



Office of the Vice President for Research  
**OVPR Catalyst Program – Ready, Set, Go**  
**FY26 – FY28 “Go” – Request for Proposals**

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### **CATALYST PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND SYNOPSIS**

The Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) is pleased to announce the **Go** phase of the revamped **Catalyst Program**, which now has three phases: **Ready, Set, and Go**.

The OVPR launched the Catalyst for Innovative Partnerships (CIP) program in 2014, followed by the Pre-Catalyst for Innovative Partnerships (PRECIP) program in 2016, to foster a pipeline of high-impact interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary team partnerships to pursue major opportunities that address grand societal and scientific challenges. After three cohorts of CIP teams and two cohorts of PRECIP teams, the OVPR, through the Research Acceleration Office (RAO), has launched an enhanced series of Catalyst strategic programs, now called **Ready (new)**, **Set** (formerly PRECIP), and **Go** (formerly CIP).

**Ready** is the first phase of this program (first round completed spring semester 2025), aimed at enhancing the research enterprise by inspiring and priming the Catalyst-level vision and collaborative connections of future Catalyst teams. It is intended to prompt transformative teams, or people looking to create transformative teams, to begin thinking big and making connections. This phase includes a speaker series and networking support.

**Set** is the second phase of this program (first round completed fall semester 2025), aimed at preparing nascent and early-stage interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary teams to pursue substantial, high-impact funding opportunities and substantial, multi-sector collaborations under an increasingly broad funding portfolio. Set provides emerging team development workshops to increase readiness and competitiveness levels while priming teams for other OVPR strategic programs, including the **Go** phase.

**Go** is the third phase of this program, aimed at providing more substantial internal funding and engagement support to more advanced teams so they can develop large, high-impact external funding proposals in an evolving funding landscape that includes mixed funding sources and cross-sector partnerships. Success in transformative funding areas often requires strong interdisciplinary teams, cross-sector partnerships, big ideas, and an intersection of center-like activities that bridge research, scholarship, workforce development, translation to practice, community engagement, and more.

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### **Go – PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The **Catalyst Program** is a unique, internal investment program focused on interdisciplinary



or transdisciplinary teams and initiatives that are achievable, but highly ambitious with high potential to win highly competitive, large extramural funding. The mission of this program is to facilitate and position Colorado State University **to achieve greater regional, national, and global impact, in accordance with our land-grant heritage and mission.** The program's objectives include a drive toward transformative interdisciplinary, multi-partner projects that translate knowledge and research into tangible research products that actively demonstrate the importance, relevance, success, and societal benefits of interdisciplinary team research. The program's anticipated outcomes include substantially increased and broadened extramural financial investments into CSU and a recognized transformation of academic research into action.

Catalyst teams work toward the creation of tangible outcomes with high impact, including large-scale proposals, high-caliber research/scholarly outputs, new or stronger partnerships, substantial workforce and economic development success, and/or significant public policy actions. Since the program's inception, teams have submitted over 500 proposals and received roughly \$115M in awards, engaged over 90 external partners, published nearly 600 publications, and given over 700 presentations. Collectively, these teams have demonstrably elevated the reputation and impact of CSU's research and scholarship programs.

The goal of the **Go** phase is to support the advanced strategic development and success of teams with strong demonstrated potential for high-impact, significant center-level funding with a diversified funding base spanning federal and non-federal sources. Teams are encouraged, although not required, to participate in **Set** phase programming (or other similar programs) prior to applying to **Go**, to enhance team readiness for this more advanced Catalyst investment. The foundation developed during **Set** provides teams with more robust team structures, roadmaps, and narratives to pursue the center-level complex and strategic opportunities required during the short timeframe of the **Go** phase.

