

**Colorado Water Center  
CSU GRANT PROGRAM  
2026–2027 Call for Proposals**



Converging social, political, and cultural changes gave rise to the creation of land-grant institutions. CSU's land-grant mission provides the framework to advance our ability to address myriad water issues impacting the quality of life in Colorado, the U.S., and the world. To that end, the Colorado Water Center (CoWC) invites proposals for Water Research, Engagement, and Education projects that address these issues.

Proposals should support inclusive and innovative transdisciplinary research, engagement, and educational projects that lead to positioning CSU as a leading institution in water resources science, engineering, and management. Proposals are invited from a broad range of disciplines, including the biological and physical sciences, the social and human sciences, and engineering fields.

Proposed projects should integrate both diverse perspectives on understanding our water systems and innovative mechanisms to transfer this understanding to students and water resource professionals.

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**PRIORITY FUNDING AREAS**

The CoWC seeks to support 2026–27 CSU Grant Projects that advance knowledge and lead to actionable science in the following priority areas:

1. Sustainable water management that benefits agricultural, municipal, and environmental uses
2. Improved water quality and access in rural and urban environments

## **GRANT DETAILS**

### **Water Research, Extension, and Education Projects**

The purpose of this grant program is to invest in transdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships that ultimately lead to a more holistic understanding of water resource issues, and to integrate translation of this understanding into the water resource profession, as well as educate the future water workforce.

- Proposals are required to demonstrate how the project supports high-priority water topics by developing water scholarship, outreach, and education programs at CSU.
- Projects should expand CSU's presence in the water community, be led by both research faculty and extension personnel, include students at either the graduate or undergraduate level, and develop new external collaborations.
- This project funding is expected to support the development of existing or new integrated research and extension project teams and eventually result in the development of large transdisciplinary external proposals and grants.

Grant funding will be available for two types of projects:

1. High Impact Projects
2. Seed/Start Up Projects

### **High Impact Projects (up to \$40,000 per project for no more than 3 projects)**

These projects should be initiatives that are innovative and lead to broader impacts, including projects that:

- Prioritize evidence-based approaches to address critical needs or accelerate innovation for use by water managers and the water community as a whole
- Create significant, measurable, or transformative changes within a specific sector
- Require extensive collaboration
- Are part of a broader, intentional effort to optimize resources, rather than support general operations
- Are scalable

### **Seed/Start Up Projects (up to \$10,000 per project for no more than 3 projects)**

These projects are intended to support the beginning phases of a larger project. The phases may include but are not limited to:

- Information and feedback gathering
- Collaboration, partnership, and/or team building

- Financial sustainability planning
- Data collection or background research
- Skill development

## **APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY AND COLLABORATION REQUIREMENTS**

The request for proposals targets all CSU faculty, staff, and students with research, engagement, or educational contributions that will be significantly enhanced by receiving the award.

- Primary Investigator (PI) and co-PIs must be current CSU faculty members, research scientists, research associates or other staff working in water resources.
  - The PI must be eligible to serve as a PI on an external grant.
  - Special consideration will be given to proposals that include:
    - At least one Academic Faculty Member and one PI eligible Engagement or Extension staff as PI or co-PI
    - Student engagement/involvement
    - Engagement/collaboration with external partners/stakeholders
    - Early career CSU faculty and staff or those who are new to the university or new to water-related research, extension, and engagement
  - Previous applicants and awardees as well as senior faculty and staff are eligible to apply. However, applications submitted by a PI who did not meet reporting requirements on a previous grant administered or awarded by CoWC are not eligible for funding.
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## **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

### **A. Proposal Format**

The proposal (items B. 1-5 below) shall not exceed 4 single-spaced pages.

References should be included in the 4-page limit. The budget page and PI resumes do not count towards the 4-page limit.

Format guidelines for the proposal including tables, pictures, graphs, and figures, are as follows:

- 12-point font size
- Times New Roman font
- 1-inch margins (all sides)

## **B. Proposal Preparation Guidelines (limited to 4 pages)**

1. Project details and collaboration
  - Project title. Concise but descriptive.
  - Amount requested (max award \$40,000 for high impact and \$10,000 for seed)
  - Project Co-PI(s) and other collaborators' information: names, affiliation, and role
2. Mini abstract (2 paragraphs)
3. Background and Purpose: brief summary of the literature, problem to be addressed, and how the project will create actionable science in the priority funding areas (see page 1)
4. Project Description: research questions, goals & objectives; brief summary of methodology; timeline of activities; collaborations and/or stakeholder engagement; expected outcomes, impacts, and benefits
5. High Impact Proposals only: Potential for developing external proposals

Additional Required Documentation (these do not count towards the 4-page limit)

1. Budget and Budget Justification

Estimate of total costs and categories of expenses using the template provided (see [Attachment A](#)) along with a budget justification. **Indirect costs are not allowed. Faculty and Extension staff salary is not allowed. Student salary and tuition costs are allowed. Fringe should be included in the budget for other types of CSU employees/students.** Note that if funds are requested for the purchase of equipment, provide a justification that indicates the names of faculty/staff that can use the equipment to support their programs, along with a description of how this equipment will be used as key facilities for future proposals seeking extramural funds.

