



2027/28 CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES / PROPOSALS

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The Water Research Commission's (WRC's) main function is to coordinate and promote water research, development, and innovation (RDI) in South Africa. The WRC effectively undertakes its mandate by prioritising water research as informed by the needs of the water sector and related stakeholders. Supported projects are related to the entire water cycle. The RDI agenda and projects of the WRC aim to make a meaningful contribution to addressing water security and socio-economic challenges in South Africa, while enabling the country to have an innovation-driven water and sanitation sector. The WRC has four (4) thematic areas through which new knowledge creation, innovation development and capacity building are pursued. They are water availability, water use, water quality and health, and water advisory support. These thematic areas generate knowledge solutions which contribute to national government and Department of Water and Sanitation priorities.

The overarching aim of this call for research proposals is to respond to national challenges through research and innovation in order for the WRC to contribute to water security while assisting the sector to adapt and become more resilient to climate change.

2. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE WRC

The WRC has five (5) outcomes on which its strategy is anchored, namely an informed water society, an innovative water sector, a transformed water sector, a financially sustainable organisation, and an agile organisation. As such, the WRC is looking for research, development and innovation (RDI) projects that can make remarkable contributions to all these outcomes while providing new solutions to the water sector's challenges.

The WRC hereby invites all South Africans from various stakeholder groups, backgrounds, and disciplines to submit concept notes or proposals as per the project category selected.

3. THE WRC IS ENCOURAGING PROPOSALS THAT PROMOTE INNOVATION AND SUPPORT LEADERSHIP, EMPOWERMENT, AND/OR PARTICIPATION BY:

- Seasoned researchers linked to institutions of higher learning and science councils
- Emerging researchers
- Postgraduate students seeking funding in the thematic areas of research
- Women, youth, and people living with disabilities
- Cooperatives and environmental groups
- Indigenous knowledge systems/non-tech researchers
- Innovators and technology developers (universities, SMMEs and commercial companies)

4. KEY STEPS TO CONSIDER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS CALL

- The Call requires a submission of a **concept note or a proposal** first on or before the due date (see timelines for the 2027/28 Call in Section 3).
- Invitations will then be sent only to those whose **concept notes** have been approved or accepted to move to the proposal submission stage.
- However, for the Directed Call with terms of reference (ToRs) in section 2 (Table 2), full proposals (**not concept notes**) need to be submitted **on or before 21 August 2026**.
- Consider your submission not successful if you haven't heard from the WRC by 01 November 2026.
- Visit the WRC BMS Portal website to submit an **open or directed concept note or proposal**. The portal website address is <https://wrc.microsoftcrmpportals.com/call-for-proposals-info/>
- If you are a first-time user of the WRC system, you are required to register to be able to use it.
- Returning users should log in using their details used before.
- For technical assistance relating to the submission of concept notes on the WRC BMS Portal, contact the BMS Administrator at email: bms-support@wrc.org.za.
- For assistance relating to the technical and scientific aspects of your proposal, please contact the Senior Research Manager for the theme as indicated for each theme in Section 1 below.
- No concept note or proposal will be accepted after the due date (and due time). Please avoid last-minute submissions of concept notes or proposals.

Details of the Call are set out below

1. RDI PRIORITIES

The Water RDI portfolio, through rigorous stakeholder engagement, has identified seven (7) RDI challenges that need to be addressed. They are:

- Failing water service delivery at the local level
- Inefficient water use across all users
- Poor resilience to global changes (climate change, urbanisation, population growth, energy and food shocks)
- Weaknesses in the institutional landscape and governance of water and sanitation
- Slow digital transition for improved water and sanitation management
- Deterioration of water resources and increase of associated health risks
- Neglect of new, emerging, and fundamental RDI.

These challenge areas are regularly discussed with key stakeholders and are used to formulate the call process and prioritize budgets. To address the seven (7) challenges, the current RDI Call is seeking projects that will contribute new knowledge, innovation, policy, advisory, and capacity building to:

- Accelerate water service delivery at the local level.
- Improve water use efficiency in the water sector (users) .
- Increase resilience to global changes (Climate change, urbanization, population growth,
- Contribute in the shaping of the institutional landscape and governance of water and sanitation
- Accelerate digital transition to improve water and sanitation management
- Arrest the deterioration of water resources and increase of associated health risks.
- Promote new, emerging, and fundamental RDI for the water sector.

