GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PRIORITY PROGRAM PROPOSALS

August 2025

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Important Changes

1. WRF implemented a new RFP submission process, which requires access to My Portal to apply for an open RFP. To learn more about the new system and submit a proposal, please visit the Request for Proposals page and follow the instructions there.

2. Effective August 1, 2025, WRF has adopted a policy establishing a fifteen percent (15%) ceiling on authorized indirect cost rates (ICR) for purposes of reimbursement, irrespective of the base of application. In other words, the ceiling applies to the nominal value of the ICR. Use of the 15 percent ceiling is expected to help further concentrate available funding on research deliverables and priorities while also providing for greater consistency and synergies with U.S. Government indirect cost requirements under 2 CFR Part 200, agency-specific regulations, and applicable program rules and guidelines.

3. All forms and documents referred to in this document are available on the RFP page.

Overview of Important Requirements

1. Applicants must submit a Co-funding Support Form for each utility or organization that is contributing co-funding cash to the project that will be payable directly to WRF (see "Co-funding Support Form" under Section II—Instructions for Preparing Proposals).

2. All files uploaded must be in PDF format and should **not** be locked/secured with a password.

3. Proposal review and selection include an evaluation of the submitting organization's entity-wide financial statements and its Statement of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits, General Overhead, Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, and Cost Sharing. In addition, if a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement ("NICRA") exists with a federal agency or other entity acting on behalf of a federal agency, the agreement should be provided for review (see "Financial Statements" and "Indirect Cost Documentation" under Section II—Instructions for Preparing Proposals). This evaluation is an integral part of WRF's proposal review and selection process. These guidelines also detail how the cost analysis of the proposed budget is an integral part of proposal review and selection (see "Technical Review and Evaluation Process" under Section III—Proposal Review and Selection).

4. A signed IRS Form W-9 is required for all U.S. entities to submit a proposal (see Section II.20: IRS Form W-9); a W-8BEN is required for international entities.

5. **Federal Administrative, Cost, and Audit Requirements**
   All WRF subrecipients, regardless of funding source, are required to comply with WRF Proposal Guidelines, all relevant U.S. laws, rules, and regulations, and the terms and

conditions included within the executed agreement terms and conditions. These include applicable provisions related to U.S. Federal Financial Assistance, including, but not limited to, the provisions within the *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* ("Uniform Guidance") codified at 2 CFR Part 200. An electronic version of the Uniform Guidance is available at www.ecfr.gov by browsing to Title 2, Part 200 of the current year.

Cost principles for commercial entities appear within the Federal Acquisition Regulation ("FAR") in Title 48, Subpart 31.2 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (48 CFR Subpart 31.2). An electronic version is available at www.ecfr.gov by browsing to Title 48, Part 31, Subpart 31.2.7.

6. **Participating Utilities and Organizations**

WRF places a high value on water utility and organization participation and active involvement in our research projects. Utility and organization participation help ensure that WRF-sponsored research is directly responsive to subscriber and stakeholder needs. Participating utilities and organizations should be considered an integral element of the research team. It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that participating utilities and organizations provide support to the project as set forth in the proposal. PIs are encouraged to keep participating utilities and organizations apprised of status throughout the course of the project.

In accordance with WRF's standard project funding agreement, each participating utility and organization must be given an opportunity to review the project's use of its data and conclusions regarding that data, and they must be provided with a reasonable opportunity to correct and respond to any problems or difficulties uncovered by the data and test results prior to publication or use. The participating utility and organization confirmation are part of the project deliverables. At the end of a project, the PI is responsible for providing the final utility and/or organization that participated financially in the project a reconciliation of their contribution against the project budget, as well as a final invoice showing all incurred costs to date against the proposed scope of work.

Definitions

Allowable Costs. Costs that meet the criteria for allowable costs pursuant to Subpart E of the *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* ("Uniform Guidance" or "2 CFR Part 200").

Applicant. Any eligible entity or organization that submits a proposal in response to a WRF request for proposals.

Co-Funder Funds. The portion of the project funds that each co-funder has agreed to contribute in cash to fund the project, payable in full to WRF.

Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI). An individual involved with the Principal Investigator in the scientific development or execution of a project. A Co-PI typically devotes a specified percentage of time to the project and is considered "key personnel." A Co-PI may or may not be a part of the sub-recipient's organization. The designation of a Co-PI, if applicable, does not affect the Principal Investigator's roles and responsibilities as specified in the Project Funding Agreement.

Cost Share. The portion of allowable costs that the sub-recipient or third-party participant contributes toward completing a WRF project. Cost share includes Sub-recipient's goods and services (non-cash) and third-party cash to sub-recipient., All cost share must meet the requirements in 2 CFR Part 200.306.

Participant. An individual or organization that provides third-party contributions or other material support to a WRF research project but does not enter into a contractual relationship with WRF, the sub-recipient, or third-party.

Principal Investigator (PI). The sub-recipient's (applicant's) employee with primary responsibility for ensuring that all terms and conditions of the agreement are met and to whom notices of insufficiencies are given by WRF.

Project Advisory Committee (PAC). A group of independent volunteers appointed by WRF to provide independent technical review, assistance, and/or expertise to WRF regarding all project reports and other work products.

Project Funding Agreement (PFA). The sub-award (agreement) between WRF and the sub-recipient to conduct a WRF research project.

Research Manager. The WRF employee responsible for reviewing all actions taken by the sub-recipient and who has the authority to communicate all WRF decisions concerning the process, procedure, scheduling requirements, funding requirements, and outcome of the sub-recipient's project.

Request for Proposals (RFP). An open and competitive solicitation of proposals for funding to conduct a specific WRF research project.

