three pages.
3. Resumes or CVs outlining the respondent's experience.
4. Proposed budget and concise budget narrative. Please visit the WRF website for instructions for budget preparation (including the budget narrative) and the budget form. No specific budget format is required, but it needs to include the following information:
 - a. Consultant's hourly rate and available capacity to support the project. For the rate provided, proposers must specify whether the hourly rate is unloaded (base direct labor) or loaded (inclusive of direct labor, fringe benefits, overhead, profit, etc.).
 - b. Estimated number of labor hours for completion of facilitation service.
 - c. Justification or narrative to explain costs beyond personnel time/labor.
5. Evidence of past performance demonstrating success in executing similar facilitation expertise. Examples include previous client assessments or appraisals of work provided to WRF by either the proposer or the proposer's previous clients, if applicable.
6. Minimum Qualification: 5-15 years of experience providing the same or similar facilitation service as described.
7. The winning respondent must be available in person on March 5-6, 2024.