

**WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH INSTITUTE (WRRI) OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
URBAN WATER CONSORTIUM**

**GROUP OPERATING PROCEDURES**

**ADOPTED MARCH 18, 2011  
UPDATED DECEMBER 7, 2012**

**1. Statement of Purpose**

In 1985, The University of North Carolina Water Resources Research Institute (WRRI) in cooperation with several of North Carolina's larger cities established the Urban Water Consortium (UWC). The fundamental purpose of the UWC is to carry out a program of research and development and technology transfer on water problems that urban areas share in order to provide high quality and more cost-effective water services to urban residents. As such, the operational objectives of the consortium are to:

- identify needs in urban water resource research and technology transfer;
- conduct research in response to identified research needs;
- facilitate through training and education the transfer of the latest technology;
- provide a continuing flow of current information on water and wastewater issues of concern to municipalities in North Carolina.

Through this partnership, WRRI and the State of North Carolina help UWC members solve problems related to water supply and use.

**2. Membership**

Membership in the UWC is limited to cities or special districts in North Carolina. The term “member” refers to a paying entity (membership dues are explained below), such as a city or water district. Currently, there are 12 members, and others may join under the process outlined below. The members, at the time of writing this document (in alphabetical order) are:

- City of Burlington
- Cape Fear Public Utility Authority (CFPUA)
- Town of Cary
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Department (CMU)
- City of Durham
- Fayetteville Public Works Commission
- City of Greensboro
- Greenville Utilities Commission
- City of High Point
- Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA)
- City of Raleigh

- City of Winston-Salem

If an eligible entity desires membership in the UWC, it must first submit a letter of interest stating such to WRRI, and may be invited to be an observer at a UWC meeting. Upon review of the letter of interest, UWC members will discuss the matter at their next quarterly meeting and subsequently make a recommendation to the Director of WRRI who will make the final decision to accept or reject the membership. Membership may be denied if, in the opinion of the Director, the overall capabilities and resources of the UWC would be insufficient to meet the needs of the entity, or if the entity's goals for membership seem inconsistent with the stated objectives of the UWC.

### **3. Fees**

Annual fees for membership in the UWC will be \$10,000 per year for the membership period from July 1<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with the state and local government fiscal year. Fees will be billed to each member entity by WRRI during July or August of each year. Fees will be due and payable by each member to WRRI by September 30<sup>th</sup> of each year.

If a new entity approved for membership in the UWC wishes to join during a fiscal year (rather than as of July 1), the new entity will be billed for a pro-rated amount of the annual fees upon approval of membership into the UWC. (For example, a new entity joining on January 1 would be billed a fee of \$5,000.) This fee will be due and payable by the new member to WRRI within 30 days of receipt. The new member will then be billed for the annual \$10,000 membership fee at the start of the next annual membership period.

The purpose for these fees is to underwrite the basic research program of the UWC, which funds research projects of common interest to the UWC members.

### **4. Roles**

#### Role of WRRI

WRRI serves important oversight and management functions for UWC and will perform the following roles:

- Provide financial management and reporting for UWC funds
- Issue calls for proposals, obtain peer reviews of proposals, and make the awards of project funding for successful proposals
- Provide oversight of UWC funded projects (including enhancement projects funded by individual members)
- Develop meeting agendas, meeting materials, and meeting minutes, in coordination with the UWC member host of each UWC meeting
- Facilitate quarterly meetings in coordination with the meeting host
- Schedule guest speakers and other logistics as necessary for meetings, in coordination with the UWC meeting host and other members
- Call for, tally, and record votes for approval of UWC business items
- Provide follow-up on outstanding meeting items

- Facilitate communication and information exchange among members by maintaining UWC listserv and website

All financial accounting and record keeping for UWC business will be performed by the WRRRI consistent with established N.C. State University policies and procedures and subject to audit under state statutes and regulations.

