

Bringing a Statement of Opportunity to the Alberta Water Council

February 2016



Contents

- 1 What is a Statement of Opportunity? 1**
- 2 Screening and Selection Process 1**
 - 2.1 Submission and Initial Screening..... 1
 - 2.2 Screening Criteria 1
 - 2.3 Board Assessment and Project Selection 2
- 3 Guidance in Preparing a Statement of Opportunity 2**
 - 3.1 Background on the issue and why it is important 2
 - 3.2 How the issue aligns with the AWC core business, goals, and mission and with GOA priorities 3
 - 3.3 The expected benefits of the AWC’s involvement in the issue 3
 - 3.4 Evidence of a client and potential funding sources..... 4
 - 3.5 Potential stakeholders who would be involved in developing terms of reference for the project 4
 - 3.6 How timeliness of response would affect the issue 5
- 4 Submission 5**

1 What is a Statement of Opportunity?

The Statement of Opportunity (SoO) is a key component of the process to bring forward an issue to the Alberta Water Council (AWC), and it is the primary tool used by the AWC to evaluate potential projects. A SoO provides a concise overview of a proposed piece of work and presents a case for why the AWC is best suited to undertake it. Once a SoO is approved by the board, a working group is struck to further scope out the proposed project and to develop terms of reference for it.

This document provides guidance for preparing and submitting a SoO to the AWC. It describes how the AWC considers and responds to a SoO, and the information that should be included in each section of the template for submitting a SoO.

2 Screening and Selection Process

2.1 Submission and Initial Screening

All parties considering submitting a SoO to the AWC are encouraged to first contact AWC staff to discuss their proposed piece of work and receive further guidance as they develop the SoO. Once submitted, a SoO undergoes initial screening by the executive director to ensure that (a) the AWC is the appropriate agency to deal with the issue, and (b) the SoO meets the screening criteria.

2.2 Screening Criteria

SoOs are screened according to the following criteria:

- The work proposed must align with *Water for Life* priorities and directions, or address emerging issues common to multiple watersheds
- There must be clear evidence of a client for the proposed piece of work
- There should be evidence of funding to support the proposed piece of work
- The issue must be provincially significant
- The SoO must demonstrate that a number of groups or individuals believe this is an important issue, are concerned about it and are interested in finding a solution
- The SoO should demonstrate that a strategic-level approach would help solve the issue
- The issue is well-suited to the consensus decision-making process and there is sufficient time to go through this process

AWC staff may work with the party submitting the SoO to refine it as needed. During this initial screening, the executive director may determine that the issue should be handled in a different way and recommend an alternative, including:

- The proposed project should be referred to an existing government department or agency with a mandate to address the issue
- The issue requires enforcement of existing regulations
- Further research is needed as a first step to gain a better understanding of the issue

The executive director will provide notification of the outcome of the initial screening.

2.3 Board Assessment and Project Selection

Following initial screening, SoOs will be distributed to board directors and alternates in preparation for the next board meeting¹. The package will include the screened SoOs and other relevant information to help directors and alternates engage their sectors and obtain feedback on the proposed work. This engagement is an opportunity for sectors to discuss their priorities for AWC projects and to consider how the screened SoOs meet their sector's needs.

The following information is also taken into account by the board when determining priority work for the AWC:

- AWC's current commitments and capacity for new work
- GoA's *Water for Life* Action Plan priorities and directions

The party submitting the SoO may be invited to present to the board and answer any questions. Based on an understanding of priorities, current commitments, capacity for new work and timing, projects will be selected to go on to the working group stage.

Any SoOs that are not selected by the board may be revised and re-submitted at a later date.

3 Guidance in Preparing a Statement of Opportunity

This section provides an overview of the template for submitting a SoO and relevant information that should be included in each of the following sections:

1. Background on the issue and why it is important
2. How the issue aligns with the AWC core business, goals and mission, and with the GoA priorities for implementing *Water for Life*
3. The expected benefits of the AWC's involvement in the issue
4. Evidence of a client and potential funding sources
5. Potential stakeholders who would be involved in developing terms of reference for the project
6. How timeliness of response would affect the issue

3.1 Background on the issue and why it is important

This section should describe the proposed issue and explain why it is important and needs to be resolved. The description should include evidence that:

- The issue is significant at the provincial scale. For example:
 - Multiple major basins or sectors are affected
 - Numerous occurrences have been documented over an extended period of time and/or area
- The issue can be addressed taking a strategic-level approach

¹ Board meetings are generally held three times a year, in March, June and October.