Subcontractor. Any individual or organization with whom the sub-recipient, or a third-party, separately contracts to complete one or more specific tasks required by a WRF research project.

Sub-recipient. The legal entity or organization with which WRF enters into a PFA (agreement) to conduct a WRF research project.

Survey. The U.S. government's Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) establishes conditions on the use of federal funds for conducting information collection activities (e.g., surveys). Under the PRA, an information collection activity is defined as obtaining facts or opinions from ten or more persons using standard questions presented in forms, telephone or personal interviews, the internet, requests for narrative responses to questions, or almost any other means. Typical WRF project activities that meet this broad definition include mail surveys, telephone surveys, email or web-based surveys, and face-to-face meetings (e.g., workshops) that aim to obtain information from ten or more water utility employees and/or other water professionals.

Third-Party In-Kind. The value of non-cash contributions that a participant or subcontractor provides toward completing a WRF project. Third-party in-kind must be necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of a WRF project. All third-party in-kind contributions must meet the requirements in 2 CFR Part 200.306.

I. 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 501(c)(3) 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 purpose of WRF is *to advance the science of water to improve the quality of life for all communities*.

WRF's research programs are among the most scientifically credible and best-coordinated water research programs in the world. Information regarding WRF research programs can be found at waterrf.org/programs.

The Research Priority Program

The Research Priority Program enables WRF to address broadly relevant subscriber issues, challenges, and opportunities. Projects are prioritized and approved for funding by WRF's Board-appointed Research Advisory Council (RAC). Sixty percent of WRF's annual research budget is allocated to this program. Individual Research Priority Program projects are awarded to researchers via a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process. The RFPs are developed by WRF staff and volunteer experts enlisted from water utilities, consulting companies, universities, and other water-related organizations. Additional information on the Research Priority Program is provided at waterrf.org/research-priority-program.

II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING PROPOSALS

The following section outlines the general instructions for preparing a proposal in response to a WRF RFP. Additional specific instructions are included in each RFP.

The WRF funding level (dollar amount) specified in the RFP is the maximum amount that WRF will provide toward achieving the objectives set forth in the RFP. Proposals requesting funds from WRF greater than those indicated in the RFP will not be considered.

Proposals must be submitted online using My Portal. To learn how to use the new system, please visit the Request for Proposals page and follow the instructions there.

You will assemble your proposal components into packets as described below. Please use the following naming convention for your documents: "YourOrgName_Packet Title.pdf", ensure your packets contain the required documents, and are uploaded before the deadline set in the RFP. The following section outlines the general instructions for preparing a Research Priority Program proposal.

When developing the proposal, the following requirements must be followed:

1. Proposals must fit on standard continental U.S. letter-sized paper (8 ½ × 11 inches) with minimum margins of one inch on each side of the paper.
2. Text font size must be a minimum of 12 point.
3. Applicants may include logos, and alternative templates may be used so long as submittals follow the requirements outlined above (paper size, margins, font size).
4. WRF's logo is copyrighted and **should not** be displayed on proposals.

Proposals must include the components listed below. **Proposals that are missing any of these required components will be considered incomplete and potentially ineligible for consideration**. Please note the enforceable page limits for certain components of the proposal as identified below. **Proposals exceeding these page limits will not be considered**.

All files must be submitted as PDFs and should not be locked/secured with a password. If you are not a U.S. entity, please provide IRS Form W-8BEN in lieu of IRS Form W-9.

Packet Component	Required	Max Page Limit	Packet Title
1. Project Abstract	Yes	1	**Technical Proposal**
2. Project Description	Yes	22	
3. Application Potential	Yes	1	
4. Quality Assurance/Quality Control	Yes	20	
5. Management Plan	Yes	1	
6. Communication Plan	Yes	1	
7. References			
8. Licenses and Inventions			
9. Budget Narrative	Yes		
10. Schedule	Yes		
11. Curriculum Vitae or Resumes for Key Team Members	Yes	2/person	
12. Current and Pending Form	Yes		**Current & Pending**

13. Third-Party Contribution Letters of Commitment*	Yes		**Third Party Contribution**
14. Co-funding Support Form	Yes		
15. Budget Form	Yes		**Budget**
16. Financial Statements	Yes		**Risk Assessment**
17. Indirect Cost Documentation	Yes		
18. Financial Grant Management Capabilities Form	Yes		
19. Certification and Assurance Forms	Yes		
20. IRS Form W-9*	Yes		**IRS Form W-9**

*As required, see further instructions below.

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL (Technical Review and Evaluation):

Technical Proposal packet should include the following documents:

1. **Project Abstract (1 page)**
   The abstract should summarize the research objectives, technical approach, and anticipated results and benefits. It must include the names of the Principal Investigator (PI) and any co-PIs, the applicant (submitting organization), and participating organizations. In addition, the total funding amount must be presented clearly, delineating the total funding amount requested from WRF and the total proposed cost share and third-party in-kind contributions.

2. **Project Description (22 pages)**
   Include the following sections:

   a. Research Objective(s) – Clearly identify the objective(s) in one or two sentences.
   b. Background/Understanding of the Problem – Provide a detailed description of the relevant topic background, including your current understanding of the problem, the current state of knowledge, regulatory perspective (where applicable), and significance to water utilities and the water community.
   c. Technical Approach – Provide a well-developed experimental plan (including details such as replicates, frequency, etc.) that includes the objectives of the research, the methods that will be followed, and the nature and extent of the anticipated results.
   d. Originality and Innovation of the Research – Briefly identify how the proposed work is unique and innovative. How is the proposed work different from other related research, and how will it impact future research?

