



J-WAFS
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Water & Food Systems Lab

J-WAFS Solutions: Commercialization Grants 2023 Request for Proposals

1. About J-WAFS and this request for proposals

J-WAFS catalyzes MIT research, innovation, and technology for ensuring safe and resilient supplies of water and food while reducing environmental impact, to meet the local and global needs of a rapidly expanding and evolving population on a changing planet. The J-WAFS Solutions program is sponsored by Community Jameel, which is represented on the governing committee of the program. **The J-WAFS Solutions program aims to move water and food technologies from labs at MIT into the commercial world**, where they will improve the productivity, accessibility, and sustainability of the world's water and food systems.

The J-WAFS Solutions program helps MIT faculty and students commercialize breakthrough technologies and inventions by transforming promising ideas at MIT into innovative products and cutting-edge spinout companies. Funding and assistance through the J-WAFS Solutions program will support activities at MIT that enable teams to advance technology readiness, investigate markets and conduct customer discovery, initiate product design and development, and carry out other research and commercialization activities that will support the establishment of a startup company upon completion of the grant.

2. General information for proposers

J-WAFS expects to sponsor up to five projects that support the transition of sustainable technologies from MIT labs to market during the remaining years of this sponsored-research agreement. We are open to eligible proposals that further [J-WAFS' mission](#), from all MIT schools and departments.

3. Timing

Thursday, January 12, 2023: J-WAFS Solutions RFP announced

Thursday, January 19, 2023: J-WAFS WizeHive online submission portal opens

5 pm, Wednesday, February 22, 2023: Pre-proposals due

Late March, 2023: Full proposals invited

5 pm, Wednesday, April 26, 2023: Full proposals due

Early May: Full proposal presentations

Summer, 2023: Announcement of funded projects

September 1, 2023: Start of funded projects

4. Funding and eligibility

J-WAFS will fund up to three proposals with grants of up to \$150,000 (including full MIT research overhead) for projects up to one year in duration. Funded projects may be eligible to apply for one renewal grant pending the availability of funding and progress from the first grant year.

Projects should aim at conceptualizing and developing products and services that will have a significant impact on water, food, or related energy, sustainability, and security, with commensurate economic and societal benefits. To be eligible for the 2023 J-WAFS Solutions grant cycle, projects should be aligned with the [J-WAFS mission](#) and/or adjacent themes including energy, AI, plant health (food crops), and animal health (livestock). Special consideration will be given to projects that also incorporate artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Examples of projects aligned with adjacent themes in AI & energy are:

- AI / machine learning (ML) in agritech
- Energy-efficient irrigation
- Battery/energy storage for solar-powered desalination
- AI / ML detection of food- and water-borne pathogens
- AI / ML discovery of veterinary medicines (where relevant to securing food systems)

All other food and water projects that align with [J-WAFS mission](#) are eligible. Please refer to prior funded projects on the [J-WAFS website](#) for further examples.

Concepts proposed for J-WAFS Solutions grants should already have completed basic research and proof of concept. Applicants should demonstrate a desire to commercialize the technology, and at least one person on the funded team should be interested in spinning out a startup company. The technology should be one to three years from commercialization.

The Principal Investigator submitting the proposal must meet one of these two eligibility criteria:

- *MIT professor*
- *Member of the MIT research staff with principal investigator privileges (generally senior or principal research scientist, or senior or principal engineer)*

The lead PI will have full responsibility for conducting and reporting on the research supported by the grant. Applicants may participate in up to two proposals.

5. Pre-proposal submission instructions

All applicants must submit a pre-proposal via the [WizeHive online proposal platform](#) which will open on Thursday, January 19, 2023. The proposal template with these instructions is available there.

Page Length and Format

- **Do Not Exceed Four (4) Pages** (Please note: this does not include graphics – additional images and graphics are encouraged)
- Do not change the font, spacing or page margins.
- Minimize file size and the resolution of the graphics for the convenience of our reviewers. (In MS Word compress all pictures in the file)
- Submit your pre-proposal as an MS Word file or PDF file.

Naming Your File

Use this format to name your file: PLastName_J-WAFS_Solutions_PreProposal_2023 (e.g. Smith_J-WAFS_Solutions_PreProposal_2023).

Confidential Information

This pre-proposal will be viewed under confidence by our reviewers and grant committee, which includes some individuals from outside of MIT. We will ask reviewers and committee members to abide by the [guidelines for confidentiality and conflict of interest](#) used by the MIT Deshpande Center.

This proposal does not constitute a public release.

Submit Your Pre-proposal

Go to the online submission site: <https://webportalapp.com/sp/jwafs-solutions>

Step 1: Complete the online form

Step 2: Write and upload your pre-proposal document using the template that follows. You may upload your document as a Word or PDF file.

Step 3: Submit your pre-proposal

NOTE: Proposals do not have to be submitted to OSP until a project award.

You will receive an email confirmation from the system once all three steps are completed.

Subsequent Steps

Notifications to pre-proposals submitters will be sent in late March. Selected teams will be invited to submit a full proposal by Wednesday, April 26, 2023. We will provide instructions and templates to those teams. In addition, in early May we will schedule proposal presentations with each team invited to submit a full proposal.

6. Review criteria

Pre-proposals will be reviewed by expert reviewers and the J-WAFS Solutions review committee. They will be evaluated for:

- Alignment with J-WAFS mission
- Potential societal impacts to water and food
- Potential economic impacts to water and food
- Technical readiness/time and needs to spinout
- Market fit, need, and value proposition
- Strength of team for pursuing a spinout company and commercializing the technology
- Impact of J-WAFS Solutions funding and support on project success

7. If your project is funded

Sponsor Rights

A novel feature of the J-WAFS Solutions Program is the interest of the program sponsor, Community Jameel (“CJ”) in the opportunity to explore investment in companies formed from Solutions projects. Projects invited to submit full proposals will receive additional information about this provision.

Commercialization Support Activities

As part of the commercialization activities for funded projects, Solutions teams will be expected to participate in a number of activities with J-WAFS partner programs, including the MIT Venture Mentoring Service, Deshpande

Center for Technological Innovation, and the New England regional I-Corps Spark program. We will provide additional information about these activities to teams invited to submit full proposals.

Reporting

J-WAFS will assess the success of funded projects in meeting the stated objectives. Each funded project will be required to schedule regular progress meetings throughout the funding period, and to submit a final report that summarizes all project outcomes and follow-on activities. Reports also identify students and staff supported by the grant, and dissertations, papers, or presentations arising from the work supported by the grant. The “highlights” section of the report will be made public. Meeting dates and due dates will be noted at the award of the grant, and reporting instructions and specific contents will be provided approximately four to five weeks before their due date.

8. Inquiries

Please direct general questions to:

Carolyn Blais, Communications and Program Manager, J-WAFS, cblais@mit.edu

Please direct budget or financial questions to:

Nicholas Pasinella, Financial and Project Coordinator, J-WAFS, bnpas@mit.edu

Please direct questions about eligibility to:

John Lienhard, Director, J-WAFS, lienhard@mit.edu

Renee Robins, Executive Director, J-WAFS, rrobins@mit.edu