



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Approaches to Build Strong Partnerships and Solidify Successful Interagency Reuse Projects (5250)

Date Posted

Monday, September 11, 2023

Due Date

Proposals must be received by 3:00 pm Mountain Time on Tuesday, November 14, 2023

WRF Project Contact

Lyndsey Bloxom, Research Program Manager, lbloxom@waterrf.org

Project Sponsors

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

Project Objectives

- Define successful interagency water reuse projects and identify the characteristics of project partnerships that strengthen reuse project planning and foster successful collaboration.
- Develop guidance for successful interagency collaboration and a toolkit of resources for multi-agency projects including, but not limited to:
 - Example legal agreements (e.g., contracts, MOUs, MOAs, etc.) successfully used to support collaboration on planning, design, construction, and operation of reuse projects.
 - Funding mechanisms, procurement models, and financing structures that most benefit multi-agency projects.
 - Regulatory approaches most suitable for partnership projects and an outline for regulatory streamlining.
 - Negotiation guidance that includes the appropriate discussion points and questions that can bolster the development of successful agreements.
 - Coordinated public and stakeholder outreach strategies to effectively communicate the goals and benefits of the partnership in addition to the reuse project.

Budget

Applicants may request up to \$150,000 in WRF funds for this project.

Background and Project Rationale

The overall goal of this project is to develop characteristics, guidance, and strategies to foster successful collaboration for interagency projects focused on water reuse project implementation. As agencies work to develop safe and reliable water supplies through water reuse projects, they face complex challenges in integrating the management of water, wastewater, and stormwater. Historically, water management structures have utilized a patchwork approach with separate entities existing within individual legal mandates, service areas, and regulatory requirements. This structure has made interagency water reuse project development burdensome. To plan, design, permit, and implement water reuse projects, agencies must build strong partnerships, engage in effective negotiations, and utilize legal agreements to address key issues such as asset ownership, liability for water quality and regulatory compliance, enhanced source control measures, and coordinated public outreach.

Currently, agencies undertaking reuse projects have limited staff trained in these types of negotiations and often limited history partnering with other agencies on large capital efforts. They must network broadly to find useful examples of appropriate legal agreements, financing structures, management and operations plans, and regulatory compliance strategies and then independently evaluate their applicability. As a result, communities either frequently neglect important terms or conditions, increasing the risk of disrupting interagency relationships, or turn away from integrated water management projects. A guidance document that provides a toolkit of resources including examples of effective interagency partnership building, guidance for evaluation of project success, potential funding structures and regulatory approaches, key negotiation discussion points, and sample agreements with explanations of their suitability would accelerate multi-agency project implementation and enable agencies to manage a safe and reliable water supply more effectively.

While this project is intended to be primarily focused on interagency partnerships, we encourage the inclusion of public-private or cross-sector partnerships where feasible.

Research Approach

This RFP is intentionally flexible in the research approach to encourage creativity and originality from proposers. Proposers should describe how they will conduct the research to meet the objectives listed above. The following approach should be considered a starting point:

- The research approach should include a review of existing multi-agency reuse projects to define what it means for a project to be successful and identify a clear set of criteria that can be used to characterize and develop a successful project.
- The research approach should capitalize on previous and ongoing efforts, for example case studies and information developed under the US EPA's National Water Reuse Action Plan (<https://www.epa.gov/waterreuse/water-reuse-action-plan>).
- Where feasible, projects should include a jurisdictional scan of regional/international best practices.
- Guidance developed should take differing project types and specific collaboration scenarios into consideration.

Expected Deliverables

The deliverables from this project are flexible and we encourage creativity and originality from proposers to ensure the deliverables are widely accessible and the toolkit of resources is easy to use. Example deliverables could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Guidance document (in addition to or in-place of a research report)
- Fact sheets/summary documents
- Workshop (consider plan to document workshop)
- Research report
- Web tool (must follow the criteria outlined for web tools presented in the *Web Tool Criteria and Feasibility Study for The Water Research Foundation Project Deliverables* at <https://www.waterrf.org/project-report-guidelines#webtool-criteria>)
- Webcast, conference presentation, etc.
- Literature review
- Peer-reviewed journal article
- Case study, white paper, etc.

Communication Plan

Please review WRF's *Project Deliverable Guidelines* for information on preparing a communication plan. The guidelines are available at <https://www.waterrf.org/project-report-guidelines#project-deliverable-guidelines>. Conference presentations, webcasts, peer-reviewed publication submissions, and other forms of project information dissemination are typically encouraged.

