



COLLABORATORIES

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

DEADLINE: SEPT 13, 2026

SPENDING PERIOD: NOVEMBER 2026 – JUNE 30, 2027

OVERVIEW

The School of Sustainable Futures invites proposals for **Collaboratory** groups for the 2026-27 year. Collaboratories will be research and scholarship communities designed to bring together CSU faculty across disciplines to **explore critical climate and sustainability challenges**. With an emphasis on **discussion, synthesis, network-building, and early-stage ideation**, these groups will foster inclusive engagement and deepen relationships across CSU's faculty sustainability community.

Each Collaboratory will be led by a small core team of two or more faculty members or permanent research associates/scientists and will welcome broader participation. After being funded, groups are expected to expand in size, with an open invitation to the campus community for participation. Groups will meet throughout the academic year, and applicants may define criteria for the scope of the group and engagement, including focal activities and whether to involve students, community members, or other external partners. Collaboratories could tackle areas of literature together, explore how to address or take action on a specific sustainability challenge, get to know each other's research, or examine multi-disciplinary research, teaching, or engagement approaches to a major sustainability challenge.

Collaboratories will receive \$10,000 in funding, which should be devoted primarily to paying for group coordination, typically by funding time for a graduate student, faculty member, or staff member to schedule and facilitate meetings, gather literature, and maintain momentum.

Each Collaboratory is expected to produce a shared product at the end of the year – such as a synthesis or scoping document, publication, creative work, patent application, white paper or policy brief, annotated bibliography, or report on progress and return on investment – to focus collaborative efforts and communicate impact.

Our goal is to strengthen CSU's climate and sustainability research community and provide new avenues for connection and ideation. Collaboratories will receive nine months of funding. Expanded or continued support from the School of Sustainable Futures may be possible, although the scope for expansion is something we have not yet determined, given that this is a new program. We anticipate funding 3-5 Collaboratories in FY27.





TO APPLY: <https://smr.to/p111330>

SUBMIT A MAXIMUM TWO-PAGE PROPOSAL, SINGLE-SPACED PDF DOCUMENT USING 12-POINT CALIBRI FONT, AND INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

1. Name of Collaboratory
2. Short description: Provide a concise 2–3 sentence summary that clearly defines your group's focus and scope. The description will be used for the School of Sustainable Futures website and to invite prospective members to join. This should quickly convey the topic and relevance to help faculty members assess alignment with their interests.
3. Topic and approach: Describe the climate or sustainability topic that will be addressed by this group. Tell us why the topic is important and how the group will add value to the existing campus landscape.
4. Leadership team: Provide a list of the core team of faculty, who are jointly applying for Collaboratory funding; these individuals must be identified before the proposal is submitted. The core proposing team must consist of at least two CSU faculty (tenure and non-tenure are eligible) or permanent research associates/scientists. Extension, adjunct, and emeritus faculty are eligible to serve on a leadership team. PhD students and postdocs are not eligible to serve on the leadership team, but are encouraged to participate or serve as coordinators.
5. Group characteristics: Describe who might join this group, including specific individuals or anticipated types of participants based on areas of expertise; use this space to describe what would make this an impactful community of practice. Describe how you will invite new members and expectations for members. Clearly articulate how this is a new and novel group effort, not an expansion of an existing group or partnership.
6. Coordination and plan of work: Describe how funds will be spent and who will organize, plan, and facilitate meetings and group progress. Be sure to identify your staffing plan for group coordination; we expect you to pay someone to take this on. Please also identify the faculty member on your team who will oversee the \$10,000 of expenditures; funds will be sent to this person's college as a budget adjustment. Tell us how you plan to structure meetings and how often you plan to hold meetings.
7. Shared product: Describe your anticipated shared product (draft publication, report, or other work). We recognize that this may change as your group forms and develops. Indicate what you would consider success after the first nine months and how you will assess the success of the group. The shared product does not need to be a peer-reviewed publication and may consist of a planning document, white paper, synthesis report, workshop proceedings, research agenda, funding roadmap, or similar output.



