Overview of the WRC and the RDI Call Process

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT ON THE 2025 RDI CALL

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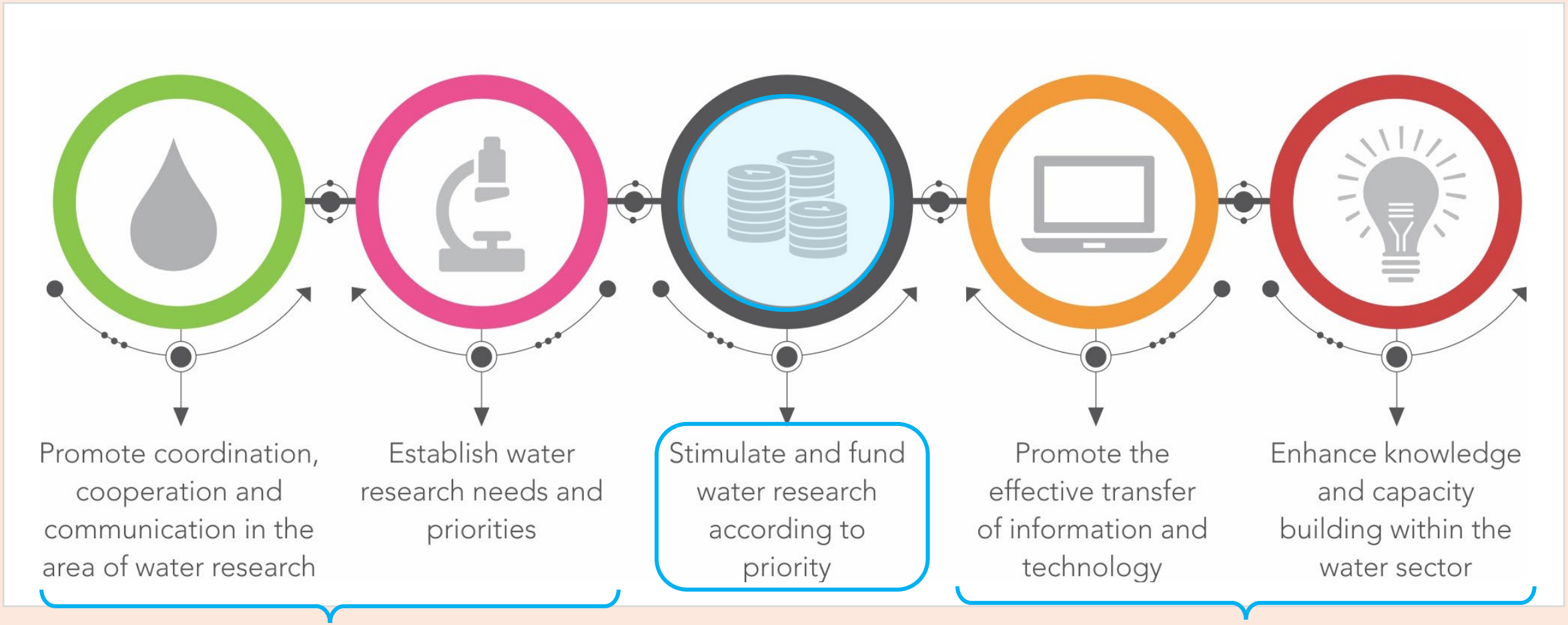
Primary function of the WRC



Activities before the call is launched

Activities after the call is launched

The WRC Knowledge Tree

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Knowledge products that emanate from WRC funded projects and activities must:

- Make meaningful contributions in addressing **water security and socio-economic challenges** in South Africa
- Enable South Africa to have the **innovation-driven** water sector
- Address at least some of the branches of the knowledge tree

Stakeholders in the water sector

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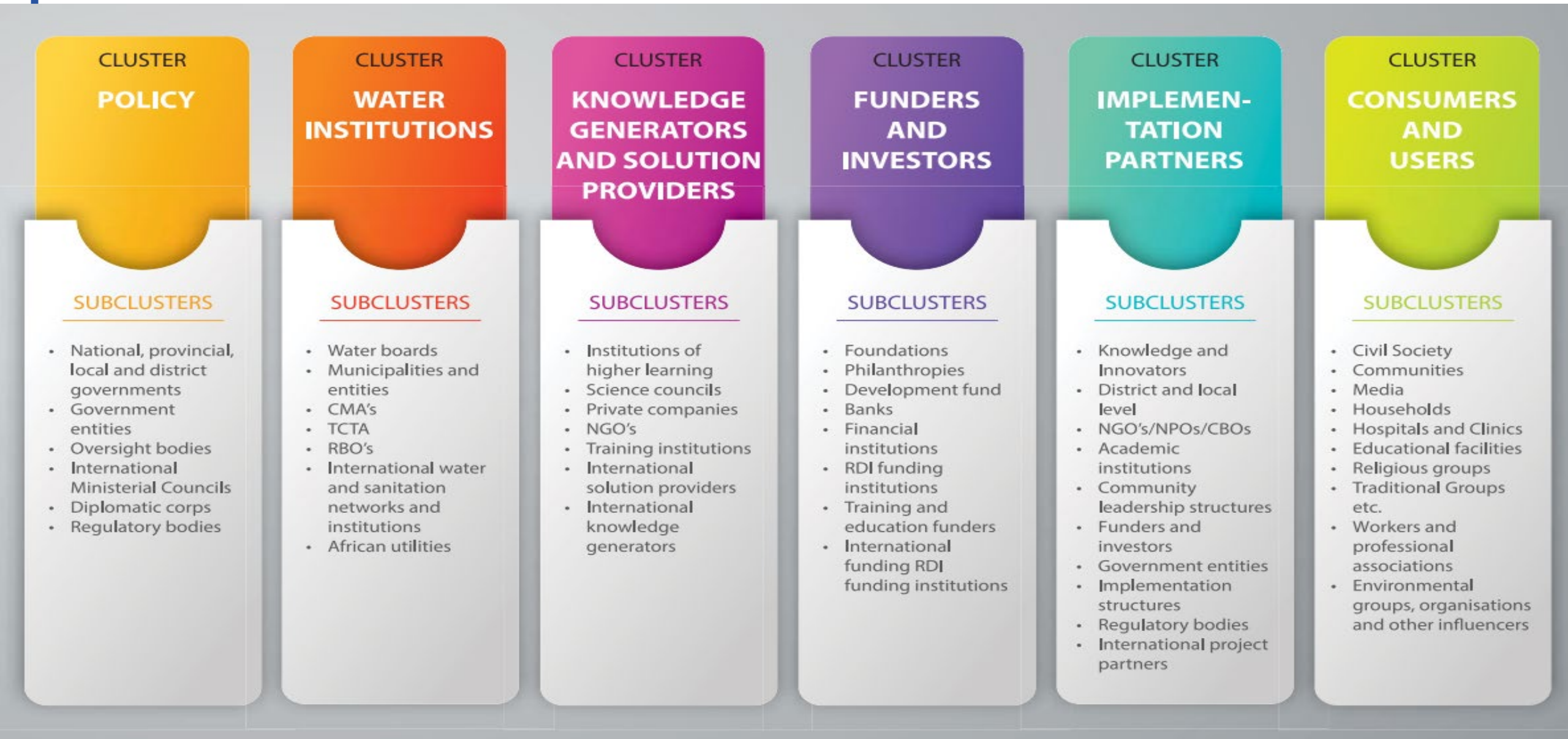


