

Facilitated Research Program Instructions for Preparing Proposals

The Water Research Foundation's (WRF) Facilitated Research Program enables utility subscribers to tap into our expertise in research management, independent expert review, and project-specific procurement processes, as well as our long-standing, scientific credibility. Water utilities often require research to solve local, regional, or niche issues; we are available to manage these projects on an at-cost basis. Under this program, our services are fully funded by a specific utility or group of utilities. It is at the utilities' discretion to make the research findings and products available to others, or to limit the findings to only the project team. WRF typically procures a third party researcher via a competitive request for proposal (RFP) to conduct each study.

Proposal Preparation Instructions

Subscribing utilities interested in pursuing a Facilitated project should reach out to their WRF [Account Manager](#).

Proposals must include the following components, which can be accessed on the [WRF website](#).

- **Proposal Cover Worksheet** – The [cover sheet](#) summarizes the title of your proposed project, the contact information for all parties involved, and a high-level funding summary.
- **Objectives** – The proposed research objectives should be clearly identified in one or two sentences.
- **Technical Approach** – Describe how the proposed research will be conducted and the tasks necessary to accomplish the objectives.
- **Research Team and Other Participants** – Identify the key members of the research team and provide brief statements of their qualifications to conduct the proposed research. Identify any other organizations that have committed to collaborate on the proposed research. Curriculum vitae or resumes for research team members are required.
- **Budget** – A detailed budget is required using the WRF [Proposal Budget Form](#). As explained in the budget preparation instructions, the budget must include a budget narrative that explains and justifies each cost included in the project budget.
- **Schedule** – Provide a schedule outlining tasks and deliverables for the proposed work.
- **References** (optional) – Detailed citations are not required in the proposal, but may be provided at the discretion of the proposer.

Proposal Review and Funding Decision

WRF will form a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) composed of volunteer professionals with expertise in the research subject area to oversee each technology demonstration project. Proposals will be reviewed by WRF staff and the PAC against established evaluation criteria. WRF may request additional information from the proposer based on this review. Proposals are treated confidentially and will not be shared outside of WRF.

The proposal review and selection process, from initial submittal through final decision, generally will not exceed 3–4 weeks.

Facilitated Research Program
Proposal Selection Evaluation Criteria
For Information Only – Do Not Submit With Proposal

A. Scientific/Technical Merit

Is the research approach scientifically/technically defensible? Is the proposal itself well prepared with supportive information? Is there a good probability that the project objectives can be achieved? Has the researcher provided an adequate explanation of QA/QC procedures to be used in the project?

B. Responsiveness

Are the stated objectives adequately addressed? Are any potential deviations from the objectives or approach justified? Does the proposal exceed the requirements with additional beneficial results for the water supply industry?

C. Qualifications

Do the principal investigator and key project personnel have experience in the proposed research area? Will all key project personnel contribute a significant time commitment to the project? Has the principal investigator completed similar research projects within budget and in a timely manner?

D. Originality

Does the proposal reflect creativity or other special qualities that lend weight to its attractiveness and potential usefulness? Has the applicant displayed an innovative approach?

E. Budget

Is the budget reasonable for the amount and type of work proposed? Are personnel rates, overhead, indirect costs, cost of laboratory analysis, etc. reasonable? Are travel funds justifiable? Do the total labor and other category costs appear reasonable and appropriate for the amount and type of work proposed? Have cost-share and in-kind contributions been satisfactorily documented?

F. Schedule

Is the schedule reasonable for the amount and type of work proposed? Is the budget competitive compared to other proposals, given the scope of work?

G Relevance and Benefits to Utility

Has the research team addressed the future applications potential that could result from the research? Is the project responsive to the water community's needs of the future? Has the research team addressed the practical applications of the research? Will the project yield a product that is beneficial to the drinking water community? Does the scope of work support an applicable research project?