REACH

Improving water security for the poor

Call for Expression of Interest: REACH Partnership Funding

Catalyst Grants

Applicant Guidance Note

Expressions of Interest must be submitted at:

www.reachwater.org.uk/funding

Deadine: 15 February 2016, 09:00 GMT

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1 Summary

REACH is a global research programme to improve water security for the poor by delivering world-class science that transforms policy and practice. The seven-year programme (2015-22) is led by the University of Oxford, funded by the UK Department for International Development, and brings together a consortium of global leaders in water science, policy and practice.

This is a call for expressions of interest (EOIs) for 'Catalyst Grants' which are commissioned under the REACH programme. These Catalyst Grants of between £10,000 and £50,000 each are designed to explore novel approaches to water security and poverty research and policy that complement the core research conducted by the REACH programme. These grants will promote the co-production of effective tools and technologies relevant for and adopted by policy makers, practitioners, civil society organisations and enterprise. There are three themes for this call:

1. Water security for vulnerable people;
2. Water security risk science; and
3. Water security partnerships.

This is the first call for EOIs for Catalyst Grants. Applicants whose EOIs are successful will be invited to submit a full proposal. There will be at least one further round of Catalyst Grants issued throughout the programme, with a second call for EOIs in 2016. Further calls may be issued subject to available funding. However, as funding for this programme is fixed, applicants are encouraged to apply for grants early in the programme.

This guidance note provides information about the REACH programme, Catalyst Grants and the rules and guidance for submitting an EOI.

Expressions of interest must be submitted via the **REACH website** (www.reachwater.org/funding) by **09:00 GMT** on **15 February 2016**.

2 The REACH programme

2.1 Background and context

The REACH programme aims to make five million poor people 'water secure' by 2022.

Water security is widely referred to as "the process of ensuring sufficient quantity and quality of water for health, productive uses and the environment, with an acceptable level of water-related risks to people, environments and economies" (Grey and Sadoff, 2007). REACH will advance this conceptual understanding using a risk-based framework for research to understand trade-offs and interactions between water resources and water services.

Achieving water security for the poor requires decision making across alternative and often competing choices with different outcomes at a range of scales. Process-based approaches such as Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) have recognised these issues in managing water demands without identifying the likelihood or consequences of alternative outcomes. A risk-based framework complements IWRM by explicitly recognising a range of alternative outcomes from multi-disciplinary data with inherent uncertainties over time (e.g. minutes for flash floods or decades for groundwater resources) and space (e.g. household poverty to national growth). Risk analysis promotes evaluation of future conditions from the familiar and daily (e.g. water supply reliability) to the unpredictable and extreme (e.g. cholera epidemics). A risk-based definition of water security embeds the management of natural variability and associated political, economic and social uncertainties as the basis for interdisciplinary decision making.

The relationship between poverty and water security risks is weakly understood although associations are well-known. For example, rapid urban growth, unregulated pollution from industry, extreme floods and droughts, lack of reliable and safe drinking water, and increasing damage to water ecosystems threaten economies and undermine the lives of the poor. There is an increasing body of global evidence which documents how improving water security affects poverty across multiple domains:

- Improving **drinking water services** promotes public health benefits by reductions in morbidity and time-savings with an economic rationale complemented by the Human Right to Water and Sanitation;
- Increased resilience to **extreme and sudden climate events**, such as floods or droughts, can reduce the large macro-economic costs of these events, which can contribute to industrial dis-investment with impacts on vulnerable people (part-time workers, pastoralists, small-scale farmers) deepening poverty or triggering major human displacement, associated with increasing political instability;
- Protection of **water ecosystems** from damage or loss in wetland, riverine or lowland environments can reduce high infrastructure replacement costs (water treatment or storage) experienced in degraded systems which have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable livelihood systems (fisherfolk, flood recession agriculture, shrimp farming) who must otherwise endure extreme hardship or migrate;
- **Achieving water resource sustainability** by managing trade-offs between new and competing demands on groundwater and surface water systems for human development, industry, agriculture or ecosystem needs is of increasing urgency in emerging economies and fragile states where institutional regulation and governance is largely weak or absent.