Contributing to growing the youth component/involvement in the water sector

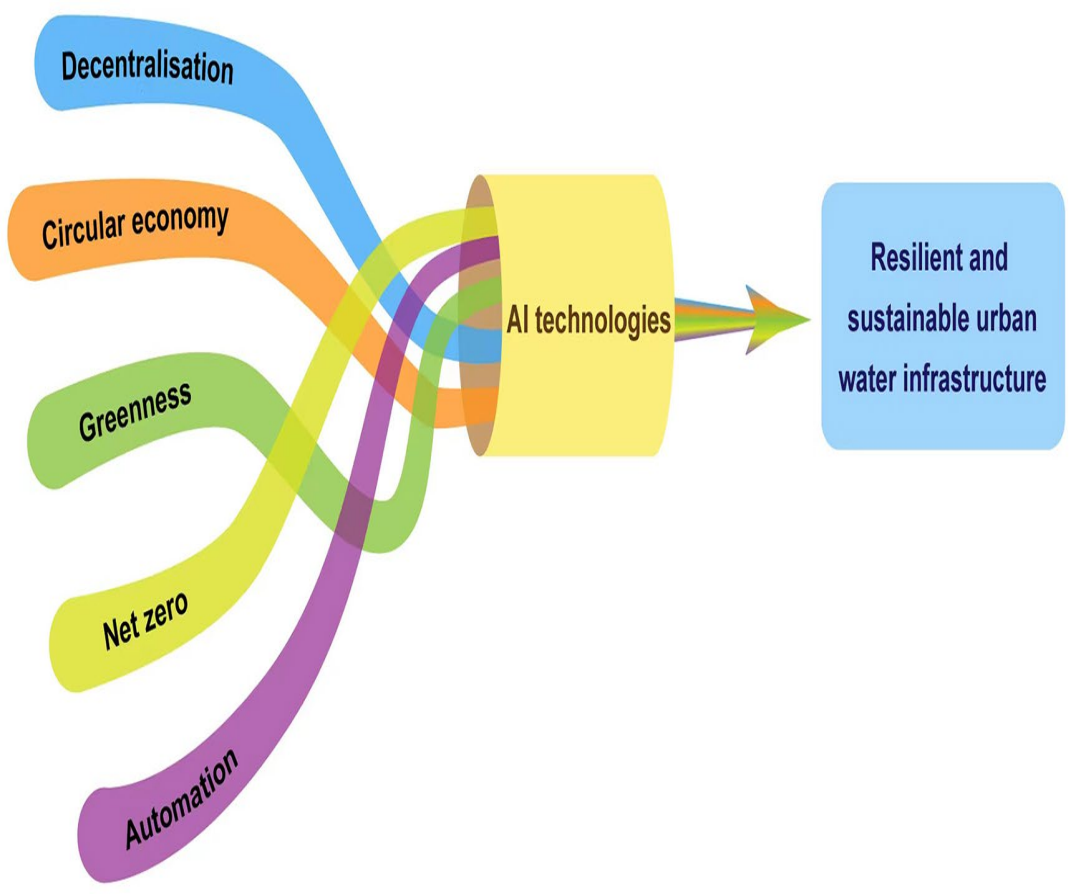
- Youth, young professionals and emerging researchers – 35 years and under – represent half of the global population and are often not engaged in decision making process around water.
- Youth, women and children generally less water secure – greater negative impact.
- Youth voices are imperative in ensuring sustainable development solutions (‘**fresh ideas’’ and adaptability and agility in embracing innovation and technology**).
- **Create and expand funding** for youth (innovators, researchers, etc). Increase accessible and inclusive education and training programmes (at earlier academic stages).
- Supporting the **South African Water and Sanitation Youth Network (SAWSYN)** - to foster and promote knowledge sharing, capacity building, and collaboration among young professionals within the water and sanitation sector.

Rethinking women's involvement in water management

- **Data are key and women represent a reservoir of knowledge.** Harnessing information from frontline water managers collectively would be extremely powerful for effective water management.
- **As the frontline users, women have a unique understanding of the frailties of systems and the societies they serve.** Their experiences provides scope for innovative training approaches and cultural adoption e.g. social acceptance of safe wastewater handling.
- **Women can make a deeply meaningful contribution as researchers in the scientific study of water and sanitation –** water sector must harness this potential. There is still a gender imbalance in the water sector e.g. hydrology, water engineering.
- **Social science involvement in water is now very important and women are well represented these fields.** There are opportunities to utilise the research capacity and project leadership skills of women social scientists to benefit water management and water research issues.

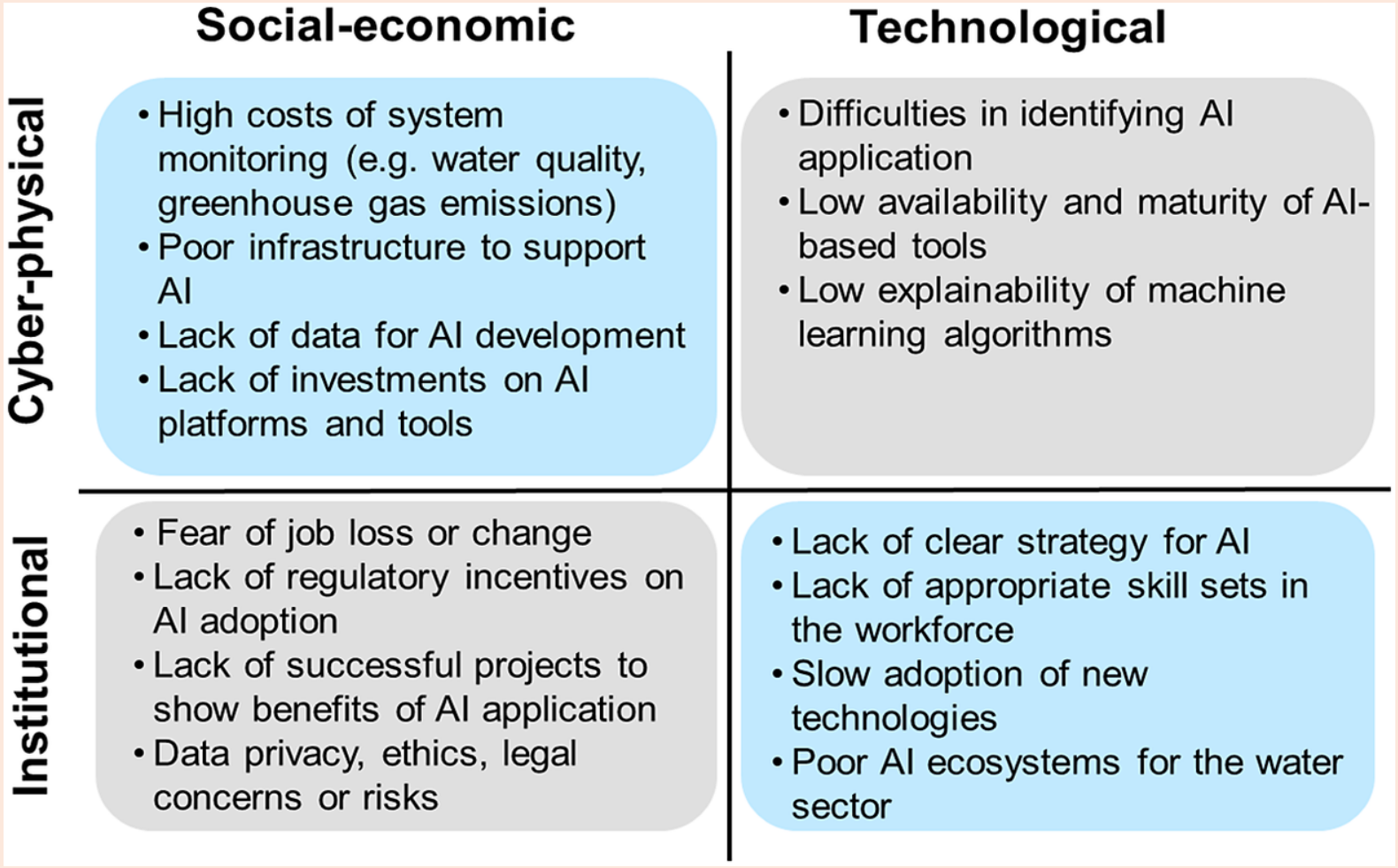
**Taken from the SDG Hub Commentary – The Transformative Potential of Women in Water Resource Management*

The use of AI in water management



- Efficient and enhanced water quality management (real time).
- Improving energy efficiency (wastewater treatment, drinking water treatment).
- Better assessment of climate change risks and as a result more meaningful resilience and adaptation strategies.
    - Drought and flood predictions
- Water use efficiency (smart irrigation systems).

