
TAILORED COLLABORATION PROGRAM PRE-PROPOSAL GUIDELINES AND REQUEST FOR PRE-PROPOSALS

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Water Research Foundation

The Water Research Foundation (WRF) is the leading research organization advancing the science of all water to meet the evolving needs of its subscribers and the water sector. WRF is a nonprofit, educational organization that funds, manages, and publishes research on the technology, operation, and management of drinking water, wastewater, reuse, and stormwater systems—all in pursuit of ensuring water quality and improving water services to the public.

The Tailored Collaboration Program

The Tailored Collaboration (TC) Program provides an opportunity for subscribing utilities to partner with WRF in regional research projects or projects that address issues of interest to a significant subgroup of WRF subscribers. The program supports research projects that may be local or regional concerns, but that are broadly applicable to WRF subscribers. Projects often address innovative ideas that have not been the focus of other WRF programs or that expand upon existing research to determine application potential at a utility.

The unique benefit of this program is that not only are utilities' research funds leveraged, but projects are further enhanced by WRF's independent review process (via Project Advisory Committees), professional project management, and broad network for sharing research outcomes and deliverables. Applicants may serve as the research organizations, conducting the research themselves; select their own contractor to serve as the research organization; or use WRF's competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process to engage a research organization.

The total amount of funds available for the 2020 TC Program is \$704,092. Applicants can apply for a 1:1 match of up to \$100,000 of WRF funds. The TC program is a two-step application process; a shortlist of pre-proposal applicants will be invited by WRF to submit full proposals for further review. WRF anticipates funding 7-8 projects. Pre-proposals, or draft RFPs in cases where applicants plan to use WRF's competitive RFP process, are due by July 8, 2020.

The estimated timeline for the 2020 Tailored Collaboration Program is as follows:

- **July 8, 2020:** Pre-proposals and draft RFPs due
- **August 2020:** Pre-proposals and draft RFPs are evaluated
- **Mid-September 2020:** Shortlisted applicants invited to prepare full proposals
- **October 21, 2020:** Full proposals/RFPs due
- **November 2020:** Full proposals/RFPs are reviewed for preliminary funding recommendations

- **November 2020:** Funding recommendations reviewed by Tailored Collaboration Review Committee (TCRC)
- **December 2020:** Projects are awarded under the 2020 Tailored Collaboration Program

II. PRE-PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

1. Sponsor Requirements

Each TC pre-proposal must be sponsored by a utility that has paid its WRF subscription as calculated on the most current year's Utility Subscription Worksheet. The Sponsoring Utility may partner with one or more organizations in a pre-proposal.

2. Sponsoring Utility Proposal Submittal Frequency

The Sponsoring Utility is defined as a WRF subscribing utility that initiates a proposed project. There can only be one Sponsoring Utility per pre-proposal; however, multiple subscribers can contribute funds to a project. In the interest of broadening program participation, a utility is limited to sponsoring one project per program cycle. However, a Sponsoring Utility may provide support to other projects (i.e., providing data or some analyses).

3. Project Funding and WRF Fund Matching Guidelines

WRF will provide matching funds for cash contributed by qualifying organizations (e.g., subscribers and contributions approved by the Chief Research Officer [CRO]) to fund the research. WRF will provide a 1:1 match, up to \$100,000, for every \$1 in cash that a subscriber or group of subscribers provides toward the project.

Only organizations that have paid their WRF subscriptions are eligible to have their project funding matched by WRF. However, organizations that are not eligible to be WRF subscribers (e.g., nonprofit organizations or government agencies) may participate in TC projects as co-funders, provided the pre-proposals are submitted by subscribing utilities. Funding contributed by these organizations may qualify for WRF matching funds; proposing teams must obtain approval from the CRO.

Grants and awards from other institutions are not eligible for the cash match. **In order to be eligible for WRF cash match, all money invested by the sponsor or other co-funder(s) is due to WRF upon execution of the funding agreement.** WRF's disbursement of the project funds shall be subject to WRF first having received full corresponding payment from all co-funders.

4. Additional In-Kind Match

There is no minimum in-kind contribution required for TC projects that are sole-sourced (i.e., not using the WRF RFP process), though such contributions are welcome. However, if a TC project has been identified as an RFP, a 25% in-kind match will be required from the awarded team. In-kind contributions, such as personnel costs, support services, facilities, and consulting services, are not required to be documented in the pre-proposal. In the event that a team is invited to submit a full proposal, all in-kind contributions should be documented in the budget submittal and accompanied by a letter of commitment from each organization providing in-kind services.