2. PI and Co-PI Qualifications

Include resume(s) of the Principal Investigator(s) and Co-PIs. Resumes should not exceed two pages, list no more than 10 pertinent publications, and identify no more than 5 synergistic activities.

## **C. Proposal Submission:**

Proposals must be submitted via email to Karen Schlatter

([Karen.Schlatter@colostate.edu](mailto:Karen.Schlatter@colostate.edu)) and Bethany Howell  
([Bethany.Howell@colostate.edu](mailto:Bethany.Howell@colostate.edu)) as PDF files by **5 PM MST on March 31, 2026.**

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## **PROPOSAL REVIEW**

Proposals will be reviewed by a Proposal Review Committee and evaluated based on:

1. Justification of proposed research, outreach, or education program addressing critical gaps in water resource knowledge
2. Feasibility of achieving project objectives and technical merit
3. Responsiveness to RFP priority areas (see page 1)
4. Qualifications of investigators
5. Potential for developing and sustaining transdisciplinary research and extension collaborations
6. For High Impact Projects only:
  - a. Potential for submitting large transdisciplinary proposals to federal funding agencies (particular focus on USDA-NIFA and NSF)
  - b. Innovation in the approach to solutions/management and anticipated impact to water community
7. Special consideration will be given to proposals that include:
  - At least one Academic Faculty Member and one PI eligible Engagement or Extension staff as PI or co-PI
  - Student engagement/involvement
  - Engagement/collaboration with external partners/stakeholders
  - Early career CSU faculty and staff or those who are new to the university or new to water-related research, extension, and engagement

At the discretion of the Proposal Review Committee, PIs may be requested to explore collaboration with other projects that are submitted for funding, when there is significant overlap or leveraging between project concepts.

## **AWARD NOTIFICATION**

Applicants will be notified by email of their status regarding award funding no later than May 8, 2026. Further information regarding acceptance and compliance will be provided at that time.

## PROJECT DATES

Awards are anticipated to begin on July 15, 2026, and end on May 31, 2027.

## PROJECT BUDGET

- All expenses must be finalized by the project end date. No extensions will be granted. Timely and consistent drawdown is expected, or funds will be withdrawn.
- The PI is expected to work with their departmental budget office to ensure their award is spent according to the approved budget. The PI's budget office is responsible for all project accounting and the department is responsible for any spending deficit.
- Funds may be used for:
  - **Indirect costs are not allowed. Faculty and Extension staff salary is not allowed. Student salary and tuition expenses are allowed. Fringe should be included in the budget for other types of CSU employees/students. Supplemental pay is not allowed.**
  - Travel and conference expenses
  - Development of instructional or training materials
  - Equipment up to \$5,000
  - Additional expenses directly related to research, extension, or education activities
- All awards are contingent on available funding.

## PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Funded projects will be required to submit a year-end report and be willing to work with OEE Communications to produce articles and impact statements on the importance of their projects.
- Funded applicants will be asked to present their results and accomplishments at events such as CSU Hydrology Days, campus seminars, or state and national conferences.
- Submission of a plan for publication of suitable results in top tier journals (Water Research, Extension, and Education Projects only)

## ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Projects should support the mission and goals of the Colorado Water Center.
- Projects should integrate CSU's Principles of Community and the mission and vision of the university's inclusive excellence.
- Funded applicants must comply with applicable University research integrity and compliance regulations and guidelines.

*Updated February 10, 2026*

**MORE INFORMATION**

- Interested applicants are encouraged to learn about previously funded projects at <https://watercenter.colostate.edu>.
- For general questions related to the request for proposals contact Bethany Howell, Associate Director of the Colorado Water Center ([bethany.howell@colostate.edu](mailto:bethany.howell@colostate.edu)).

**ATTACHMENT A – Budget Sheet for Research, Extension, and Education Projects**

<b>BUDGET BREAKDOWN</b>	<b>Project Year: July 15, 2026 to May 31, 2027</b>		
<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b>			
PI (College or OEE Unit):			
Co-PI (College or OEE Unit):			
Co-PI (College or OEE Unit):			
OEE Project Lead (if applicable):			
	<b>CSU Grants Program</b>		
	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>PERSONNEL SALARIES</b>			
Administrative Professionals:			
Post Docs, Interns:			
Classified Staff:			
Fringe Benefits:			
Student Hourly:			
Fringe Benefits:			
GRA's:			
Fringe Benefits:			
<b>TOTAL SALARY:</b>			
<b>TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS:</b>			
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL:</b>			
<b>DOMESTIC TRAVEL:</b>			
<b>MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES:</b>			
<b>OTHER DIRECT COSTS</b>			
Publications:			
Equipment Use Fees:			
Consultants:			
Other:			
<b>TOTAL OTHER DIRECT:</b>			
<b>TOTAL DIRECT COSTS:</b>			
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST:</b>			

**\*\*\*NOTE:** If funds are requested for the purchase of equipment, provide a justification that indicates the names of faculty/staff that can use the equipment to support their programs, along with a description of how this equipment will be used as key facilities for future proposals seeking extramural funds.