1.1. RESEARCH FOCUS AREAS PER THEME

THEME 1: WATER AVAILABILITY

South Africa faces significant challenges in securing sustainable water resources amid increasing global change pressures. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach centred on four key focus areas. First, improving water availability through resilient infrastructure and advanced climate and weather monitoring enhances the reliability and management of existing water resources. Second, exploring and developing diverse new water supply sources broadens the national water portfolio and reduces dependence on vulnerable systems. Third, enhancing sustainable water management through innovative, localised strategies informed by socio-economic research, water conservation knowledge and robust data platforms ensures equitable allocation and supports livelihoods. Finally, promoting ecosystem protection and integrating natural infrastructure safeguards critical water source areas and utilises nature-based approaches to maintain water quality, regulate flows and build resilience. Together, these focus areas form a comprehensive framework to strengthen South Africa's water security, support sustainable development and protect vital ecosystems for future generations.

For more information, please contact Senior Research Manager, Dr Shafick Adams, at email: shaficka@wrc.org.za.

THEME 2: WATER USE

The water use thematic area focuses on driving and advancing sustainable and optimal water use within the various economic sectors (agriculture, industry and domestic), including pollution mitigation for improved water use in support of water resilience and security of supply.

For more information, please contact Senior Research Manager, Prof Sylvester Mpandeli, at email: sylvesterm@wrc.org.za.

THEME 3: WATER QUALITY AND HEALTH

As global challenges like climate change, population growth, and pollution intensify, there is a need to ensure that the available water meets the required quality standards for various uses. The deterioration of water quality remains a major challenge in South Africa. This is a critical concern raised throughout various chapters of the WRC@50 (2021). Several drivers contribute to negative changes in water quality, including land cover/use, soil erosion, alien invasive plants, industrialisation, urbanisation, and population growth, climate change, industrial discharges, urban runoff, inadequate infrastructure and ineffective waste and wastewater treatment systems, as well as compromised natural processes. The main aim of this thematic area is to drive integrated research and innovation activities to generate new knowledge, insights and data aimed at improving water quality to enhance health outcomes, inform the establishment of appropriate health-based targets and thresholds for different water uses, development and deployment of appropriate and innovative water treatment and ecological infrastructure rehabilitation methods, inform adaptive/resilient strategies, and support the development of effective interventions to protect public/aquatic ecosystems health, build resilient communities and contribute to the attainment of water security.

For more information, please contact Senior Research Manager, Mr Jay Bhagwan, at email: jayb@wrc.org.za.

THEME 4: WATER ADVISORY

This theme focuses on scaling projects, initiatives, and technologies of research development and innovations that emanate from the RDI focus areas described above. It focuses on innovation demonstration and deployment that could solve some of the critical water sector challenges. It also focuses on catalytic and cross-cutting water and sanitation projects and cross-sectoral projects developing key insights for the Water Research Commission, the national system of innovation partners and the water sector. The third focus area aims to strengthen institutions by driving RDI that supports good governance and financial sustainability of the sector.

For more information, please contact Senior Research Manager, Dr Valerie Naidoo, at email: valerien@wrc.org.za

2. INVITATION OF THE CONCEPT NOTES / PROPOSALS

In consideration of the challenges and stakeholder-centric approaches, this call presents two categories of projects: **(a) project titles (or topics) in Table 1 for concept notes**, and **(b) terms of reference (TORs) under directed research call in Table 2 for full proposals**. Thus, the 2027/28 Call is directed in one way or another as described below:

2.1. Directed Research Call for Concept Notes with only research titles or topics (with or without descriptions)

Table 1 shows specific research titles/topics and descriptions in which the WRC is directing or guiding researchers to mould their research concept notes. The table provides only the research titles or topics without ToRs, and each project has a unique **concept number (CN)**. Take note of the first year's budget for each topic. The concept note should put more emphasis on the research methodology, outputs or products (including innovation), how the products or new knowledge address the water sector challenge(s) or the intended outcomes. Anyone can submit a concept note(s) under this Call.

2.2. Directed Research Call for Proposals with full Terms of Reference (ToRs)

Table 2 presents the full terms of reference that the WRC has developed for the directed call with relevant stakeholders through meaningful engagements. In this case, the full terms of reference (ToRs) will be published on the WRC's business management system (BMS). Note that each ToR has a unique number. The project should provide solutions addressing the seven(7) water challenges stated above.

