



Submission Guidelines for
Water Resources Research Act Program
104g National Competitive Grants Program

FY2026 104g General
Funding Opportunity Number G27AS00164

Intent to Submit email to IWRRC: 10:00AM EST October 15, 2026
Budget submission deadline to IWRRC: 11:59AM EST October 28, 2026
Proposal submission deadline to IWRRC: 10:00AM EST November 5, 2026

The U.S. Geological Survey in cooperation with the National Institutes for Water Resources has issued a 104g request for proposals (RFP) for the General category. We anticipate the release of an additional RFP for the PFAS category in the future. These national competitions focus on water problems and issues of a regional or national concern.

These projects can be for a duration of up to 3 years. Project Period: 05/01/2027 – 04/30/2030

104g General (\$462,500 available in funding; Award ceiling \$120,000)

Research Priority: Data Centers and Other Water Intensive Industries

The rapid expansion of data centers and other water intensive industries that rely on public supply systems has outpaced the availability of accurate, transparent, and timely information about their water use. Existing datasets often contain gaps, inconsistencies, and uncertainties that limit the ability of communities, utilities, and policymakers to make informed decisions. As public concern grows and water resource pressures intensify, there is a critical need for improved methodologies that can more reliably characterize industrial water withdrawals, cooling demands, and local impacts. This Notice of Funding Opportunity seeks to address these challenges by advancing observational and analytical approaches capable of reducing uncertainty and strengthening confidence in publicly available information.

The scope includes the development, testing, and demonstration of innovative methodologies for observing, estimating, and validating water use associated with data centers and other industries drawing from public supply systems including the identification of variables for accurate prediction of data center water usage, quantification of the uncertainty around those predictions, and the ability to forecast future scenarios of usage. Proposers must design approaches that integrate diverse data sources—such as utility records, operational data, environmental conditions, and publicly reported metrics – to produce more accurate and interpretable representations of water use. A central requirement of this effort is the application of artificial

intelligence and machine learning techniques to enhance data transparency, improve traceability, and identify sources of bias or uncertainty within existing datasets. Potential areas of research include quantifying water reuse from onsite or municipal wastewater treatment facilities, characterizing self-supplied withdrawals from wells, reservoirs, or rivers, and evaluating how seasonal variability influences industrial water demand.

Proposed methodologies should be scalable, adaptable to different geographic and regulatory contexts, and capable of supporting both national level assessments and localized decision making. Approaches must account for the variability in industrial processes, cooling technologies, water supply conditions, and the potential for alternative water sources such as reclaimed water or self-supplied withdrawals. Proposers should also incorporate strategies for validating results against independent or ground truth data and for capturing temporal dynamics, including seasonal fluctuations in water use. Proposals must articulate clear performance metrics, describe anticipated data needs and limitations, and outline how their methods will improve upon current practices used by utilities, regulators, and industry stakeholders.

The selected awardee will work collaboratively with federal partners, local utilities, regional planning bodies, and industry representatives to ensure that the resulting methodologies are practical, credible, and aligned with real world information needs. Engagement with these stakeholders should inform the design and refinement of analytical approaches, support the interpretation of results, and help identify pathways for long term adoption. The final deliverables should provide a robust, transparent framework for observing and communicating industrial water use – including reuse, self-supply, and seasonal variability – enabling communities and decisionmakers to better understand the implications of datacenter growth and other public supply dependent industries.

Eligibility and other considerations

Awards are available only to Water Resources Research Institutes established pursuant to the provisions of section 104 of the Water Resources Research Act - <http://water.usgs.gov/wrri/index.php>. However, any investigator at an institution of higher learning in the United States is eligible to apply for an award through a Water Resources Research Institute. The application, with full proposal along with the SF-424 and SF-424A and budget forms, must be submitted through grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>) by the university at which the Institute is located.

Intent to Submit email

We require that you submit an intent to submit email to the IWRRRC **no later than 5:00PM EST on Thursday, October 15, 2026**. The email must include:

- Your application is for the 104g General funding opportunity
- The proposed title of your proposal
- Name and email address of any Co-PI(s) with corresponding institutions
- **Send Intent to Submit email to IWRRRC:** email Dr. Keith Cherkauer (cherkaue@purdue.edu), Dr. Dani Lay (winter35@purdue.edu), and Laura Esman (lesman@purdue.edu).. **Remember to copy all Co-PIs on this email.** You will receive a confirmation email from IWRRRC within 24 hours.