Additional considerations that may provide valuable information to the AWC and an eventual working group include:

- Is human or ecological health being affected? How? What impacts have been documented? Include available sources.
- What are the economic impacts related to this issue?
- What research has been done to better understand the issue?
- How will successful resolution of this issue benefit Albertans and the environment?

3.2 How the issue aligns with the AWC core business, goals, and mission and with GoA priorities

This section should describe how the issue aligns with the AWC's overall mandate and core business. In particular, the SoO should describe how the proposed issue relates to the following elements.

a) Water for Life goals

The Alberta Water Council is a multi-stakeholder partnership that provides leadership, expertise and sector knowledge to engage and empower industry, non-government organizations, and governments to achieve the outcomes of the *Water for Life* strategy. Considering this, the SoO should frame the proposed issue in this context and explain how this issue relates directly to one or more of the three goals of *Water for Life*:

1. Safe, secure drinking water supply
2. Healthy aquatic ecosystems
3. Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

Submissions should also consider how the proposed issues related to GoA priorities and directions for implementing *Water for Life*, or addressing an emerging issue that is common to multiple watersheds.

b) AWC core business goals and mission

The AWC Business Plan, renewed every three years, sets the strategic priorities and guides the AWC's work. AWC goals for the current period and the complete Business Plan are available on our [website](#). The SoO should explain how work on the proposed issue would support and advance the AWC's core business goals and mission.

c) Water Conversation

Following the 2014 Water Conversation, the GoA released [Our Water, Our Future – A Plan for Action](#), which outlines provincial priorities around water. SoOs should also consider any potential linkages with priorities expressed in the plan.

3.3 The expected benefits of the AWC's involvement in the issue

This section should briefly describe the desired outcomes of the proposed work, and demonstrate the added value of the AWC consensus process in undertaking this work. More information on the AWC consensus process can be found in our [Process Guidelines](#).

For example:

- The AWC's reputation and credibility for innovative solutions will increase the likelihood that key stakeholders will come to the table.
- The AWC's successful use of consensus is likely to achieve a more lasting solution.
- The involvement of a wider range of stakeholders may result in a more integrated and creative solution.
- A fresh approach to the issue is needed, especially if previous attempts to resolve it have failed. The SoO should document previous efforts to resolve the issue and their outcomes.
- The AWC has experience with this or a similar issue. The SoO should highlight any previous AWC projects that might be helpful in addressing this issue, either in terms of their process or outcomes.

3.4 Evidence of a client and potential funding sources

The SoO must identify a clear client for the proposed work. A committed client provides some assurance that there will be momentum to implement recommendations that arise from a given project. Consequently, the client must be an implementer, either from a policy perspective or from a planning and management perspective.

Core funding is provided by the AWC for all its projects, and covers meeting requirements, project management and team member expenses and honoraria. However, most projects also require funds beyond those allocated to core expenses. For example, funds may be needed to hire expertise to fulfill a particular element of the terms of reference. These funds are usually supplied by the client or other sector stakeholders, including project team members. Typically, the client for the project will commit to providing a certain level of funding. The SoO should document any funding available for the project.

3.5 Potential stakeholders who would be involved in developing terms of reference for the project

This section should identify those groups and organizations that have a stake in the outcome of the project and who have indicated an interest in working together in a consensus process to find solutions. Some or all of these stakeholders would be approached to participate on an AWC working group. These organizations (and sometimes the same individuals) will often continue to serve on the project team. Typically, between 8 and 16 stakeholders are listed in the SoO, and additional stakeholders may subsequently be suggested by the board or the working group itself.

The [24 AWC members](#) provide a good starting point to identify potential stakeholders. The proposed list should include representation from each of the four broad categories on the AWC:

- Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities
- Government (federal, municipal, First Nations, Métis Settlements)
- Industry
- Non-Government Organizations

3.6 How timeliness of response would affect the issue

Consensus approaches generally require a longer time commitment than other problem-solving approaches. To be undertaken by the AWC, a specific project needs to allow sufficient time to go through the consensus process. AWC projects typically require 18 to 30 months to complete.

Is resolution of the proposed issue time-dependent? In other words, does it require a solution within a specific time frame? If so, clearly state the required time frame along with the consequences if the issue is not addressed by then.

4 Submission

Proponents wishing to submit a SoO are encouraged to contact the Senior Manager to discuss the potential work and work collaboratively to develop a strong SoO. AWC staff contact information is available at <http://awchome.ca/ContactUs/tabid/96/Default.aspx>.

SoOs may be submitted at any time and should be no more than ten pages in length.

For more information:
Alberta Water Council
14th Floor, Petroleum Plaza South Tower
9915 – 108 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 2G8

Tel: (780) 644-7380

Email: info@awchome.ca

Web: www.awchome.ca