TABLE 1. DIRECTED RESEARCH CALL (WITH RESEARCH TITLES AND/OR SUMMARIES)

There are 22 topics /titles under this call section. In this section, only the first year budget is reflected and applicants will be required to build the outer years' budgets as per the total years recommended.

Concept Notes Submission (via BMS), due date is 26 June 2026 (before 15H00)

CN NO.	TITLE	BUDGET 2027/28 (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
CN -1	Modernisation of the soil moisture from satellites system	300 000	3
CN -2	National sludge quality survey to determine changes in sludge quality since the 2000s The existing sludge management guidelines in South Africa, developed over two decades ago, require revision as they no longer reflect current sector realities, advances in analytical methods, or evolving regulatory and sustainability priorities. Since the 2000s, methods for sludge characterisation and risk assessment have significantly improved, including more accurate detection of contaminants, enhanced nutrient profiling, and better understanding of environmental and health risks. However, these advances have not been incorporated into the existing guidelines, which remain largely aligned with outdated assumptions and practices. Compounding this, there is currently no consistent sludge monitoring and compliance framework in place, unlike effluent quality monitoring through systems such as IRIS, resulting in limited data availability, weak enforcement, and uncertainty around sludge handling, treatment, and disposal practices across municipalities. The proposed project will directly address the identified gaps in outdated sludge guidelines and update them using current data, technologies and approaches.	400 000	4
CN -3	Support to national SFDs: Development and application of a methodology to calculate the percentage of wastewater reaching and safely treated at wastewater treatment works in South Africa The WRC & DWS rolled out the SFD capacity and training programme, which was well received. During the programme, it was shown that data scrubbing may be occurring. While the SAs provide a powerful diagnostic tool for understanding sanitation service delivery, its accuracy is undermined by inconsistent approaches, data gaps, and reliance on assumptions, particularly due to infrastructure failures (e.g. leaks, pump station downtime, poor WWTW performance). Existing compliance systems such as IRIS and Green Drop do not translate directly into volumetric or population treatment performance, making it difficult to integrate into SFD analysis. As a result, SFD outputs lack robustness and comparability across municipalities, limiting their usefulness for identifying service delivery gaps, prioritising interventions, and informing evidence-based planning and investment decisions. This project will address this gap.	300 000	3

CN NO.	TITLE	BUDGET 2027/28 (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
CN-4	Knowledge review of underutilised crops in South Africa in relation to water use and identify research, development, and innovation gaps and opportunities Adapted crops like maize and wheat require a lot of water and other inputs, yet indigenous crops can grow naturally in the wild and are adapted to local harsh climatic conditions. The agriculture sector uses over 60% of the available freshwater resources. This can be reduced by mainstreaming underutilised indigenous crops into the food value chain. This has a triple benefit of enhancing food, water, and nutritional security The ultimate goal is to grow and mainstream strategic indigenous crops at the commercial level, as recommended by the Department of Agriculture (DoA). The research will focus on these areas: (i) whole-chain integration, which includes shifting from farm-level trials to the full value chain, (ii) smallholder focus and demonstration sites to enhance the resilience of the rural community and support rural development, (iii) shift from subsistence to commercialisation by smallholder farmers, and (iv) addressing market gaps by addressing the lack of processing technologies and creating consumer awareness regarding the nutritional value of these crops.	200 000	3
CN-5	Reclamation of salinised soils from groundwater irrigation, which has affected ~32% of arable land, leading to reduced crop yields. Soil salinisation from groundwater in South Africa poses a significant threat to agriculture, affecting ~32% of the land surface. Key challenges of soil salinisation include rising saline water tables, poor drainage in irrigation schemes, and high evaporation rates, leading to salt accumulation, reduced crop yields, and soil degradation. Research should focus on (i) degraded lands rehabilitation, (ii) revitalisation of affected irrigation schemes, (iii) integrating climate-smart agriculture with advanced monitoring technologies to combat accelerating degradation, and (iv) developing smart technologies to estimate subsoil salinity from surface-level, topsoil spectral characteristics.	200 000	3

