



TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A SOLICITED WRC PROJECT

KEY STRATEGIC AREA	1&2 (Water resources and ecosystems)
THRUST	1 (Governance and institutional arrangements)
PROGRAMME	
TITLE	Knowledge review and supporting agenda setting for future WRC investments in research on water governance

Objectives

General:

Review of the state of knowledge on water governance in order to inform the process of agenda setting for future WRC investments in research on water governance

Specific:

1. Stocktake and analysis of current knowledge on water governance in or relevant to South Africa, including international and South African reports and articles across academic journals and grey literature, and building on other recent scientometric and other analyses (e.g. Water RDI Roadmap implementation plan)
2. Examination of the WRC-funded component of this knowledge set, with particular reference to the extent to which this knowledge has been published beyond WRC reports.
3. Mapping of the institutions that are the main generators of water governance research outputs in South Africa and analysis of linkages to government, industry and civil society in order to understand relevant impact.
4. Contribution to WRC-led process of horizon scanning and agenda setting for future WRC investments in water governance research, in consultation with the relevant communities of practice (including researchers, policy makers and other users of water governance research)

Rationale

Water governance has emerged as a key concept over the past few decades and is becoming an increasingly prominent field of research activity as recognition grows that many water crises are attributable more to governance failures than resource scarcity. There is no single, universally-accepted definition for water governance, and research efforts on a wide range of subjects as well as from an increasing number of disciplines frequently appear under the banner of this term. For the purposes of

this project, a definition that could serve as a useful point of departure is provided by the Global Water Partnership, which defines water governance as, “the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society.”

Water governance has been an area of research effort for the Water Research Commission (WRC) for several decades, although it has not always been explicitly labelled as such. This effort has also tended to be unevenly distributed across the major themes that are frequently observed under the banner of water governance. In recent years, a more focused portfolio of work has emerged within the WRC on water governance, to the extent that a Lighthouse focusing on governance was established in order to enable a multi-disciplinary, programmatic approach to be taken for this research area. However, much remains to be done to create a systematically-derived agenda for water governance research that is also responsive to current needs and drivers in South Africa. Such an agenda needs to consider governance at a range of scales, from sub-national to national and across national borders in the case of shared water resources and multi-lateral agreements.

With many aspects of water governance currently being in a state of flux in South Africa, there is a need for the relevant research agendas to respond to the current challenges, while continuing to scan the horizon in order to surface future risks and opportunities. There is thus a need to take stock, reflect and rethink the focus of the water governance portfolio going forward. This will entail examining the existing body of knowledge in relation to current global trends, as well as specific needs and opportunities in water governance in South Africa. The stock take will feed in to a process for identifying future areas of strategic research that both inform and align with WRC objectives and national priorities. Such foresight exercises have been shown to be useful vehicles for identifying research priorities and strengthening capacity for undertaking priority research.

The work to be done through this project will feed into a broader project being undertaken within the WRC to design a strategy (including a research agenda) for the water governance portfolio.

Deliverables

The following deliverables are indicative and may be tailored to suit the proposed research approach:

1. Stakeholder database
2. Starter document for workshop/s
3. At least one stakeholder workshop
4. Report and policy support documents, covering aspects researched as per specific objectives
5. Draft paper for submission to a relevant academic journal

Impact Area

Knowledge Tree: Inform Policy and Decision-making; Sustainable Development Solutions; Human Capital Development

Time Frame

Seven months

Total Funds Available

R200,000