Practical implications and barriers for AI adoption in the water sector

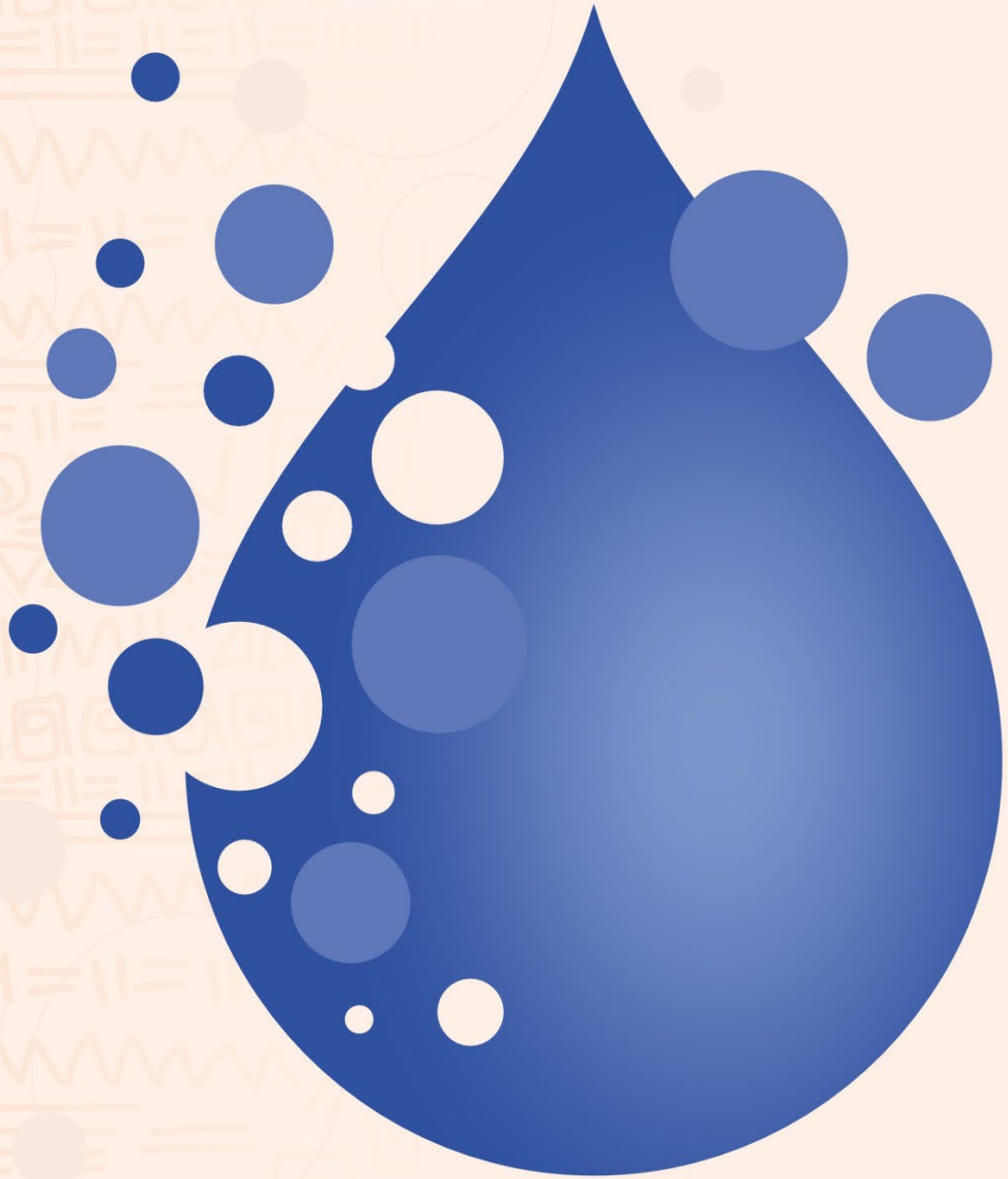


Guangtao Fu, Siao Sun, Lan Hoang, Zhiguo Yuan and David Butler - Artificial intelligence underpins urban water infrastructure of the future: A holistic perspective – Cambridge University Press – Cambridge Prisms: Water

Technology transfer mission

Small Scale Nano Filtration Business Owner

- The water sector is critical to economic growth through product development, business development, and job creation.
- The WRC through its funding seeks to improve the transition of water-related scientific and technological breakthroughs from the lab/research to the marketplace.
- Support is provided to SMMEs, entrepreneurs, innovators, to build sustainable enterprises.



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Overview of RDI calls and general information on project terms

Thematic areas within the RDI programme

Image: Jaco Roselt/Wikimedia

The RDI call covers all thematic areas.
Senior Research Managers are the point of contact regarding information contained in the call.

1

Water Availability

led by

Dr Shafick Adams

2

Water Use

led by

Prof Sylvester Mpandeli

3

Water Quality & Health

led by

Mr Jay Bhagwan

4

Advisory Support

led by

Dr Valerie Naidoo

5

Knowledge Dissemination

Types of WRC Calls

OPEN CALLS *(usually annually)*

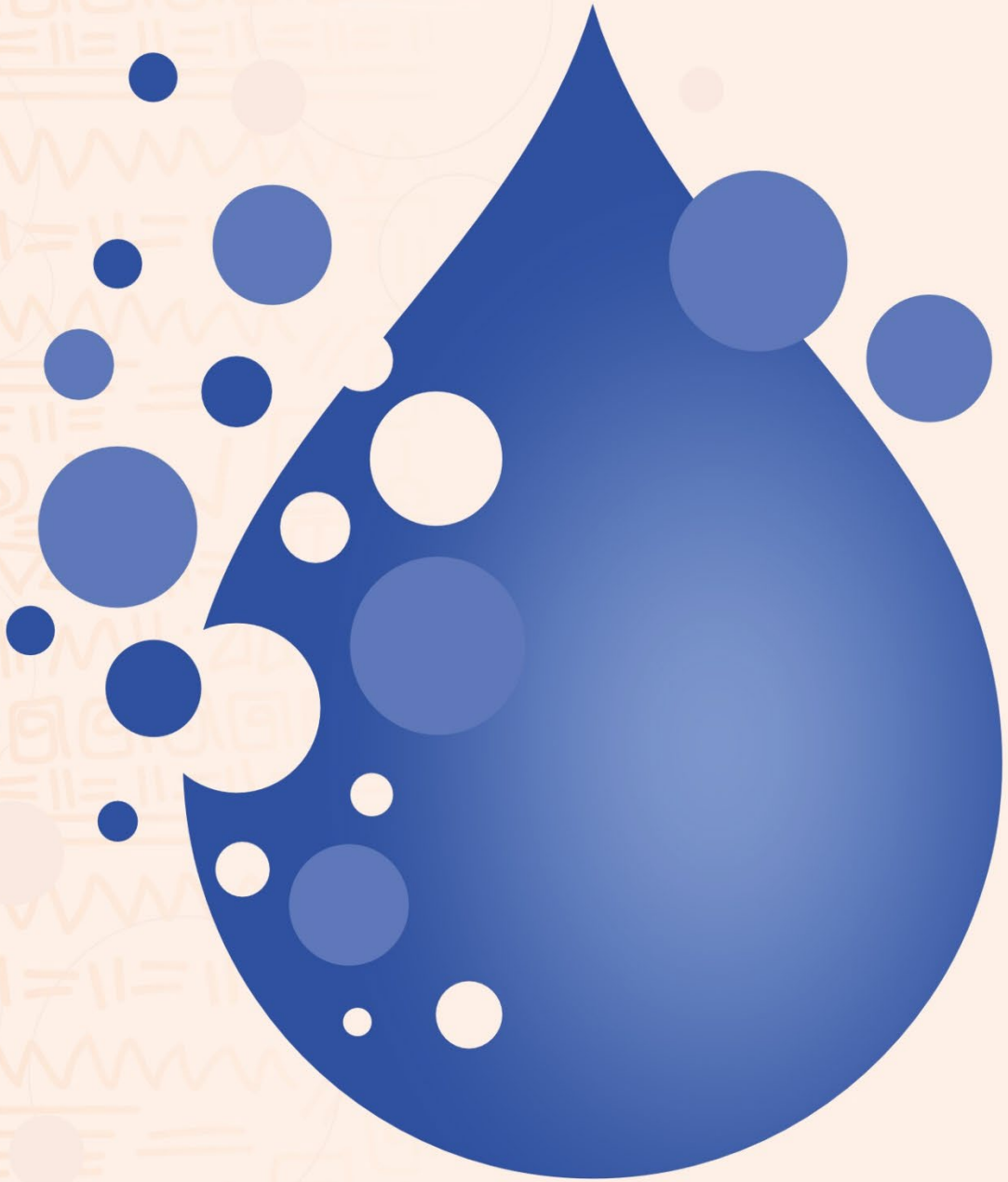
- Researchers propose a research topic.
- Guidance provided on priority areas in different themes.
- Targeted applicants
  - *South African citizens who are emerging researchers (35 years and younger)*
  - *South African citizens who are women*
- Duration of the proposed research topic is not stipulated - (2-5 years).
- Budget is usually not prescribed.