Reducing water security risks is an important pathway to sustainable growth and poverty reduction. However, better evidence is needed to guide institutional and infrastructure investments, which unlock growth opportunities and help people move out of poverty.

We identify three primary dimensions where water security risks interact with poverty pathways:

- **Resource Sustainability** – increasing climate variability and extremes pose unprecedented risks for managing surface water and groundwater sustainably for the competing needs of people, industry, agriculture and the environment. Improved understanding of complex water systems in resource-poor environments requires novel approaches linking scientific advances with the political reality of making difficult decisions under uncertainty. The political economy of resource decision making in weak institutional contexts often increases risks to the poor though transformational opportunities may exist to reduce poverty.
- **Inclusive Services** – major advances in increasing water access to the poor are now advancing a global drive for universal water services. The shift from 'access' to 'services' is a major step requiring significant improvements in monitoring systems and institutional regulation to ensure reliable, safe, affordable and physically-accessible water services are available. Progress to 2015 has often benefited those in the upper wealth quintiles disproportionately, with the most in need and difficult to reach requiring major innovations in policy, regulation and delivery to achieve the target of universal services by 2030.
- **Sustainable Growth** – extensive evidence illustrates the macro-economic role of growth from agriculture or enterprise to lift people out of poverty. However growth can increase inequality or damage water systems with external costs paid by less powerful groups or future generations. It is less clear the role and responsibility of water-related enterprise to respond to increasing water security risks to balance economic growth with water security and poverty reduction. Strategic industrial sectors, such as food, mining, garment, infrastructure, beverages or energy, all offer potential pathways out of poverty if growth is

sustainable and inclusive. Leading national and international enterprises are working to understand and to respond to these risks and opportunities in emerging economies in partnership with government and civil society.

Resource sustainability, inclusive services and sustainable growth are not mutually exclusive but interact in different contexts with varying consequences (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 REACH conceptual understanding of Water Security Risk and Poverty Reduction

REACH aims to generate improvements in water security for the poor by working at the interface of water security risk and poverty reduction research and practice.

2.2 The REACH consortium

The REACH programme is led by the University of Oxford, funded by the UK Department of International Development, and brings together a consortium of global leaders in water science, policy and practice.

UNICEF is our global practitioner partner. UNICEF has over 100 offices worldwide and a global mandate to improve water supply, sanitation and hygiene for the poor, particularly women and children. Our global partnership also includes: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), International Water Association (IWA), SKAT Foundation hosting the Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN), and IRC.

Our research is undertaken in collaboration with partner institutions in Africa and South Asia:

- **Bangladesh**: Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), University of Dhaka, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b)
- **Ethiopia**: Water and Land Resource Centre (WLRC), Addis Ababa University
- **Kenya**: Institute for Climate Change and Adaptation, University of Nairobi

For a full list of REACH partners, please see our website at: http://reachwater.org.uk/about-reach/who-we-are/.

2.3 Objectives of the programme

REACH will generate improvements in the way that national and global sector actors plan, implement or monitor aspects of water security. The programme will take into account aspects of and linkages between:

- drinking water supply;
- water supply for livelihoods;
- water security for growth development and
- water ecosystem risks.

The programme will have fulfilled its aim if it produces concrete examples of improvements in the interactions between these areas.[1] In order to generate research which promotes improvements in water security, we have identified the following indicative research objectives:

- To develop a water security risk framework to underpin decision making at multiple levels;
- To evaluate the interrelationships between poverty and water security for women, men, and children, providing new evidence for improved policy and investments that benefit all;
- To ensure resources are managed sustainability balancing competing demands, including those of women and marginalised groups;
- To develop and evaluate pathways to provision of inclusive, sustainable water services for poor women, men, children and marginalised groups; and
- To promote sustainable growth strategies which benefit poor women, men and future generations.

Please note that this list of research topics is not exhaustive; we are seeking innovative research in areas which generate improvements in water security for the poor.

