



NCKRI National Seed Grant Program FY 2026

Deadline: April 16th, 2025

The New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, on behalf of the National Cave and Karst Research Institute (NCKRI), invites proposals for FY2026 Seed Grants in support of cave and karst research.

Application deadline: April 16th, 2025, 5:00 PM Mountain Time

Background and Goals

NCKRI is a research center of New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (a.k.a. New Mexico Tech or NMT) headquartered in the City of Carlsbad, New Mexico. Its goals are to conduct, support, facilitate, and promote programs in cave and karst research, education, environmental management, and data acquisition and sharing. NCKRI was created by the US Congress in 1998 as partnership with the National Park Service, State of New Mexico, and the City of Carlsbad.

In 2019, NCKRI initiated a seed grant program designed to facilitate and support cave and karst research at academic and research institutions across the United States. These seed grants are intended to enable investigators to initiate new cave and karst research, encourage new scientists to enter the field, and address research needs for cave and karst resource management.

This funding opportunity is made possible by generous support from the National Park Service, through a Cooperative Agreement with the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service under CFDA 15.944 - Natural Resource Stewardship.

Application Criteria

Principal Investigators (PIs) at any academic or research institution in the United States are invited to apply. Only one application per PI is allowed.

- 1. New research:** Only new, unfunded projects will be considered, and seed grant funds may not be used to support existing studies. Because these grants are intended as seed money to enable new research directions, the investigator should not have published on the research or received funding for it from another agency, and should clearly describe how the proposed activity truly represents a new direction for them and their research group.

2. **Clear relevance to cave and karst science:** NCKRI's goals are to conduct, support, facilitate, and promote programs in cave and karst research; thus, the research described in the proposal should be clearly relevant to cave and karst science. Basic and applied research in any field of cave and karst science will be considered.
3. **Research addressing the priorities of the National Park Service (NPS):** NCKRI seed grant funds are made possible by support from the NPS. While research anywhere qualifies for this grant program, proposals must address how the research helps meet the objectives of the NPS's Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Framework focus areas (<https://tinyurl.com/NRSS4pill>). Proposals for work in a national park should include a letter of support from an appropriate authority at the park.
4. **Outreach:** Each project must include an outreach component. Examples of appropriate outreach projects are instructional programs in a K-12 setting, video presentations of research posted on an institutional or NCKRI video channel, collaboration with a show cave or museum (including the NCKRI museum), college-level outreach initiatives, or collaboration with an artist. Investigators or their students/postdocs should expect to spend 5-10 hours on outreach in addition to preparation time.

Finalists will be selected based on:

- Scientific merit and quality of the proposal
- Relevance to cave and karst science
- Alignment with NPS focus area priorities
- The potential longevity of the proposed research (that is, the likelihood that pilot data obtained from the project will make the research team competitive for support from other funding agencies).

We will ask external reviewers to specifically critique and rank proposals based on these four criteria, in addition to quality of outreach activity and appropriateness of the budget. An example of the review form that is provided to external reviewers is available on the application website. Lead PIs cannot be a lead PI on a currently funded NCKRI seed grant.

Budgetary information

NCKRI expects to fund two projects with total subawards up to \$25,000 each, contingent on funding availability. Project periods may be 12 months, but funds must be fully expended before the end of the federal fiscal year (9/30/2026) regardless of project length.

The NCKRI National Seed Grant Program is intended to be a small seed funding source. NCKRI encourages institutions to give special consideration to this funding and recommends a waiver of Facilities & Administrative (F&A) cost recovery for these grants. Please provide evidence of an F&A cost waiver if relevant, and if your institution will be removing F&A costs, that should be reflected in the budget. (NMT will be the negotiating party.)

The budget and budget justification should be two pages in length. Please include an itemized budget (1 page) and budget justification (1 page) including details of personnel (salaries, fringe),

materials and supplies, analytical costs, other expenses, travel, and indirect costs and a copy of the Negotiation Rate Agreement (if no F&A waiver is provided).

Reporting and award conditions

Awardees will be required to provide a conceptual summary and a figure of their proposed research for the NCKRI website and Annual Report before any funds are disbursed. A final report will be due to NCKRI by the designated project completion date, including a list of any presentations and publications resulting from the research. We will also request that investigators provide a 2-3 page summary for the NCKRI annual report and website (2-3 pages, 2-3 figures) upon completion of the project.

NCKRI requests a copy of published materials such as manuscripts, dissertations/theses, or technical reports that result from the supported research, as well as acknowledgement in any publications or presentations.

To Apply

Please submit a proposal document containing the following sections as a single merged pdf using our online application system by the deadline.

The proposal will include the following parts:

1. Title, list of PIs/Co-Is, and summary (150 words maximum) on a single page.
2. Proposal document – **5 pages maximum** (1-inch margins, 12 pt. font, Times New Roman or equivalent font) which includes the following sections in no particular order:
 - a. Project description, including a brief background, objectives, and approach, with sufficient technical detail to pass review.
 - b. Significance of the proposed research to cave and karst science.
 - c. Description of how the proposed research addresses NPS-NRSS focus areas (<https://tinyurl.com/NRSS4pill>).
 - d. Description of the research team, including the roles and qualifications of the PIs and Co-PIs, graduate students, or any other personnel involved.
 - e. Description of outreach activity.
 - f. Project timeline and activity schedule (a small table or graphic is fine).
3. Literature cited.
4. Letter of commitment with F&A waiver (if provided) included for the subaward proposal.
5. Itemized budget (1 page) and justification (1 page), including salaries, supplies, equipment, etc. Budgets may not exceed \$25,000.
6. Curriculum vitae: 2 page CV for each PI and Co-PI.
7. Letter(s) of collaboration or support.
8. Applicants are also asked to provide the name, affiliation, phone and email address of 3-6 unconflicted reviewers. Reviewers should have sufficient expertise in the subject area, and shall not have a financial, family, or strong personal relationship with the applicant, including a financial interest in the outcome of the proposal.

Questions

Please direct any questions about submission or budget preparation to Judith McShannon (Judith.McShannon@nmt.edu). Other questions about this RFP should be directed to Daniel Jones, NCKRI Academic Director (daniel.s.jones@nmt.edu).