CLaSH Small Grants RFP 2025–26
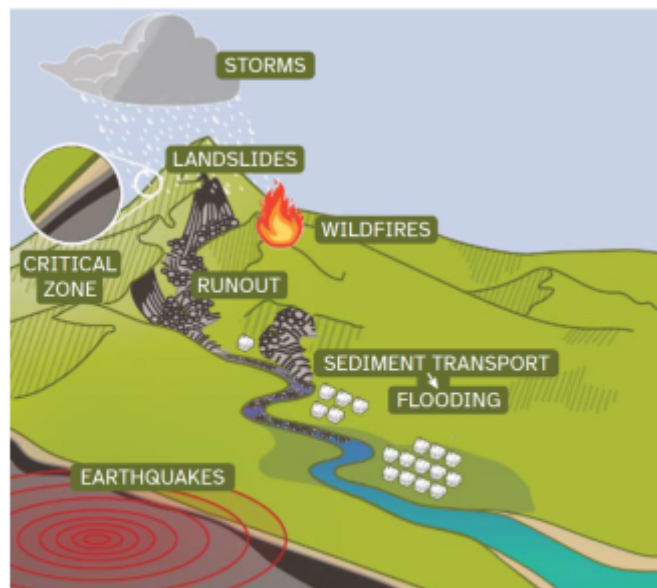
1. Center for Land Surface Hazards Overview

The Center for Land Surface Hazards (CLaSH) is a national research center that seeks to transform how cascading land-surface hazards—chains of landslides, debris flows, floods, and related processes—are understood and predicted before, during, and after disasters. Supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF-EAR 2425607), CLaSH is advancing a new scientific framework for studying how geomorphic, climatic, and human processes interact to generate hazard cascades that amplify risk across landscapes. CLaSH aims to collectively advance the science, application, and education of cascading land-surface hazards. Through six integrated Major Activities (MA), the Center unites multi-scale field observations, data-driven and physics-based modeling, and artificial intelligence to build predictive understanding of the land-surface hazard cascade.

CLaSH organizes its research and community engagement through six interlinked major activities:

Hazard Event Response: Mobilizes rapid-response teams based on community input to collect perishable field, geophysical, and remote-sensing data following major hazard events. These efforts capture transient process signals and feed directly into model refinement and long-term monitoring frameworks.

Hazard Observatories: Operates observatories in Alaska, Appalachia, Puerto Rico, and Southern California to couple new observations with process-based or AI/ML models. These sites serve as natural laboratories for understanding how triggering, runout, and fluvial responses interact across diverse climatic and geologic settings.

Modeling Collaboratory: Builds open-source, physics-based and AI-enhanced models linking atmospheric forcing to geomorphic responses across the hazard cascade. These models quantify uncertainty and provide scalable frameworks for hazard forecasting and scenario testing.

Schematic of the land surface cascade involving processes, interactions, and impacts that emerge from triggering events, such as earthquakes, storms, and wildfires.

Education and Workforce Development: Training of the next generation of geohazard scientists through field schools, workshops, and two-year college partnerships. Activities emphasize computational skills, responsible engagement, and broadening participation.

Community Engagement and Collaboration: Expands hazard preparedness and ethical engagement through immersive role-playing simulations, stakeholder workshops, and public outreach. This activity strengthens two-way communication between scientists, agencies, and at-risk communities.

Small Grant Program: Provides seed funding for innovative, high-risk/high-reward projects that bring new collaborators, methods, and technologies into the CLaSH network. The program encourages cross-MA integration and broad participation in cascading hazard science.

The CLaSH strategic plan (available at geoclash.org) provides more information about the Center's goals and activities.

2. CLaSH Small Grant Program

The CLaSH Small Grant Program is open to the wider community and aims to provide flexible, seed-level funding to:

- support creative, high-risk/high-reward projects that broaden community participation by bringing new investigators and new expertise into the Center;
- advance understanding of interacting land-surface hazards, complementing the scope of current Center activities;
- foster cross-cutting science that connects observations, modeling, and societal relevance;
- open the door to new approaches to land surface hazard cascade research, via pilot studies that may grow into larger collaborative projects, development of new field sites, and application of novel modeling frameworks; and
- contribute to the Center's goals of education, workforce development, and community engagement.