At the heart of the REACH programme is its global science-practitioner partnership. Aligning research design and activities with practitioner interventions will enable the programme to have a significant and material impact. REACH's projects are expected to deliver both *academic impact* (eg. globally-outstanding journal papers, theoretical advances, methodological innovations) and pathways to significant and sustainable *development impact*.

Regional focus

From a regional perspective, the programme is focussed on Fragile States[2] in Africa and South Asia as these are the regions where water security challenges are greatest and poverty is most acute. EOIs must be relevant to one or more of DFID's list of Fragile States to qualify for funding[3].

Gender

Gender will form a critical element of the programme, as it is a vital building block for enhancing and maintaining water security for all. Consequently, understanding differential impacts of water security on the poor women, men, girls and boys, and the different barriers to equity is essential. This gender inclusive approach will seek to identify and address gender challenges such as unequal access to knowledge and differing capacities to adapt and implement change.

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[1] The REACH logical framework, which outlines the programme's objectives, is available on the REACH website.

[2] A Fragile State may be defined as "*failing, or at risk of failing, with respect to authority, comprehensive basic service provision, or legitimacy*" (Frances and Brown, 2010).

[3] Of DFID's 28 focus countries, the following 21 are included in the 2014 Fragile States' list: Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Burma; DR Congo; Ethiopia; Kenya; Liberia; Malawi; Nepal; Nigeria; Occupied Palestinian Territories; Pakistan; Rwanda; Sierra Leone; Somalia; Sudan; South Sudan; Tajikistan; Uganda; Yemen and Zimbabwe

Capacity building

A key aim of REACH is to facilitate strengthened technical capacity in the design, delivery and monitoring of water security interventions by policy-makers, practitioners and change makers in Africa and Asia. Thus in this programme, we particularly encourage applications from women, early career researchers, and researchers from Africa and Asia across a range of sectors.

2.4 Programme design

There are two strands to the REACH programme. First, core research will be conducted through 'Water Security Observatories' ('Observatories'). Secondly, these Observatories will be complemented by partnership funding (see below) which is intended to extend the thematic and geographical scope of the programme.

Water Security Observatories

The Water Security Observatories will promote programmes of long-term, instrumented and interdisciplinary research on water security and poverty. The Observatories will be located at Bangladesh, Kenya and Ethiopia as these are locations where significant but uncertain trajectories of change are predicted to emerge over a time span of a decade or longer. The Observatories will be conducted with key REACH partners and will form the major component of the programme.

Partnership Funding

A combination of research, action research and partnerships will be commissioned to complement the wider research-into-action programme ('Partnership Funding'). Partnership Funding will allocate up to 30% of funding for the REACH programme.

The purpose of this funding is to:

- complement core research activities[4] and fill gaps in water security thematic areas;
- extend the regional reach of the programme, particularly in South Asia;
- attract high quality applications from African and Asian-based institutions;
- encourage young and/or female African and Asian researchers;
- identify new opportunities and partnerships, for example through matching funds;
- generate high quality research and capacity development in target regions; and
- produce high quality research results in journal publications and policy impacts.

Two types of funding will be provided as part of the Partnership Funding. These are:

1. Catalyst Grants; and
2. Major Grants.

Catalyst Grants will be from £10,000 up to £50,000 and run for up to one year. To supplement the funding awarded, applicants are encouraged to leverage funding from other sources to be used in combination with the funding provided by REACH.

Major Grants will be funded for at least 2 years and may attract funding of up to £500,000. They will present an opportunity for applicants to undertake longitudinal research over the course of several years. A successful Catalyst Grant may be extended through the award of a Major Grant. Details for Major Grant funding will be released in the future and will not be restricted to Catalyst Grant awardees.

[4] Core research is conducted through the Observatories. Descriptions of core research will be available through the REACH website.

This First Call for EOIs and associated guidance is for Catalyst Grants.

3 Catalyst Grants

There will be three themes of Catalyst Grants. These themes are:

1. Water security for vulnerable people;
2. Water security risk science; and
3. Water security partnerships.

REACH invites EOIs that focus on one or more of these three areas. EOIs may address multiple themes however a primary theme must be selected.