CN NO.	TITLE	BUDGET 2027/28 (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
CN -6	Knowledge review and analysis of research done on the water use of strategic fruit crops Most strategic fruit crops are meant for the export industry, increasing the agricultural virtual water. Although the industry generates a lot of foreign currency, the water footprint needs to be reduced. This can be achieved by developing and implementing strategies and practices that enhance water-use efficiency in the sector. These projects are generally co-funded with industry partners. New projects should focus on (i) developing smart precision irrigation and technology innovations, (ii) regulated deficit irrigation, (iii) orchard management, including the use of covering nets, mulching, and optimized timing for irrigation. (iii) data-driven decision-making, including near-real-time monitoring via soil moisture probes and weather stations, and (iv) biostimulants and soil health to enhance water-use efficiency and improve soil structure and strengthen plant drought tolerance	3 00 000	3
CN -7	Developing a WEF nexus integrative model dashboard The WRC and partners have developed water-energy-food (WEF) nexus models and tools, which now need to be operationalised so that the approach can transition from theory to practice. Research needs to direct policymakers in operationalising the WEF nexus at all spatial scales. The current WEF nexus practices and models have remained abstract, yet they need to guide sustainable development. Research now needs to focus on guiding policy on practical and actionable practices to operationalise the approach, including evidence on the WEF nexus as a strategic and transformative approach that catalyses sustainable development.	3 00 000	3
CN -8	Pathways to transform traditional AWM practices through transformative approaches Current agricultural water management (AWM) practices are subsistence-based and are vulnerable to current cross-cutting challenges faced in agriculture. These need to be transitioned through transformative and circular approaches. The current subsistent AWM practices are no longer sustainable and are vulnerable to climate change, risking food and water security. Research should now focus on developing, applying, and implementing smart technologies that enhance crop-water productivity.	3 00 000	3

CN NO.	TITLE	BUDGET 2027/28 (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
CN -9	Testing the application of a Water Flow Diagram (WFD) for water resources and services management in South Africa South Africa lacks an integrated and standardised tool for visualising and analysing water flows across the entire water value chain, from water resources to water use and wastewater return flows, making it difficult for planners and decision-makers to understand system inefficiencies, losses, and reuse opportunities. Water information in South Africa exists but is fragmented across different institutions responsible for water resources, water services, wastewater management, and water reuse. The No Drop provides information on water services, but in a report format. This project will complement the water resources accounting project. The expected outputs from this project should include: a standardised Water Flow Diagram (WFD) framework for South Africa, case study WFDs for selected catchments or municipalities, a methodology and technical guideline for developing and interpreting WFDs, datasets and quantified water flow balances for the case study areas, and a technical report and implementation framework for applying WFDs in South Africa.	300 000	3
CN -10	6PPD and 6PPD-Quinone in the South African environment: An integrated source-to-target site assessment of aggregate exposure pathways and human health risks Globally, 6PPD-quinone has been linked to aquatic toxicity and environmental contamination through stormwater runoff from roads. However, South Africa lacks local data on its occurrence, environmental transport pathways, ecological impacts, and potential human exposure risks.	400 000	3
CN -11	Evaluation of viral, surrogate, and DNA nanostructure approaches: Assessing treatment performance, cost, and laboratory accreditation Current monitoring approaches often rely on bacterial indicators, which may not accurately represent viral removal efficiency. New approaches using viral surrogates and DNA nanostructures are emerging internationally, but their effectiveness, cost implications, and suitability for accredited laboratories in South Africa remain unclear.	400 000	3
CN -12	Economic and water quality management in South Africa's Strategic Freshwater Aquaculture Zones: Guideline compliance and effluent control for sustainable development zones South Africa is promoting aquaculture through designated development zones; however, aquaculture activities can generate nutrient-rich effluent that may impact receiving water bodies. There is limited operational guidance on balancing aquaculture growth with water quality protection and regulatory compliance.	500 000	5

