

What is a Research Work Order? Information for Cooperating Faculty and Agency Collaborators

General Information:

Research Work Orders (RWO) have been developed as the mechanism for Cooperative Research Units and their Cooperators to receive Federal financial support for doing research as provided for in the 1978 amendment to the Cooperative Units Act (P.L. 86-686). Funds from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), other Department of the Interior (DOI) bureaus or other Federal agencies are obligated in a RWO and awarded to the University for a specific research project. The RWO awards have several benefits: they provide a mechanism to reach the expertise of all Cooperating faculty at the Host University, and thus provide access to expertise that does not exist within the Federal Government; they are awarded non-competitively as part of the existing Cooperative Agreement; and since the RWOs define projects and deliverables, funds can be awarded in the current year and used for work into future fiscal years. The RWO is a simplified statement of work outlining what research is to be done, by whom, at what cost, and within what time-frame. Because special authority has been granted to award RWOs as extensions of the Cooperative Agreements, they are not as narrowly regulated as other legal contracts, and sole source statements and justifications are not required for the RWO award itself. Find below basic RWO guidelines. More specific RWO questions and inquiries can be addressed to the AKCFWRU Unit Leader and/or Fiscal Professional.

RWO Guidelines:

1. The Unit Leader or Assistant Unit Leader, as either Project Officer or Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that the terms of the Research Work Order are met. Quality, completeness, and timeliness are all important. Unit staff are the federal representatives for these efforts and must ensure that the obligations for all Cooperators are met.
2. The project should be of mutual interest to cooperating agencies. Broadly interpreted, this means that research, training in the application of research results, and other activities that relate to gathering and interpretation of information of concern to these agencies and groups are legitimate endeavors to be pursued through a RWO.
3. The project may involve the Unit Cooperators at the University and/or State agencies. For example, one might legitimately bring in a physiologist from another department on campus to collaborate on a problem that may affect a wildlife species.
4. There should be research and educational benefits derived from involvement in the project. This can include research experience for graduate and post-graduate students. It can also include University staff, either permanent or assigned for the duration of a particular project, technicians, professionals on temporary assignments, and permanent University professors. The complete standards and guidelines for educational activities are available upon request.

5. It is not legitimate to use Research Work Orders to supplement the Federal work force, and thus avoid Full Time Equivalent (FTE) limitations.
6. RWOs cannot be used as a "pass-through" tool whereby entities funding the research seek to also hire, direct, and advise a post-doc (e.g.) to do the research. In essence, the office funding the research cannot be responsible for also completing the research, as this establishes a conflicted and untenable contract performance situation.
7. Research Work Orders must not be used solely to hire outside consultants. Consultations by Cooperator staff are considered part of the research process. Up to 20% of the total estimated amount of the RWO may be subcontracted. The budget narrative should include a justification for the need for the subcontract, and should specifically state that the expertise to perform this portion of the RWO is with the proposed subcontractor and that this expertise is not available from the University or another Cooperator.
8. Research Work Orders cannot be used solely to develop a management plan. That is considered an operational and not a research function. If you are conducting a research project that includes a management plan, that may be acceptable.
9. Questionnaires that survey the public (more than 10 people) cannot be included in Research Work Orders without prior Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval. If you are planning a research project that needs data regarding public opinions, please contact the CRU HQ Office for guidance.
10. Only RWOs approved by Unit Leaders or Acting Unit Leaders will be processed by the CRU HQ Office. This means that all RWOs should come to the CRU HQ Office from the Unit. RWOs may not legitimately originate from any source other than the Unit.
11. Because of the costs associated with processing RWOs they should not be submitted for amounts with the total estimated cost less than \$5,000. Only in special cases will the CRU approve new RWOs for amounts smaller than \$5,000.
12. Appropriate planning time is essential. No work is to begin on projects covered by any RWO before the RWO has been approved at all levels, including the final signatory approval by the Contracting Officer. A minimum of sixty days should be allowed for processing any new RWO. Yearend deadlines are established each year. Special approval from the CRU-HQ Office must be obtained for any new RWO to be established after these deadlines. See below for general AKCFWRU RWO deadlines.
13. A RWO should normally be written to address a complete project, including all funding necessary to complete the task. RWOs should be written with a reasonable assurance that funding can be obtained for the full project. It may be incrementally funded; that is, funds may be added in future years up to the last year of the RWO. RWOs should not be written or extended beyond 5 years.
14. Department of the Interior (DOI) policy now requires that grants and cooperative agreements issued from DOI agencies to university recipients receive clearance regardless of funding amount. However, once approval is received it is good for the life of the agreement unless the project amount increases, such as through a SUPPLEMENTAL RWO MODIFICATION. Although not always the case, DOI

