



## **FY26 USGS 104 B Graduate Student RFP Guidelines** **Closing Date: March 31, 2026 5:00 PM (Mountain Time)**

The Colorado Water Center (CoWC) seeks to support graduate water resource student activities that advance our 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

### **Program Description**

This program, funded by US Geological Survey/National Institutes for Water Resources (USGS/NIWR), encourages and supports graduate student research in disciplines relevant to water resources issues and assists Colorado institutions of higher education in developing student research expertise and capabilities. It is intended to help students initiate research projects or to supplement existing student projects in water resources research. Proposals must have a Faculty Advisor from the applicant's institution, and students must be enrolled full-time in a degree program at one of Colorado's public or private 4-year colleges or universities. Research must be relevant to water resources issues that Colorado is facing and be conducted within the state of Colorado. The faculty sponsor is responsible for ensuring that the proposal has been processed according to their university's proposal submission policies and procedures, including review by their institution's office of sponsored research, or equivalent unit.

### **Funding**

Budgets requesting federal funds may include, but are not limited to, expenditures for student salaries, fringe benefits, supplies, services, travel, and other direct costs. Federal funds will not be approved for faculty salaries, student tuition, or equipment. All awards are limited to a maximum of \$10,000 of federal funds, and a minimum of 7 projects will be awarded for the FY 2026 program. Only direct costs (0% indirect costs (IDC)) are allowed for these research grants and require a 1:1 cost-share from **non-federal** sources. Non-federal cost share can include faculty salaries, fringe benefits, tuition and fees, forgiven IDC, as well as other expense categories normally associated with research activities. Research projects should begin September 1, 2026 and be completed by August 31, 2027.

### **Proposal Submission:**

Proposals are to be submitted electronically using the Detailed Proposal Requirements, described below, and are to be received no later than 5:00 PM (MDT) on March 31, 2026. Materials should be submitted to Karen Schlatter ([karen.schlatter@colostate.edu](mailto:karen.schlatter@colostate.edu)) and Nancy Grice ([nancy.grice@colostate.edu](mailto:nancy.grice@colostate.edu)) via email.

### Application Review

Applications will be pre-reviewed by the CoWC leadership to ensure that each proposal meets the administrative requirements of the RFP, including budget expenses and justification. All proposals meeting the administrative requirements will then be evaluated through a peer review process, overseen by the CoWC leadership. The criteria used for evaluating each proposal includes: (1) justification of proposed student activities in addressing critical gaps in water resource education and/or knowledge; (2) responsiveness to RFP priority areas; (3) technical quality of the proposed study plan; (4) training potential for graduate and undergraduate students; and (5) effectiveness of knowledge dissemination plan.

### Announcement of Awards

The student applicant and Faculty Advisor will be notified regarding the status of their application via email no later than April 30, 2026, *pending availability of federal funds*. The student research project will be included in the CoWC's FY26 application package for USGS 104b funding (typically submitted in May) and will be routed through CSU's Office of Sponsored Programs. **\*Projects may not be started until official notification from USGS is received by the Colorado Water Center that our application has been approved.**

### Proposal Preparation Guidelines:

The proposal shall not exceed 6 single-spaced pages.

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

- 12-point font size
- Times New Roman font
- 1-inch margins (all sides)
- Budget not to exceed \$10,000

### Deliverables

Projects must be completed by August 31, 2027. No-cost time extensions are not allowed.

Upon completion of the project, recipients will be required to submit a final project report not to exceed 10 pages and due no later than October 31, 2027, which will include:

- One-page Narrative on research activities and project results for a general audience.
- High-resolution photos of students and faculty advisor actively conducting research of the project.
- Financial accounting of all expenditures.
- Faculty & Student will be required to provide information that CoWC is mandated to include in its Annual Report to the USGS ([see previous reporting form](#)) and may be **contacted up to five years following the completion of the project.**

### Financial Policy:

The designated Faculty Advisor is ultimately responsible for CoWC-funded accounts. If the budget is over-expended or expenditures were improperly charged, the Faculty Advisor and his/her department or college are responsible for providing funds for the unauthorized spending.