CN NO.	TITLE	BUDGET 2027/28 (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
CN -13	Development of operational and staffing guidelines for water and wastewater treatment works in compliance with Regulation 3630 in South Africa Regulation 3630 requires appropriately qualified and certified process controllers to operate water and wastewater treatment plants. However, there is a lack of clear, standardised guidance on the required staffing levels, competencies, and operational practices needed to comply with Regulation 3630, leading to inconsistencies in plant operation and regulatory compliance. As a result, treatment plants are sometimes operated by inadequately qualified staff, contributing to operational inefficiencies, poor treatment performance, and non-compliance with regulatory standards such as Blue, No and Green Drop Certification Programmes. The expected outputs from this project should include a national guideline on staffing and operational requirements for water and wastewater treatment works, as well as a compliance assessment framework to be included in the Blue/Green Drop Audits.	350 000	3
CN -14	Assessment of disinfection by- products in drinking water systems and associated public health risks Water treatment plants use disinfectants such as chlorine to control microbial pathogens. While essential for safe drinking water, these disinfectants can react with certain precursors, such as natural organic matter, some organic and inorganic compounds in source water, to form DBPs such as trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids. Monitoring in South Africa is limited, and existing standards such as SANS 241 Drinking Water Standard include only a small number of DBPs. There is insufficient national data on DBP occurrence, treatment conditions influencing their formation, and associated public health risks. The expected outputs from this project should include: national dataset on DBP occurrence in drinking water systems, characterisation of DBP formation under different treatment conditions, analytical monitoring protocols for DBPs, public health risk assessment reports and technical guideline for DBP monitoring and management.	400 000	5
CN -15	The impact of water quality degradation on the economy of SA, with specific reference to eco-tourism Water quality degradation in rivers, dams, and coastal areas may negatively affect tourism activities that depend on healthy aquatic ecosystems, but the economic implications are not well quantified. South Africa's eco-tourism sector relies on natural water environments such as rivers, wetlands, and estuaries. Pollution, eutrophication, and ecosystem degradation can reduce the attractiveness and ecological integrity of these areas. While water quality deterioration has been documented in several catchments, there is limited analysis linking environmental degradation directly to economic losses in the tourism sector. This project aims to quantify the economic impact of water quality degradation on South Africa's eco-tourism sector.	300 000	3

CN NO.	TITLE	BUDGET 2027/28 (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
CN - 16	Protecting aquatic ecosystems through beneficiation, nature-based solution, focused on medicinal plants Aquatic ecosystems in South Africa are increasingly degraded due to pollution, land-use change, and altered hydrology, and there is limited implementation of nature-based solutions that simultaneously support ecosystem protection and socio-economic benefits. Many rivers, wetlands, and estuaries in South Africa face ecological degradation, reducing their ability to provide ecosystem services such as water purification, biodiversity support, and flood regulation. Nature-based solutions are increasingly promoted globally for ecosystem restoration, but their application in South Africa remains limited and often disconnected from economic opportunities such as resource beneficiation and community participation. The main aim of this project is to develop and test nature-based solutions for aquatic ecosystem protection and sustainable resource beneficiation in South Africa.	300 000	3
CN - 17	Develop and test an integrated catchment-based NBS framework for selected high-risk estuaries in SA: Balancing conservation and food security needs at policy, society and commercial scales High-risk estuaries in South Africa face increasing pressure from pollution, land-use changes, and competing water and food production demands, with limited integrated frameworks to apply nature-based solutions at catchment scale. Estuaries play a critical role in supporting fisheries, biodiversity, and coastal livelihoods. However, many estuaries are affected by nutrient pollution, sedimentation, and altered freshwater flows. Management approaches are often fragmented between catchment management and coastal management, and there is limited practical guidance on applying nature-based solutions to balance ecological protection with food security needs such as fisheries and aquaculture. The main aim of this project is to develop and test (at pilot scale) a catchment-based nature-based solutions framework for high-risk estuaries in South Africa, with particular focus on St Lucia Ramsar/ Heritage site.	300 000	3
CN - 18	A desktop knowledge review: Water-use related pollution management Conduct a knowledge review of water-use-related pollution management in South Africa (including regulatory frameworks for water use licensing, effluent discharge standards, pollution reporting systems, and polluter accountability mechanisms, with comparison to international best practices).	250 000	2-3