approval can take up to six months. Researchers will need to keep this in mind when submitting RWO proposals and documentation.

15. The total amount of funding planned to be obligated to an RWO needs to be determined at the start, and included in the RWO proposal. Funds up to this amount may be added annually through INCREMENTAL FUNDING. Funds above the total to be added to the RWO are considered SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING and must be justified through additional project objectives added to the RWO proposal/scope of work. Additionally, SUPPLEMENTAL MODIFICATIONS must be (re) approved by the DOI Secretary and are subject to similar due dates and time constraints as a NEW RWO. See below general timetable for more information.

Alaska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit (AKCFWRU)-specific deliverables and expectations for RWO-funded projects.

The ability to make use of Research Work Orders by Unit Scientists and Cooperating Faculty is a privilege, not a right, and subject to the terms outlined above. Beyond the basics, there are a few minimum expectations required by AKCFWRU Unit Scientists and Cooperating Faculty with respect to projects and students supported through RWOs, as follows:

- 1) Annual reporting—AKCFWRU produces a report each year that details Unit activities during the previous calendar year. AKCFWRU Annual Reports can be found at (<https://uaf.edu/akcfwru/research/reports.php>). Reports include lists of Unit Scientist publications and presentations, graduate students and post-doc's supported by RWOs, Cooperating Faculty, graduating students, etc. during that year. Additionally, all projects on which Unit Scientists are PI's, and all RWO's (regardless of whether a Unit Scientist or Cooperating Faculty is PI) are required to submit a brief (~250 words) progress report to be published in the annual report. A call for progress reports will be made in late December each year, and guidelines for these reports will be sent to PI's at that time. It is the RWO PI's responsibility to ensure the reports are submitted by the specified due date. We also appreciate an image representing the project be submitted along with the PI reports for inclusion in the AKCFWRU annual report.

Brief reports on RWO progress are also required by USGS CRU. These are required annually for the duration of the project starting one year from the inception of the RWO project. Forms will be provided to PI's.

- 2) Acknowledgement—AKCFWRU should be acknowledged in theses, dissertations, and peer-reviewed publications that result from Unit Scientist projects and RWO projects (regardless of whether a Unit Scientist or Cooperating Faculty is PI). For example: "The staff and facilities of the Alaska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit were instrumental to the success of this project".

- 3) Annual Meeting—Each year (typically in late March/early April), AKCFWRU holds a Research Review to disseminate research conducted by Unit Scientists, Cooperating Faculty, and their students and post-doc's to Cooperators, funding agencies, and other interested parties. This half-day meeting consists of oral presentations followed by a poster session. *All active RWO projects are required to be represented at the annual Research Review by a poster or oral presentation.* Posters are the preferred format for new and interim projects. Posters can report a description of the project proposal and/or results to date. Oral presentations should be saved until the end of the project when results are firm and talks are polished. Information regarding the annual Research Review date and schedule, poster and oral presentation formats, etc. will be provided to RWO PI's at least three months prior to the meeting. It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that the student/post-doc poster or oral presentation is rigorously reviewed. Additionally, all posters and oral presentations to be given at the Research Review will be evaluated by the AKCFWRU Unit Leader and/or Unit Staff.