DIRECTED CALLS *(annual/anytime)*

- WRC publishes a Title or Terms of Reference on the topic .
- Time frame and budget indicated.
- Often short-term projects responding to urgent needs.
- Co-funding from other partners/stakeholders

General information regarding WRC projects (MOAs)

- Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs) are signed with institutions (signatory) and **not with individuals** (project leaders). In the case of SMME's project leaders might be the signatories too.
- **If a project leader leaves an institution, the project remains with the institution** unless the institution indicates it does not have the capacity to continue with the project.
- **International collaborators can be included as project team members, but they must fund their own activities**. Budget for their activities should be clearly outlined in the co-funding section of the proposal.
- **IP emanating from publicly financed R&D is identified, protected, utilised and commercialised for the benefit of the people of the Republic**, whether it be for a social, economic, military or any other benefit (IPR (Intellectual PROPERTY RIGHTS) Act of 2008).
    - *Sections 9, 10 & 11 in the MOA contract provides the details on IP. Liaise with TTO offices in institutions.*
    - *IP belongs to the contractor (public institutions)*
    - *SMMEs - foreground IP ownership is negotiable based on the contributions of the parties.*
    - *If an opportunity arises to commercialise the Foreground IP, under circumstances where a Contractor has either failed to commercialise or is not interested in pursuing commercialisation thereof itself, the WRC shall have the discretion to impose an obligation on the Contractor to assign the Foreground IP to the WRC who is capable and mandated to commercialise using NIPMO approval procedures as deemed by the IPR Act.*
- The WRC does not pay funds upfront; **funds are paid on delivery**.



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How to write a successful WRC proposal

1

Carefully study the annual call document/TOR

- Understand the water challenges and priority areas for the current call.
- Strategic objectives of the WRC and investment plan for new projects.
- Formulate the research idea – **NB: specific idea vs interest in a general specific field**.
- Multi-disciplinary/trans-disciplinary – consider the WRC Knowledge tree.
- Screen through the entire call.
- Refer to the WRC knowledge hub – completed projects in relation to the call.

2

Give some thought to the expected impacts of the research

- Sub-headings provided by the WRC for the proposer to clearly state the potential impacts of the project.
- Impacts can be on a national, international level.
- Impacts that can be achieved throughout the life cycle of the project any Potential IP.
- Dissemination and communication strategies (who is interested in your results and how can they use them).

3

Assemble an appropriate project team

- **Project leader vs proposer** – consider WRC strategic objectives e.g., transformation and redress, capacity building objectives
- Appropriate project team – especially for multi/ trans-disciplinary research
- Collaborations are encouraged – with other HEIs, small medium enterprises, end users, government representatives, etc.
- Send a “cold” email (be wise when sharing novel ideas)
- Capacity building – students/interns

4

Writing the research proposal

- Motivation and rationale - The research proposal must respond to a real multi/trans disciplinary challenge
- Contextualization - Demonstrate an understanding of the water challenges, what research has been done and clearly state research gap - access WRC knowledge hub
- SMART goals – state aims of the research clearly
- Method – clearly state how each goal will be achieved
- Deliverables = aims divided into ‘work packages’ - deliverables must be in sync with aims and method

5

Keep in mind basic writing principles

- Write for a general audience BUT maintain technical relevance.
- Find examples of successful proposals and send completed proposals through an internal review process.
- Do not resend a previously submitted proposal without effecting the necessary changes.
- Use appropriate nomenclature, terminology, references and referencing style.
- Research contribution – clearly state the new knowledge / innovative / novel aspects

6

Budget accurately but realistically for proposal deliverables

NB: Funds are not provided upfront

- As a proposer it is important to have a detailed explanation of the resources needed for the project.
- Deliverable amounts should correspond to the yearly allocations.
- Where necessary – have formal sub-contracting agreements with partners / collaborators.
- Modifications and reallocations can occur if the proposal is approved.
- Co-funding should be stated.

f) Budget Summary

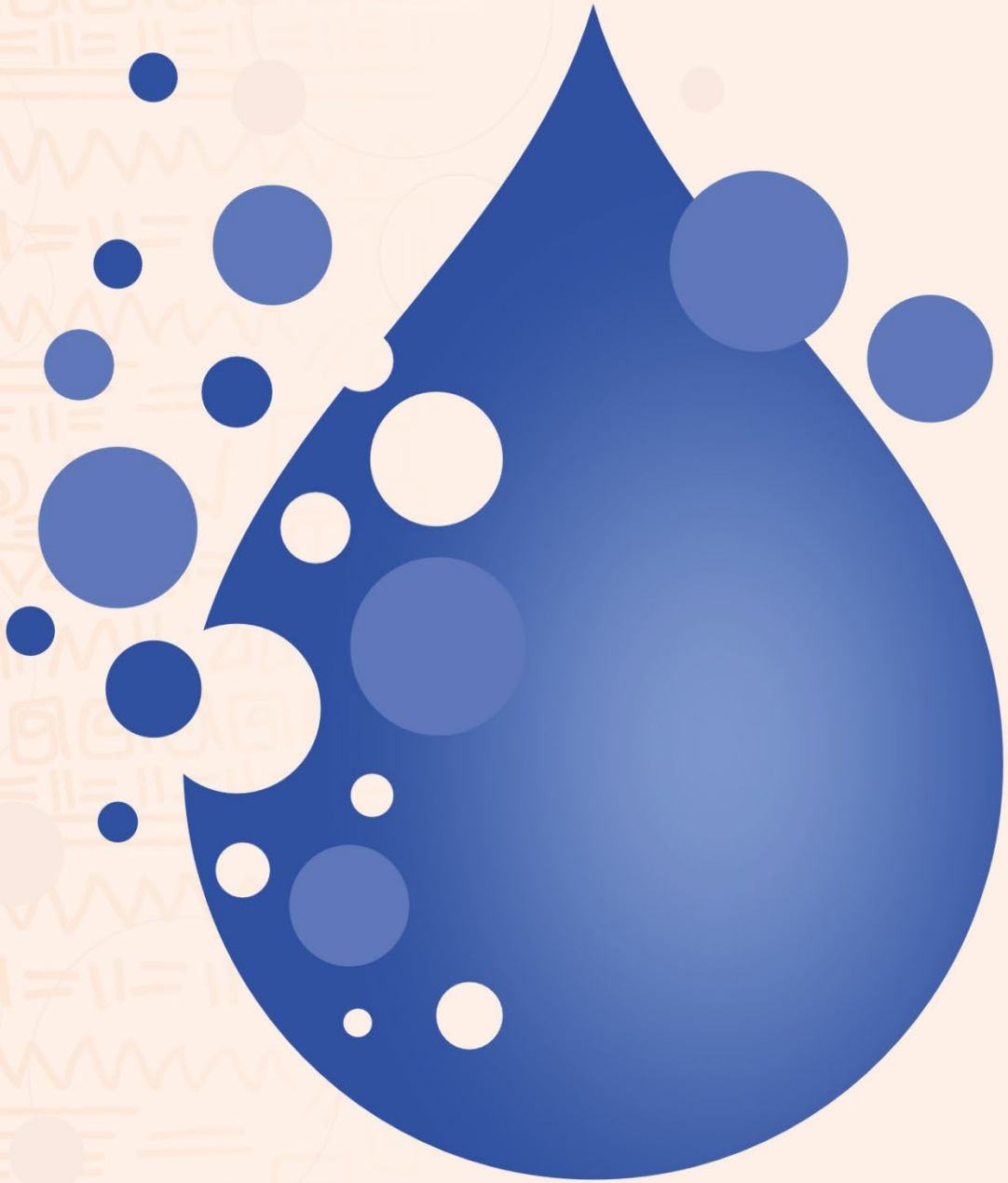
Expenses						
Financial Year	**HR**	**Capital**	**Running**	**Uptake**	**Total**	**Deliverables**
2025/2026	R276 000,00	R0,00	R574 000,00	R0,00	R850 000,00	R850 000,00
2026/2027	R77 000,00	R0,00	R423 000,00	R50 000,00	R550 000,00	R550 000,00
2027/2028	R69 000,00	R0,00	R481 000,00	R50 000,00	R600 000,00	R600 000,00
Totals	R422 000,00	R0,00	R1 478 000,00	R100 000,00	R2 000 000,00	R2 000 000,00