### Notice Regarding Funding for Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS)

There are restrictions on using grant funds for Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS). If your request includes funding for UAS, please refer to the enclosed "Covered UAS Assessment Guide" (doi-covered-uas- assessment-guide-v3.0.pdf) for guidance in determining whether the UAS is covered. The Department of Interior will not approve funding for covered UAS, and including a covered UAS in your request may cause significant delays in processing the award.

Additionally, all UAS operated under DOI operational control, including cooperator aircraft, must have a current OAS-36U DOI UAS Data Card or letter of authorization issued by the Office of Aviation Services. Please review <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/opm-11.pdf> for detailed information if you are submitting a proposal that includes UAS.

Questions:

Please contact Karen Schlatter by e-mail [karen.schlatter@colostate.edu](mailto:karen.schlatter@colostate.edu) for questions about this RFP.

Detailed Proposal Requirements

The proposal (items 1-22) shall not exceed 6 single-spaced pages. Items 23-27 are not included in the 6-page limit.

Proposals must contain the following elements:

1. **Title.** Concise but descriptive
2. **Simple Summary:** Enter a summary of the project that would be understandable to an individual without specific expertise in the research topic. Please limit the summary to approximately 150 words.
3. **Project Type.** Choose from the following: Research, Information Transfer, or Education and Outreach (please specify).
4. **Congressional District:** CO-XXX
5. **Science Priorities:** Choose one category from the following categories that most closely applies: Water Scarcity and Availability; Water Hazards and Climate Variability; Water Quality; Water Policy, Planning, and Socioeconomics; Watershed and Ecosystem Function; Water Technology and Innovation; or Workforce Development and Water Literacy.
6. **USGS Cross-Discipline Landscapes:** Arctic; California Bay-Delta; Chesapeake Bay; Columbia River; Everglades; Great Lakes; Gulf Coast; Klamath; Puget Sound; Salton Sea; Upper Mississippi River; None of the Above.
7. **USGS Cross-Discipline Science Topic:** Choose one category from the following categories that most closely applies: Climate; Energy; HABS; Indian Water Rights; Natural Hazards; Oceans; Coastal; or Great Lakes; STEM; Water Challenges; Other.
8. **Geographic Study Area:**
9. **Keywords.** Provide three keywords, using the list found in Attachment A.
10. **Start Date.** September 1, 2026
11. **End Date.** August 31, 2027
12. **Student Information.** Provide name, academic rank, major, university, email address, phone number, fax number, street address, city, state and zip code.
13. **Faculty Advisor Information.** Provide name, academic rank, university, email address, phone number, fax number, street address, city, state and zip code of the Faculty advisor(s).
14. **Faculty Advisor Departmental Accountant.** Provide name, email address and phone number.