CN NO.	TITLE	BUDGET 2027/28 (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
CN - 19	Development and testing of drinking water innovations (TRL 4 to 6) Many drinking water systems in South Africa face operational and technological challenges, including inadequate treatment capacity, limited access to advanced treatment technologies, and difficulties in maintaining consistent water quality. While research institutions and innovators develop new treatment technologies, there is limited coordination and structured support to develop innovations that are suitable for South African conditions and can be tested for practical implementation. Proposals to be considered under this call should focus on the development of locally appropriate drinking water treatment solutions capable of improving treatment efficiency, maintaining drinking water quality, and addressing operational constraints in South African water systems. Expected outputs from such projects should include: prototype drinking water treatment technologies, laboratory and pilot-scale performance datasets, technical specifications and design documentation, innovation testing and validation reports, and technical guidelines for deployment of developed technologies.	500 000	3-5
CN - 20	Investigation of the potential impacts of removing caps on raw water use charges for agriculture sectors The revised Pricing Strategy for Raw Water Use Charges (Pricing Strategy) took effect in April 2026 and introduced several reforms to raw water pricing. One of the most significant changes is the removal of pricing caps previously applied to certain water-user categories. This is intended to strengthen the implementation of the user-pays principle and improve the financial sustainability of water sector institutions through the enablement of full cost recovery. In implementing these reforms, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is required to monitor and report annually on the impact of the progressive phasing out of pricing caps for agricultural water users, with specific emphasis on implications for food security, food prices, and employment. The WRC is collaborating with DWS, National Treasury and other relevant departments on a multi-year initiative that will put in place the necessary systems and undertake the annual monitoring, assessment and reporting. The initial phase of this work will span five years from April 2027. Concept notes are invited for a project to design and implement a system to monitor, assess and report on the impact of removing pricing caps in the agriculture sector. This project will provide an iterative learning approach to policy implementation, building on the economic and social regulation processes being put in place by DWS.	700 000	5

CN NO.	TITLE	BUDGET 2027/28 (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
CN - 21	National dialogue on water tenure: Strengthening the African voice in the global dialogue The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has initiated a Global Dialogue on Water Tenure to identify principles and models for the responsible governance of water tenure. In this context, water tenure is defined as “the relationships, whether legally or customarily defined, between people, as individuals or groups, with respect to water resources.” To strengthen the African contribution to the process, a national-level dialogue on water tenure will be convened that can feed into the global dialogue. This national dialogue will provide an opportunity for South Africa to contribute its experience and policy insights to strengthening multilateral governance and to benefit from the process to tackle unresolved challenges in water tenure reform. This call is seeking concept notes for a project that will design and implement a national dialogue, including preparatory knowledge synthesis and the necessary integration with the global dialogue process.	300 000	2
CN - 22	3. Addressing challenges in the model for water services delivery in South Africa: Investigating the feasibility of establishing a National Water Services Provider SA has 257 municipalities (metros, districts, and local municipalities). Several districts and local municipalities struggle to plan and execute sustainable projects for service delivery. This is evident from the SDG 6 counts and Blue, Green, and No Drop audits. This impacts SA’s ability to deliver sustainable water and sanitation services. This call responds to these challenges and should explore the feasibility of the establishment of a national water services agency, National Water Services Provider, throughout the country (operating similar to a Water Board), excluding areas under the jurisdiction of metropolitan municipalities. An appropriate analysis framework is expected with rigorous stakeholder and expert engagement, drawing on international best practice and refining towards a best solution for the SA institutional landscape. This should include an examination of the Constitutional implications of such an arrangement.	300 000	3

TABLE 2: DIRECTED RESEARCH CALL WITH TERMS OF REFERENCE (TORS)

Table 2 provides a list of all the ToRs with a unique ToR number (identifier). The table provides the first year budget and total budget and the number of years recommended for the project. **Proposal Submission (via BMS) due date is 21 August 2026 (before 15H00).**

NOTE: No concept notes are required. The WRC will start accepting proposals on 2 June 2026. The TORs will be uploaded on BMS on 2 June 2026 for your reference.