Project Duration

The anticipated period of performance for this project is up to 18 months from the contract start date.

References and Resources

The following list includes examples of research reports, tools, and other resources that may be helpful to proposers. It is not intended to be comprehensive, nor is it a required list for consideration.

- Rosenblum, E., F. Marcus, R. Raucher, B. Sheikh, and S. Spurlock. 2022. *Multi-Agency Water Reuse Programs: Lessons for Successful Collaboration*. Prepared for the U.S. EPA. https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-03/multi-agency_water_reuse_programs-lessons_for_successful_collaboration_march_2022.pdf. WRF has a full suite of research on the topic of water reuse, extending beyond interagency collaboration, which can be found here: <https://www.waterrf.org/research/topics/reuse>.
- A selection of WRF projects related to reuse project planning and management structures and/or interagency collaboration are provided below:
- Mantovani, P., T. Asano, A. Chang, and D. A. Okun. 2001. *Management Practices for Nonpotable Water Reuse*. Project 1272. Alexandria, VA: Water Environment Research

Foundation. <https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/management-practices-nonpotable-water-reuse>.

- Means, E., S. Sriboonlue, and T. Anderson. 2010. *Bay Area Collaborative: Model for Regional Utility Cooperation*. Project 4157. Denver, CO: Water Research Foundation. <https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/bay-area-collaborative-model-regional-utility-cooperation>.
- Mukheibir, P., C. Howe, and D. Gallet. 2015. *Institutional Issues for Integrated One Water Management*. Project 4487A. Alexandria, VA: Water Environment Research Foundation. <https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/institutional-issues-one-water-management>
- Raucher, R. 2007. *Extending the Integrated Resource Planning Process to Include Water Reuse and Other Nontraditional Water Sources*. Alexandria, VA: WateReuse Research Foundation. <https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/extend-irp-process-include-water-reuse-and-other-non-traditional-waters>.
- Rosenblum, E. 2012. *Interagency Partnerships for Water Reuse: Workshop Proceedings*. Alexandria, VA: WateReuse Research Foundation. <https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/interagency-partnerships-facilitate-water-reuse>.

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 15 points)
- Communication Plan, Deliverables, and Applicability (maximum 20 points)
- Budget and Schedule (maximum 15 points)

PROPOSAL PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals submitted in response to this RFP must be prepared in accordance with WRF's *Guidelines for Research Priority Program Proposals*. The current version of these guidelines and the *Instructions for Budget Preparation* are available at <https://www.waterrf.org/proposal-guidelines>. The guidelines contain instructions for the technical aspects, financial statements, indirect costs, and administrative requirements that the applicant must follow when preparing a proposal.

Proposals that include the production of web- or software-based tools, such as websites, Excel spreadsheets, Access databases, etc., must follow the criteria outlined for web tools presented in the *Web Tool Criteria and Feasibility Study for The Water Research Foundation Project Deliverables* at <https://www.waterrf.org/project-report-guidelines#webtool-criteria>.

Eligibility to Submit Proposals

Proposals will be accepted from both U.S.-based and non-U.S.-based entities, including educational institutions, research organizations, governmental agencies, and consultants or other for-profit entities. (If there is any funding from non-WRF sources, staff should check with WRF Grants Management regarding possible eligibility restrictions that need to be included).

WRF's Board of Directors has established a Timeliness Policy that addresses researcher adherence to the project schedule. The policy can be reviewed at <https://www.waterrf.org/policies>. 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 <https://www.waterrf.org/proposal-guidelines>.

Budget and Funding Information

The maximum funding available from WRF for this project is \$150,000. The applicant must contribute additional resources equivalent to at least 33% 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% to the project, but the maximum WRF funding available remains fixed at \$150,000. Proposals that do not meet the minimum 33% of the project award will not be accepted. Consult the *Instructions for Budget Preparation* available at <https://www.waterrf.org/proposal-guidelines#RPP-instr-budget-prep> 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 <https://www.waterrf.org/policies>.

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 3:00 pm Mountain Time on Tuesday, November 14, 2023.

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. Submit your proposal at <https://forms.waterrf.org/cbruck/rfp-5250>.

Questions to clarify the intent of this RFP and WRF's administrative, cost, and financial requirements may be addressed to the WRF project contact, Lyndsey Bloxom at lbloxom@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.

5250 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 on your settings, you may need to click refresh on your browser to load the latest file.)**

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