3. **Applications Potential (1 page)**
   Define the practical benefits of the proposed project to the water community. What will be the products of the research (e.g., knowledge, protocol, instrument, software package, etc.)? How can they be used, who will use them, and what level of sophistication will be required? Define the steps to be taken in the project to ensure practical application (e.g., utility involvement). Where possible, identify additional efforts following project completion that will be needed prior to application of the research results.

4. **Quality Assurance/Quality Control (Up to 20 pages)**
   Provide a detailed description of the procedures that will be used to ensure the quality of project data (e.g., statistical basis for number of analyses, statistical methods to be used in data evaluations, sample duplicates, blanks, and blind samples). If the project involves laboratory analyses, this description should indicate whether the laboratory performing the analyses is accredited or certified for the analyses of concern. If the laboratory is not certified, and/or if nonstandard methods are used, detailed quality assurance/quality control procedures must be submitted with the proposal.

5. **Management Plan (2 pages)**
Identify the individuals and organizations participating in the project, their specific roles and responsibilities, and their time commitment to the project. Describe how the PI will maintain accountability for the individuals and organizations involved in the project. Include a concise organizational chart showing the relationships and the lines of communication among the research team and all project participants.

6. **Communication Plan (1 page)**
Provide a draft plan for how the project results and key outcomes will be communicated effectively and in a timely manner to WRF subscribers and other end users who will apply the results for the benefit of the water community. WRF will work with the selected PI to refine the draft Communication Plan prior to the start of the project. The draft Communication Plan should address the following questions:

   - Who are the target audiences for the final deliverable(s)?
   - Who are the end users of the project results, and what other WRF stakeholders might benefit from knowing the results?
   - What deliverables and communication activities are necessary to reach the target audiences effectively? What format, content, focus, and level of detail are appropriate?
   - During the project, when should communication occur? Should there be interim deliverables and communication activities before project completion?
   - Are there opportunities for joint or combined communication activities with those of other ongoing, related projects?

   The proposed budget should include costs and resources associated with implementing the Communication Plan. Applicants are encouraged to review WRF's *Project Deliverable Guidelines* for information and considerations about various project communication tools and activities.

   Proposals that include the production of web- or software-based tools, such as spreadsheets, databases, websites, and calculators, must follow the criteria outlined for technology deliverables presented in WRF's *Technology Deliverables Guidance*.

7. **References (as required)**
Include an alphabetical list of references for works cited. References should conform to journal format.

8. **Licenses and Inventions (as required)**
If the research is likely to produce inventions, new products, or processes (or improvements thereof), include a statement defining the relationship between the proposed research and any pre-existing patents or patent applications owned or controlled by the applicant, subrecipients, or any participants. Identify the patents or

patent applications and attach copies. WRF does not exercise any claims on patent rights for new inventions, products, or processes developed through our research; however, if a patent application could result from the proposed project, include a statement as to the proposed ownership of any resultant patent. **NOTE: WRF does not endorse or certify commercial products or processes.**

If a patented product or process is being used in the research and is not owned by the applicant, then a license to use the patent must be submitted with the proposal.

9. **Budget Narrative**
   Itemize, explain, and justify each cost included in the project budget, and identify when (e.g., Year 1, Year 2, etc.) during the period of performance the cost is expected to be incurred. Budget tables are often the best way to represent costs on a yearly basis.
   Note: Do NOT include individual salary and wage rates in the Budget Narrative.

   The Budget Narrative must accurately reflect the information contained within the WRF Budget Forms. There must be sufficient detail to enable each itemized cost to be evaluated for allowability and appropriateness for the project. Refer to the *Instructions for Budget Preparation* for additional information on specific items that must be addressed in the Budget Narrative. Changes made to the project budget through the proposal, contracting, and execution process must be reflected in both the narrative and budget forms.

   Any applicants subject to Single Audit must provide, within the Budget Narrative, the name, title, email address, and phone number of the sub-recipient employee who is familiar with the Single Audit Report, including the financial statements and expenditures of federal awards, **AND sub-recipient must** provide the publicly available URL link to the most recent Single Audit Report (e.g., State Auditor or university website) where available. See section 16-1 below.

10. **Schedule**
    Applicants should include a detailed timeline of the project, including start and end dates for each task (including deliverables such as the draft product and final product) and responsible party (e.g., a Gantt chart or schedule table). The project period of performance should include additional time for review and required revisions to draft deliverables. Note: the specific dates may need to be altered depending on the timing of the selection process and funding agreement negotiations.

11. **Curriculum Vitae or Resumes for Key Team Members (2 pages/person)**
    Upload Curriculum Vitae or abbreviated resumes as a single file for the PI, Co-PI, and any other key members of the research team.

CURRENT AND PENDING:

Current and Pending packet should include the following document:

12. **Current and Pending Form**
    Complete the form fields of the *Current and Pending Form*. A completed *Current and Pending Form* is required for the PI and for each Co-PI listed on the Proposal Cover Sheet. List all public support (e.g., U.S. federal funding, state grant funding) and private support (e.g., industry-supported projects, in-house support, etc.) to which the individual has committed time, regardless of salary support. The proposal being submitted to WRF should be listed in the pending section. The PI and each Co-PI must commit a reasonable and appropriate amount of time to the project, commensurate with the proposed scope of work described in the Project Description and the Management Plan.

