

Montana NASA EPSCoR

CALL FOR 2026-2027 RESEARCH INITIATION PROPOSALS



<http://nasaepscor.montana.edu>

**Proposal submission deadline:
5:00 p.m., Friday, March 20, 2026**

Contact Information & Contents

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Solicitation Contents:

Contact Information	Page 2
General Information	Page 3
Overview	Page 4
Important Details	Page 5
Proposal Preparation Guide	Page 7
Budget Preparation Guide	Page 9

General Information

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION:

Proposals must be uploaded as a single PDF file. To upload, click on the submit button on the website <http://nasaepscor.montana.edu> and follow the instructions. Proposals are due:

Friday, March 20, 2026, by 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time.

CAMPUS CLEARANCE & CERTIFICATION:

All investigators are required to advise the appropriate administrator and/or department head on their campus of their plans to submit a proposal. Proposals submitted to Montana NASA EPSCOR must include a campus proposal clearance form (or an equivalent) complete with signatures including budget approval and certification of non-federal cost share by the campus research or appropriate office. The form should be an electronic copy attached to the primary submission. See Budget Preparation Guide for details.

Other faculty opportunities

Research Activation grants. Another opportunity for small campuses (not MSU, UM, or MT Tech) is the Montana Space Grant Consortium Research Activation grants. Grants can be between \$5,000 to \$15,000 for a period of one year. These smaller awards will help kick-start NASA-related projects that while rigorous, will not necessarily result in further NASA grants.

Faculty Fellowships. The purpose of the Montana Space Grant Consortium Faculty Fellowships is to foster increased NASA-related research capabilities and activity on Montana campuses. We are particularly interested in increasing the number of Montana faculty mentors who take on undergraduate student researchers. Fellowships are intended to give Montana faculty members time to participate in training, professional development, and/or research that furthers their careers in fields of interest to NASA. Fellowships can be between \$1,500 and \$7,500. The primary focus of Faculty Fellowships is for small campuses.

Overview

The goal of the Montana NASA EPSCoR Research Initiation grant program is to help boost the research programs of Montana higher education faculty research in areas that match scientific and technical problems of importance to NASA, enabling them to compete successfully for regular NASA funding.

Proposals are welcome in all fields of science and engineering normally funded by NASA (refer to <http://nasaepscor.montana.edu/interest.html> and the NASA EPSCoR office for guidance). It is beneficial to research NASA's website for recently funded areas of research.

Research Initiation Grants from the Montana NASA EPSCoR Program **are intended to help junior faculty or faculty new to NASA research at Montana institutions develop nationally competitive research programs in areas of interest to NASA**. In addition, the awards can assist in Montana's economic development in aerospace-related fields by strengthening existing Montana high-tech companies, seeking new connections between Montana faculty researchers and state industries, and building university research enterprises that will foster "spin-off" startup enterprises. Grants are for a period of one year. All grantees are encouraged to submit a follow-on proposal to NASA for continued funding within the grant period.

It is strongly suggested that faculty contact NASA researchers in their field before submitting a proposal to determine and document NASA's interest in the proposed research area. **Proposals should include evidence of interest and potential support from NASA, e.g., in a letter(s) of support.** The stronger the indicated support, the better the chance of obtaining funding from Montana NASA EPSCoR. The NASA EPSCoR office can help make contacts.

Montana NASA EPSCoR goals:

- 1) Bring the capabilities of Montana's nationally competitive researchers to the attention of NASA.
- 2) Build infrastructure to enhance Montana's capabilities and expertise in areas of importance to NASA, focusing on institutions of higher learning.
- 3) Use NASA EPSCoR sponsored research to strengthen partnerships with Montana's high-tech companies and drive the growth of Montana's aerospace-related economy.
- 4) Focus on building nationally prominent, competitive research groups at Montana's major universities while also providing collaborative opportunities to faculty members at smaller institutions.

Important Details

FUNDING AND FUNDING PERIOD

Montana NASA EPSCoR Research Initiation grants are for up to \$60,000 total costs for one year. Requested funds must be accompanied by a 15% cost share. See Budget Preparation Guide for details. Montana NASA EPSCoR will be able to accommodate start dates no later than Jan. 1, 2026. Proposals should state the desired start date. One-year no-cost extensions are granted on a case-by-case basis.

ELIGIBILITY

Faculty or appropriate professionals at Montana institutions of higher education are eligible to apply. Generally, post-doctoral researchers or researchers who are in temporary positions are not eligible, as this program intends to increase Montana's capacity for NASA-related research. Research Initiation Awards are intended for junior faculty or faculty new to NASA-related research. Faculty who already have substantial off-campus funding or who are already well-established members of research groups with substantial off-campus funding are not encouraged to apply unless working with NASA represents a significant new direction.

PREVIOUS GRANTEES

Recent recipients of a Research Initiation grant who have not submitted a follow-on proposal directly to NASA are generally not eligible for additional funding. Those who have recently (three years) held a NASA EPSCoR Research Initiation Grant must include a list of all proposals submitted to NASA and other agencies, indicating whether declined, pending, or awarded.