REACH anticipates awarding Catalyst Grants to at least 3 proposals from each theme, however this allocation may vary depending on the needs of the programme and the quality of applications. Each application will be assessed only against other applications in the same theme.

An overview of each of the three themes is outlined below.

3.1 Water security for vulnerable people

The first theme focuses on novel approaches to promoting water security for vulnerable people. These might include people living in vulnerable settings, such as urban slums, conflict-affected areas, disaster-prone zones or politically-unstable places; or populations that are vulnerable due to their status in society or livelihoods. We are looking to document and share novel approaches in challenging spaces where the state may have failed to provide necessary structures or practices which increase water security risks for poor or vulnerable groups. Of particular interest are vulnerable children, women, sick, handicapped, refugees or small-scale entrepreneurs.

This theme specifically seeks to generate capacity building and action-research. In the light of this, this theme may be of particular interest to civil society organisations.

Areas of work may include:

- Evolution and performance of non-state governance approaches which benefit vulnerable groups;
- Novel civil society and private sector partnerships which identify and sustain benefits for the poor;
- Compilation and synthesis of historical data from vulnerable groups linked to water security shocks;
- New approaches to measure and monitor vulnerability linked to water security;
- Improved evidence of water security impacts on children;
- Methods to build water security capacity or promote participation of the poor in challenging environments; and
- Research to identify the most vulnerable and/or water-insecure individuals within small rural communities, and what is the pattern of water-insecurity through the year for them.

3.2 Water security risk science

The second theme focuses on novel risk-science research that promotes water security for the poor. Risk science encompasses theory and methods from the natural, engineering and social sciences. We are looking for advances in existing theory or methods, or the transition of successful approaches to water security challenges. This may include purely theoretical work or empirical work where proof of concept is required. Analysis of existing and large data sets is particularly welcomed where results provide new insights explicitly linking water security and poverty.

Areas of work may include:

- Translational research of advanced, data fusion methods applied to water security to establish proof-of-concept;
- Reconfiguration and analysis of existing, large data sets (health, poverty, mobile data, rainfall) to explore water security risk metrics for the poor;
- Innovative uses of climate predictions such as seasonal forecasts to support water security applications;
- Use of Earth Observation datasets to support innovative soil and water conservation practices to benefit the agricultural sector;
- Enhanced in situ climate and hydrological monitoring to improve the basis for decision making in poorly-gauged areas; and
- Theoretical or methodological advances in risk perceptions, behaviour or decision-making, including individual and higher institutional levels.

3.3 Water security partnerships

The third theme focuses on building partnerships with establishing or emerging implementation programmes, private sector initiatives, entrepreneurial sectors or research institutes advancing complementary approaches to improve water security for the poor.

In this area, REACH is seeking to facilitate the development of global science-practitioner partnerships which drive globally outstanding science to inform improved policy and practice. These partnerships should generate scalable results, enabling a wider and deeper uptake of research.

Examples may include regional or country initiatives implementing infrastructure, institutions or monitoring systems which would complement the REACH programme. Private sector initiatives may include novel alliances in water insecure environments or collaboration in new technologies with indirect but potentially significant benefits for the water insecure poor. There is particular interest in long-term (5-10 years) initiatives where partnership would leverage significant benefits for both parties.

Under this theme, REACH will accept applications for partnering with one of the members of the REACH Consortium. However REACH may also be used as a mechanism to facilitate new partnerships. These new partnerships are particularly encouraged.

Areas of work may include:

- Convening events and meetings to promote long-term partnerships aligning existing or new programmes of work;
- Collaboration in sharing data, resources or monitoring systems aligned to REACH Observatories;
- Proof-of-concept, technology projects with industry; and
- Initiatives to accelerate the impact and sustainability of REACH work in existing networks or institutional structures.