THIRD PARTY CONTRIBUTION:

Third Party Contribution packet should include the following documents:

13. **Third Party Contribution Letters of Commitment (as required)**
    WRF RFPs require a contribution of at least 33 percent **of the project award** to be provided as cost share or third-party contribution. If the applicant's budget includes third-party contributions, these contributions must be confirmed by letters of commitment. The letter of commitment must identify the type (e.g., cash, labor, materials, services, etc.) and estimated dollar value of the contribution, and it must be signed by an authorized representative of the organization. Letters of commitment must match the amounts presented in the budget form. An email communication will be accepted as a letter of commitment so long as the email originates from an authorized representative and adheres to the requirements set forth above. No letters of commitment or changes to letters of commitment will be accepted after the proposal submittal deadline. **Third-party contributions will not be considered in the proposal selection process unless a letter of commitment, with the exact dollar amount of contribution listed, is included with the proposal.**

14. **Co-funding Support Form (as required)**
    Any participant in the project (sub-recipient or co-funder) who is contributing cash payable to WRF should complete the *Co-funding Support Form*. The *Co-funding Support Form* provides information pertinent to the project funding agreement. Each co-funder will receive a Letter of Agreement outlining their contribution and expectations.

BUDGET FORM:

Budget Form packet should include the following document:

15. Budget Form

Complete the *Proposal Budget Form* to provide the best estimate, cumulative budget for the project. Consult the *Instructions for Budget Preparation* for details on preparing the budget. Costs will be evaluated for allowability under the relevant U.S. federal cost principles and any project-specific guidelines identified in the RFP. The budget should include sufficient funding to prepare the project deliverables described in Section IV—Award Administration.

The Budget Form must be accompanied by a detailed Budget Narrative in the main body of the proposal (See **10. Budget Narrative**).

If indirect costs are included on the budget form, the applicant must substantiate their indirect cost rate as outlined below in "Indirect Cost Documentation." **Note:** Recovery of indirect costs is not required. However, if indirect costs are not budgeted, it is WRF's standard practice to analyze other budgeted costs for potential inclusion of indirect costs as a component of quoted costs/prices.

RISK ASSESSMENT:

The following items are for internal WRF evaluation purposes and will **not** be provided to the Project Advisory Committee (see Section III—Proposal Review and Selection)

Risk Assessment packet should include the following documents:

16. Financial Statements and Audit Reports

16-1. **All entities:** Please provide a copy of your most recently completed audited financial statements and the accompanying audit report. If your organization has not had its financial statements audited within the past three years, please include a written statement certifying no recent audited financial statements are available and, therefore, have not been included within the proposal.

16-2. Entities subject to the Single Audit Act (2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F): Please provide either a functioning link to the website containing your most recently completed Single Audit Report (SAR) or attach a copy of the SAR in its entirety to your proposal. In the event your SAR file size exceeds 20 MB, please provide the most recent fiscal year for which a SAR is available, and the name of the auditee as referenced in the Federal Audit Clearinghouse database.

16-3. For-profit (commercial) entities and all entities NOT subject to Subpart F of 2 CFR Part 200: Please provide (1) a copy of the most recently issued compliance or financial audit report covering your Federal awards (if your organization has completed one); and (2) if your organization did not have audited financial statements per Section 16-1, above, please provide either of the following:

- Externally Reviewed Financial Statements and the accompanying review report prepared in accordance with the *Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services* (SSARS) issued by the AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants); or
- Compiled Financial Statements and the accompanying compilation report prepared in accordance with the SSARS issued by the AICPA.

Confidentiality

WRF does not typically enter into Confidentiality or Non-Disclosure Agreements regarding corporate financial information contained in research proposals. However, WRF does understand the sensitivity surrounding corporate financial information and is careful to review and maintain confidential information on a strictly need-to-know basis. Only WRF staff assigned to review the submission see financial statements, direct labor schedules, and budget details. This information is not provided to the Project Advisory Committee or individuals outside WRF. This procedure applies to Financial Statements and related Statements of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits and General Overhead, and the *Financial Grant Management Capabilities Form* (see 18 below).

17. Indirect Cost Documentation (Applicable to Entities Seeking Indirect Cost Recovery Only)

Generally, WRF permits researchers to recover indirect costs; that is, your organization may be reimbursed for overhead costs incurred as part of an approved project.[1] If your organization has decided to seek indirect cost recovery, documentation supporting the indirect cost rate that will be used for calculating reimbursement amounts is required. The documentation requirement applies whether your organization includes indirect costs as a dedicated line item consistent with the budget template, incorporates indirect costs as a component of the sources proposed to meet cost share requirements, or includes indirect costs as a component of price or rate calculations.

Indirect Cost Rate Policy

Effective August 1, 2025, WRF has adopted a policy establishing a fifteen percent (15%) ceiling on authorized indirect cost rates (ICR) for purposes of reimbursement, irrespective of the base of application. In other words, the ceiling applies to the nominal value of the ICR. Use of the 15 percent ceiling is expected to help further concentrate available funding on research deliverables and priorities while also providing for greater consistency and synergies with U.S. Government indirect cost requirements under 2 CFR Part 200, agency-specific regulations, and applicable program rules and guidelines.

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[1] Certain funders, statutory requirements, and Federal regulations may prohibit or otherwise limit indirect cost recovery. WRF's approach to managing and awarding research funds will incorporate and otherwise comply with such requirements or limits.

Indirect cost rates exceeding the ceiling may be used to meet cost share requirements subject to WRF's prior written approval and communication of this proposed approach within the budget narrative provided with your application.

Supporting Documentation Requirements
Should your organization include indirect costs within your budget proposal, an indirect cost rate must be disclosed and documentation supporting the ICR must be provided with your budget proposal. The following table summarizes supporting documentation requirements based on certain organization characteristics. The documentation requirements are applied in the order presented in the table such that, if your organization aligns with the characteristics in Scenario 1, the remaining scenarios are no longer considered applicable.

Please note that failure to provide the required supporting documentation may result, at WRF's sole discretion, in your proposal being returned for revision, modification to your proposed budget, rejection of your proposal, or other actions based on applicable evaluation and program requirements.