SELECTION PROCESS

All proposals are reviewed by the Montana NASA EPSCoR (MNE) Proposal Evaluation Committee. This committee consists of respected scientists, engineers, and educators from around the state. The evaluation committee's rankings are used together with MNE's overall budget constraints to determine which proposals may be funded.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Montana NASA EPSCoR receives proposals from a wide variety of fields. We ensure at least one panel reviewer in each submitted general field. As a result, the panel will be diverse in backgrounds and proposals should be aimed at the general science/engineering level.

The panel will consider:

- 1) Scientific/Engineering merit,

- 2) NASA connection,
- 3) Feasibility,
- 4) Broader impacts; see Montana NASA EPSCoR goals on page 4,
- 5) Suitability of the proposed research team, including eligibility,
- 6) Probability of the work resulting in further NASA funding, and

Optionally:

- i) Montana graduate student impact, and
- ii) Economic development/technology transfer impact.

RESUBMISSIONS

Any proposal that is a resubmission of a previously declined MT NASA EPSCoR entry must include a separate page addressing the weaknesses stated in the proposal's review. Only reentries that address previous weaknesses will be reviewed.

Proposal Preparation Guide

Submit proposals electronically as a single PDF file via the uplink and instructions at <http://nasaepscor.montana.edu>. All proposals must include a campus proposal clearance form complete with signatures including budget approval and certification of non-federal cost share by the campus research office. The form should be an electronic copy attached to the primary submission. **Note: proposals that do not adhere to the formatting requirements and/or do not provide all information requested below are subject to rejection without review.**

TITLE PAGE: proposal title, P.I. name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and total budget request (indicate both the amount of NASA funding requested *and* the amount offered as cost share). Also, include the name(s) and contact information for any Co-Is.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT: limit to 250 words

BODY of proposal: 10 pages maximum, 1.1+ line spacing, 12-point font, one-inch margins: ☐

1. Introduction.
2. Project description including approach and methods.
3. Goals, objectives, and evaluation. Goals and objectives should be specific, measurable, and appropriate. Project goals and objectives must further one or more of the Montana NASA EPSCoR goals. Include information on how the project will be evaluated, including metrics and milestones/timelines.
4. Plans for subsequent research activity enabled by seed funding. Specify potential future funding sources.
5. Description of team member roles.
6. Description of contacts and communications with NASA Centers regarding this proposal. Explain how the proposed research relates to NASA's existing research and needs.
7. References (not included in page count).

LETTERS OF SUPPORT, including from NASA personnel.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFO: Include two-page CVs for all investigators. In addition, provide a list of current and pending grant support, title of proposals, dates, funding agency, and amount of awards.

BUDGET SPREADSHEET: See the Budget Preparation Guide below.

BUDGET NARRATIVE: Describe how the budget will allow the proposed research; provide details on salaries, benefits, supplies, travel expenses, user fees, indirect costs, etc.

CONTINUED FUNDING JUSTIFICATION (prior grantees only): Describe in detail the progress made to date on the project. Explain why further funding is appropriate.

Budget Preparation Guide

Format: use the budget template available at:

https://spacegrant.montana.edu/opportunities/faculty-grants/budget_template.html

For details about cost share, see our cost share guide:

https://spacegrant.montana.edu/opportunities/faculty-grants/cost_share.html

Budget requests are allowed up to \$60,000 total, including appropriate F&A or indirect costs. Smaller budget requests increase fundability. Budgets, particularly the form and amount of cost share funds (shown in the second column labeled “cost sharing”) must be approved and certified by signatures on a Proposal Clearance Form or an equivalent.

1. Salary breakdown must include the amount of time each person is being paid from the grant and/or time committed as cost share. The breakdown should be indicated in hours or by the percentage of the individual's total effort (FTE). Fringe benefits for salaries should be shown as individual line items. Do not include support for undergraduate students, as Montana Space Grant will cover costs for them. Do, however, mention any planned undergraduate student involvement in the budget narrative.
- 2a. All proposals should have a certified 15% non-federal cost share. Cost share may be in the form of cash match, faculty release time, waived equipment usage fees, etc. Questions regarding the validity of a cost share fund source should be directed to the local office of sponsored programs and/or the NASA EPSCoR office.
- 2b. MSU proposals: When considering possible sources of cost share funds for an MSU-Bozeman proposal, be aware that there will be no return of indirect costs on these grants to the college, department, or PI. Do not contact the MSU VPRED office concerning possible cost share.
3. Show a complete breakdown of estimated travel costs, including airfare and per diem, registration fees, and car rental.
4. Supplies must be listed specifically (no “\$500 for lab supplies”). Items costing over \$250 must include a screenshot or quote.
5. No foreign travel or civil servant travel is allowed on any grant or cost share funds.
6. Consultant fees require a resume, work statement, and a breakout of hourly rate.

7. Postage, general office supplies, and peripheral purchases may not be charged to the grant.
8. No funds can be sent to an entity in a non-EPSCoR state.