



UN  
2023 WATER  
CONFERENCE

NEW YORK  
22-24  
MARCH  
2023

## UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

### *Water Management Innovation for Underserved Populations*

March 22, 2023, 15:30-16:45, UN HQ Conference Room 8

Organized by: IBM, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Deltares; Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); Texas A&M AgriLife

#### **Background on the event**

The [IBM Sustainability Accelerator](#) is a pro-bono social impact program speeding and scaling nonprofit and governmental organization environmental sustainability initiatives supporting populations especially vulnerable to environmental threats. The 2023 UN Water Conference provided IBM the opportunity to deliver the first formal impact and innovation updates on two on-going Sustainability Accelerator projects at the intersection of water and sustainable agriculture. IBM recently launched a request for proposals (RFP) for the third cohort of the Sustainability Accelerator. IBM detailed the RFP for a new commitment of \$10 million in support of nonprofit and governmental organization water management projects aligned to SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation. Representatives from IBM, UNDP, and GIZ detailed the importance of partnership for social impact and scaling solutions.

#### **Water Action Agenda**

<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/ibm-sustainability-accelerator-water-management>

Now in its third year, IBM Sustainability Accelerator launched an RFP on March 14 and open through May 31 focused on water management solutions. IBM looks to support projects that help advance equitable access to safe drinking water for all, improve hygiene and water quality by reducing pollution, increase water-use efficiency across all sectors, reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity, protect water-related ecosystems to support the people living in or around them, among other purposes. Nonprofit and governmental organizations are encouraged to submit a proposal for IT-driven projects that would benefit from hybrid cloud and AI solutions, sustainability software, data science-enabled insights, and/or expert consulting and design services. Successful proposals will deliver direct support to vulnerable populations at scale while advancing one or more of the targets of the United

Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6. The IBM Sustainability Accelerator will provide support to five selected organization, making up a cohort, for up to two years. During this timeframe, IBM will follow a comprehensive approach with each selected nonprofit or government organization, delivering user centered design, development, technical solutions, custom tools, scientific expertise, and mentorship while building community among the participants. Selected organizations will be announced November 2023.

### **Key Issues discussed**

- IBM believes that the power of science, technology, and innovation can help tackle environmental issues while helping communities address societal needs
- The launch of the IBM Sustainability Accelerator’s new request for proposals (RFP) for support to government and nonprofit initiatives advancing SDG 6.
  - The RFP is open March 14, 2023-May 31, 2023
- Tech-driven solutions for water efficiency and quality, which are publicly available and have been developed with event-participating partners Deltares and Texas A&M AgriLife:
  - Liquid Prep, an end-to-end, open-source solution that provides “when to water” decision support to farmers in arid regions of the United States
  - Nitrate App, a tech solution that ultimately helps protect communities by identifying hot spots of nitrate losses to surface water that causes toxic algae blooms and oxygen depleted dead zones in downstream lakes and coastal waters
- Benefits and opportunities presented by new technology and partnerships, which were shared by water and digital solution leaders from UNDP and GIZ: Partners help scale your work, add value to your portfolio, and open you to the reality of the people that you want to support
- Environmental Justice initiatives are key to making a truly sustainable change across the globe

### **Key recommendations for action**

- Share best practices for formalizing and making the most of partners. It is not enough to say that partnerships are important.
- Create a sense of urgency around water and other sustainable development issues. Innovation can’t wait.
- Design technology, which will be key to achieving SDG 6, to be user-centric, easy to use, and accessible.