2025–2026 Priority Areas: The 2025–2026 Small Grant Request for Proposals seeks to catalyze integrative studies that couple new data acquisition, process-based modeling, or AI-driven analyses to predict how multi-hazard cascades evolve. During 2025-2026, we plan to prioritize the following research areas, but welcome all proposals that advance hazard cascade science, along with aligned community engagement and workforce development activities:

- Site-Specific Investigations at CLaSH's current Hazard Observatories located in Alaska, Appalachia, Puerto Rico, and Southern California, including proposals that:
  - Apply geophysical, geochemical, or remote-sensing approaches to investigate site-specific hazard processes,

- ○ Integrate new tools and datasets across CLaSH Hazard Observatories, and/or
- ○ Extend ongoing or post-event data collection in fire, landslide, or flood-impacted sites.
- Modeling of Weather-Related Forcing and Phenomena relevant to CLaSH's current Hazard Observatories, including proposals that:
  - ○ Quantify how storms, rainfall, winds, or wildfire alter hazard frequency and magnitude,
  - ○ Investigate novel couplings of meteorological, hydrological, geomorphic, and/or hazard models, and/or
  - ○ Produce datasets and frameworks for scalable hazard prediction.
- Applications of Machine Learning and Development of AI-Ready Datasets to increase the understanding of land surface hazards, including proposals that:
  - ○ Build FAIR-compliant, AI-ready datasets to enable model training, validation, and cross-hazard benchmarking,
  - ○ Develop novel AI algorithms for event detection, forecasting, and early warning of geomorphic hazards, and/or
  - ○ Apply and optimize machine learning models to simulate cascading hazard sequences linking landslides, erosion, and sediment transport dynamics.

4. Funding Scope

Anticipated Awards: 5 - 9 annually
Award Size: $20,000- $40,000, including indirect costs
Indirect costs: in accordance with NSF and institutional federally negotiated rates
Project Duration: Up to 12 months
Projected Start Date: May 1, 2026
Final Report Due: 30 days after project end date

Allowable Costs: Funds may be used for costs necessary to plan and execute the proposed research project (consistent with university and state rules), including:

- Salary and benefits for career research faculty, postdocs, graduate students, undergraduates, and/or technical personnel under the supervision of the principal investigator
- Faculty summer stipend and/or course release (as per departmental and NSF policies and guidelines)
- Travel (domestic or foreign) to field sites or other key resources for achieving project goals
- Equipment
- Analysis cost
- Materials and supplies
- Contractual services
- Publication costs
- Other direct costs: core/shared user facility use, fees for use and shipping of instrumentation, tuition, etc.

- Indirect cost/ general administrative cost at the federally negotiated rate for the PI's institution

Unallowable Costs:

- Computers or Computer Supplies (includes iPads, other tablets, and handheld devices, etc.)
- Hosting/Entertainment
- Membership Fees
- Gifts
- Renovation, remodeling, or alteration of research laboratories or core/shared facilities
- Participant Support Costs
- Administrative and clerical salaries

5. Proposal Preparation Guidelines

Eligibility: PIs must be affiliated with U.S. institutions eligible for NSF funding. Early-career scientists and investigators are strongly encouraged to apply. Applicants must be eligible for regular NSF funding as a Principal Investigator (PI) at their home institution. Students and postdocs are encouraged to discuss project ideas with potential PIs.

Proposal Format: Submit a single PDF containing the following components in order (except the Budget and Justification which should remain in Excel format):

- Cover Page – Title, PI(s), affiliations, total budget, duration, and priority areas from this RFP that the proposal addresses (or "Other")
- Abstract – ≤250 words
- Project Description – Up to 5 pages, with up to 2 figures. Proposals exceeding these length restrictions will be deemed ineligible.
    - Use single-spaced text, Times New Roman font (11-point or larger), and 1-inch margins.
    - Clearly describe the research problem(s) or question(s) to be addressed, emphasizing the gap in current knowledge.
    - Specify which CLaSH priority (or priorities) the project targets and explain how the proposed work advances that priority (or priorities).
    - Describe how the project connects to and leverages existing CLaSH major activities (as described above, and in more detail in the strategic plan), and how the proposed work will complement and extend the ongoing efforts.
    - A list of specific objectives, anticipated deliverables, and associated timeline.
    - Intellectual Merit & Broader Impacts
- References Cited (no limit)
- Biographical Sketch or CV (NSF/NIH format via SciENcv)
- Current and Pending Support (NSF/NIH format)
- Field Safety Statement (if applicable)

