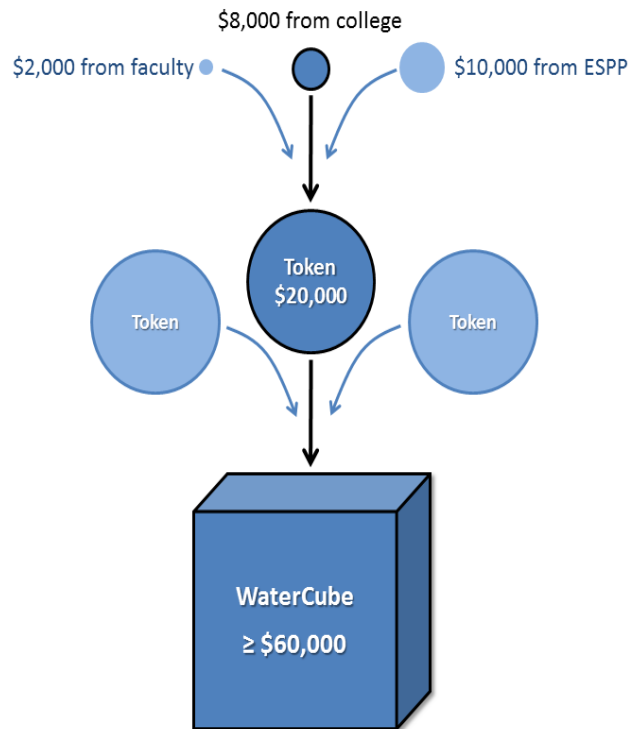


MSU WaterCube Program

The MSU WaterCube Program stimulates new multidisciplinary collaborations and novel water research ideas with minimal investment of college funds and faculty time spent on developing internal grant proposals. The program creates tokens, each worth \$20,000 in research spending over two years, and awards them to individual faculty members. Faculty members then form teams of at least three token holders, one of whom must be new to the team, to create a WaterCube. Each WaterCube is thus provided with at least \$60,000 to be spent over two years to pursue promising research ideas. Written proposals are not required – if members of a WaterCube agree on a worthy water project, then the project is a go. WaterCubes are expected to produce external grant proposals and peer-reviewed publications, and document evidence of progress through annual WaterCube meetings with peers.

Where do tokens come from?

Colleges create each token with flexible funding mechanisms totaling \$10,000, which is then leveraged with a \$10,000 match from ESPP. A participating college must create at least two tokens and award them only to faculty with serious interests in water. Each college can choose its internal funding mechanism by some combination of shared investments from the college, the department, and/or the faculty member. Figure 1 shows an example in which a college contributes \$8,000 and a faculty member contributes \$2,000.



The colleges decide how many tokens they will fund and how to award them to their faculty. Participating colleges include Agriculture and Natural Resources, Communication Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Natural Science, Social Science, and James Madison. The contact person for each college is its Associate Dean for Research. Tokens are expected to be issued by the colleges to their own faculty during March 2015.

How do faculty members participate?

Faculty members participate by receiving a token from their home college. Interested individuals should contact the office of their Associate Dean for Research for details (the exact process may differ from college to college). Possession of a token renders a faculty member eligible to form a WaterCube, which must (1) include tokens from at least two colleges, (2) contain at least three tokens, and (3) represent a new collaboration. Collaborations are considered new if members of the team have had no jointly funded projects or publications within the previous two years. ESPP will create a clearing house website and hold a network event to assist faculty in forming WaterCubes and sharing research ideas. The website will include brief online forms to document the process of cubation.

When will all this happen?

We envision a four-stage process with the following timeline:

- Stage 1, March 2015: Colleges award tokens.
- Stage 2, March - April 2015: Token holders form cubes.
 - March 19, 2015: Water networking event to facilitate cubation
 - April 30, 2015: All teams must complete a brief online form to lock themselves in as a WaterCube.
- Stage 3, May – June 1, 2015: Cubes are notified of approval. Colleges set up accounts and ESPP transfers funds to colleges
- Stage 4, June 1, 2015 – May 31, 2017: The fun begins as funds are spent to support research activities of the WaterCubes.

Who manages the program?

As host for the MSU Water Science Network, ESPP will manage the program with assistance and oversight from the Faculty Water Committee. The team will work with colleges to create tokens, facilitate the formation of cubes, and provide funding. ESPP will create a separate account for each WaterCube and will work with the colleges to transfer funds into these accounts and monitor expenses. There is a strict time limit on funding. All cubes must complete their projects in two years, and so any unspent funds remaining at this time will be returned to the pool to fund other projects. No exceptions!

Expected outcomes and performance tracking

The WaterCube program intends to support collaborative research that results in high profile publications and external grants. The ESPP team will track the performance of each cube by asking participants to fill out an annual performance form that includes the transmittal numbers of submitted grant proposals and citations for peer-reviewed publications. Publications should acknowledge support from the WaterCube Program. In order to keep the ideas flowing (no pun intended), we will also hold an annual WaterCubes meeting where the teams present their progresses and exchange ideas.

This seems too easy. What's the catch?

There is no catch! Once a WaterCube has been proposed online, the ESPP team will quickly screen the proposed cube to ensure that it meets the three criteria for cubation, confirm the availability of funds, and work with colleges to award the funds. Rather than spending time and energy on up-front peer review, the ESPP team assumes that only serious cubes will form. We ask each cube to notify ESPP of transmittal application numbers for all grant proposals submitted and of citations for each peer-reviewed publication.

WaterCube Flow Chart

