Call for Proposals
Vermont Water Resources and Lake Studies Center
2018-2019

Dear Colleagues:

The annual RFP for the USGS state-level (104b) Water Resources Research Institutes has not yet been posted for FY2018-2019. 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 FY2017-2018 RFP. There have typically been very few changes to these RFPs in recent years. Two types of proposals will be considered, as follows:

**Graduate Research (GR) proposals:** In the next year, these awards will be favored. Graduate students may propose projects with direct costs of up to $10,000/year. 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. 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-part match is required and is usually relatively easy to obtain.)

**Faculty Research (FR) 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.

GR and FR 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@uvm.edu 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.

For the time being potential PIs should consult the FY2017 RFP for detailed instructions on how to prepare a proposal. This document can be found on the Vermont Water Resources and Lakes Studies Center website by following the link to the USGS RFP document for the 104b program (a PDF). This page also has a link to a file with suggestions for how to obtain and compute matching funds, which can also be found appended to this document. When the 2018 RFP is released – most likely in late October 2017 – it will be posted at the same location. 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). 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. If your proposal is selected for funding, we will work with you to develop the detailed 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. In the special case of second-year and renewal Faculty Research proposals, PIs should include a Progress Report within section F.15 (Statement of results or benefits) that explains the key results from your relevant Vermont Water Center funding to date. Include figures, tables, and interim conclusions as needed to make a compelling case for continued funding. The proposal should be no longer than 10-pages, including references, but not including title and project information, abstract, budgets, or investigator qualifications. Include in your proposal the names of three potential reviewers, including home institution, mailing address, email, and phone number, who are competent in the field of study, but with whom you have no conflict of interest. Prepare your proposal as described in these sections and submit it as a PDF file to Elissa.Schuett@uvm.edu by Monday, 16 October 2017. You must submit your proposal documents as instructed by the indicated due date and time and receive confirmation that the documents have been received for them to be considered as submitted.

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, 17 November 2017.

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 PI’s 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, 11 December 2017. 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.

In summary, the key dates to note are:

- **Proposal due (PDF format)**: Monday, 16 October 2017
- **Notification of selection**: Friday, 17 November 2017
- **Revisions of selected proposals due (MS/Word format)**: Monday, 11 December 2017
- **Submission of proposal package to USGS (completed by Elissa)**: Friday, 12 January 2018
- **Award period**: Thursday, 1 March 2018 – Thursday, 28 March 2019

If you have any questions, please contact Elissa or me.

Regards,
Breck Bowden, Director
Suggested sources of match for Vermont Water Center proposals

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.

Graduate Student Support from other, non-Federal resources

Consider matching graduate student support from the Vermont Water Center with other institutional sources of support; e.g. graduate student stipends, tuition support, start-up funds etc. If the source of funding for the other portion of the graduate student support is Non-Federal then this funding as well as the F&A multiplier associated with it can be claimed as match. This is an effective way to stretch your institutional dollars.