- Letters of Collaboration (optional; can confirm any collaborative relationships that are central to the proposed plans – if use of instrumentation or services from NSF or other facilities or contractors is included in the scope, a letter should be provided)
- Budget and Budget Justification (CLaSH template, Excel – do not include in PDF)

Please name your files using the following convention:
> Compiled PDF: *[Contact PI Last Name]_fy26_clash_proposal*
> Budget Spreadsheet: *[Contact PI Last Name]_fy26_clash_budget*

6. Review Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by the Small Grant Planning Committee in accordance with NSF and CLaSH-specific criteria.

- Intellectual Merit — originality, rigor, and innovation.
- Broader Impacts — training, outreach, and data sharing.
- Relevance — alignment with CLaSH goals and current priority areas.
- Innovation & Collaboration — cross-disciplinary integration or new partnerships.
- Feasibility — sound methods, achievable outcomes, realistic budget.

7. Award Administration

Awards will be issued by the University of Michigan as subawards.

At the time of award, grantees will be:

- requested to provide an image and short public-facing abstract (200-400 words) summarizing their project, for the CLaSH website, and
- required to complete and submit a Statement of Work document (based on a CLaSH template) and subrecipient form, in coordination between the receiving PI and CLaSH administrative personnel at the University of Michigan.

Carry-over between fiscal years is not allowed. Awardees must comply with NSF policies, institutional research ethics, and the CLaSH Code of Conduct.

8. Expectations, Reporting, and Data Sharing

Awardees will be expected to participate in regular CLaSH community activities. These include online meetings associated with Center subgroups (as appropriate to their proposed activities). Personnel associated with selected proposals will be eligible for full or partial funding to attend the CLaSH Annual Meeting to present their ongoing or final project results. All participants in CLaSH activities are expected to follow the Center's Code of Conduct.

Intermittent financial updates and effort information will be requested as part of CLaSH center reporting.

At the end of their project duration, awardees must submit a 1-2 page executive summary of the findings, including a figure or other graphic item, describing:

- Accomplishments and deliverables
- Changes to the original scope
- Plans for dissemination (with public-repository archiving)

These documents should be submitted within 30 days of project completion. Please note that no-cost extensions will not be allowed.

All data and products generated with support from the award must be reported and made publicly available following the NSF EAR Data Management and Sharing Plan, including release of data following FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) principles. Publications must acknowledge NSF and CLaSH (NSF-EAR 2425607). As part of sub-award closeout with the University of Michigan, grantees will be expected to upload their data to a public data repository; the data may remain embargoed for up to 1 year following closeout, but confirmation of upload will be expected at the time of closeout.

Publications (journal articles, preprints, books and chapters, white papers, etc.) reporting work supported by CLaSH grants, either in whole or in part, should acknowledge support including the NSF award (NSF-EAR 2425607) and the CLaSH grant number (which you will receive when submitting your proposal and which will be associated with award paperwork). All such publications should be reported to CLaSH, with details provided on geoclash.org.

Recommended Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

This research was supported by the Center for Land Surface Hazards (CLaSH). CLaSH is funded by the National Science Foundation Cooperative Agreement #2425607. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of CLaSH or its sponsors.

9. Key Dates

RFP Released: December 8, 2025
Proposal Deadline: **February 4, 2026 (11:59 PM PST)**
Award Notifications by: April 6, 2026
Project Start: May 1, 2026
Project End: April 30, 2027
Final Report Due: May 30, 2027

10. Contact

Program Contact: contact@geoclash.org

Appendix A — Budget Template

The standardized Excel budget form available via geoclash.org should be used for itemized costs and justification.

Appendix B — Proposal Checklist

Ensure your submission includes:
☐ Cover Page
☐ Abstract
☐ Project Description
☐ References
☐ Biographical Sketch or CV
☐ Current and Pending Support
☐ Letters (optional)
☐ Field Safety Statement (if applicable)
☐ Budget and Budget Justification (use Excel template provided; submit as Excel)