TOR NO	TITLE	2027/2028 FIRST YEAR TOR BUDGET (R)	TOTAL BUDGET (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
TOR-1	Technical review and contextual refinement of Groundwater Resource Quality Objectives (RQOs) in relation to water quality parameter specification	300 000	2 000 000	3
TOR-2	Consolidation of knowledge and research gaps in priority aquifer systems of South Africa (Karoo, Table Mountain Group, Dolomitic, Crystalline Basement and associated aquifers) to enable expansion of groundwater supply	300 000	2 000 000	3
TOR-3	Impacts of rapid urbanisation on water resources (groundwater, surface water, and recharge systems), water quality, and long-term water security in South Africa	300 000	2 200 000	3
TOR-4	Socio-economic and governance models for small-scale aquaculture integration into existing inland fisheries	300 000	2 500 000	3
TOR-5	Securing South Africa's water future: Integrated assessment of sectoral competition and socio-economic vulnerability for equitable resource planning	200 000	2 500 000	3
TOR-6	Review, development and testing of comprehensive training material focused on RDM determination methods	200 000	1 500 000	3
TOR-7	Enhancing the Water Research Observatory (WRO) to accommodate all the RDM-generated database and information, including metadata since 1999.	300 000	1 000 000	3
TOR-8	Development of groundwater management plans for priority aquifer systems in South Africa (DWS request)	200 000	1 500 000	2
TOR-9	Re-imagining the feasibility of the future of water resources quality monitoring in South Africa and transboundary systems using latest technology: A feasibility assessment for accelerating digital transition	300 000	1 000 000	3
TOR-9	Re-imagining the feasibility of the future of water resources quality monitoring in South Africa and transboundary systems using latest technology: A feasibility assessment for accelerating digital transition	300 000	1 000 000	3
TOR-10	Development and implementation of a robust framework for the management of Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) in South Africa: Piloting the implementation of a national water programme on Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) in South Africa	400 000	5 000 000	5
TOR-11	Assessing the impact and contribution of RDI investment into Water Sensitive Design	400 000	1 000 000	2
TOR-12	Demonstration of greywater treatment systems for households, community buildings and/or informal settlements	800 000	3 000 000	2.5
TOR-13	Optimising water services in informal settlements: Cost analysis and savings potential of decentralised reuse and shared service models	400 000	1 000 000	3

TOR NO	TITLE	2027/2028 FIRST YEAR TOR BUDGET (R)	TOTAL BUDGET (R)	TOR TERM (YEARS)
TOR-14	Exploration of the best international practice relating to the procurement and regulation of water utilities for long-term concessions	300 000	600 000	1
TOR-15	Expansion of the South African Mine Closure Risk and Opportunity Atlas	400 000	R3 500 000	4
TOR-16	An AI-augmented multidisciplinary approach for adaptive design and optimisation of water and resource recovery facilities – a pathway to a digital twin for water services	300 000	R2 000 000	4

3. ESTIMATED TIMELINE

The stages, dates and activities of receiving and reviewing CONCEPT NOTES and project proposals during the Call are presented below.

RDI CALL - PLANNING	
06 February 2026	Call Timeline review and feedback by RMs to SRMs
02-05 March 2026	Theme RDI Plans Finalised and shared with SRMs and RMs for inputs
Any of the 2 days between 9-10 March 2026	RDI two days' workshop meeting – consolidation of the plans
28 April 2026	Review and discussions of the 2025 RDI Call Plan (CEO & RDI snr management)
25 - 29 May 2026	Call Launch on media platforms and website and stakeholder workshops about the Call for proposals
CALL FOR PROJECT CONCEPT NOTES	
25 May 2026	Approval of Terms of Reference (TORs) by TechManco
27 May 2026	Approval of TORs by EM RDI
1 -2 June 2026	WRC 101 online workshop – to assist new Project Leaders or new BMS users
2 June 2026	BMS enabled to receive Concept notes and full proposals
2 June 2026	The Call of proposal or concept notes documents are posted and advertised on website and other available media platforms Project titles (only) also advertised for concept notes and full TORs are advertised for proposals and will be uploaded on 2 Jun 2026)
26 June 2026	Submission deadline of the Concept Notes (15H00)

SCREENING AND PRE-SELECTION OF SUBMITTED PROJECT PROPOSALS/CONCEPT NOTES	
21 July 2026	Initial screening and review of concept notes finalised
30 July 2026	Concept notes approved by the Snr RM
31 July 2026	Project leaders / institutions informed of the successful (approved) Concept Notes & invited to submit full proposals
31 July 2026	BMS enabled to receive full proposal of Approved Concept Notes only.
10 August 2026	List of Proposal reviewers and/or Review Panel members finalised
21 August 2026	Submission of the proposal due date (due time: 15H00)
REVIEW/EVALUATION, SELECTION AND APPROVAL OF PROPOSALS	
21 August – 15 September 2026	Proposal Reviews
15-18 September 2026	Special TechManco meetings to recommend proposals for Approval
25 September 2026	EXCO Noting
28 September-30 October 2026	Decision letters sent to Institutions/Contractors