EVALUATION CRITERIA:

PRIORITY WILL BE GIVEN TO PROPOSALS THAT:

1. Address especially important, novel, timely, and relevant climate and sustainability topics.
2. Fill a unique niche on campus. Proposals should clearly explain how the Collaboratory addresses a research, scholarship, or partnership gap at CSU, how it differs from or complements existing efforts, and the unique value added to CSU's research and scholarly community.
3. Demonstrate a well-structured and inclusive team leadership and plan for inclusive engagement. Team leaders should clearly indicate how the group will bring together diverse perspectives, career stages, disciplines, and backgrounds, and how they will advertise and recruit new members.
4. Include a clear, achievable plan for meetings and coordination.
5. Define a realistic, shared product and criteria for success.

EXPECTATIONS:

Teams must be operationally self-sufficient (i.e., not relying on the School for organizational capacity) with organizational leadership built into the group's design and spending plan. Collaboratories are expected to meet at a regular cadence; most successful Collaboratories will likely meet at least monthly, although applicants may propose alternative structures. The School can provide access to conference rooms and offer some help with scheduling space. We ask teams to participate in the School of Sustainable Futures community at events and meetings as feasible.

All groups must:

1. Respond to an end of year survey from SSF in May 2027.
2. Provide the School of Sustainable Futures with a copy or draft of your shared product by June 2027.
3. Acknowledge the School of Sustainable Futures in all publications, presentations, reports, or other products fully or partially supported by this funding.

QUESTIONS: contact Darren Cockrell, darren.cockrell@colostate.edu



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can a Collaboratory group evolve into a School of Sustainable Futures Global Challenge Research Team (GCRT), and what's the difference between the two programs?

While a Collaboratory group or a spin-off may wish to apply to the GCRT program, the Collaboratory program is not intended as a pipeline or precursor to a GCRT. The two programs serve different purposes. GCRT teams receive seed funding to pursue early-stage, cross-campus and interdisciplinary research projects with potential for long-term impact. The Collaboratories are designed to foster community, new partnerships, dialogue, and idea generation, emphasizing discussion, synthesis, and relationship-building rather than direct research outputs. Collaboratories offer a low-barrier way for CSU faculty to explore big sustainability and climate questions in a collaborative setting without the immediate pressure to produce research results.

Can I participate in other funded research programs through the School of Sustainable Futures at the same time as my participation in a Collaboratory?

Yes! You can serve on SSF committees, research projects, GCRTs, curriculum grants, and other funded programs in conjunction with participating in a Collaboratory group. This program is meant to be open and complementary to your work.

Can students, research associates/scientists, or postdoctoral scholars apply for a Collaboratory?

The core proposing team must consist of at least two CSU faculty (tenure and non-tenure are eligible) or permanent research associates/scientists. Students and postdoctoral scholars are encouraged to participate in groups, but not serve on core leadership.

Does the budget and proposal need to be submitted in Kuali Research?

No. This is an internal funding opportunity, and the only submission necessary is the one linked via SmarterSelect. Do not submit a budget in Kuali Research to your department.

Can funds be carried forward?

No. The full amount awarded must be spent in the 2027 fiscal year (Spend or encumber by May 31).

Can we include non-CSU group members?

Yes, absolutely! We encourage you to ensure a strong CSU presence in the group, but external partners are welcome and encouraged.

Can an existing community or unit apply?

These funds are intended for new groups and collaborations. While they might build upon some existing foundations, funding will not be awarded to existing groups or units without some significant and novel expansion.

Can funds be used to compensate a non-CSU group coordinator?

No. Funds must be for a CSU student or employee only.

Can funds be spent on food for meetings?

Yes, we leave this to your discretion. We encourage you to prioritize the majority of funding for coordination capacity for your Collaboratory.