



## Request for Nebraska Water Center's USGS FY2026 104B

Call for Pre-Proposal Guidelines

Attachment 1

PRE-PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE: April 15, 2026

### INTRODUCTION

Under the Water Resources Research Act, Section 104(b) research grant program, which is administered by the US Department of the Interior through the Water Resources Division of the US Geological Survey (USGS), the Nebraska Water Center is soliciting pre-proposal applications for projects funded by the FY2026 RFP. The following are general guidelines concerning this program.

### DESCRIPTION

The FY2026 USGS 104B anticipated award provides funding for projects that will enhance the grantee's ability to obtain external funding to support prominent scholarly work.

Through the 104B program, USGS seed grant funding to be awarded through the Nebraska Water Center provides funding for research projects proposed by early-career faculty and below.

Pre-proposals are welcome in all areas of water quality, water quantity, and surface or groundwater study, with preference given to problems of state and regional importance. The Nebraska Water Center highly encourages faculty who previously submitted a FY2025 pre-proposal to this program to make revisions and resubmit for the FY2026 call.

*Note: the award funding is contingent on the availability of appropriated federal funds.*

Junior faculty are encouraged to apply, with an emphasis given to pre-proposals which include student-training opportunities. A faculty member may submit only one application as PI per funding request but may serve as a Co-PI on other submitted applications.

**These are anticipated one-year seed grants which are expected to lead to larger, extramural grants.**

- Awards will be for one year (January 1, 2027-December 31, 2027) and you may request between \$5,000 - \$30,000 total per project.
  - The FY2026 awards will be made to the Universities in September 2026, however, spending will not be allowed until January 2027
  - There will be NO no-cost extensions granted to finish the FY2026 research project
  
- All research must be completed by the grant deadline of December 31, 2027.
- Expenses (less salary) must be encumbered by December 30, 2027.
- Materials/supplies must be received by December 30, 2027, if purchased with USGS grant funds.

Faculty from any college or university within Nebraska are invited to apply. For those interested in submitting a pre-proposal from outside the University of Nebraska system, please contact Tricia Liedle at 402-472-3305 or Ann Briggs at 402-472-5317 for instructions. You will be required to complete attachment 5. However, if you are not in the FDP Clearinghouse you will be required to complete attachment 6.

The 104B Internal Competition Module in NuRamp can be found under ID 1293: 2026 Nebraska Water Center Call for USGS 104B Pre-proposals or by visiting [go.unl.edu/2026\\_104b](https://go.unl.edu/2026_104b).

Pre-proposal applications must be submitted via the Internal Competition module in NuRamp. Sign into NuRamp using your NU Institutional credentials. If you are outside of the University of Nebraska system, please contact Tricia Liedle (402-472-3305) or Ann Briggs (402-472-5317) for instructions.

## PRE-PROPOSAL REQUIRED CRITERIA:

### Proposal Assistance in Attachment 2:

attachment 2, pg. 11    2025 pre-proposal by Dr. S. Beegum  
 attachment 2, pg. 28    2025 full proposal from Dr. L. Chen  
 attachment 2, pg. 53    2025 USGS 104(b) RFP for Reference only

**Prepare the following information in the order listed below – as a single PDF file.**

**Formatting Order:** (12 pt. Times Roman font, 1” margins)

- a. **Title:** Concise but descriptive
- b. **Principal investigator(s):** Provide name, university, and email address
- c. **Start Date:** January 1, 2027
- d. **End Date:** December 31, 2027
- e. **Project Type:** Choose from the following: Research, Information Transfer, Education, or Other (please specify).
- f. **WRR Science Priorities:** Choose from the following the one category 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.
- g. **Keywords: Use Focus Categories** (see attachment 2, pg. 10) provide a detailed list of ALL keywords that apply to help us assign reviewers.
- h. **Abstract: 300-word project abstract:** Provide a brief (300 word) description of the problem, methods, and objectives.
- i. **Plain-language summary:** Provide a brief (150 word) description of the study that could be understandable by the public with no acronyms.