5. Application Review and Selection

TC applications are accepted once per year under a two-step process. An initial pre-proposal

or draft RFP of no more than four pages is first submitted for review and screening.¹ WRF's Expert Review Committee (ERC), consisting of WRF staff and industry experts, will review the pre-proposals/draft RFPs and recommend to the TCRC a shortlist of projects that have the greatest potential impact or outcome. The number of full proposals/RFPs requested will be approximately twice the number of projects to be awarded. The review criteria for pre-proposals and draft RFPs are provided in Attachment 3. The TCRC will determine which Sponsoring Utilities will be invited to submit full proposals and full RFPs.

The Sponsoring Utilities and research teams that are not invited to submit full proposals or RFPs can request verbal feedback from WRF staff about the:

- Strengths and weaknesses of the project concepts and components described in the pre-proposal
- Redundancy or uniqueness when compared to past and ongoing research
- Identification of potential fatal flaws

The ERC will then review the full proposals/RFPs for funding consideration. The Board-appointed TCRC will then evaluate the ERC's recommendations and make final funding decisions. Both committees can request clarification on technical and/or financial issues they identify in the proposal or RFP before making a decision regarding suitability for funding.

6. Contract Requirements

For a project selected for funding, a Multi Funded Research Agreement (MFRA) must be established between WRF, the Sponsoring Utility, and co-funding organization(s). If a third-party research organization is contracted to do the work, that sub-recipient will also enter into the MFRA. It is recommended that the Sponsoring Utility, all co-funders, and the Principal Investigator (PI; the person who will have primary responsibility for ensuring that all terms and conditions of the agreement are met) review the MFRA on the WRF website in advance:

<http://www.waterrf.org/funding/ContractMaterials/MultiFundedResearchAgreement.pdf>.

Prior to submitting a full proposal or RFP, the Sponsoring Utility should verify with each co-funder and the PI (if pre-designated) that the MFRA is acceptable to their respective organizations. It must be signed by all parties within 45 days of receipt of the draft agreement. Co-funding organizations must complete internal reviews of the MFRA to identify potential concerns (e.g., intellectual property, legal, risk management, indemnification) that will require negotiation and resolution. Items requiring negotiation must be identified in the proposal on the Co-funding Support Form. **The MFRA must be signed by the Sponsoring Utility, all co-funders, sub-recipients, and the Principal Investigator before WRF can move forward with the project. Projects that are solicited through the RFP process will begin the contracting process using the MFRA after the research organization is selected.**

WRF encourages research sponsors to involve their legal counsels in review of the MFRA. If there are any major revisions, expected funding arrangements, timelines, or legal discussions, WRF would like to work with applicants early in the contracting process to avoid delays.

¹ See Section III for specific requirements. Pre-proposals not meeting these requirements will be automatically disqualified.

III. GUIDE FOR THE PREPARATION AND SUBMITTAL OF PRE-PROPOSALS/DRAFT RFPs

Pre-proposal Checklist

A Pre-proposal/Draft RFP Checklist (Attachment 2) has been provided to avoid confusion and address questions. Please check off the items on the checklist showing that you are aware of these key points. Although WRF asks that you review this list **before the pre-proposal is submitted**, all of these items do not need to be completed until the **full proposal is submitted**. WRF wants to ensure these issues have been discussed and are understood during the preparation of the full proposal to avoid delays.

Pre-proposal or Draft RFP Preparation

- Pre-proposals must be at least two pages and no more than four pages, including figures, tables, and appendices. The cover sheet (Attachment 1), Pre-proposal Checklist (Attachment 2), résumés/bios (limited to one page or less per person), and lists of references are excluded from this page limit.
- Pre-proposals must be formatted for standard letter-size paper with 1-inch margins and font size of at least 11pt.

Pre-proposal submissions must include:

1. Tailored Collaboration Program Pre-proposal/Draft RFP Cover Sheet (Attachment 1)
2. Pre-proposal/Draft RFP Checklist (Attachment 2)
3. Research Objective – Clearly identify the research objective in one or two sentences.
4. Background/Understanding of the Problem – Provide a brief background on the topic, and articulate why this research is important and necessary.
5. Technical Approach – Describe the main tasks to be accomplished. This will serve as the basis for the scope of work that will be more fully described in the full proposal.
6. Originality and Innovation of the Research – Briefly detail how the proposed work is unique and innovative. Describe how this research will add to the advancement of science. How is the proposed work different from other related research? How does this work benefit other utilities?
7. Potential Relevance and Future Applications – Discuss why this work would be important to the broader water community. Explain the potential benefits of the work, as well as the project's potential impact on future research.
8. Budget – A detailed budget is not required in the pre-proposal. Pre-proposals should identify the amount of WRF funds requested (not to exceed the maximum amount stated in this request for pre-proposals), as well as matching and other funding. The scope of work must be based upon the requested WRF funds and in-kind contributions. Project teams for sole-sourced projects are encouraged, but not required, to provide in-kind contribution of items such as personnel costs, analytical and support services, facilities, consulting services, etc.
9. Schedule – A detailed task-specific schedule is not required in the pre-proposal. However, an estimate of the project duration should be provided.
10. Statement of Qualifications (if project is to be sole-sourced) – Have members of the research team previously done this type of work? Does the team have appropriate equipment?