Example of budget summary

7

Become part of the WRC Community

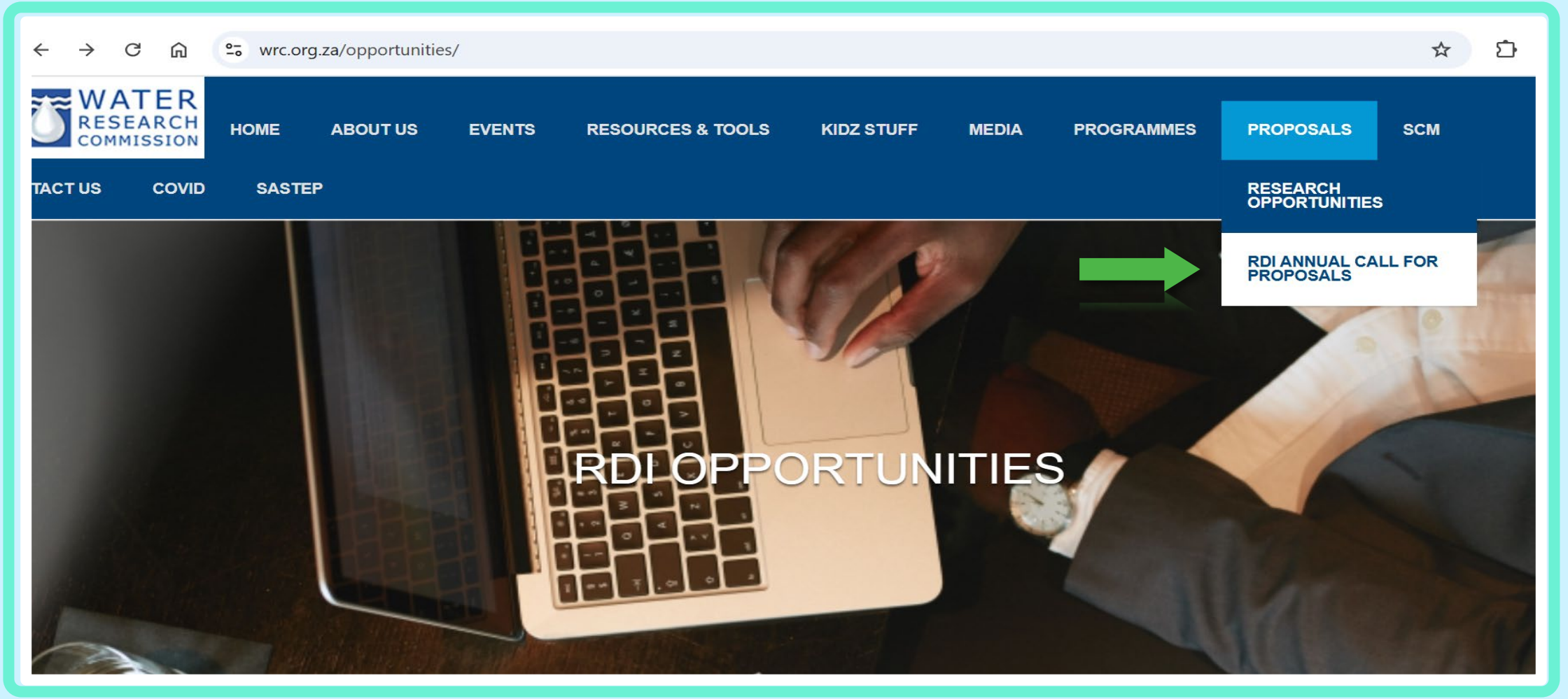
- Become a project team member
- Accept a reviewer invitation
- Become a reference group member
- Be part of a WRC community of practice / advisory team / specialist group
- Attend relevant WRC events (workshops, dialogues, launches)



The WRC online concept note and proposal submission system (BMS)

