

Extension Water Initiative Grant Request for Proposals 2026

Background and Purpose

Utah State University Extension requests proposals for the 2026 Extension Water Initiative Grant program. This program is funded through legislative appropriation approved during the 2016 legislative session titled the USU Extension Water Initiative. Research proposals must focus on at least one of the following topics:

- Water conservation, particularly agricultural water conservation, optimization and efficiency.
- Creation of innovative tools that support/direct water conservation.
- Enhancement of water quality.
- Enhancement of water availability.
- Enhancement of water efficiency.

Priority will be given to projects that meet multiple objectives or that have the potential to conserve significant volumes of water. Projects must align with Utah's current statewide water priorities as reflected in the Utah Division of Water Resources' [2021 Water Resources Plan](#), recent statewide conservation and infrastructure initiatives, and legislative updates such as [2024 HB280](#) (Water Related Changes).

Successful research projects must have a clear Extension outcome such as new Extension programming, deliverable tools, curriculum, smart Apps, or other Extension-relevant deliverables. Extension proposals that do not include a significant research component will be considered but must demonstrate a high probability of significant impact on water conservation within a reasonably short period of time.

Eligibility Criteria

- Applicants must hold a faculty position at Utah State University.
- Given the focus on Extension deliverables, applications should include Extension Faculty as Project Director (PD) or Co-PD.

Timeline

- Proposals must be submitted electronically before 11.59 p.m. on **Wednesday, April 8th, 2026, via the submission portal located on:** <https://extension.usu.edu/employee/grants/>.
- Notification of awards following review and selection will be provided to the applicant and their department head approximately two months after the submission deadline.

General Guidelines

- The maximum request must not exceed \$75,000, and the timeline for project completion generally should not exceed 24 months. Requests for extended timelines must demonstrate a clear plan for steady progress to ensure funds are actively utilized and not encumbered for long periods without measurable outcomes.
- There is an expectation for a 1:1 match from external partners such as a city/town, Conservation District, State or Federal agency, private industry, non-governmental organization, etc. The match can be a combination of in-kind and/or cash.
- The required cover page form and budget template can be found at <http://extension.usu.edu/employee/grants/>.

Application

Formatting: 12-point font, single-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. Figures and tables may use a reasonably smaller font size, but generally no less than a 10-point font.

Submission: Please combine the documents listed below as a single PDF file.

1. Cover Page (PDF form)

- a. Complete the Water Initiative Cover Page 2026 (fillable PDF).

2. Project summary (1 page)

- a. Provide a non-technical project summary of no more than 400 words.

3. Project Narrative (5 pages)

- a. Provide justification for the project and describe the scope of work.
- b. Describe the anticipated impacts (including an estimated time frame for when impacts will be realized).
- c. Explain how project outcomes will enhance water conservation and availability.
- d. Identify specific Extension deliverables.
- e. Provide a specific plan outlining how the project outcome(s) will be integrated into Extension programming or tools.
- f. Provide a plan and commitment to present on your project (i.e., lessons learned, products, programs) to Utah audiences and water-related conferences (e.g., Utah Water Users).

4. References (No page limit)

5. Budget Form (Excel spreadsheet)

- a. Complete the Water Initiative Budget Form 2026 (xlsx).
- b. Matched funds from external partners should be listed on this form. The total amount requested should equal the total matched funds.
- c. Salaries for faculty members, including summer salaries, are not allowable expenses.
- d. Fringe benefits must be calculated at 48% for contract employees, 8.0% for payroll personnel (such as undergraduate students), and 0.8% for graduate students, plus \$170.17 per month for the university's portion of graduate student medical insurance (see [current rates](#)).
- e. In-state travel may be included if justifiable.
- f. Requests for the purchase of capital equipment (equipment with an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more and a useable life of more than one year) essential for the proposed project may be included.
- g. If selected for an award, budget deviations of more than 10% must receive prior written administrative approval.

6. Budget Justification (No page limit)

- a. Specifically justify each of the budgeted expenses and describe all matching funds.

7. Biosketch (2-4 pages)

- a. Provide a brief biographical sketch for the PD and key Co-PDs as applicable.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by the Extension Water Advisory Board and ranked based on anticipated community impact(s). Funding recommendations will be made to the Vice President for Extension based on scientific merit and impact on community water conservation. The Vice President reserves the right to fund or not fund board-recommended projects as well as the right to fund projects at full or partial levels depending upon the appropriateness of the budget and budget justification.

Questions

For any questions regarding the Extension Water Initiative Grant program or how to submit a proposal, please contact Cody Bills, Proposal Specialist (email: cody.bills@usu.edu; phone: 435-797-1929).