15. **Abstract.** Provide a brief (one-page or less) description of the problem, methods, objectives, and expected outcomes of the proposal.
16. **Statement of regional or State water problem.** Include an explanation of the need for the project: who wants it and how it benefits Colorado.
17. **Statement of the results or benefits.** Specify the type of information that is to be gained and how it will be used.
18. **Nature, scope, and objectives of the project, including a timeline of activities.**
19. **Methods, procedures, and facilities.** Provide enough information to permit evaluation of the technical adequacy of the approach to satisfy the objectives.
20. **Dissemination of findings.** Provide a brief statement on how the results of this work will be disseminated to water professionals and/or communities/public.
21. **Related research** (Research projects only). Show by literature and communication citations the similarities and dissimilarities of the proposed project to completed or on-going work on the same topic.
22. **Data Management Plan (DMP):** Provide a supplementary paragraph labeled “**Data Management Plan**” (DMP). This supplementary document should describe how the proposal will conform to USGS policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results and associated data. A valid DMP may include only the statement that no detailed plan is needed (e.g. “No data are expected to be produced from this project”), as long as the statement is accompanied by a clear justification. This supplementary paragraph may include:
  - the types of data, samples, physical collections, software, curriculum materials, and other materials to be produced in the course of the project;
  - the standards to be used for data and metadata format and content (where existing standards are absent or deemed inadequate, this should be documented along with any proposed solutions or remedies);
  - policies for access and sharing including provisions for appropriate protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, or other rights or requirements;
  - provisions for re-use, re-distribution, and the production of derivatives; and
  - plans for archiving data, samples, and other research products, and for preservation of free public access to them.
23. **Budget Breakdown.** Provide an estimated budget by filling out the template provided as attachment [104b-budget-single-project.xlsx](#) to this communication. Indirect costs are not allowed and a 1:1 fund match from non-federal sources is required. Federal funds will not be approved for faculty salaries, student tuition, or equipment, but these can be used as matching funds.
24. **Budget Justification.** Breakdown and justify requested expenses utilizing the budget justification template provided as attachment [budget-justification.docx](#). See the USGS examples of a [good budget justification](#) and a [bad budget justification](#).
25. **Training potential.** Estimate the number of graduate and undergraduate students, by

degree level, who are expected to receive training in the project (See Attachment B).

26. **Student and Faculty Advisor Signature Page.** It is mandatory that the student and their Faculty Advisor complete the form in Attachment C.
27. **Faculty Advisor (PI) and Graduate Student Qualifications.** Include CVs of the Major Advisor and Graduate Student. CVs should not exceed two pages or list more than 15 pertinent publications (these do not count against page limit).

**Research must be relevant to Colorado and be conducted within the state of Colorado.**

ATTACHMENT A

ACID DEPOSITION	ACD
AGRICULTURE	AG
CLIMATOLOGICAL PROCESSES	CP
CONSERVATION	COV
DROUGHT	DROU
ECOLOGY	ECL
ECONOMICS	ECON
EDUCATION	EDU
FLOODS	FL
GEOMORPOLOGICAL PROCESSES	GEOMOR
GEOCHEMICAL PROCESSES	GEOCHE
GROUNDWATER	GW
HYDROGEOCHEMISTRY	HYDROGEO
HYDROLOGY	HYDROL
INVASIVE SPECIES	INV
IRRIGATION	IG
LAW, INSTITUTIONS, AND POLICY	LIP
MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING	M&P
METHODS	MET
MODELS	MOD
NITRATE CONTAMINATION	NC
NON POINT POLLUTION	NPP
NUTRIENTS	NU
RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCES	RAD
RECREATION	REC
SEDIMENTS	SED
SOLUTE TRANSPORT	ST
SURFACE WATER	SW
TOXIC SUBSTANCES	TS
TREATMENT	TRT
WASTEWATER	WW
WATER QUALITY	WQL
WATER QUANTITY	WQN
WATER SUPPLY	WS
WETLANDS	WET

**Student Support**

**Project Title:** [Type project title here]

Please provide the following information for students that will be involved in this project:

<b>Student's Name</b>	<b>Degree Level (Undergrad, Masters, Ph.D.)</b>	<b>Area of Study (Discipline)</b>	<b>Thesis or Dissertation to be completed? Yes/No</b>

**Financial Policy:**

The designated faculty advisor is ultimately responsible for CoWC-funded accounts. If the budget is over-expended or expenditures were improperly charged, the Faculty Advisor and his/her department or college are responsible for providing funds for the unauthorized spending.

**By Signing This Document:**

- You acknowledge that you have read the Student RFP Guidelines.
- You meet the requirements to submit a proposal.
- The information you have provided on this form is accurate.
- You agree to the Deliverables and Financial Policy outlined above.

Student Signature

Faculty Advisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_