



Water Efficiency Lab 1 (WEL 1)

Launch Webinar 3 December 2025

Attendee Questions

1. Actionable Insights and the Challenge Statement

1.1 What evidence can be used to support innovative ideas?

Any evidence submitted by entrants in support of an application must comply with assessment guidance that can be found in the [Entrant Handbook](#). The [Entry Drafting Form](#) contains detailed assessment guidance for what assessors and judges expect to see for each question, which can also be found in the Submittable entry form.

Please see more information in our [Innovation assessment criterion](#) on how innovation is defined for WEL 1.

1.2 Does this competition embrace electrical, power quality problems tripping water & sewage services. We have been working with Thames Water on this topic?

We are looking for entries that can meet the Challenge Statement of innovative solutions which deliver tailored water usage insights that drive a reduction in water consumption for households and/or businesses in England and Wales. We're not able to advise on individual proposals, however it is unlikely that solutions focused on resolving power quality problems would meet the Challenge Statement.

1.3 If the data is based on the peer reviewed published journal paper, will it be considered as valid and suitable in 'actionable insights'?

Please see the [Entry Drafting Form](#) which contains detailed assessment guidance for what assessors and judges expect to see for each question, which can also be found in the Submittable entry form. In question 1.1 you will need to explain how your solution provides actionable, tailored insights at a property or customer level, that enable customers to identify specific opportunities to reduce water use. Evidence that extends beyond theoretical approaches, such as from published journal papers, can be provided to strengthen your explanation.

1.4 Is treating wastewater in the scope?

For WEL 1, we are looking for entries that can meet the Challenge Statement of innovative solutions which deliver tailored water usage insights that drive a reduction

in water consumption for households and/or businesses in England and Wales. We're not able to advise on individual proposals, however it is unlikely that a solution focused on treating wastewater would meet the Challenge Statement.

1.5 Behavioural change is described by u as key.. how can a Standardising behavioural change model like TryBthrive (piloting now in 5 uk water co's) be used by all

We are not able to advise on the eligibility of specific solutions. We encourage you to review the eligibility criteria, assessment criteria and guidance [on our website](#) to understand whether such a solution meets the Challenge Statement.

We will be encouraging successful projects funded through the WEL to share what works through the monitoring process so that learnings can be disseminated within for wider adoption.

1.6 Really impressive today.. ! displays big progress.. eg on IP owner – & focus on behavioural change..! how do we offer behavioural skillsets to all other bids..?

Please submit this question via email with more detail to help us respond to this at waterinnovation@challengeworks.org.

2. Eligibility and entering the WEL

2.1 Please clarify if wholesaler water company can be lead entrant and if so how this affects in-kind contribution and financial contribution criteria.

A wholesaler water company can be the lead entrant for an entry. It is up to the partners to decide the allocation of the 10% contribution between the partners. If the wholesaler water company is contributing towards this, then their contribution must be financial.

We welcome any additional financial and/or non-financial contributions beyond the minimum 10%.

2.2 Can a party apply independently, or do all entries have to be made in partnership?

A single organisation can enter. It is not mandatory to enter as part of a partnership or consortium. We will not accept applications from individuals.

3. Funding & match funding

3.1 Can funding be used to scale a small project to the whole building for developing data sets and findings on behavioural change?

We are unable to provide advice for specific projects and their eligibility. We encourage you to read the eligibility criteria, assessment criteria and guidance [on our website](#) carefully to understand whether such a solution meets the Challenge Statement.

3.2 Could the 10% contribution be entirely in-kind if no wholesale water company involved?

Yes, this is correct. If there are no wholesaler water company or NAV partners, the 10% contribution could be entirely in-kind contributions.

3.3 Can the 10% of participant matched funding be revenue or capital funding?

If capital funding is referring to assets and equipment then these would be considered as in-kind contributions. As long as there is an auditable value to this cost along with a clear description as to how it's going to be used, then this can be included as part of the in-kind contributions.

The match funding must be available during the development of the solution, so unless the solution has generated pre-sales, we would not expect to see revenue included as part of the 10% contribution.

A reminder that if the wholesaler water companies are contributing towards the 10% contribution, then their contributions must be financial and cannot be funded by charges to water customers in England and Wales.

3.4 Does the application need to confirm the ability to fund the match funding?

Alongside the entry form, entrants need to submit a completed [Project Delivery Template](#) (available for download on the website): Tab A 'Budget by Partner' requires a detailed breakdown of the funding attributed to each partner and the amount of financial and non-financial contributions entry partners are committing to the entry.

3.5 To clarify, any number of wholesalers who are involved the same project must each give financial contribution to the 10%.

It is up to the entry partners to decide how the 10% contribution will be allocated. But if the wholesaler water companies are contributing, then their contributions must be financial and cannot be funded by charges to water customers in England and Wales.

3.6 What day-rate do you consider apt for in-kind contributions please?

We do not expect to see a specific day rate, and cannot comment on costs related to individuals. Assessors will be looking for entries to demonstrate cost efficiency and good use of customer money, with a clear case for any costs included in the entry budget.

Staff time should be valued at the cost to the organisation, allowing for the salary, employer costs such as pension and National Insurance, and apportioned for the time spent directly on the initiative. Donated services should be valued at the standard market rate or actual purchase cost.