Scenario No.	Organizational Characteristic(s)[2]	Required Supporting Documentation
1	Applicant has a current, active Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) issued by a Federal agency OR an entity with delegated authority from a Federal agency (e.g., state departments of transportation, education, etc.)	Copy of the complete, unexpired NICRA. The approved ICR within the NICRA may be utilized up to 15%. The base of application denoted within the NICRA must be applied within the budget proposal.
2	Applicant has negotiated an ICR with a pass-through entity (PTE) or government agency for the current fiscal year AND the rate has not expired	Copy of the agreement between the applicant and PTE or other agency with which the applicant negotiated; copy of the rate calculation file and any supporting schedules (in Excel format); Notes supporting the rate calculation, including significant accounting policies; and certified statement per FAR 42.703-2 or CFR Part 200.415(c), as applicable.
3	Applicant elects to utilize the de minimis indirect cost rate as per 2 CFR Part 200.414	Statement by applicant contained in the budget proposal affirmatively indicating the applicant is requesting to and will utilize the de minimis ICR as per 2 CFR Part 200.414 and is eligible to use the de minimis ICR; required use of the modified total direct cost (MTDC) base; ineligible for use as part of cost share; and mandatory use on all Federal awards until a NICRA is established.

[2] As of the proposal submission date.

Scenario No.	Organizational Characteristic(s)[2]	Required Supporting Documentation
4	Applicant has an audited, reviewed, or compiled Statement of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits, and General Overhead	Statement of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits, and General Overhead and the accompanying Independent Auditor's Report; copy of the rate calculations audited, including any notes; and copy of the management letter, if applicable.
5	Applicant does not have a NICRA, negotiated rate with a PTE or other agency, or a Statement of Direct Labor, Fringe Benefits, and General Overhead that has been audited, reviewed, or compiled	Copy of the trial balance[3] report generated from the applicant's accounting system; Cost Policy Statement identifying which accounts are considered to be direct costs, indirect costs, unallowable in accordance with applicable cost principles, and applicable financial and accounting policies; indirect cost rate calculation schedule that reconciles to the trial balance; and required indirect cost proposal certification.

Note: Recovery of overhead is not required, but if indirect costs are not budgeted, WRF will undertake some examination to assure that recovery is not included within another budget element. Alternatively, if the applicant's accounting system permits, costs may be allocated in the direct costs categories.

18. Financial Grant Management Capabilities Form

The *Financial Grant Management Capabilities Form* is used to provide essential information regarding financial and accounting systems, policies, and procedures by completing the fields in the form and uploading the document. This information is used to evaluate the capability of the applicant's systems to meet the criteria outlined in WRF's Project Funding Agreement. Signatures are required and may be either inserted into the form as images or hand-written on scanned forms. **Note: This form should be completed by the organization's financial or sponsored programs staff familiar with the Uniform Grants Guidance.**

19. Certification and Assurance Forms (3 forms)

Three related forms are included in one file. Complete the form fields in the *Certifications and Assurance Form*. Signatures are required and may be either inserted into the forms as images or hand-written on scanned forms. The information on these forms will be used by WRF to determine applicant eligibility and should be completed by sub-recipient finance, grants management, or contracting staff.

[3] Only the expense accounts are required and should be presented by account (e.g., report would show total expenses of $4,150 in the Rental Car account for the most recently concluded fiscal year).

If no funds have been paid to any person to influence action on any federal contract, grant, cooperative agreement, etc., then only two forms, *Certification Regarding Lobbying* and *Assurances and Certifications Non-Construction Programs*, need to be completed, signed, and submitted to WRF.

How others complete the forms may or may not be relevant to your situation, but generally:

- *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,* SF-LLL – is generally **not required** since most WRF sub-recipients do not make any payments to any lobbying entity for influencing any federal person in connection with a federal grant, cooperative agreement, etc.
- *Certification Regarding Lobbying* – is **generally always required** since most WRF sub-recipients can certify they have not and will not pay federal funds to any person to influence any federal person in connection with a federal grant, cooperative agreement, etc.
- *Assurances and Certifications Non-Construction Programs* – is **always required** since at least some of the items on the form are relevant to all WRF sub-recipients.

IRS FORM W-9:

IRS Form W-9 packet should include the following document:

20. IRS Form W-9

For all U.S. entities, a certified (signed) Form W-9 is required. Obtain the latest version from www.IRS.gov, complete the information, and upload the signed first page (only) with your proposal. Outdated revisions of the form may not be acceptable.

For non-U.S. entities, include either the W-8BEN Form or the W-8BEN-E Form, as applicable. Please consult your organization's tax advisor or legal counsel directly for assistance in determining which form(s) are applicable and appropriate for your organization.

III. PROPOSAL REVIEW AND SELECTION

Proposals are selected for funding based on technical merit, cost analysis, and evaluation of the submitting organization's financial and grant management capabilities. The WRF proposal review involves two steps:

1. **Technical review and evaluation:** Proposals are reviewed and evaluated on technical merit and cost analysis. The criteria by which proposals are reviewed can be found in Attachment 2. (See **Technical Review and Evaluation** below.)

2. **Evaluation of financial and grant management capabilities:** Once a proposal is received, an evaluation of the standalone financial package is conducted to evaluate the proposed budget,

supporting documentation, and financial and grant management capabilities of the applicant. This is an evaluation of the organization's capability to meet the administrative, financial, audit, and programmatic requirements of WRF's Project Funding Agreement. (See **Financial Grant Management Capabilities Evaluation** below.)

WRF will typically fund a single proposal for each RFP, unless otherwise specified. WRF may choose not to fund any of the proposals submitted in response to an RFP.

All proposals and proposal reviews are treated confidentially and are available only to WRF staff and Project Advisory Committee (PAC) members.