Selected **Go** teams will receive funding and robust programmatic support from the OVPR, led by the Research Acceleration Office (RAO). This programmatic support may include cohort-wide group or individual sessions as well as periodic 1:1 meetings with the OVPR and RAO to review progress, discuss challenges, and receive constructive guidance. As appropriate, the OVPR will facilitate engagement with other CSU offices, such as VPR Advancement, Foundation Relations, Corporate Relations, CSU STRATA, International Programs, the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences (IRISS), the Office of Defense Engagement, CSU Writes, and others, in alignment with the goals of each Go team.

***Proposed teams and projects must include three or more CSU faculty members across more than one discipline.*** If these disciplines are within the same department or the same college, the interdisciplinary nature of the team must be well described and justified.

*For the purposes of this program, interdisciplinary research and scholarship will be defined as:* activities that integrate information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance



fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions require fundamental research advances in multiple disciplines and research areas.

### Go – AVAILABLE FUNDING

The FY26-FY28 **Go** program intends to support up to 5 teams for this cohort. The OVPR will provide direct funding support to each team at a **maximum of \$200,000** over the program period. **Additional non-OVPR match or leveraged support, particularly from external sources (outside of CSU), is strongly encouraged but not required. These additional resources will not be evaluated as a part of this program, though such support can be utilized to further advance the team.** Funds will be approved and released at program start and annually, following OVPR approval at the annual check-in meeting (up to \$100,000 per year). Funds must be expended by the end of the program. Unspent funds remaining at the end of the program will be returned to the OVPR after a 30-day project closeout period.

### Go – TIMELINE

DATE	EVENT
<b>March 9, 2026</b>	<b>Deadline for receipt of proposals</b>
<b>April 1, 2026</b>	<b>Program start</b>
April 2026	Catalyst Go Kick-off Meeting
Summer 2026	OVPR Progress Check-in Meeting
Fall 2026	OVPR Progress Check-in Meeting
Spring 2027	OVPR Progress Check-in Meeting
Summer 2027	OVPR Mid-point Annual Check-in + Budget Request Meeting
Fall 2027	OVPR Progress Check-in Meeting
Spring 2028	OVPR Progress Check-in Meeting
Summer 2028	OVPR Final Annual Check-in Meeting
<b>June 30, 2028</b>	<b>Program end</b>

### Go – ELIGIBILITY, ALLOWABILITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS

#### Eligibility:

- All full-time, regular, and special appointment CSU faculty, research scientists and scholars, and center/institute directors are eligible to apply as the lead PI/Co-PI.
  - Lead PIs will be expected to submit extramural center-level proposals as a result of the Catalyst investment during the program period and, therefore, should have demonstrable experience participating in team projects.



- Proposals must include an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary team of **three or more CSU faculty members from different disciplines, departments, and/or colleges**.
  - If these disciplines are within the same department or college, the interdisciplinary nature of the team must be well described and justified.
  - Teams (particularly team leadership) should be small enough to be able to regularly attend and participate in required OVPR progress check-in meetings.
- Postdocs, graduate students, undergraduate students, research associates, and adjunct faculty are not eligible to lead a team or submit a proposal to this program, but they may participate as part of a project team.
- Project teams may collaborate with partners at other organizations, however, funding from the OVPR may only be used to support CSU-based personnel and activities.
- Past Catalyst program (Set, PRECIP, CIP) participants are eligible to participate and/or serve as PI/Co-PI on proposed **Go** projects. Previous CIP teams may apply but must demonstrate significant evolution/change in composition and propose new projects that are distinct from previously funded projects.

#### **Mandatory Costs:**

**Go** teams must be able to successfully manage large, interdisciplinary teams. All teams are required to utilize:

- At least 10% of the total budget for project management resources, including assignment of a dedicated project manager.
  - RAO will regularly interact with assigned project managers and provide other resources for streamlined project development activities.