Draft RFP Preparation

If the Sponsoring Utility would like to have an RFP issued to select a research organization, WRF can support this effort. Utilities should submit a narrative to address items 1-9 above, which should not exceed **four** pages. If shortlisted, an RFP template will be provided by WRF.

All due dates applicable to pre-proposals and full proposals also apply to draft RFPs and full RFPs. The ERC will review the draft RFPs and provide its shortlist of recommendations to the TCRC. If a draft RFP is selected for the shortlist, the Sponsoring Utility will be invited to develop a competitive full RFP and accompanying narrative as described in the Full Proposal Guidelines. The full RFP will be due to WRF at the same time full proposals are due for sole-sourced projects. The ERC will review the submissions for both RFP and sole-sourced projects and provide funding recommendations to the TCRC. The TCRC must approve the funding for the project before WRF issues an RFP for the purposes of selecting a research organization for the project.

Pre-proposal/Draft RFP Submission

Pre-proposals/draft RFPs are considered the intellectual property of the submitter and are handled confidentially. Pre-proposals must be submitted via email to TCPreproposal@waterrf.org by **Monday, July 8, 2020, at 5 pm Eastern Time**. Pre-proposals received after this deadline will not be considered. Receipt of pre-proposals will be acknowledged by email.

ATTACHMENT 1
TAILORED COLLABORATION PROGRAM PRE-PROPOSAL/DRAFT RFP COVER SHEET

PROPOSER INFORMATION

Sponsoring Utility: _____
Contact Person at Utility: _____
Address: _____
Phone and Email: _____

Coordinating PI: _____
Address: _____
Phone and Email: _____

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: _____
Topic/Keywords: _____
Project Period: _____

Project is to be: ☐Sole-Sourced ☐RFP

<u>Organization Name</u> (note with * subscriber organizations whose funding is eligible for WRF match)	<u>Cash Co-funding</u> (Funds to WRF)	<u>In-kind</u> (Goods & Services by 3rd Parties)	<u>Total Funding</u> (Cash + In-kind)
1			
2			
3			
Subtotal			
Funds requested from WRF		N/A	
Total Project Budget			

Will all cash funding be received by WRF? ☐Yes ☐No

If not, please describe who will disburse funding and who will receive funding:

_____ If you are submitting a technology demonstration, please initial, signifying that you have reviewed the WRF IP and Patent Policy (see Section VI of WRF's sample contract)

Is this research being funded/leveraged by other organizations/programs/funding sources?

☐Yes ☐No If Yes, list funding sources and/or programs: _____

Is this research related to a prior or ongoing WRF project?

☐Yes ☐No If Yes, list project and/or program: _____

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURES

Principal Investigator

I agree to accept responsibility for scientific conduct of the project and to provide the required project reports if a contract is awarded as a result of this application.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Name: _____

Designated Official Responsible for Contracts in the Proposer's Organization

To the best of my knowledge, this organization can comply with the WRF policies and contractual conditions listed in Section II.6 of the instructions.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Name: _____

ATTACHMENT 2

PRE-PROPOSAL/DRAFT RFP CHECKLIST

Please check the points below to acknowledge that you, as the proposer, are aware of each point. If you have any questions, contact Kenan Ozekin at kozekin@waterrf.org or the Regional Liaison for your area.

- ☐ Guidelines. The person submitting this pre-proposal (the Proposer) has read the Tailored Collaboration Program Pre-Proposal Guidelines posted on the WRF website at <https://www.waterrf.org/funding/Pages/proposal-guidelines.aspx>.