Technical Review and Evaluation

Technical review and evaluation of proposals is performed by the Research Manager and an independent Project Advisory Committee (PAC). A PAC is composed of volunteer professionals with expertise in the RFP topic area. A PAC provides guidance, reviews all project reports and work products, and generally monitors project technical performance on behalf of WRF and the water community. The Research Manager and the PAC review all proposals received in response to the RFP. Ultimately, WRF staff are responsible for selecting a proposal for funding consideration based on technical review and evaluation. *Proposals are reviewed according to the criteria in Attachment 2.*

Applicants should be aware that timeliness on past WRF projects will be considered during proposal evaluation. Please refer to WRF's *Timeliness Policy* for more information. A PI's performance on previous WRF projects is also considered in proposal selection.

Cost Analysis

Concurrently with the technical review and evaluation, WRF staff conducts a cost analysis of the proposal guided by the Budget Form and supporting Budget Narrative. The objectives of the cost analysis are to determine whether the proposed budget package is:

- Reasonable
- Appropriate in scope for the proposed project to be implemented and completed
- Allocable to the proposed project
- Allowable in accordance with the applicable cost principles appearing in Subpart E of the Uniform Guidance or, for commercial/for-profit entities, 48 CFR Part 31 as well as any additional requirements from WRF's funders
- Complete in that the proposed budget addresses each anticipated major activity or component of the project and is reflective of their whole cost
- Consistent with the applicable period of performance

If project funding includes co-funding paid to WRF, a pre-award meeting will be scheduled with the research team, co-funders, and WRF staff assigned to the project. The purpose of the meeting is to familiarize all parties involved with the co-funding language in the proposed project funding agreement and general participation in the project.

Financial Grant Management Capabilities Evaluation

Once a proposal is selected for funding consideration through technical review and evaluation and cost analysis, WRF staff assesses the financial grant management capabilities of the submitting organization. This is an evaluation of the organization's capability to meet the administrative, financial, audit, and programmatic requirements of WRF's Project Funding Agreement.

Potential applicants are encouraged to review WRF's *Financial and Grant Management Researcher Guidelines* and the *Financial and Grant Management Capabilities Form* for additional background and information about the financial grant management capabilities evaluation. It is important that **both** the applicant's proposed Principal Investigator and financial staff understand the federal regulations that apply to their proposal, and how these directly influence WRF's cost analysis and financial grant management capabilities evaluation.

IV. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

Terms and Conditions

WRF will enter into a Project Funding Agreement (PFA) with the selected researcher. WRF's standard PFAs for both federally funded and non-federally funded projects are available at waterrf.org/guidelines-and-forms#sample-contracts. The selected researchers and their sub-recipients will be expected to comply with the terms and conditions of the applicable standard project funding agreement.

WRF has established a 45-business day period for project funding agreement negotiations, commencing on the issuance date of the draft agreement and ending on the return date of the final fully executed agreement. Upon the issuance of the draft agreement, the researcher has 10 business days to review the draft and respond back to WRF with (a) requested revisions, or (b) the approval to proceed to a final agreement. WRF will conduct funding negotiations in good faith and in a timely manner for this period. Upon completion of the award negotiations, a final executed project funding agreement will be issued to the researcher. The researcher has 10 business days to execute the final agreement. The agreement will be executed by both parties via DocuSign. If a researcher is experiencing negotiation or execution issues, please convey the issue(s) to the WRF Contract Manager listed in the PFA in Exhibit B – WRF Key Contacts.

<u>If an agreement cannot be reached within this 45-business day period, WRF may choose, at its sole discretion, to terminate the negotiations</u>.

Applicants and their proposed subrecipients are, therefore, **strongly urged to review** the standard project funding agreement **before** submitting the proposal to determine whether the terms and conditions are acceptable. Prior review of the standard project funding agreement is beneficial to all project participants. Please note that the standard project funding agreement reflects WRF's intention to solely own all worldwide copyrights in all the Work Product (Project Information Summary, Periodic Reports, Draft and Final Reports). WRF does grant the sub-recipient and any co-funders a right to use the data from the Work Product with some restrictions outlined in the standard project funding agreement.

WRF's project funding agreement is a not-to-exceed subaward of financial assistance. The WRF funding level (award dollar amount) specified in the funding agreement is the maximum amount that WRF will provide toward achieving the scope of work set forth in the applicant's proposal.

Additional, project-specific terms and conditions may apply as set forth in the RFP.

PAC Meeting

While most communications between the PAC, research team, and Research Manager are done via email, conference calls, or web-based meetings, projects may also include a one-day, face-to-face meeting during the project. These meetings typically involve the PAC, the Research Manager, and the research team. The meeting will sometimes include participating utilities, project co-funders, and other stakeholders. This meeting may be held at any time during the project, as agreed between the PAC, Research Manager, and PI. The PAC meeting is an opportunity for face-to-face interaction among the key project stakeholders.

WRF covers WRF staff and PAC member travel costs for the PAC meeting using non-project funds. The research team is expected to cover any research team travel costs associated with the meeting.

Project Deliverables

Deliverables described below are required for most WRF projects. Applicants should allocate adequate resources for developing these deliverables. Once a proposal is selected, the project reporting schedule and specific reporting requirements will be negotiated in Exhibit B of the PFA. All project deliverables (with the exception of products such as spreadsheets, databases, videos, websites, etc.) must be submitted in Microsoft Word® or Adobe InDesign software with figures, tables, and graphics embedded in the text. All deliverables must be submitted electronically (via email, or if the files are too large, via Dropbox or other electronic method).

Project Information Summary

The Project Information Summary is typically due one month after the project start date. The Project Information Summary should be completed using the *Project Information Summary Template*. The Project Information Summary is provided by WRF (posted to the website) to outside audiences for informational purposes. Therefore, a reasonable effort should be made to exclude information that may be considered sensitive to organizations participating in the project.