4 REACH call for EOIs: guidelines and rules

4.1 Purpose of the call

The REACH programme is holding an open call for expressions of interest (EOI) to select projects that will complement its core research-for-development programme. These rules and guidelines lay out the process for the submissions. In the first round, potential projects will be identified via the quality of their EOIs.

These guidelines are important. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in disqualification from this EOI process.

4.2 Who may apply for funding?

Applications are encouraged from institutions which can fulfil the aims of the programme, including civil society organisations, research institutions, regional organisations, think tanks, governmental organisations and the private sector.

REACH programme members at the University of Oxford or any of the Partner Institutes are eligible to apply for, or be part of an application for, the Catalyst or Major Grants.

REACH encourages collaboration and partnerships as well as the active involvement of developing country researchers and institutions in the design and implementation of the projects.

If EOIs are submitted as a consortium, all EOIs received under this initiative must have a lead organisation, which may be local, national, regional or international, but must be a legal entity. Which entity acts as the lead institution is a decision for the consortium.

4.3 Eligibility

At the full proposal stage, applicants will need to provide evidence that they have in place the resources, systems and processes that will enable them to effectively manage the size of funds that they are requesting.

At this EOI stage, applicants will be required to submit a due diligence checklist which will be made available with the application form. If an applicant is invited to submit a full proposal, REACH will request a letter of support from the host institution of the applicant and other consortium members, as well as any additional funders. Each applicant must be able to demonstrate that it:

- has internal controls which provide reasonable assurance that the use of resources is consistent with all relevant laws, regulations, and award terms; and
- is able to safeguard resources against waste, loss, and misuse; and will obtain, maintain, and fairly disclose reliable data in reports.

The University of Oxford reserves the right to audit the projects of all successful grant recipients throughout the life of the project.

4.4 EOI submission format

- All submissions must be submitted via the REACH website.
- Submissions must be made using the REACH EOI Template.
- Submissions must comply with the word limit indicated for each selection criterion.
- Submissions must be in English.

4.5 Submission deadline

This call will close (the 'deadline') at 09:00 (GMT) on 15 February 2016. All submissions must be received on or before the deadline.

NOTE: All submissions will be acknowledged as received with an automated reply. If this reply is not received, the sender must assume that the submission has not been received and try again.

4.6 Timeline of the call and evaluation

This application process will consist of two stages.

- Stage One – Call for expressions of interest.

- Stage Two – Invitation for full proposals.

The EOIs will be double-blind reviewed by the REACH Science Board which is comprised of academics and practitioners. Short-listed applicants from this review will be invited to submit a full proposal which will be reviewed externally as well as internally.

An outline of the process of commissioning the catalyst projects is detailed below.

Application timeline	
Action	**Date**
Stage One	
Call for EOIs issued	10 December 2015
Deadline for online applications of EOIs	15 February 2016
Stage Two	
Invitation to submit full proposal	16 March 2016
Online applications of full proposals received	29 April 2016
Award letter and contract sent to successful consortia	17 June 2016
Funding contract signed	July 2016
Projects commenced	July 2016

4.7 Duration

Projects are expected to begin by end of July 2016 and may not last longer than one year, with an end date not later than December 2017.

4.8 Funding

- Funding available for each project is subject to a maximum £50,000 for the entire period. Funding requests cannot exceed this amount.
- EOIs for less than £10,000 will be disqualified.
- Applicants will be asked to provide a preliminary budget. A more detailed outline of the budget will be asked for at the full proposal stage. Applicants should explain any material deviations from the preliminary budget at the full proposal stage.
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to match funding through either their own in-kind contributions, or through the leveraging of other funding.
- All budgets must not allocate more than 20% to indirect overheads. Per diems will not be permitted under the REACH funding agreement,

4.9 Submitting questions regarding the open call

- Questions about submission must be sent by email to: reachfunding@water.ox.ac.uk. Please place in subject title: EOI Questions.
- All questions and all answers which are relevant to all applicants will be anonymously posted on the following website: http://reachwater.org.uk/ for the benefit of all applicants.
- Questions will be answered up until 10 February 2015. They will not be accepted or answered beyond this date.