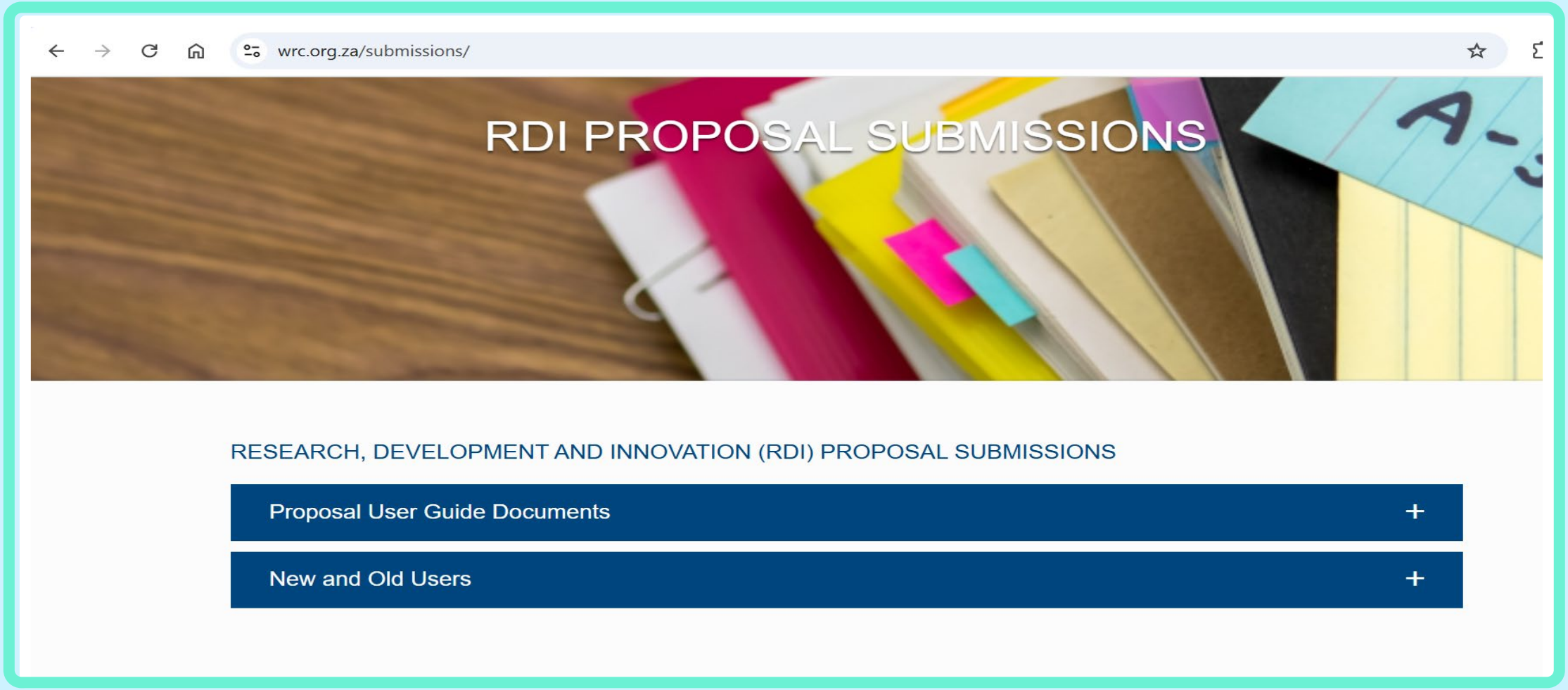
Location of WRC Calls

Currently calls for proposals are only published on the WRC website: **www.wrc.org.za**



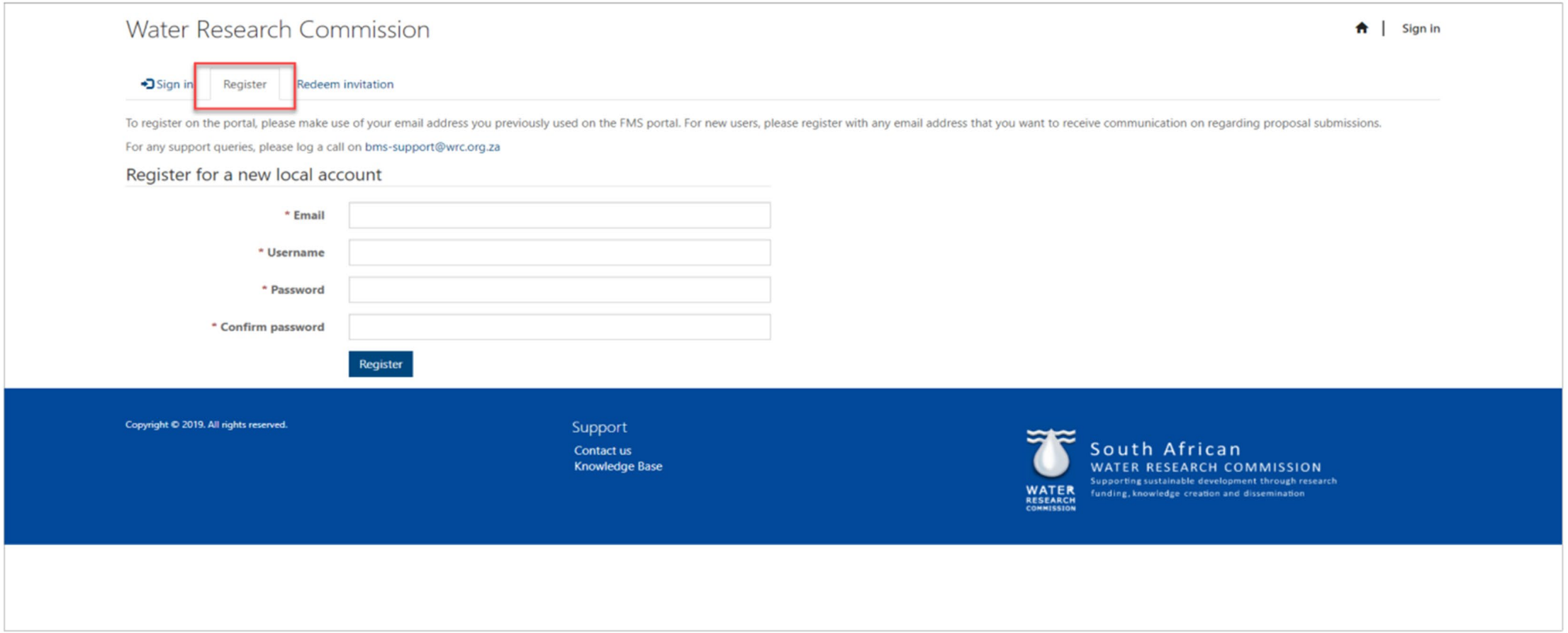
Business management system (BMS) portal (www.wrc.org.za)

All submissions of proposals and concept notes are through the business management system (BMS)