3.7 Many consortium bidders are approaching water companies for smart meter data / insight, but if the wholesaler is then required to provide additional financial contribution (part of 10% match funding), then this could be a significant barrier.

There are no specific requirements for individual partners on an entry to contribute set amounts; the minimum 10% contribution requirement is for the entry as a whole. It is up to the entry partners to decide between themselves who will be contributing towards the 10% match funding contribution. This can be a combination of financial and non-financial contributions, depending on the type of organisation. If part of the 10% match contribution comes from a wholesaler water company, then this must be financial and cannot be funded by charges to water customers in England and Wales.

We welcome and encourage any commitment that exceeds the minimum 10% contribution. This can be in the form of additional financial (cash) or additional in-kind contributions. Wholesaler water companies and NAVs are welcome and encouraged to provide in-kind contributions that are additional to the minimum 10% contribution.

4. Partnerships

4.1 What are the access routes to reach the appropriate partnership contacts with a water utility?

We encourage you to register your interest in forming partnerships through [our Partnerships form](#). Once you have submitted details of your organisation, expertise areas and where you're looking to form partnerships, you will receive access to all responses from other organisations. You are then free to contact any organisations who may be of interest as a partner.

We are also hosting a networking event on 15 January 2026 to enable in-person networking. Find out more information and [register to attend](#).

Do also ensure that you're [subscribed to our newsletter](#) to hear about any new events and other opportunities to connect with other organisations interested in meeting partners to submit an entry to the WEL.

If you are new to the water sector, you may also wish to contact [Spring, the water sector's centre of excellence for innovation](#). In particular, we recommend you read [the Water Innovation Strategy 2050 and the Water Innovation Strategy Ecosystem Guide](#).

4.2 Will organisations seeking to form partnerships at the networking event, include water utilities?

Yes, we are expecting a number of water utilities to be attending the networking event, but we cannot guarantee attendance on the day.

4.3 SPRING host collaboration sessions for the Water Breakthrough Challenge – will they offer a similar service for WEL?

The WEL delivery team are also hosting two activities to support partnership formation amongst potential entrants: our ongoing [partnerships form](#) and an in-person [networking event](#) on 15 January 2026, as detailed in the response to question 4.1 above. Find out more about our [Entrant Support](#) on the website.

[Spring](#) (the water sector's central hub for innovation for the UK and Ireland) separately runs their own activities, including a brokerage service which aims to connect water companies with suppliers and innovators who can help with the challenges they're facing. Find out more about Spring's [Brokerage Service](#).

4.4 Do you have a standard contract partnerships use & have visibility of as agreeing terms could take longer than 3 months?

We don't prescribe a standard contract for partnerships, and we do not get involved in partnership arrangements. It is up to the partners to coordinate this between themselves.

We strongly encourage entrants to develop collaboration agreements in advance of the project start to avoid delays if the entry is successful. Water companies have developed their own template 'Collaboration Agreement' for use in Ofwat Innovation Fund competitions, which may be a useful starting point. Download the latest version from the [Water Breakthrough Challenge Key Materials page](#).

5. Assessment criteria and how entries will be assessed and judged

5.1 Do sub-benefits carry any weighting in the assessment e.g. building trust, PSR, supporting vulnerability/EDI etc.?

We welcome reference to wider benefits and impact of the solution in your entry. For example, in actionable insights effectiveness, we are seeking to understand how insights are personalised based on individual customer needs, including any adjustments for vulnerable customers or customers with accessibility needs.

Please see the [Entry Drafting Form](#) which contains detailed assessment guidance for what assessors and judges expect to see for each question, including examples.

5.2 Regarding adoption can the implementation fund be referenced although yet to be launched?

Questions 4.1 – 4.4 in the entry form ask entrants to set out their adoption and implementation plans, which will be assessed against criteria 4.1 – 4.4. Entries need to demonstrate that they have a credible path to reach customers with meaningful engagement from relevant stakeholders, that they have a viable business model, and a strong understanding of the market.

Entries should present a realistic implementation plan. If these plans require further funding, the entry must prove that these funds can be secured from other funding sources. The Water Efficiency Lab will not provide additional funding beyond the WEL 1 winner's award.

Please see the [Entry Drafting Form](#) which contains detailed assessment guidance for what assessors and judges expect to see for each question.

5.3 Did you consider a Q&A session with judges?

We have not included a Q&A with judges to keep the process simple, including for entrants. A Q&A process is more typically included in competitions with higher funding amounts and greater risk. We will be keeping the processes in review for future rounds of the WEL.

6. Other

6.1 Will a list of those attending this webinar be shared?

For GDPR reasons, we will not be sharing a list of the webinar attendees.

6.2 Will the 75/25 split of the WEF be reviewed based on uptake and success of the WEL?

Ofwat's Final Decision Document on the [Water Efficiency Fund](#) recommended an initial 75/25 split of the £100 million Water Efficiency Fund. However, we prioritised flexibility when designing, operating and distributing the fund. Therefore, Ofwat will monitor the effectiveness of both streams and use the flexibility of the two-stream approach to adapt allocations between them across the delivery period.

6.3 As last time, people who ask questions early wait for the whole call, yet their questions are never answered.. that's not working out well

Questions were answered based on the most popular questions in Slido, as voted on by other attendees.