

Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit
State Agency-Supported Project Initiation Workflow
December 4, 2021

This document is provided to help UW and WSU principal investigators (hereafter, PIs) and agency project officers (hereafter, POs) – PIs and POs are collectively referred to hereafter as “project leads” – to establish projects with state cooperators (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and Washington Department of Ecology) through the Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit (WACFWRU). The WACFWRU is administratively the most complex Unit in the national Cooperative Research Units program because there are three different agency cooperators and two different university cooperators. In addition, the allocation of limited waiver across projects requires close communication between agencies and the WACFWRU as projects develop. Because of these complexities, the project initiation process can be confusing. Steps in the project initiation workflow include:

1. **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT:** Project leads will collaborate on the development of a project idea. Once a project is adequately defined, the project leads must produce an abstract and a budget. If funds have not yet been secured for the project, and the agency is undertaking an effort to secure funds from an external source, this process can and should still be initiated (the fact that funds have not yet been secured should be noted in the budget).
 - a. The abstract should describe the project goals, basic methods, and expected outcomes. The abstract must clearly articulate how the project fits within the mission of the WACFWRU. Briefly: *The Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit works to support conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats in Washington, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond.* Project leads should consult the existing policy on project fit (see Attached) if they have questions.
 - b. Project leads must also include a budget for the project, being particularly careful to get an accurate assessment of total project costs. The initial budget should assume indirect costs at the off-campus rate (currently 26% at WSU and UW). Whether waiver of this 26% will be granted will be determined in the third step.
2. **PROJECT APPROVAL:** Once the abstract and budget are developed, the PO should contact their agency’s cooperating committee (CC) member (Donny Martorello and Ken Warheit at WDFW, Annette Hoffmann at WDoE, and Josh Halofsky at WDNR) and provide the project abstract and budget, along with the expected date of project initiation.
 - a. The agency CC member will assess the abstract to determine if the project fits within the Unit mission. If the CC member approves the project, they will forward it to the Unit Leader (Sarah Converse) for her assessment. If both the CC member and Unit Leader approve the project as appropriate to the project mission, the project is approved to come through the WACFWRU. The CC member or Unit Leader may request additional information or clarification when evaluating projects, and this can slow down the process, so project leads should be sure that the abstract makes a clear case regarding how the project fits within the Unit mission.
 - b. Projects that are approved at this step will receive the following benefits: 1) administrative support through the WACFWRU, 2) eligibility of project-supported students to participate in the annual student symposium and to be considered for annual WACFWRU awards, and 3) reduced indirect rate at either the off-campus rate (currently 26%) or – if their limited waiver is granted by the agency – 0%.
3. **INDIRECT RATE DETERMINATION:** Once the project has been approved, a separate determination must be made by the CC member whether the agency’s limited waiver will be allocated to the project. The CC member will inform the Unit Administrator whether they are

granting this waiver for any approved project, and the specific amount of direct costs that will receive the waiver, if less than the total direct costs.

- a. If a project has already been approved and contracted, but additional funds are being added, the project need not be approved again, but a separate budget for the add-on must be submitted for indirect rate determination. A project that obtained waiver initially is not guaranteed access to additional waiver, and a project that did not get waiver initially may be able to access waiver with the add-on funds.
4. **PROJECT CONTRACTING:** Once the waiver determination is made, the project contracting process can begin – this will require communication between the PI, the PO and agency financial lead, the Unit Administrator (Sarah Romero), and – for WSU projects – the WSU financial lead. The PO or PI should initiate these conversations with an email to all of the parties.
- a. At this point, if the 0% waiver has been granted, project leads must revise their original budget to reflect a 0% indirect cost rate. The Unit administrator will handle contracting of UW projects directly. For WSU projects, the Unit administrator must be kept up-to-date as the project hits milestones in the contracting process, and a final version of the contract must be provided to the Unit administrator. Note that all final contracts **must** include a project abstract; project abstracts are sometimes provided by the WACFWRU in response to federal and state information requests.

After contracting is complete, project leads should be aware that Sarah Converse will contact the university PI annually to request information on student and post-doc support provided by the project. A prompt response to this information request is required so that the annual report can be completed. Finally, upon closeout, project leads must provide a final abstract of the projects aims, methods, results, and significance to the Unit Administrator. Failure of project leads to meet these two requirements may jeopardize their ability to work through the WACFWRU with future projects. The Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit should also be acknowledged for facilitating funding in any publications stemming from project funds.

If questions remain that aren't addressed in this document, project leads are welcome to reach out to Sarah Converse, Unit Leader, at sconver@uw.edu or Sarah Romero, Unit Administrator, at sarahjh@uw.edu.