### Role of UWC Members

The UWC members, in particular the “voting representatives” (see below) and meeting hosts, will:

- Host quarterly meetings at their facilities on a schedule that rotates among members
- Provide input on development of quarterly meeting agendas in coordination with WRRRI staff
- Participate in quarterly meetings
- Co-facilitate quarterly meetings in coordination with WRRRI staff (typically, the UWC member host will call the meeting to order, make announcements and introductions as needed, introduce host member presentations, and facilitate other meeting aspects that relate specifically to the meeting host)
- Work together in defining/revising UWC research priorities
- Work together to synthesize feedback from members on final reports and other issues with funded projects, especially in cases where feedback is complex and spans a broad range
- Keep open lines of communication between UWC members and WRRRI
- Collectively determine and assign leads for special tasks and projects as needed
- As needed, select 1-2 UWC members to serve as liaisons between principal investigators (PIs) on UWC-funded projects and the rest of the UWC membership

## **5. Voting**

### Voting Representatives

The term “voting representative” as used in this document refers to the individual person designated by a UWC member to officially speak for and represent that member in all discussions and decisions of the UWC members. The group of all voting representatives is referred to as the “Advisory Committee” mentioned in the original UWC bylaws from the 1980s. The term “non-voting representative” refers to any other member employee who may interact with the UWC (by attending UWC meetings, participating in UWC discussions or presentations, assisting the voting representative, etc.).

Each UWC member will appoint one of its employees (usually the Utility Director or other designated staff member) as a voting representative to the UWC. Each voting representative will be responsible for conveying and representing the interests of his/her member entity within the business and activities of the UWC, and for voting on business items and decisions of the UWC. The WRRRI will maintain a current list of the UWC voting representatives. Should a member’s voting representative change, the member must notify WRRRI in writing as soon as possible, designating the new voting representative and providing all contact information for the new person. The voting representatives will as a group:

- Cooperate with WRRRI to establish and make appropriate changes to this document, the Group Operating Procedures of the UWC
- Provide general guidance to WRRRI and oversight of the operations of the UWC.
- Decide by simple majority vote all business items before the UWC, including setting research priorities and approving expenditures of funds contributed by UWC members.
- Serve as a first point of contact for other UWC member non-voting representatives and WRRRI on communications, special tasks, or projects.

The voting representative may designate a proxy to vote in his or her place in the event that the voting representative cannot attend the quarterly meeting to participate in the vote. To designate a proxy, the voting representative should inform WRRRI by e-mail in advance of the meeting, including the name of the person who will stand in as proxy (though in practice, if no notification is sent in advance of a meeting, members will generally allow a representative from a member to act in place of an absent voting representative from that same member entity). Proxies may change depending on a member's staff situation and availability, and the items that are on a particular meeting agenda.

### Approval of Business Items

Each UWC member is allowed one vote per each business item and that vote must be made by the member's voting representative or proxy. Approval of all business items (including any revisions to these UWC Group Operating Procedures) before the UWC must be by simple majority vote of the members present at the meeting or time of vote, with the call for vote being conducted, tallied, and reported by WRRRI. Sending absentee votes by e-mail after a meeting is discouraged, in part because the individual casting the vote will not have been present during discussion of the issue, but this may be allowed by majority vote of the members present if there are special circumstances; in this case, the absentee e-mail vote should come to WRRRI within 3 days of the corresponding vote at the meeting. The normal approach to handling absenteeism of a voting representative is for the absent voting representative to name a proxy to attend the meeting.

Approval of UWC business items are normally voted on during quarterly UWC meetings. However, it may be necessary from time to time to vote on pressing business items outside the scheduled quarterly meetings. In this case, the UWC voting representatives may elect to conduct a vote via e-mail (or other electronic means), which will be tallied and reported by WRRRI.

