REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE 2019-2020
VERMONT WATER RESOURCES AND LAKE STUDIES CENTER
ANNUAL GRANTS PROGRAM

PROPOSAL DUE DATE: OCTOBER 8, 2018
NOTIFICATION OF SELECTION: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2018
REVISIONS OF SELECTED PROPOSALS: MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2018
SUBMISSION TO USGS (COMPLETED BY ELISSA): FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 2019
AWARD PERIOD: MARCH 1, 2019 – FEBRUARY 29, 2020

OVERVIEW

The Vermont Water Resources and Lake Studies Center seeks faculty and graduate student research and information transfer proposals for the 2019-2020 USGS 104b grant program. The annual RFP for the USGS state-level (104b) Water Resources Research Institutes has not yet been posted for FY2019-2020. However, it appears that funding will be available again this year and so we will proceed with this call for proposals on the basis of the FY2018-2019 RFP. There have typically been very few changes to these RFPs in recent years. For the time being potential PIs should consult the FY2018 RFP for detailed instructions on how to prepare a proposal. Other relevant documents and forms can be found Vermont Water Resources and Lakes Studies Center website. This page has also has a link to a budget spreadsheet and proposal guidelines. When the 2019 RFP is released – most likely in late October 2018 – it will be posted to this page. Typically there has been little change in this RFP from year to year. The USGS RFP describes how the Vermont Water Center must format and submit the annual program of research and outreach and so you can ignore some of this document. To create your annual project proposal (new, second-year, or renewal), you should focus in particular on Section F (Project Proposals) and Attachments C (Budget Breakdown) and D (Budget Justification).

RESEARCH FOCUS

Proposals must focus on critical water resources science and management needs in Vermont, including research conducted in the Connecticut River Basin and the Lake Champlain Basin. Proposals for research on physical, biological, chemical, social, or engineering aspects of water quality or quantity are encouraged. Proposals for outreach, education, training and other information transfer opportunities are also welcome. Contact Elissa Schuett if you have an idea you would like to pursue, especially in the case of information transfer proposals. All proposals should base their justifications on current needs as documented in national, regional, and especially state science and technology overviews.
PROJECT TYPES

One and two-year projects are eligible. Two types of proposals will be considered: Graduate Research (GR) and Faculty Research (FR).

**Graduate Research proposals**

In the next year, these awards will be favored. Graduate students may propose projects with direct costs of up to $30,000/year, of which $10,000 may be requested directly from the Water Center (i.e. the Federal source) and up to $20,000 must come from non-Federal matching sources (either cash or in-kind). In all cases the project budget must be at least 1:2 Federal to Non-Federal matching funds. These awards can be used for stipend, tuition, research operating costs, travel or any other direct cost that is directly relevant to the student’s research. Graduate students must have a faculty sponsor, who will act as lead PI on the project. UVM graduate students are required to include graduate student tuition in the budget (federal funds or matching funds) unless the student is on continuing registration. If funds will be used over the course of an entire academic year (which does not align with the award period), we can plan for that when developing the budget.

**Faculty Research Proposals**

Faculty may propose projects with budgets of up to $120,000/year, of which $40,000/year may be requested directly from the Water Center (i.e. the Federal source) and up to $80,000/year must come from non-Federal matching resources (either cash or in-kind). Requests of less than $120,000 are encouraged so that the Water Center can fund more individual projects. In all cases the project budget must be at least 1:2 Federal to Non-Federal matching funds. PIs may propose two-year projects with opportunities for renewals but should understand that the USGS process requires that all projects – new, second year, and renewal – be vetted annually. Multi-year projects will be renewed pending an internal review of progress as described below. Projects must be led by a Vermont university or college faculty Principal Investigator (PI) but can and should include federal, state, or private partners whose contributions can often be counted as match. See the suggestions for match sources below.

**SUBMISSION PROCESS**

The deadline for submissions is 4:00pm, Monday, October 8, 2018. Proposals must be submitted by email to Elissa Schuett.

Proposal requirements:

- The proposal narrative should be no longer than 10 single-spaced pages. 12-pt font, including references
- Budget and budget justification (not counted toward the 10-page limit)
  - The budget does not need to be officially vetted at this stage, but needs enough detail for assessment by reviewers. Please also be aware of university budget policies (e.g. allowable expenses for travel, food, computers, etc.). For UVM, you may refer to Sponsored Project Administration policy and award management website.
- PIs (including graduate students) should include a 2-page CV (not counted toward the 10-page limit)
- The names of three potential reviewers, including home institution, email, and phone number, who are competent in the field of study but with whom you have no conflict of interest. Reviewers do not need to be from Vermont.
**FEDERAL AND NON-FEDERAL FUNDS**

These proposals require a **1:2 Federal:Non-Federal match**, i.e., for each $1 you request there is a requirement to identify $2 of “match.” There are a variety of ways to meet this match, as described at the end of this document, including non-monetary as well as monetary sources. Graduate students should work with their faculty advisor(s) to identify appropriate match opportunities. Note in particular that fringe benefits and the *entire* sum of indirect costs can be used as matching funds. Thus, if a faculty advisor is willing to offer salary as match, this will meet a large portion of the matching commitment. Other forms of match are acceptable as well, including *quantifiable* in-kind and donated resources from a third party. (A letter documenting the value of the third-party match is required and is usually relatively easy to obtain). If your proposal is selected for funding, we will work with you to develop the official budget. Graduate Research (GR) proposals should follow the same format. It is recommended that the proposal clearly state how the Federal funding obtained from the USGS will leverage other funds that are being used as match.