Periodic Reporting

Periodic reporting is a requirement for all WRF research projects, as it allows WRF to evaluate the researcher's progress and performance on a project. Periodic reporting also provides a mechanism for ongoing review of technical findings by WRF and the PAC. Finally, it provides information that enables WRF to review and approve the sub-recipient's invoices.

Most projects will require the submission of quarterly periodic reports, as described below. Some projects will have specialized periodic reporting requirements, and Exhibit B of the PFA will include the reporting schedule and requirements for a particular project.

The Periodic Report format is outlined in Attachment 1—Periodic Report Format and Content. Note that the Title Page and Status Summary are due every three months, while the more extensive Technical Summary and the Website Update are due every six months (i.e., with every other Periodic Report). As stipulated in Exhibit B of the PFA, an invoice detailing expenses incurred during the reporting period must be submitted with each periodic report. Sub-recipient invoices will not be paid until the associated Periodic Report is received and accepted. Report and invoice reminders will be sent to the PI from the Project Coordinator—a WRF staff member who assists the Research Managers in tracking all project deliverables.

WRF generally posts the Website Update on the WRF website to provide information for subscribers on research in progress. In some instances, WRF may edit the Website Update for clarity and readability. WRF may also choose not to post the Website Update at its discretion.

Researchers sometimes wish to use the Technical Summary to present sections of the Project Report as a work in progress, thereby reducing the level of effort required to compile the Project Report at the end of the research phase. This approach is acceptable if approved by the WRF Research Manager and the PAC.

Final Deliverable
WRF generally plans to publish a report for each project, but a number of other outreach options are available. The options are detailed in WRF's *Project Deliverable Guidelines*. It is the researcher's responsibility to prepare the final deliverable in accordance with WRF's guidelines and requirements, whether the deliverable is a standard final report, white paper, video, external website, etc. Project-specific requirements for the final deliverable may be set forth in the RFP.

The target audience for the final deliverable is the water sector (i.e., utilities, consultants, manufacturers, regulators, and other water professionals); accordingly, the deliverable(s) must clearly provide practical benefits to the water sector.

A completed *Copyright Permission Form*, as described in the *Project Deliverable Guidelines*, is required.

If a researcher chooses to produce a standard final report, they must use WRF's *Research Report Template*.

A Draft Report should be submitted for review at the completion of the research phase of the project. The report should be submitted electronically (via email, or if the files are too large, via file transfer such as Dropbox). WRF will review the Draft Report as set forth in the **Review and Alteration of Project Deliverables** section below, and WRF may require additional drafts of the Draft Report.

To be considered acceptable, the Draft Report must be clearly written and responsive to the project goals and objectives.

The Final Report should be a revision of the accepted Draft Report.

Review and Alteration of Project Deliverables
All deliverables will be reviewed by WRF, and WRF retains the right to require response to comments, questions, and suggested revisions. This response may include an explanation and clarification of technical information or revisions to the deliverables. WRF will also have the right to make grammatical, stylistic, or syntax revisions to any deliverables submitted to WRF, or to request such revisions from the researcher. Unless otherwise specified, the researcher is to provide revisions in response to technical comments within 45 calendar days of receipt of the comments and is to respond to formatting or editorial comments within 14 calendar days of receipt of the comments. The need for revised drafts of deliverables shall be determined at the sole reasonable discretion of WRF.

Webcasts
Project webcasts are intended to communicate project-specific findings to WRF subscribers and other stakeholders. The decision on whether to hold a webcast will be made at the sole discretion of WRF. The webcast may be scheduled prior to, or up to six months following, submittal of the final deliverable. The webcast will be hosted by WRF in coordination with the PI. WRF will cover the costs of hosting the webcast outside of the project budget but cannot compensate the PI for their time in preparing or providing the webcast.

V. The Water Research Foundation Non-Discrimination Policies and Complaint Procedures

As a component of our commitment to ethical, equitable, and proper treatment of our personnel and research partners as well as a component of our compliance obligations pursuant to federal laws, rules, and regulations, WRF has proactively established procedures and policies to address certain matters, should they ever arise. These procedures are presented within this section.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Religious Accommodation
WRF will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with known disabilities and employees whose work requirements interfere with a religious belief unless doing so would result in an undue hardship to WRF or cause a direct threat to health and safety. If you believe you need accommodation, contact Human Resources.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Unlawful Harassment
The Water Research Foundation (WRF) is dedicated to the principles of equal employment opportunity (EEO). We prohibit unlawful discrimination and harassment against applicants or employees based on age, race (including traits historically associated with race, such as hair texture and length, protective hairstyles), sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions and lactation), gender identity, color, religion, national origin, disability, military status

(including membership in the National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and Virginia Defense Force), genetic information, veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable state or local law. This policy applies to all employees, including managers, supervisors, co-workers, and non-employees such as customers, clients, vendors, consultants, etc.

EEO Harassment

WRF strives to maintain a work environment free of unlawful harassment. In doing so, WRF prohibits unlawful discrimination against applicants or employees on the basis of age 40 and over, race, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions and lactation), sexual orientation (including transgender status), color, religion, national origin, disability, military status (including membership in the National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and Virginia Defense Force), genetic information, veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable state or local law.

Unlawful harassment includes verbal or physical conduct that has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Actions based on an individual's age 40 and over, race, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions and lactation), sexual orientation (including transgender status), color, religion, national origin, disability, military status (including membership in the National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and Virginia Defense Force), genetic information, veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable state or local law will not be tolerated. Prohibited behavior may include but is not limited to the following:

- Written form, such as cartoons, emails, posters, drawings, or photographs.
- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory comments, slurs, or jokes.
- Physical conduct such as assault or blocking an individual's movements.