## **6. Meetings**

### Meeting Schedule

The UWC will meet on a quarterly basis, typically in March, June, September, and December. Alternative meeting dates from this schedule may be set from time to time based on the needs of and by mutual agreement of the WRRRI and the UWC members. UWC members will take turns providing the location and hosting the quarterly meetings, generally according to the following rotation (underlining separates fiscal years):

- September                      Greensboro

- December           Durham
- March               High Point
- June               Fayetteville
- September         Winston-Salem
- December         Burlington
- March              Raleigh
- June               Greenville
- September         OWASA
- December         Cary
- March              Charlotte
- June                CFPUA

On occasion, should a member be unable to host a meeting as scheduled, that member must make the arrangements with another member to swap the meeting dates and locations. Both members should then notify WRRI and the rest of the UWC of the schedule change at least 6 months (or 2 meetings) prior to their scheduled hosting date (example – a member unable to host a December meeting must notify the group prior to the June meeting). In creating the meeting rotation, consideration has been given to providing more central locations in December when weather may be more of a concern, and in areas requiring farther travel during months of favorable weather. Changes to this rotation should be made only when necessary, so as to facilitate travel and share the responsibilities of hosting meetings evenly among the group.

Meeting Logistics

The hosting member will coordinate with WRRI and will be responsible for providing the meeting space, parking, audio/visual equipment, lunch, and any other on-site logistics, as well as arranging for a local guest speaker if desired.

Meeting Attendance

Members should strive to have their voting representative or proxy attend each quarterly meeting, particularly the December meeting, at which decisions are normally made concerning funding for proposals from the annual WRRI call for proposals. As a financial consideration to the UWC member hosting the meeting, and to keep the group to a manageable and productive size, members should normally limit their staff attendance at each quarterly meeting. In the event a member wants to bring a large number of staff to a meeting for a particular reason, that member should arrange this directly with the hosting member in advance of the meeting.

In order for decisions to be made at each quarterly meeting, a quorum of 50% (or 6) voting representatives must be present at the meeting. If a voting representative cannot attend the meeting, the member’s designated proxy will count towards the quorum.

Meeting Agenda

WRRI will be responsible for developing the meeting agendas in cooperation and coordination with UWC members. WRRI will develop and provide a draft agenda to the hosting UWC member approximately forty five (45) days prior to the scheduled quarterly meeting date. After initial discussion

of the draft agenda between WRRI and the host, WRRI will forward the draft agenda to the members with a call for comments or additional agenda items (e.g., speakers or topics for round table discussion – see below). Thereafter, WRRI will provide a finalized agenda to the members approximately fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled quarterly meeting date. A typical meeting agenda may contain all or most of the following topics:

- Presentations by the hosting UWC member
- Optional field tours by the hosting UWC member
- Presentations and updates by researchers on projects funded by the UWC and/or other sponsors
- Presentations by federal, state, or local agency officials on various water resources issues
- Discussion of various business items before the UWC
- Financial report from WRRI (UWC funds received, spent, and obligated under ongoing projects)
- Roundtable discussion among the members
- Discussion of agenda items for the next meeting

## **7. Funding of Research Projects**

Funding for activities and projects conducted by the UWC will come primarily from annual membership fees paid by the members. Decisions to fund or not fund a project with consortium membership funds will be based on a simple majority vote by the voting representatives present at the discussion of the proposal, normally at a quarterly meeting of the UWC. On occasion a vote may be taken by e-mail if warranted by some time-sensitive circumstance or other factor.

From time to time UWC members may wish to undertake projects, or tasks within projects, which require “enhanced” financial contributions from one, some or all members (beyond the \$10,000 annual membership fee) because: (1) project or task costs exceed the amount of funds available in the annual fees account, and/or (2) the project or task is of interest to only a minority of the membership and those members are willing to bear the cost of the project. Members who request these “enhancement” projects or tasks will pay the extra costs, the distribution of which will be determined on a case-by-case mutually satisfactory basis. A majority vote is not required for a member or members to pursue an enhancement project. Additional procedures for the funding of enhancement projects are outlined below.

The UWC may in some cases partially support a research project, with the balance of support in those cases coming from state or federal appropriations to WRRI, or other external funds (e.g., grants to WRRI). The UWC may also compete for federal, state, or local research funds in order to supplement its other funds available for support of research projects.

The UWC is not obligated to award its funding budget within the fiscal year it was collected and may elect to retain its funding budget over a period of years in order to have the ability to fund larger research projects.

### Establishment of Research Priorities

The UWC will establish a set of research priorities to guide its research needs, and will review them annually and update them if necessary. The review will generally take place at the March meeting in order for any changes to be incorporated in the WRRRI call for proposals. This will be based on review of current and previous UWC research priorities, the latest issues of concern and mutually beneficial research needs identified by the members.