PERA instructions for Purdue Applicants: when entering your proposal request into PERA, please use the following nomenclature for your short title: “PI Last Name_USGS_FY26_104G_GEN. For example, CHERKAUER_USGS_FY26_104G_GEN. In addition, add edit rights for Keith Cherkauer, Danielle Lay, and Laura Esman.

Budget Deadline

Project budgets are required to be completed using two forms; the budget sheet (.xlsx) and the budget justification (.docx). There has been intense scrutiny on the budget documents that cause funding delays. Please use the example budget justification as a guide to the information required. If you are proposing a multi-year project, make sure to separate costs per year as done in the example template. Both documents are due to IWRRC no later than **11:59PM Eastern Standard Time on Wednesday, October 28, 2026**. Please email both attachments to Dr. Keith Cherkauer (cherkaue@purdue.edu), Dr. Dani Lay (winter35@purdue.edu), and Laura Esman (lesman@purdue.edu).

Proposal Deadline

Please note that the information on deadlines and submission guidelines documented in the Fiscal Year 2026 Announcements, released by the US Geological Survey, is for the staff of the Indiana Water Resources Research Center (IWRRC) and other Centers only. This information does not apply for Principal Investigators submitting research proposals.

Full proposals for the Water Resources Research Act Program, National Competitive Grants Program and additional required documentation are due to the IWRRC **no later than 10:00AM Eastern Standard Time on Thursday, November 5, 2026**. Anything received after this time will not be eligible for submission.

Submit full proposals to IWRRC (as a Word Document): email Dr. Keith Cherkauer (cherkaue@purdue.edu), Dr. Dani Lay (winter35@purdue.edu), and Laura Esman (lesman@purdue.edu). You will receive a confirmation email within 24 hours.

Principal Investigators – please do not submit your proposal to grants.gov. IWRRC staff are required to complete these tasks. Proposals for the National Competitive Grants Program are only accepted for review if received from IWRRC. Therefore, Principal Investigators are required to submit proposals to the IWRRC.

Proposal Preparation

Please follow the proposal preparation guidelines outlined starting on **page 7** of the Fiscal Year 2026 Announcement, with the exception of document format. Please review the list of files that should be submitted with your full proposal and the format required for each below. IWRRC staff will convert the final files to PDF and will enter your proposal information into grants.gov on behalf of the PI (PIs may have access to grants.gov but should not access and instead work through their Sponsored Programs and IWRRC).

Please note that:

- Elements 3-8 shall not exceed 10 single-spaced pages with 12-point font and at least 1-inch margins, including tables, pictures, graphs, figures, and appendices.
- Supplemental information (Elements 1, 2, 14, and 15) does not count towards the page limit.
- Include page numbers and short title in either header or footer. Do not include any other information in the header or footer.

For clarification of Element 3 – Executive Order/Secretarial Order Alignment, please see information and links available under Review and Selection Process (page 15).

All forms and templates are linked below and available at <https://iwrrc.org/funding-opportunities/>. Full proposal submission must include these 19 files (please also use this file naming nomenclature):

1. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Project Abstract Summary.pdf** – Please use the form available at https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/readonly/Project_AbstractSummary_2_0-V2.0.pdf.
2. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Elements1-2.docx** – This should include the Title Page and Address of Specific Priority in a Word document.
3. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Elements3-8.docx** – This should include sections of the proposal narrative that match the elements written in the RFP. This should be a Word document.
4. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Budget_Justification.docx** – The budget justification that was submitted and approved earlier in the submission process. If your project includes a subaward, the subaward also requires a separate budget justification document. This should be a Word Document.
5. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Budget_Sheet.xlsx** – The completed and approved budget spreadsheets for the project, including any subawards. This should be an Excel file.
6. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_DMP.docx** – Your data management plan, no more than 2-pages. This should be a Word document. Template available at: <https://www.usgs.gov/media/files/usgs-data-management-plan-checklist>
7. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Cited_Literature.docx** – A Word document of all your references, formatted appropriately.
8. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Qualifications_Team.docx** – A Word document that includes a brief biosketch, no more than 3-pages, for the PI and any Co-PIs.
9. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Match_Commitment_Letter.docx/pdf** – A letter from your institution on letterhead indicating a commitment to the required match for the project. These are often in pdf format due to signatures but can also be a Word document.
10. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_LOS.docx/pdf** – Letters of support can be submitted combined into one file or as individual files. **A Letter of Support from USGS is required for every proposal.** Other Letters of Support are optional. Submit as either a Word document or pdf.
11. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Required_Statements.docx** – template is available at <https://iwrrc.org/funding-opportunities>. Submit as Word document.
12. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_FARate.pdf** – Your institution's F&A rate document. These are most often pdfs.
13. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Biosketch_PI.pdf** – This is a requirement for the PI only. Please use SciENCv NSF biosketch and provide as a pdf. There is also a [template](#) provided.
14. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Current_Pending_PI.pdf** - This is a requirement for the PI only. Please use SciENCv NSF current and pending and provide as a pdf. There is also a [template](#) provided.
15. **FY_26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_LOI.pdf** – This document is required for all non-Purdue University applicants.
16. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_SFLLL.pdf** – This is a disclosure of lobbying activities. This may be needed for non-Purdue University applicants. Please review criteria. Your Sponsored Programs should assist with this.
17. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_Lobbying_Cert. pdf** - Your Sponsored Programs should provide this.
18. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_SF424.pdf** - Your Sponsored Programs should provide this.
19. **FY26_104G_Proposal_[PI last name]_SF424A.pdf** - Your Sponsored Programs should provide this.

Contact Sponsored Programs

Make sure to contact your institution's Sponsored Programs immediately. The proposal should be submitted to your institution's Sponsored Programs for processing. The proposal must include an institutional cost-sharing agreement letter.

Federal Employee Collaboration

Federal employees are encouraged to collaborate with research scientists at colleges and universities. A Federal collaborator can serve as a Co-PI in this proposal (they cannot be PI).

- **If your project DOES NOT include a Federal collaborator**, you should be communicating with USGS regardless. A letter of support from USGS is required.
- **If your project includes a Federal collaborator**, a letter of support is required.
- **If your project includes a Federal collaborator as a Co-PI**, a letter of support is required. The letter of support must be signed by someone in leadership at a designated center (not by the Co-PI). The letter must include an outline of the Federal collaborator's level of commitment to the project.
- **If your project includes a Federal collaborator and is requesting USGS funding for that collaborator (this funding is not included in this grant application)**, a letter of support is required. The letter of support must be signed by someone in leadership at a designated center (not by the Co-PI). The letter must include a detailed description of the role and responsibilities of the Federal collaborator in the proposed research project (see Element 14).

Letters of Support

All proposals require a Letter of Support from USGS. This letter must be signed by someone in leadership at a designated center (state or regional). Other letters of support are optional. Letters of support do not count against the proposal page limit.

Proposal Preparation Checklist

1. Review these IWRRRC Submission Guidelines carefully.
2. Review the Fiscal Year 2026 Announcement (Funding Opportunity Number G27AS00164) carefully for full eligibility for this grant competition.
3. Submit Intent to Submit email to cherkaue@purdue.edu, winter35@purdue.edu, and lesman@purdue.edu by **October 15, 2026 at 10:00AM EST**
4. Complete proposal following guidelines outlined starting on page 7 of the Fiscal Year 2026 Announcement (Funding Opportunity Number G27AS00164).
5. Complete budget forms (budget sheet and budget justification; include project start and end dates) and submit to cherkaue@purdue.edu, winter35@purdue.edu, and lesman@purdue.edu by **October 28, 2026 at 11:59PM EST**.
6. Complete the additional required documents (listed above). These should be submitted with your final proposal.
7. Obtain institutional cost-sharing agreement documentation. Incomplete cost-share documentation will disqualify your proposal.
8. Include a letter of support from USGS. Your proposal will be disqualified if you do not include this.
9. Obtain additional letters of support, if applicable.
10. Submit full proposal document files to cherkaue@purdue.edu and lesman@purdue.edu by **November 5, 2026 at 10:00AM EST**
 - a. Email subject line: example - 104g Proposal_[PI last name]

- b. All Co-PIs must be copied on this email submission
- 11. IWRRC staff will provide an email confirmation to each PI that the proposal was submitted to grants.gov by **5:00PM EST on November 12, 2026**. Email confirmation may take 24 hours.

Questions

Please contact Dani Lay (winter35@purdue.edu) or Laura Esman (lesman@purdue.edu).