**REVIEW PROCESS**

The review process has two steps. Step One is a state-level review of each individual proposal which will include an external peer-review component. In Step One you **do not** need to have an officially-vetted project budget. However, you should provide a complete draft budget following the format of Attachment C and should include a detailed budget justification as per Attachment D. Your proposal, budget and budget justification will be reviewed externally and then the proposals and external reviews will be reviewed by the Vermont Water Center Advisory Board, a group of state agency, university, private sector, and NGO stakeholders. The Director and Advisory Board will give priority to new Graduate Student support projects and to current projects in the second year of two-year funding if sufficient progress has been shown in year one. Projects requesting renewals beyond two years will be considered on equal priority with new projects. The Director and Advisory Board will recommend a group of proposals that will be advanced to Step Two. Principle investigators (PIs) for all proposals will be notified of the outcome of their proposals in Step One **by Friday, 16 November 2018**.

In Step Two the proposals selected for advancement will be assembled into single package to be submitted by the Vermont Water Resources and Lake Studies Center to the USGS. The Director and/or Advisory Board may suggest changes to proposals that are recommended to go forward to the USGS in Step Two. The PIs of these recommended proposals must provide a revised version of their proposal and should work with Elissa Schuett to create a final budget and detailed budget justification that is acceptable by UVM Sponsored Projects Administration, **by 5:00 PM, Monday, 10 December 2018**. This final version of the PI’s proposal should be submitted as an *MS/Word*.doc file, to Elissa.Schuett@uvm.edu. You must submit your proposal documents to Elissa by the indicated due date and time and receive confirmation that the documents have been received for them to be considered as submitted. *Do not submit a PDF file as indicated in the USGS RFP.* We will arrange to submit all recommended proposals to USGS as a package; i.e., you do not need to worry about this step. It is highly likely that proposals selected for advancement in the state-level review will be funded by USGS.

**SOURCES OF MATCH**

The USGS requires that Water Center awards show a 1:2 match of Federal to Non-Federal resources; i.e., $2 matching Non-Federal *value* for each $1 of Federal *funding* requested. This is a high level of match, but with some ingenuity and willing partnerships, it is possible to obtain this match relatively easily. All matching funds must be from commitments and purchases during the award period, March 1 – February 28 of each year. See the following suggestions for ideas.
THIRD-PARTY MATCHING SUPPORT

External, “third-party” matching is the simplest form of matching support. Interested clients and stakeholders may be able provide matching support in the form of cash or in-kind services. In either case the matching external support must be quantified in a letter from the sponsor(s) and shown on the routing forms for your proposal. Elissa.Schuett@uvm.edu can provide a suggested template letter that sponsors can use to document their matching contribution(s). In the case of cash given directly to UVM in support of your proposal it will likely be necessary to create a separate contract to bring the cash into the UVM system. We can help with this process and in the case of a client who might like to support more than one project, the Vermont Water Center can help consolidate the budgets and contracts to simplify the process for everyone. Direct "gifts" from, for example, a foundation can be handled in a similar manner. In-kind services (versus direct cash support) are a valuable and sometimes overlooked resource. In-kind services (e.g., consulting services provided by a partner, subcontracting done on behalf of the project by a client) must be described and quantified and a letter of support will be required from the partnering entity. We are happy to work with you, your partner(s), and your Office of Sponsored Projects representative to determine the documentation required. Note that indirect costs (F&A) should not be calculated on third-part matching funds.

PI SALARY

PI salary is an important form of match. Due to USGS guidelines, it is possible to count the fringe benefits and the full overhead costs for salaries as match. We suggest that faculty supporting a Graduate Research Project consider allocating a minimum of 2 weeks of cost-shared salary to this type of proposal. If your department will support a greater cost-share, you may certainly do that. On Faculty Research proposals you may also request federally funded support (e.g., for summer salary), but remember that every dollar of federal support requested requires $2 of Non-Federal match.

OVERHEAD (F&A) COSTS

By rule the USGS does not pay overhead (F&A) costs to the institutions that host the state Water Centers. This unrecovered overhead can and should be used as match. The sum of all sources of overhead (e.g., salaries, graduate and undergraduate student support, operational costs, etc.) count towards this unrecovered overhead. The combination of 2 weeks of PI salary support and the associated Overhead (F&A) costs can often contribute up to $1 of the $2 required Non-Federal match in many projects. Note that third-party cost share does not carry overhead (F&A) costs.