### Research Proposals: Solicitation and Evaluation

The basic elements by which UWC and WRRRI decide whether to fund a research project are evaluation of a brief pre-proposal, invitation of a proposal if the pre-proposal seems sound and has support, peer review of the proposal, evaluation of the proposal and reviews by the UWC members and WRRRI, and a joint decision by the UWC voting representatives and WRRRI to fund or not fund the project. The details of the process differ slightly depending on whether the pre-proposal is Type 1 or Type 2, as described below.

*Type 1: A type 1 pre-proposal is a written pre-proposal in response to WRRRI's annual call.*

The annual WRRRI call for pre-proposals includes a brief list of research priorities (water resource topics of particular significance for NC), and the UWC is invited to contribute its own research priorities, decided by its voting representatives, to that list. Pre-proposals received at WRRRI in response to the annual call are evaluated by the WRRRI Advisory Committee. At least two voting representatives of the UWC are invited to serve on that committee to involve the UWC in review and evaluation of pre-proposals. Actual representation of the UWC on the WRRRI Advisory Committee depends on the responses to these invitations. Using the input from its Advisory Committee concerning the relevance and quality of the pre-proposals, WRRRI invites proposals from a subset (generally about 50%) of the pre-proposal authors. Upon receipt of the proposals, WRRRI arranges for peer reviews of each proposal by research scientists and engineers with appropriate expertise. The WRRRI Technical Committee (a group of academic researchers in water resources) convenes at WRRRI to evaluate both the proposals and peer reviews.

After the Technical Committee meeting, WRRRI will identify those proposals which seem relevant to the mission and interests of the UWC and which scored highly for technical merit in the peer reviews and Technical Committee evaluations. WRRRI will then forward these proposals (and their associated peer reviews and Technical Committee summaries) to the UWC members for their review prior to the December meeting of the UWC. The December meeting will include time for discussion of these proposals and decisions regarding which, if any, to fund. The UWC is under no obligation to fund proposals in any given year (for example, if the proposals submitted are not of strong interest to the members). In some cases, a project may be partially funded by UWC, with the balance of support coming from other funds (WRRRI or the UWC Stormwater Group).

*Type 2: A type 2 pre-proposal is an "ad-hoc" pre-proposal which occurs outside WRRRI's annual call, and may be a written pre-proposal or an oral proposal in the form of a presentation by a researcher at a UWC meeting*

Research of potential interest may come to the attention of the UWC through means other than and outside the schedule of WRRRI's annual call for pre-proposals. At such times the UWC may consider

funding a research project, based on and subject to the basic elements outlined above. The process should begin with a pre-proposal, either in the form of a brief (about 2 pages) written document from the researcher to WRRRI and the UWC, or a brief oral presentation by the researcher at a UWC meeting. After consideration of the pre-proposal, the voting representatives of the UWC will decide whether or not they have interest in seeing a full proposal on the topic. WRRRI will communicate this decision to the researcher, in some cases with feedback from the UWC. Upon receipt of the proposal, WRRRI will obtain peer reviews, and will share the proposal and peer reviews with the UWC. Normally a decision on whether or not to fund the proposal will be taken at the next UWC meeting, or by other means as decided on by the voting representatives.

### *Enhancement Projects*

UWC members may wish to fund research projects or contract services with investigators with utility funds that are separate from UWC funds. Enhancement projects may be single-party or involve multiple members. These projects may be in the form of a traditional research proposal that tests a hypothesis, or may be in the form of a service that a researcher is providing to the utility, such as the development of a tool or testing a new technology for performance. In order for proposals to be processed by WRRRI, enhancement projects shall follow the procedures below:

- The UWC member(s) initiating the project should notify WRRRI as soon as feasible when it begins negotiating a project or proposal with a researcher; the member should also notify the full UWC by email in order to provide an opportunity for other members to provide assistance, assess whether a proposal could become a larger consortium project, or ask questions as appropriate on a case-by-case basis.
- Proposals and projects funded as UWC enhancements should have some relationship to the research priorities and/or mission of the UWC and/or WRRRI
- Proposals should follow WRRRI Guidelines for proposals submitted outside the annual call
- Upon development of a proposal, the utility or researcher should send the proposal to WRRRI and allow up to 30 days for in-house review of the proposal
- All proposals must include a letter to WRRRI from the utility (utilities) involved indicating that the proposal, as submitted, is acceptable and indicating a commitment of funding from the utility (utilities)
- Following in-house review WRRRI will advise on whether the proposal should have outside technical peer review (generally not needed in the case of applied utility-specific projects that are not typical research projects); if WRRRI feels peer review is needed and the parties are not willing to allow time for it (up to 60 days), the parties are free to pursue an arrangement outside of WRRRI
- Proposals funded in this manner will carry an additional F&A fee of 10% as required by NCSU SPARCS for consortium enhancement projects
- Upon completion, all projects are required to submit a final report that meets WRRRI guidelines. Proposals for contracted services may generate a report that is shorter than a standard research proposal, but a report is required. The member(s) negotiating with the researcher should inform them of this requirement, and the requirement will also be included in the award paperwork provided by WRRRI.

### Research Proposals: Award Decisions

*UWC and WRRRI recognize that decisions regarding funding are necessarily joint, in the sense that both entities should approve in order to make an award.*

UWC members know best what research areas and topics are of interest to them as a group and which align with their individual utility missions. WRRI has expertise in the execution, evaluation, and oversight of academic research, and an obligation to the UNC system and state of NC to dedicate funds only to high quality proposals with strong promise, identified with the help of peer review. UWC funds should be used to support research projects based on proposals that are: (1) highly rated by WRRI for technical merit (considering peer reviews and WRRI Technical Committee input), and (2) also highly rated and of strong interest to the UWC members. In discussions of research proposals at UWC meetings (particularly the December meeting), WRRI will communicate its level of support for funding specific proposals. The UWC voting representatives will decide by simple majority vote on behalf of the members whether the UWC supports funding specific proposals. Awards will be made on proposals receiving support by both the UWC and WRRI for funding.

### No-Cost Extensions

WRRI occasionally receives requests from researchers for no-cost extensions (NCEs) of UWC funded research projects, whereby a researcher requests additional time for the completion of research objectives without a request for additional funds. This may occur if a project was unable to start at the expected time due to student or technician availability, field logistics, or other reasons that may reasonably alter an expected research timeline. Handling such requests is part of WRRI's normal administrative oversight of research projects. NCE requests are reviewed by the WRRI Business Officer and Associate Director for Research to check for adequate justification and whether any technical issues may arise by the extension, and to see if the researcher is up-to-date on required progress reporting. After review, WRRI will e-mail the UWC voting representatives to inform them of the request and our recommended action, which is normally to approve the extension, at least for the first request per project. WRRI will provide a brief comment period during which UWC members can ask for more information or raise concerns about the NCE. If there are any objections to the recommended action, WRRI will work with the member(s) to address concerns. Once any questions are answered, WRRI will inform the researcher of the decision regarding the request.

### Project Reports

Final reports are required of all research projects funded through WRRI. In addition, final presentations at a UWC meeting are expected following all projects funded with UWC membership dues. Presentations for enhancement projects will be at the discretion of the member(s) providing the enhanced funds and based on interest of other UWC members. Final reports received at WRRI are reviewed for format and content. In some cases WRRI will interact with a report author to effect changes to the final report. For projects supported with UWC funds, the report will then be forwarded to the UWC voting representatives and other member staff for their information and evaluation. Before formally accepting the final report, WRRI will allow the UWC members 4 weeks to evaluate the report and make comments. If the members have significant concerns with the report, the UWC voting representatives and the UWC liaison(s) assigned to that project will help as needed to synthesize and clearly articulate these concerns to WRRI. WRRI will in turn communicate the concerns to the researcher and make efforts to obtain a revised report that addresses the concerns. Once the final report is completed and accepted by WRRI and the UWC, the researcher will then be invited to make a formal presentation on the research to the UWC at its next quarterly meeting.