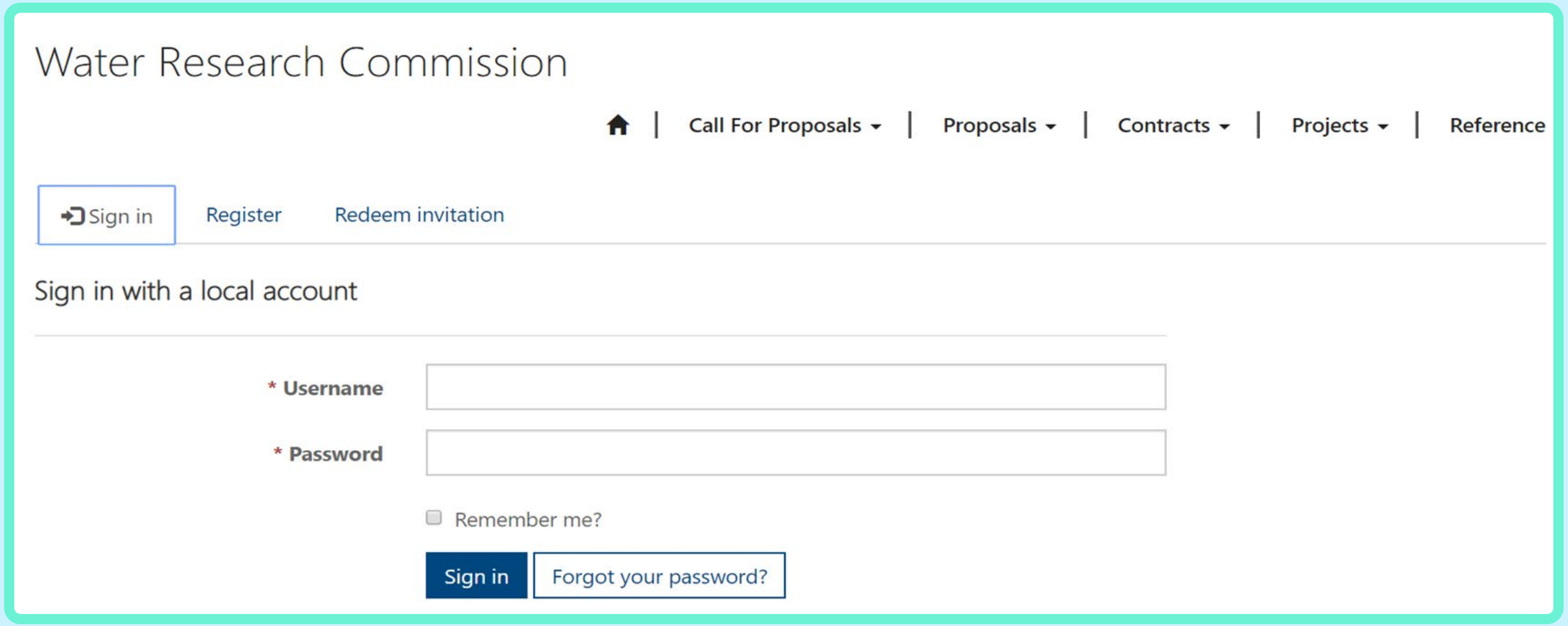


BMS registration page

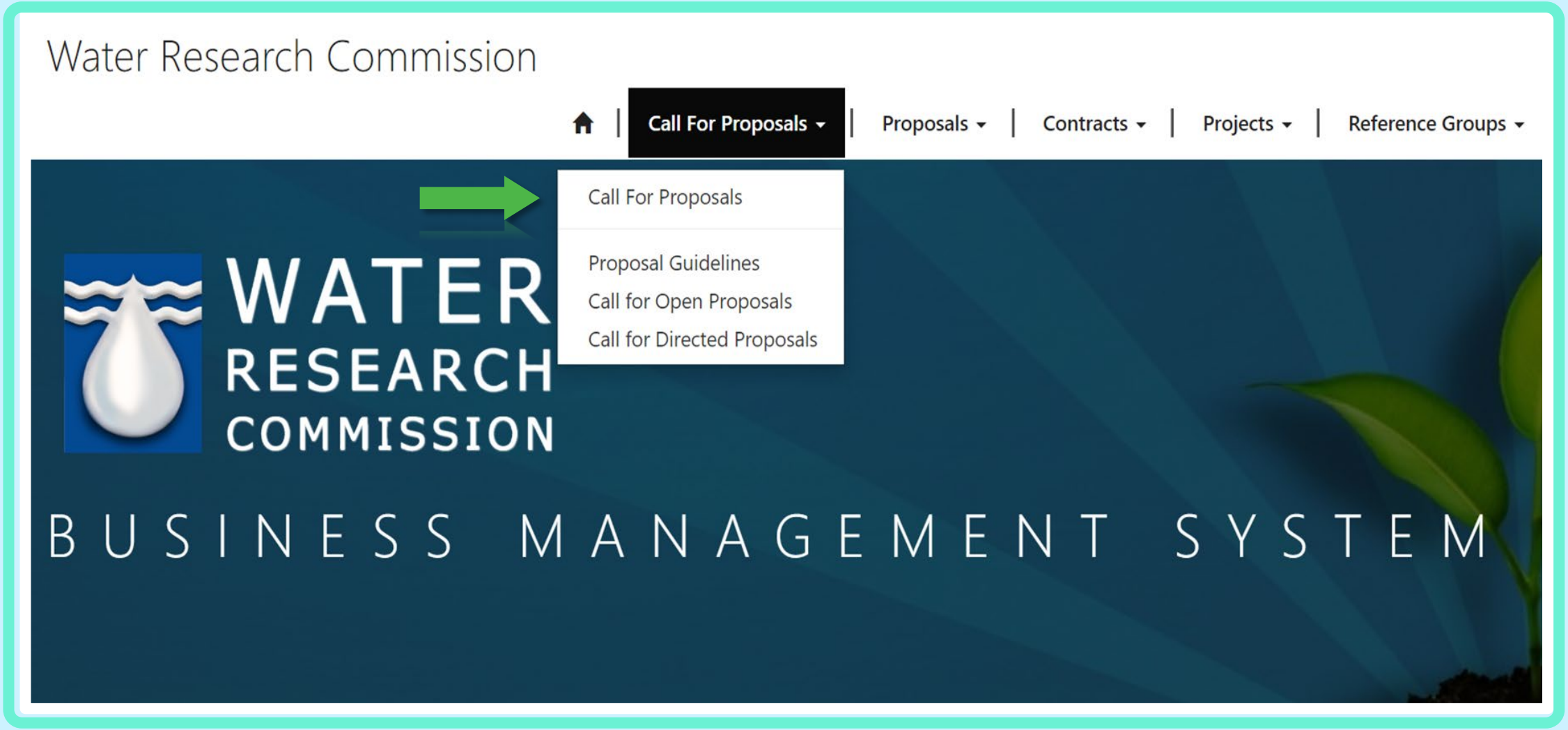
Complete all the relevant details to register onto the BMS Portal, then click “Register”



