



2025-2026 ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

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EARLY-STAGE INVESTIGATOR PROGRAM (ESI)

Key Dates

Spring/Summer 2026 Research

- Applications Open: September 1, 2025
- Deadline: October 13, 2025
- Awards Announced: December 5, 2025
- Award Cycle: January 1-August 31, 2026

Academic Year 2026-2027 Research

- Applications Open: November 1, 2025
- Deadline: February 2, 2026
- Awards Announced: March 27, 2026
- Award Cycle: July 1, 2026-May 31, 2027

Awards

Award Amount:

- Major Awards: up to \$10,000
 - Minor Awards: up to \$5,000
- (subject to funding availability)

Purpose

The Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium (WSGC) Early-Stage Investigator (ESI) program supports faculty members in the first five years of their first tenure-track appointment at WSGC universities and colleges. The program helps build research capacity and gather preliminary data for future proposals to WSGC, NASA, or other funding entities.

Note: Faculty members at institutions without tenure-track appointments are also eligible, provided they include a statement about faculty status and appointment policies.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be full-time faculty within five years of their first tenure-track appointment (or equivalent).
- Be employed at a WSGC academic affiliate institution.
- Ensure graduate students funded are U.S. citizens or U.S. nationals.
- Have institutional affiliate award agreements on file with WSGC.
- Align proposed research with at least one NASA Mission Directorate.

Application Process

1. **Create a NASA STEM Gateway account:** stemgateway.nasa.gov/public/s/login/
2. **Create a WSGC account:** spacegrant.carthage.edu/about/login/
3. Log in and complete the **Early-Stage Investigator** application

Projects Should

- Develop new or enhance existing lines of research
- Involve or have the potential to involve undergraduate and/or graduate students
- Quantitatively demonstrate impact (e.g., through number of students engaged, future funding opportunities pursued, or other institutional metric of faculty effectiveness)
- Initiate or enhance research in line with the [NASA Mission Directorates](#)

Required Materials

- Proposal (≤15 pages) addressing:
 - Introduction/Summary
 - Background and Prior Research (include prior RIP awards if applicable)
 - Proposed Activities, Objectives, and Expected Outcomes
 - Timeline and Milestones
 - Budget/Use of Funds (using [WSGC budget template](#)) with quarterly spend-down plan
 - CV/Personnel (2-page PI CV; brief qualifications of collaborators/students)
- Budget must demonstrate 1:1 cost-share and follow WSGC guidelines (no overhead, capital purchases, or international travel; laptops require pre-approval).

Application Evaluation

- Alignment with this AO's goals and NASA Mission Directorate priorities
- Clarity, quality, and feasibility of the proposed work
- Demonstrated investigator expertise and potential to support future funding opportunities
- Reasonableness of the budget and evidence of required institutional match

Awardee Acceptance Components

Recipients must:

- Submit award acceptance materials (Award Agreement, W9, biography, photo).
- Provide quarterly invoices/cost-share documentation.
- Submit interim report (if >6 months), final reports, student/alumni/faculty stories, project photos/video, and awardee publications, presentations, patents, and technology transfers report.
- Complete NASA reporting requirements (STEM Gateway activity acceptance).
- Present research at the Annual Wisconsin Space Conference (Aug. 2026 for Spring/Summer awards; Aug. 2027 for Academic Year awards).

Contact

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This funding opportunity is made available for the pursuit of space-related research and/or activities through the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program: NASA Educational Cooperative Agreement #80NSSC25M7122. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number for this award is 43.008.

All awards are fully competitive awards of opportunity in which applications are reviewed by the WSGC Technical Advisory Panel and other experts as needed. Awards are made by the Assistant Director based on recommendations from the Associate Director.