#### **Allowable Costs:**

Funds are intended to enhance and accelerate the trajectory of success in the development of larger interdisciplinary funding proposals or groups of proposals. Allowable expenses associated with supported activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Internal personnel efforts and associated support, including tuition. Any request that proposes academic year funding for tenure track faculty or other base funded employees must be accompanied by a statement from the employee's department head which articulates one or more course releases or other reduction in regular, non-research activities.
- Team assembly and management, including workshops to refine frameworks, recruit partners, and strengthen team dynamics. Food for teaming meetings is allowable.
- Creation of resources (e.g., websites, graphics, communication, and pitch materials) to facilitate large-scale, interdisciplinary research planning and communication.
- External strategic feedback and guidance, including for proposal development.
- Feasibility or gap-filling projects, including materials and other direct costs, to complement and advance the Go project.



- Surveys and other discovery activities, including stakeholder and market analysis.
- Publication costs and other joint products, presentations, whitepapers, or other materials that establish the team as a collaborative entity and solidify its reputation.
- Travel for internal team members to meet partners or program officers.

**Unallowable Costs:**

The following costs will not be approved under this program:

- Support for external partners or participants (exception: travel for team meetings).
- Exploratory pilot projects.
- Re-seeding programs (i.e. creating a secondary call for proposals under the team umbrella, except with prior approval from the OVPR).
- Capital equipment or space renovations.
- Travel to attend conferences or workshops.

**Accountability:**

It is expected that participation in the **Go** program will ultimately lead to substantive impact, primarily through the **submission of large-scale interdisciplinary funding proposals or sets of proposals** and, potentially, prestigious recognition awards. Therefore, selected teams will be **required to actively participate** in this program, to include **considerable engagement with and accountability to the OVPR throughout the duration of the award**. Teams (team leadership and others, as appropriate) will meet with OVPR leadership and other complementary units for formal **progress check-ins at least three times per year** (fall, spring, summer), to discuss project progress/challenges and receive feedback, but may meet with RAO at any time. Teams **must propose at least two major milestones per year which should serve as benchmarks** of the team's progress toward its overall goals, **one of which must be submission to a significant funding opportunity**. Teams will report on these milestones, current activities and accomplishments, programmatic metrics, budget expenditures, challenges, and future path at these check-ins as well as comprehensively at program end. The OVPR will use **progress on identified milestones at the time of annual review to allocate funding, and reserves the right to halt or withdraw funding** if a team fails to meet reasonable expectations regarding progress.

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## Go – PROPOSAL CONTENT

**1) Captured electronically in fillable fields within the submission system:**

- **Proposal Title.**
- **Team Member Names, Affiliations, and Role.** Name, affiliation (college, department), contact information, and role of all team members. Include faculty, graduate students, postdocs, and staff, as well as any external team members, as appropriate.
- **Total Budget Requested.**



## **2) Uploaded as separate PDF documents:**

Formatting, all sections: 8.5" x 11" page size; single-spaced; 1" margins; typeface no smaller than 11-point Times New Roman, 11-point Calibri, or 10-point Arial.

