



TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A DIRECTED WRC PROJECT

THEMATIC AREA	Water Quality and Health
TITLE	Establishment of an Independent Water Quality Advisory Committee

Background and rationale

South Africa faces increasing challenges related to water quality, stemming from urbanization, agricultural runoff, industrial activities, and inadequate wastewater management. In response to the growing complexity of water quality challenges and the need for credible, independent, and multidisciplinary advice, the WRC seeks to establish an Independent Water Quality Advisory Committee. The Independent Water Quality Advisory Committee is also in recognition of the urgent need for a coordinated and evidence-based approach to address water quality challenges in South Africa. This Advisory committee shall provide independent, expert, and strategic advice to the WRC and relevant stakeholders on water quality matters. The committee will serve to enhance the credibility, scientific rigour, and impact of water quality-related research, innovation, and policy development. Therefore, this committee shall serve as a structured platform for delivering actionable guidance to policymakers, local authorities, industry stakeholders, and communities. This initiative will bridge the gap between scientific research and practical decision-making, ensuring sustainable and adaptive management of the country's water resources.

Objectives

The objectives of the Independent Water Quality Advisory Committee are to:

- Provide strategic guidance on emerging and priority water quality issues.
- Review and advise on WRC water quality research themes and portfolios.
- Facilitate the translation of scientific knowledge into policy and practice.
- Promote collaboration among stakeholders across science, policy, and implementation.
- Ensure alignment with national, regional, and global water quality standards and commitments.

Scope of work

The broad scope of work for the advisory will include, but not limited to:

- Provide advisory, thought leadership and expert guidance on water quality issues of national importance



- Develop and recommend evidence-based water quality guidelines for known and emerging contaminants of concern for various water uses (e.g., drinking water, industrial use, agriculture, ecosystems).
- Respond to water quality emergencies and provide timeous advisories during water quality crises, such as contamination events or natural disasters
- Promote the uptake of research and innovative solutions for addressing water quality challenges, and identify knowledge gaps in emerging areas, including CECs and climate change impacts on water quality.
- Reviewing and assessing existing water quality management frameworks and identifying gaps.
- Facilitating training and capacity-building initiatives for key stakeholders.
- Delivering targeted policy recommendations and strategies to address water quality challenges.

Composition and membership of the WRC National Water Quality Advisory

- Lead and secretariat

The lead and secretariat roles of the National Water Quality Advisory shall be determined by the Water Research Commission.

- Eligibility for membership to the WRC National Water Quality Advisory

Members of the WRC National Water Quality Advisory shall constitute a distinguished group of engineers, scientists, and practitioners who are nationally recognized experts in their respective fields. Interested parties responding to this EOI must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Deep understanding of water quality governance and policy development; expert knowledge of water quality standards development, compliance frameworks, and enforcement mechanisms.
- Demonstrated technical and scientific expertise in one or more of the following areas: hydrology and water resources quality management; water quality modelling; water quality monitoring and assessment; water safety planning; epidemiology; ecotoxicology; microbiology; environmental chemistry; GIS and remote sensing; data science and statistical modelling
- Expertise in cost-benefit analysis for water quality interventions, economic valuation of water resources, and financing mechanisms for water management.
- Expertise in public health; social, behavioural and decision sciences; environmental impact assessment; sustainability, etc.
- Skills in developing and disseminating materials to educate and train stakeholders about water quality issues and solutions.
- Capacity to engage with diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, industry representatives, and community organizations.
- Proficiency in preparing clear, concise, and actionable advisory reports for decision-makers.
- Strong track record of implementing national or regional water quality initiatives.



To address specific issues and advance targeted initiatives, the WRC may establish specialist and working groups, drawing from the pool of members within the National Water Quality Advisory.

Submission process

All expression of interest applications must be submitted electronically in PDF format to Ms Charmaine Dladla (charmained@wrc.org.za) using the subject Line: Expression of Interest – WRC Independent Water Quality Advisory Committee. The WRC template to be used for this submission can be downloaded here: http://wrcwebsite.azurewebsites.net/mdocs-posts/panel-of-experts-application-form_word/.

Evaluation criteria and appointment

Evaluation and appointment will be based on:

- Expertise in water quality and track record in related fields
- Given the complexity of water quality management, applicants capable of integrating perspectives across environmental sciences, public health, agriculture, industry and mining, urban planning and infrastructure will be given high priority.
- Membership shall reflect a balance of expertise in water science, public health, ecology, policy, law, civil society, and indigenous knowledge systems.
- Gender, generational, and geographic balance shall be considered in member selection.

This Terms of Reference is issued solely for the purpose of gathering information and identifying qualified parties. Submission of an application does not constitute a commitment by the WRC to award any contract or proceed with the programme. Formal appointments to serve on the WRC's National Water Quality Advisory shall be in writing and shall be for a specific term (not more than three years) and remuneration terms determined by the Water Research Commission.

Total budget: R 5 00 000 (Including VAT)

Duration: 3 years