Financial

- ☐ All co-funding organizations are identified on the Pre-proposal/Draft RFP Cover Sheet.
- ☐ WRF funding. WRF will provide 1:1 matching funds up to \$100,000 cash for all funds provided by qualifying organizations (e.g., subscribers and contributions approved by the CRO) if the full proposal is accepted for funding.
- ☐ Purchase orders. Cash co-funders have been asked if they need purchase orders to pay WRF the co-funding amount.
- ☐ Timing of payment from co-funders. All co-funding is due to be paid to WRF at the beginning of the project to ensure that WRF can meet the contractual obligation to distribute funds for the entire project as work is completed by the research organization.
- ☐ Initial payment to researcher. All co-funding must be received by WRF before the 10% project advance will be paid to the research organization or sub-recipient. No invoice will be required from the sub-recipient to obtain the 10% project advance. The advance will be issued upon WRF's receipt of all parties' signatures on the MFRA and receipt of full co-funding.

Contractual

- ☐ A completed W-9 form will be submitted to WRF.
- ☐ Signature authority. The proposer will provide the name of the individual with signature authority for each organization providing cash to WRF. This person must be listed in the proposal paperwork. Technical participants may not necessarily have the authority to commit funding or sign legal documents on the organization's behalf.
- ☐ Agreement signed by all cash contributors. All utilities and other organizations providing cash to WRF that will be used toward the project are aware that they will need to sign the same mutually agreed to MFRA.
- ☐ Draft WRF contract is on website. A template the contract that will be used for all parties, should the project be funded, is available on the WRF website. This contract is called the Tailored Collaboration Multi Funded Research Agreement (MFRA), and can be viewed at

- ☐ Legal review. The MFRA template has been provided for the sponsoring subscriber utility, who is encouraged to share it with their legal and contract staff for review prior to project award. WRF highly recommends legal review of this document to avoid any contractual roadblocks or project delays.
- ☐ Intellectual property is owned by WRF. WRF's IP includes text, tables, and figures that were created during the project and are included in the Scope of Work, periodic reports, draft report, final report, or other materials produced during the course of a project. As stated in the MFRA, the PI may use without restrictions all data produced during the course of the project such as innovations, creations, processes, designs, methods, formulas, plans, technical data, and specifications.
- ☐ Copyright for the report is owned by WRF, and a license to use the information will be granted to other parties, including the researcher.
- ☐ Timeframe. The proposer understands the timeline expectations outlined below. The cash co-funders have been informed of these expectations.
 - A draft contract with all participating cash co-funders' information will be emailed to all participants after the project award has been approved and upon receipt of all required proposal documents. All parties sign the same MFRA to ensure contractual consistency.
 - A contracting pre-call, scheduled by the WRF Regional Liaison, will be held with all project participants: research organization key personnel (including contract or legal counsel if available), co-funders, Sponsoring Utility, and WRF key personnel involved in the project.
 - Proposers will have 10 business days to review and respond back to WRF's Contract Manager with requested revisions.
 - Requested revisions will be reviewed by WRF's Contract Manager. The negotiation period begins in good faith, and reasonable requests may be approved. WRF's Contract Manager will keep all participants apprised of any delays presented by the negotiation period.
 - The final contract will be emailed to all parties for final execution upon completion of negotiations with all participants. This final agreement will include all contract exhibits. All parties will have 10 business days to sign and return the signature page of the final agreement.
 - The total contracting process from draft contract to final contract execution should take no longer than 45 calendar days.
 - Draft and final contracts are sent with specific due dates. In the event a due date is not met, the WRF Contract Manager will send out a final request. If no reply is received, the contracting period will not proceed. Delays or lack of response may result in the funding being withdrawn. WRF retains the right to allocate funding to other organizations and projects if the contract cannot be mutually agreed upon by all parties.

ATTACHMENT 3
WRF TAILORED COLLABORATION PROGRAM: PRE-PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

		Score
A.	Topic Breadth and Applicability (maximum 20 points)	
	Does the topic fit with WRF's mission? Is the topic broadly applicable to the water sector?	_____
B.	Project Originality (maximum 20 points)	
	Is the proposed project original or innovative? Does the proposed project complement, rather than duplicate, WRF's ongoing research? Is it building on or applying previous work?	_____
C.	Technical Approach (maximum 35 points)	
	Does the pre-proposal outline the main tasks to be accomplished, and are they technically defensible? Do the expected outcomes clearly demonstrate how the project will benefit WRF subscribers?	_____
D.	Budget (maximum 10 points)	
	Does the budget accurately represent the scope of the work proposed?	_____
E.	Project Schedule and Qualifications of Key Personnel (maximum 15 points)	
	Is the proposed schedule realistic and manageable? Do the key personnel have experience and expertise in the issues and objectives discussed in the pre-proposal?	_____

Total Score: _____