- j. **Project Narrative:** Up to no more than four pages of pre-proposal project narrative/description, plus a list of references cited (one-page maximum). Appendices are not allowed. Must be **written in lay language understandable to non-specialist reviewers**. Your preproposal should also include: the overall goal of the study, specific objectives, anticipated outcomes and a description of the approach, including a research timetable and ***specifically where you intend to apply for extramural funding because of this grant.***
- k. **Investigator Qualifications:** Up to two-page CV (including selected relevant publications and grants over the last five years) for each Principal Investigator listed.
- l. **Funding Support:** List any previous USGS 104b support from the Nebraska Water Center within the past five years.
- m. **Budget Items:** Mandatory
  - **UNL's OSP budget template is required** (attachment 3)
    - Refer to attachment 2, page 1
      - Pre-proposals require that you work with your departmental grants specialist even though they will be submitted through the Internal Competition Module and the specialist will know where they are if needed. Cost share must be verified prior to pre-proposal submission. (*DO NOT contact OSP*)
      - Outside UNL PIs are required to complete the UNL subrecipient form using either (attachment 5 or 6)
  - **USGS 104B budget justification**
    - Budget justification USGS template (attachment 4); and for 'justification' guidance use (attachment 2, pg. 2)
    - USGS requires an extremely and very detailed budget justification/breakdown using (attachment 4)
      - Example of a "BAD" and "GOOD" budget justification can be found by referencing (attachment 2, pgs. 3-9)
    - **Match: A 1:1 FEDERAL (one) TO NON-FEDERAL (one) MATCH is mandatory.** Matching funds (a.k.a. Cost Share) may include indirect costs and unrecovered indirect costs, non-federal salaries and benefits. Indirect costs (i.e. F&A) are NOT allowed on the grants; however unrecovered F&A may be used to help meet the required match ratio.
    - The **F&A rate** should correspond to the rate that was used in the first year of the five-year cycle for USGS. For FY2026 UNL's federally negotiated indirect rates will be 55.5% for organized research and 48.5% for Ag research respectively. (see attachment 3) – *FY2026 will be year 1 of 5.*

**NOTE: if all the above criteria (a-m) is not remitted in completion with pre-proposal, your project will be disqualified**

#### **Take aways from USGS after projects were funded:**

- Junior faculty is highly recommended
- Travel is *discouraged* in budgets
- USGS prefers focus be on student support and the research project

#### Verification Required:

Pre-proposals must be verified at this stage to ensure cost share is appropriately approved or modified before NWC will consider your pre-proposal for funding.

- Please work with your departmental or business center grants specialists to ensure the budget is correct. DO NOT contact OSP for this internal submission.

- Pre-proposals must be submitted via NuRamp **on or before 3:00pm, April 15<sup>th</sup>**. Pre-proposals will not be reviewed without budget approval.
- **NOTE:** Pre-proposals submitted after 3:00pm will not be considered. *Principle investigators chosen for funding will be notified by the Nebraska Water Center regarding the USGS 104b FULL proposal phase. Date has not been determined.*
- You may reference the FY2025 USGS RFP (attachment 2, page 53), but do not follow any of the 2025 instructions in the RFP on your pre-proposal. We ask that you use the above guidelines for your pre-proposal submission. **FY2026 USGS RFP has yet to be released. Anticipated sometime in April.**

**Pre-proposal Review and Selection Criteria:** (up to 100 points possible)

Pre-proposals will be evaluated based on the extent to which they address the following criteria:

- **20 points - Scientific or scholarly merit and relevance of project,**
  - Describes the project's scientific, artistic, or scholarly merit.
- **15 points – Operation Plan**
- **10 points - Potential for securing external funding**
  - Identifies one or more external funding opportunities likely to follow from USGS funding or other resources.
- **10 points - Alignment with USGS priorities and success likelihood**
- **Up to 20 points – Qualification of project personnel**
  - 10 points – Junior faculty (0-5 years at educational institution). Highly encouraged
  - 5 points – Senior faculty (5-10 years at educational institution)
  - 1-5 points – Emphasize the importance of USGS funding to the applicant's long-term professional development and the overall scholarly reputation of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- **10 points – USGS 104B detailed budget justification**
- **10 points – Relevance and importance to program objectives as they pertain to Nebraska water needs**
- **5 points – UNL Budget Spreadsheet**

## FULL PROPOSAL PROCESS:

**Successful Research Projects Chosen by NWC to Move Forward with FULL 2026 USGS 104B Proposal Information**

**NOTE:** *turnaround time may be two weeks for preparing the FULL proposal once notified.*

Selected pre-proposals will be asked to complete the FULL proposal for USGS per the 2026 RFP, **not yet released**. The full proposal will require more in-depth narrative of up to ten (10) pages total (pre-proposal narrative must be expanded for full submission), approved USGS budget, USGS budget justification details, UNL budget pages, data management plan, signed matching letters, conflict of interest statement, overlap and duplication of effort statement, and possibly other materials per RFP, which will be provided to all successful chosen pre-proposals by the Nebraska Water Center once USGS releases the full FY26 RFP.

If you have any questions, please contact Tricia Liedle ([pliedle@nebraska.edu](mailto:pliedle@nebraska.edu)) or by calling 402-472-3305.