4.10 Guidance with EOIs

REACH will schedule two webinars to answer questions about the EOI process. The scheduled times for webinars are:

- **20 January 2016** between **21:00-23:00 GMT**
- **22 January 2016** between **09:00-11:00 GMT**

The timings of these webinars have been chosen to accommodate applicants in Europe, Africa, Asia, America and Australasia.

Please submit all questions about this EOI via the REACH website so that they can be collated and addressed in the sessions. Subject to demand, REACH may schedule a further web-based session to answer further questions.

All relevant questions and answers will be posted to the website.

A contact will be made available to offer informal feedback. This person will not be involved in the review process.

4.11 Evaluation of EOIs

EOIs will be assessed against the criteria set out below. EOIs will be evaluated by at least two members of the REACH Science Board, consisting of members of the University of Oxford and other REACH partners. Reviewers will be asked to evaluate EOIs against a number of criteria. The criteria and how points are assigned is described in Section 5. Scores will guide the final selection. Scores will not be publically available. For all criteria, the evaluation scale features a range that begins at zero and ends with twenty. A score of zero indicates a complete absence or weakness for the criterion in question while the maximum score indicates exceptional strength or achievement with regard to that criterion.

0	The EOI fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
1-4	Poor: The criterion is addressed inadequately, or there are significant weaknesses.
5-8	Fair: While the EOI broadly addresses the criterion, there are considerable weaknesses.
9-12	Good: The EOI addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.
13-16	Very Good: The EOI addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.
17-20	Excellent: The EOI successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

4.12 Notification of the results of evaluation

Successful applicants will be notified by email and this information will also be posted on the website: http://reachwater.org.uk/.

The REACH team will endeavour to provide some feedback to unsuccessful applicants, however due to the large number of applications anticipated, only limited feedback will be made available.

4.13 Terms and conditions of the open call

- By submitting an EOI, applicants indicate agreement with the guidelines and rules associated with the open call, in particular its terms and conditions.

- REACH's decision on an EOI is final. REACH is under no obligation to provide further information to the feedback issued for the reasons for its selection, or for the rejection of an EOI.
- An invitation to proceed to full proposal writing does not imply obligation on the part of REACH to fund the final proposal.
- REACH will treat EOI submissions in confidence. Information contained within unsuccessful EOI submissions will not be shared, communicated or otherwise utilised.

5 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria against which the EOI will be assessed are outlined below. Applications will be assessed against the selection criteria as a whole.

Applications will be selected on the basis of demonstrated potential to fulfil the aims of the REACH programme. Successful applicants will be able to demonstrate how their team(s) of researchers and practitioners intend to deliver impact from their project.

Advice may be provided from members of the REACH Science Board to develop or revise proposals that are considered to have potential for high impact. This will help to develop research that may be considered high risk or innovative ideas from people with limited track records. However, the provision of any advice should not be taken as an indication of guaranteed funding.

Evaluation Criteria	Judgment based upon	Scoring
Criterion 1. Quality and significance	Quality of project objectives and their alignment with the objectives of the REACH programme. The project fills gaps or addresses strategic needs of the overall programme.	20 points
Criterion 2. Impact and dissemination	Potential impact for the poor, and how project outcomes and outputs contribute to REACH's targets. Potential of the project to create benefits at scale. Quality of the plan for implementing and evaluating the dissemination and use of the expected project outputs and the knowledge generated by the project.	20 points
Criterion 3. Project design	Appropriate project planning tools for monitoring both management and implementation/research activities including key milestones and dates that they are expected to be achieved. Stakeholder analysis and engagement plan, with indicative cooperation structure and strategy sensitive to gender and the needs of vulnerable groups.	20 points
Criterion 4. Project management.	Project coordination, management strategy and previous management experience. Quality of project team, including the synergies between the partners bringing added value by working together. Leadership by African and Asian partners, female researchers and early career researchers in the project team.	20 points
Criterion 5. Cost effectiveness	Cost of the proposal set against its significance and potential impact against REACH aims. Value for the money to be invested, taking into account any other leveraged funds.	20 points