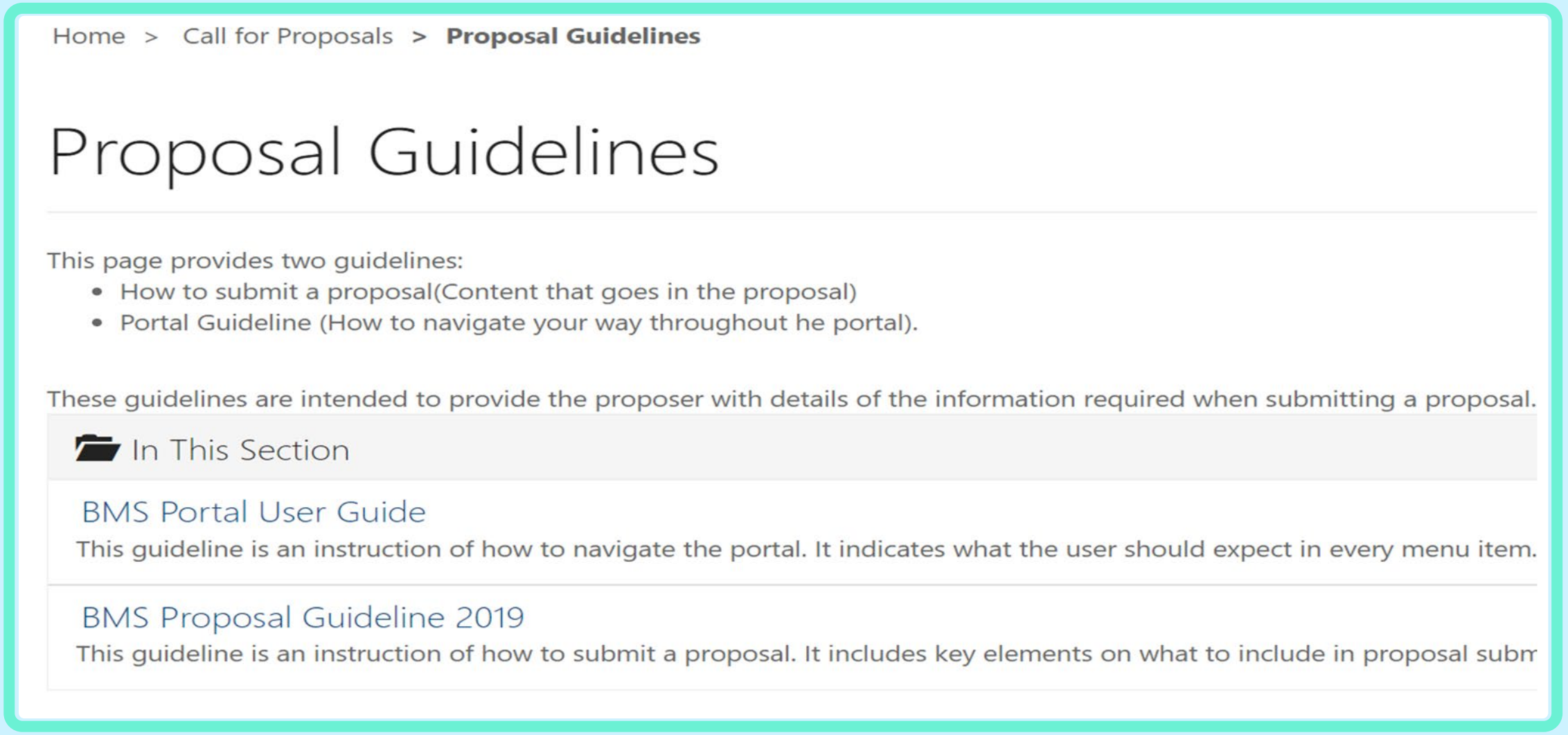
Signing into the BMS Portal

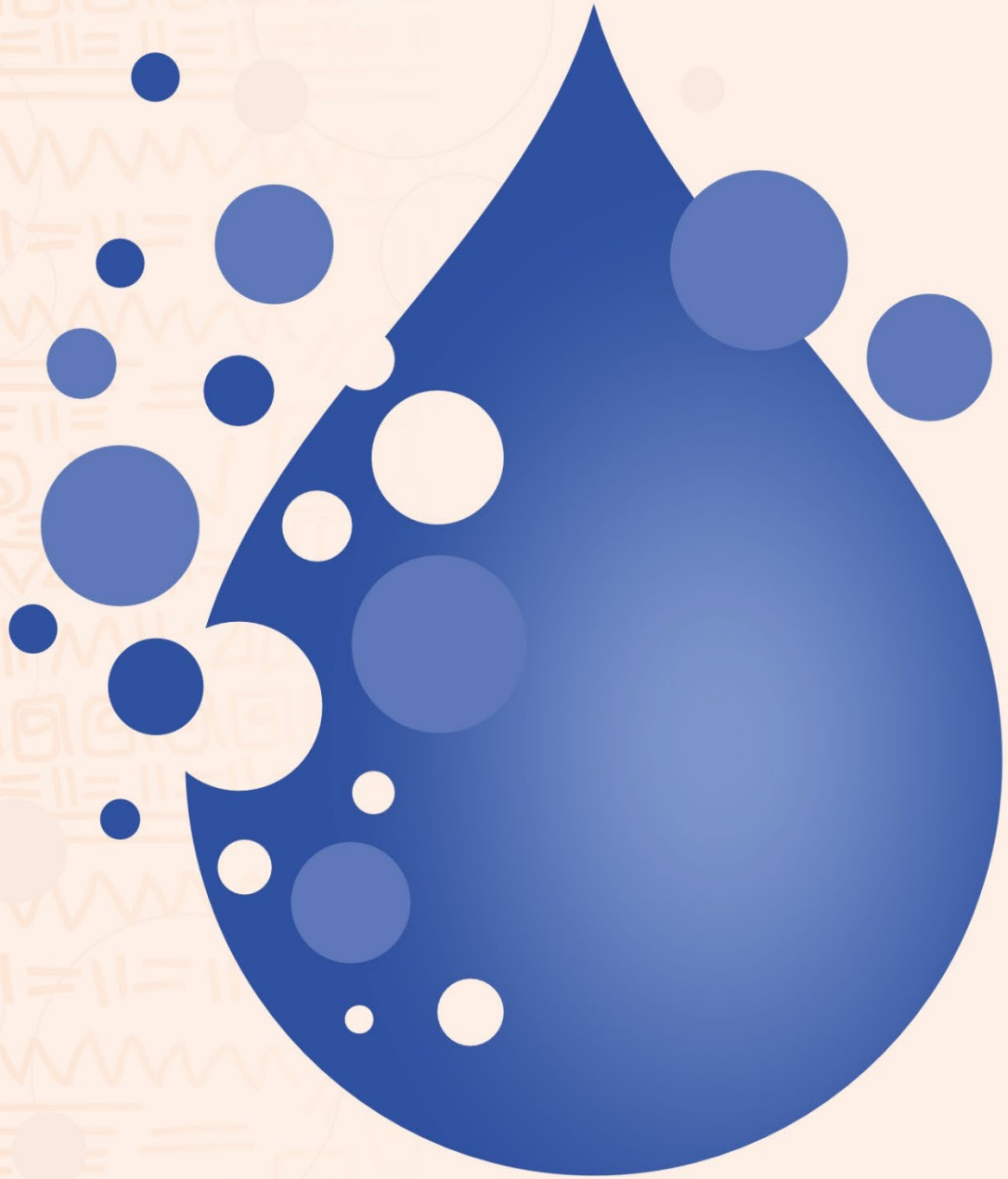


Call for proposals located on BMS



BMS Portal User Guide





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Concept note and proposal submission process

Stages in the concept note submission process

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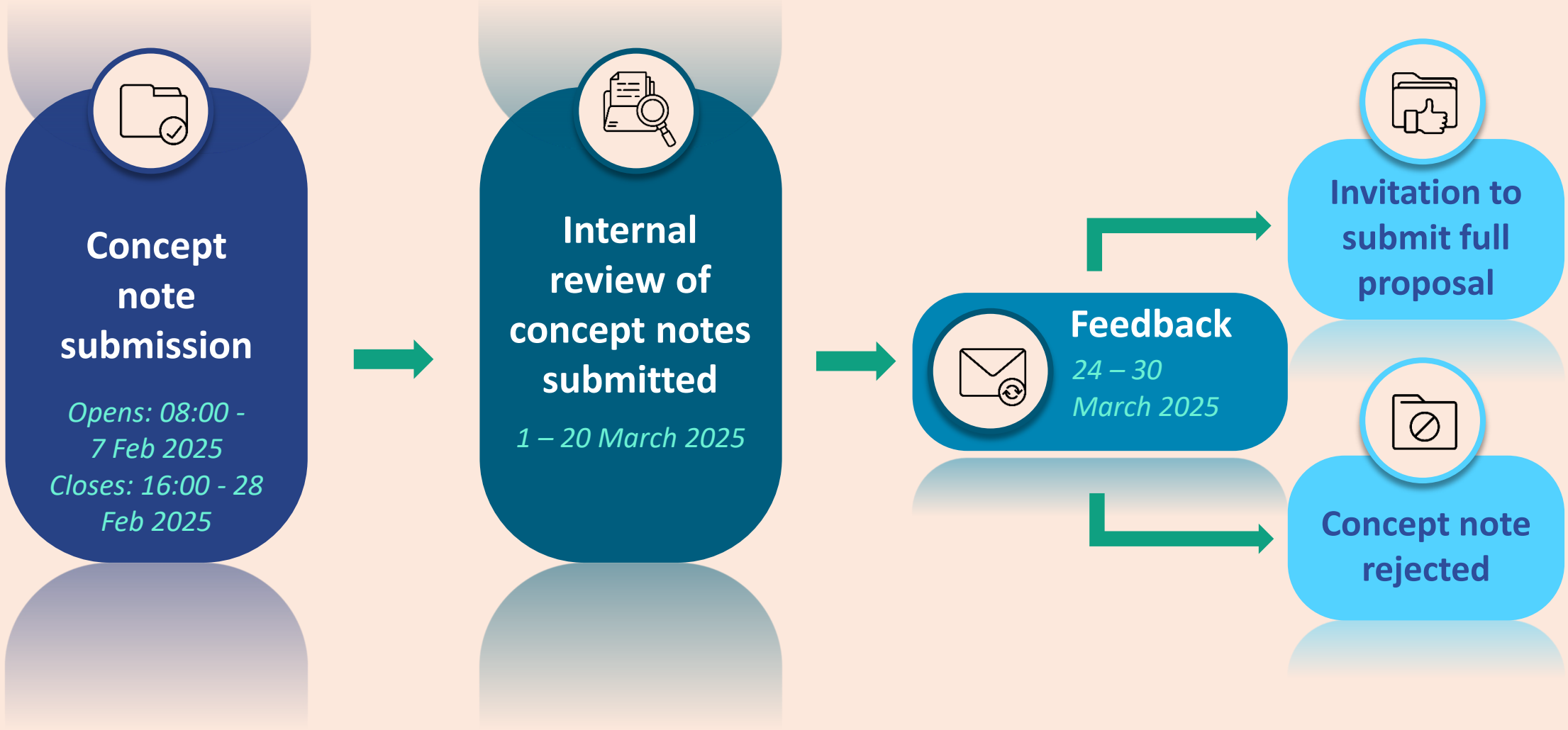

Stages in the proposal submission process

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Proposal submission

Opens: 08:00 - 1 April 2025
Closes: 16:00 - 20 April 2025

Proposal evaluation and review

21 April 2025 – 20 June 2025

Confirmation of acceptance of funding

Proposal amendments; preparation and signing of contracts; commencement of project activities

21 June – 20 July 2025

Proposal rejected – notification sent to proposers

21 June 2025 onwards

THANK YOU

All completed WRC funded project reports and associated publications @ www.wrc.org.za