CLaSH Small Grants RFP 2026-27

1. Center for Land Surface Hazards Overview

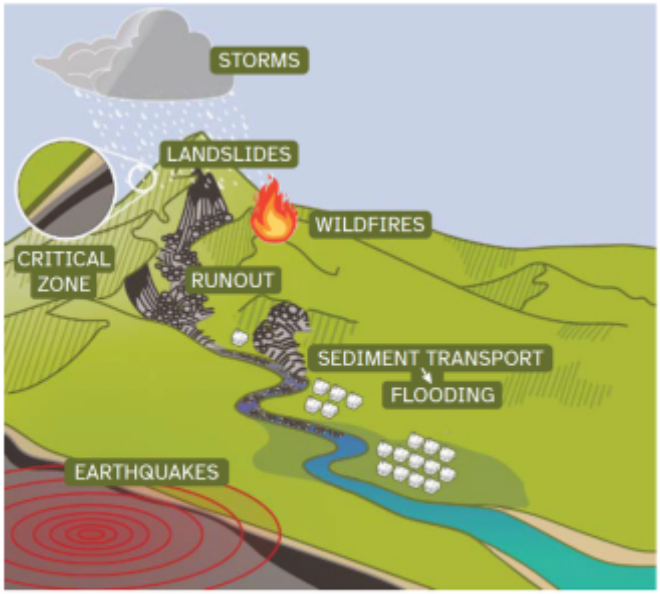
The Center for Land Surface Hazards (CLaSH) is a national research center that seeks to transform how cascading land-surface hazards—chains of landslides, debris flows, floods, and related processes—are understood and predicted before, during, and after disasters. Supported by the U.S. National Science 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.

2026-2027 Priority Areas: In this year's small grants program, we will prioritize the following research areas, but welcome all proposals that advance hazard cascade science, along with aligned community engagement and workforce development activities:

1. Cross-observatory inquiry and modeling to test hypotheses about the geohazard cascade: We encourage 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,
- 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.

This year, we seek proposals that promote cross-observatory hypothesis testing with existing or new data, or proposals that focus on observatory work in Puerto Rico or Alaska. Within this scope, we encourage proposals that include partner engagement and community engaged research.

2. Connecting the geohazard cascade through modeling: We solicit proposals that expand our ability to model cascades or link models addressing hazard components. Proposals could focus on triggers (i.e. weather or seismic forcing) or coupled hillslope-channel processes that lead to runout, sediment transport, and flooding. We encourage model-focused proposals that can work with the CLaSH Modeling Collaboratory and integrate their work into CSDMS frameworks (e.g. BMI, pyMT, Landlab). Development of ML/AI applications to cascade hazard modeling are especially welcome.

3. Remote sensing products and AI that advance process understanding of land surface hazards at scale: To extend land surface hazard science from CLaSH observatories to regional and global scales, we encourage proposals that:

- Apply radar/InSAR and other remote-sensing approaches in novel ways to detect, map, and monitor hazard processes,
- Scale observatory-based measurements and models to regional or global products, and/or
- Build FAIR-compliant, AI-ready datasets, benchmarks, and AI methods for hazard detection and forecasting.
- Proposals directed in this priority area should explicitly describe how they contribute to the scientific goals of the CLaSH strategic plan.

4. Event-driven investigations & new hazard types: We encourage proposals that enhance post-event science and build on the recent hazard response activities initiated through CLaSH (see the center event response page for more information). Proposals in this area could include, but are not limited to, development of workflows for data ingestion that enable rapid modeling of event response and cascade prediction as well as new tools for identifying or quantifying triggering processes and their precursors. Proposals focused on geographies outside of the current foci of CLaSH should clarify how the proposed work addresses elements of the strategic plan not addressed by current CLaSH geographies. Proposals focusing on hazards not included in ongoing CLaSH research should contextualize how the process of interest fits into a hazard cascade or the long tail of site response.

Several NSF facilities and other centers provide complementary resources that may be leveraged in proposals. Existing CLaSH partnerships include EarthScope, NHERI RAPID,

DesignSafe, and OpenTopography. Proposers are also welcome to include other partners. Note that letters of collaboration can be provided from partners (see below).

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, 2027
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
- Subcontracts/subawards
- 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 – available from geoclash.org - do not include in PDF)

Please name your files using the following convention:

Compiled PDF: *[Contact PI Last Name]_fy27_clash_proposal*
Budget Spreadsheet: *[Contact PI Last Name]_fy27_clash_budget*

6. Review Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by the Small Grant Planning Committee in accordance with NSF and CLaSH-specific criteria. The primary categories of evaluation will be:

- 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.

Relevance will be evaluated specifically within respect to the following questions:

- How well does the proposal address aspects of the cascade that we don't understand today?
- How well does the proposal link two or more processes or observatories, if the focus is not on Alaska or Puerto Rico?
- How well does the proposed work contribute to the understanding of CLaSH cascade model and data objectives (broadly defined)?
- For proposals that are site-specific and are outside of the current CLaSH geographic scope, is the rationale for the study region well-justified and does it provide transformative potential for understanding aspects of the hazard cascade?

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 required 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 the CLaSH's Collaborative Guidelines and 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, must 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

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9. Key Dates

RFP Released: October 30, 2026
Application Submission Portal Opens: November 15, 2026
Proposal Deadline: **January 15, 2027 (11:59 PM PST)**
Award Notifications by: early- to mid-April 2027
Project Start: May 1, 2027
Project End: April 30, 2028
Final Report Due: May 30, 2028

10. FAQ

An FAQ document is available and will be updated based on questions received. Please consult the FAQ in the first instance for questions related to this RFP.

11. 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)