This policy applies to all employees including managers, co-workers, and non-employees such as customers, clients, vendors, consultants, etc.

Sexual Harassment

Because sexual harassment raises issues that are, to some extent, unique in comparison to other types of harassment, WRF believes it warrants separate emphasis. WRF strongly opposes sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual conduct. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- Submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions affecting an individual's employment
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment

Employees and Non-employees are expected to always conduct themselves in a professional and businesslike manner. Conduct that may violate this policy includes, but is not limited to, sexually implicit or explicit communications whether in:

- Written form, such as cartoons, posters, calendars, notes, letters, emails
- Verbal form, such as comments, jokes, foul or obscene language of a sexual nature, gossiping or questions about another's sex life, or repeated unwanted requests for dates
- Physical gestures and other nonverbal behavior, such as unwelcome touching, grabbing, fondling, kissing, massaging, and brushing up against another's body

This policy applies to all employees, including managers, co-workers, and non-employees, such as customers, clients, vendors, consultants, etc.

Complaint Procedure

If you believe there has been a violation of the ADA, EEO, or harassment policy based on a protected class, including sexual harassment, please use the following complaint procedure. WRF expects employees and non-employees to make a timely complaint to enable the organization to investigate and correct any behavior that may be in violation of this policy.

Report the incident to your manager or Human Resources—in the case of non-employees, to the HR Manager—who will investigate the matter and take corrective action. Your complaint will be kept as confidential as practicable. If you prefer not to go to either of these individuals with your complaint, you should report the incident to the Chief Operating Officer.

WRF prohibits retaliation against an employee and non-employees for filing a complaint under this policy or for assisting in a complaint investigation. If you perceive retaliation for making a complaint or your participation in the investigation, please follow the complaint procedure outlined above. The situation will be investigated.

If WRF determines that an employee's behavior is in violation of this policy, disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including termination of employment. If WRF determines that a non-employee's behavior is in violation of this policy, WRF reserves the right to sever the business relationship.

ATTACHMENT 1
Periodic Report Format and Content

Periodic reporting is a requirement for all WRF research projects. Most projects will require submittal of quarterly Periodic Reports based on the format shown below. *Some projects have specialized periodic reporting requirements, and Exhibit B of the Project Funding Agreement will include the reporting schedule and requirements for a particular project.*

PERIODIC REPORT

I. **Title Page** – 1 page (every 3 months)
- Project title and number
- Periodic report number and period covered
- Principal Investigator and organization
- Project start date and end date
- Subrecipients, participating utilities and organizations, and other participants
- Project funding
- Project objective

II. **Status Summary (basic Periodic Report)** – 2 to 5 pages (every 3 months)
- Statement of goals for the reporting period
- Summary of work tasks completed and accomplishments during reporting period, including significant findings, major observations, statement of how goals were met, and applicability of findings to the water community.
- Assessment of actual versus planned progress for each work task (recommend using a table to show actual versus percent completed for each task)
- Tasks proposed to be completed in the upcoming period
- Problems encountered
- Rationale for proposed changes (if any) to the scope of work
- Brief explanation of abstracts, presentations, papers, and reports submitted for publication or presentation during reporting period
    - List of submitted/published reports (title, author, journal/conference, date)
    - Copy of submitted/published reports and presentations
- Response to questions and comments on previous report

III. **Technical Summary** – 5 to 20 pages (every 6 months, include with Status Summary)
- Methods and materials
- Data and analysis
- Significant findings
- Applicability of findings to water utilities
- Response to questions and comments on previous report

IV. **Website Update** - 1 to 2 pages (every 6 months, include as separate section after Technical Summary)

- Project title and number
- Principal Investigator and organization
- Reporting period (i.e., period covered by update)
- Activities and progress since previous Website Update; work to be performed next period
- Findings of significance to WRF subscribers and other stakeholders; how/why are they significant?
- Statement of how overall project results will ultimately benefit water utilities and the water community
- Brief statement on communications and outreach (presentations, papers, etc.)

ATTACHMENT 2

Research Priority Program Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria
1. Understanding the Problem and Responsiveness to RFP (maximum 20 points)
Does the proposal demonstrate a thorough understanding of the issue(s), including the current state of knowledge, regulatory perspectives (if applicable), and significance to the scientific community and water utilities? Does the proposal adequately address the RFP objectives? If the objectives in the proposal go beyond those in the RFP, do they address current or future needs?
2. Technical and Scientific Merit (maximum 30 points)
Is the proposal clearly understandable and prepared with appropriate supporting information? Is the approach technically sound with clear project goals and objectives? Does the approach include the necessary components to achieve the desired outcome? Does the proposal reflect creativity, originality, or innovation? Does the proposal outline adequate QA/QC procedures?
3. Qualifications, Capabilities, and Management (maximum 15 points)
Do the applicant and key personnel possess the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, and resources to accomplish the project? Have key personnel committed an appropriate amount of time? Do the PI and lead organization provide the appropriate level of management and oversight to successfully complete the project? Are team roles, responsibilities, and assignments clear?
4. Communication Plan, Deliverables, and Applicability (maximum 20 points)
Does the proposal include an effective communication plan that is applicable to the intended end users and other identified stakeholders? Are the project deliverables well-described? Will the deliverables provide value to the intended target audiences and address the practical applications of the research? Are utilities and key stakeholders appropriately engaged?
5. Budget and Schedule (maximum 15 points)
Does the proposal provide good value for the amount of funding requested? Is the budget realistic and commensurate with the work plan and time frame? Has the applicant provided significant in-kind contributions (at least 33% of the project award)? Is the level of effort allocated to each task reasonable (if applicable)? Is the schedule realistic for the tasks described?