- **Team Description (3 pages max).** Include the following subsections:
  - **Team Identity.** A description of: the purpose, mission, and vision of the team and the related project; the interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary nature of the team and related project as well as a justification for a team approach; rationale and other drivers; history of working together and readiness for Go.
  - **Team Composition and Leadership Structure.** Include the expertise, strengths, and roles/responsibilities for all team members. Discuss the leadership structure and how postdoctoral researchers, graduate students, and undergraduate students will be engaged, as applicable.
  - **Project Management and Evaluation Plans.** Describe how a project manager will be identified and how other project management resources will be utilized, including an overview of project management processes for communications, decision-making/governance, conflict management, applicable advisory boards. Describe how the project will be evaluated with metrics for success.
- **Project Description (3 pages max + 1 page for references).** Include these subsections:
  - **Targeted Grand Scientific and Societal Challenge.** Brief (2 - 3 sentence) description of the challenge you hope to tackle to achieve significant regional, national, and global impact in accordance with our land-grant mission.
  - **Project Overview.** Brief description of the project and how the project will leverage the interdisciplinary team, industry, community, and other ecosystem-engaged cross-sector partnerships. Clearly articulate what you're trying to do and who cares.
  - **Near/Mid/Long-Term Goals.** Project goals and activities to accomplish those goals. Highlight new approaches and/or activities that challenge the limits of current practice. Include measures for success. "Near" is the first 15 months, "mid" is the second 12 months, and "long" is the period after program end.
  - **Obstacles.** Gaps and resource needs that present a hurdle to future success, and a brief description of how program participation will help team success.
  - **Anticipated Outcomes and Impact.** Describe how project completion will result in sustained inter/transdisciplinary team efforts, including discussion of the anticipated continued activities and tangible high-impact outcomes across the ecosystem of researchers, partners, and surrounding community.
  - **Catalyst, Institutional, and External Priority/Mission Alignment.** Describe the alignment of the project with the goals of the program as well as how the project relates to internal and external funder/partner priorities. Address how the project may add to potential growth at CSU by significantly increasing funding, visibility, and recognition for the proposed research.



- **Project Timeline and Milestones (1 page max – use provided template).** Provide a timeline of major activities and milestones that will be used to benchmark success. These milestones will be used by the OVPR to assess progress at the annual check-in to allocate funding. Note: must include at least two major milestones per year, one of which should be submission of a proposal to a major funding opportunity.
- **Funding Roadmap (1 page max – use provided template).** Note: this section is important – **successful proposals must include a strong, realistic extramural funding strategy with large-scale proposals or sets of proposals.** Teams should clearly identify specific and significantly high-reward external funding opportunities which they plan to pursue and also articulate how the project aligns with the priorities of anticipated sponsors. External funding opportunities that provide substantial support and/or establish sustained funding streams beyond the Catalyst investment will be prioritized. Teams are encouraged to consider diverse funding sources, including federal, industry, foundations, philanthropy, and others.
  - *Illustrative but not comprehensive examples of significant Catalyst-level, high-reward funding opportunities include:* NSF Engineering Research Center (ERC), Science and Technology Center (STC), Materials Science & Engineering Centers (MRSEC), Centers for Chemical Innovation (CCI), Regional Innovation Engines (Engines); NIH Research Program Projects, Specialized Center, and Collaborative Program Grants for Multidisciplinary Teams (P01, P50, U19, U54, RM1); NEH Challenge Grant and Digital Humanities Advancement Grants; USDA NIFA AFRI Sustainable Agricultural Systems (SAS); DOE Energy Frontier Research Centers (EFRC), Hub Projects; DOD Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI); DARPA programs; EDA Tech Hubs; Bezos Earth Fund; Burroughs Wellcome Fund; XPRIZE Grand Challenges.
- **Funding Request (1 page max – use provided form).** Provide a line-item budget by project year (year 1 = 15 months; year 2 = 12 months).
  - Note: all teams are required to utilize at least 10% of their budget on project management resources (e.g., project management personnel, software, etc.).
- **Funding Justification (1 page max).** Provide a brief justification of anticipated costs and how funds will foster success. Describe all sources of additional match or leveraging of resources, if applicable.
- **Biographical Sketches (5 pages max per Biosketch, all compiled into one single PDF).** For all team leadership and senior/key personnel.

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## Go – REVIEW AND SELECTION

All applications will be reviewed by internal reviewers, which may include past Catalyst Program participants and others who have participated in Catalyst-level interdisciplinary teams and activities. Final selection decisions will be made by the OVPR.



Review criteria will include:

- **Team Identity:** Clarity of team identity and motivation, including: purpose, mission, and vision; rationale and drivers; team history and accomplishments to date.
- **Team Composition and Management:** The strength of interdisciplinarity, expertise, and organizational structure, including: integrated roles/responsibilities of members; leadership structure; project management and evaluation plans.
- **Project Quality and Readiness:** Overall quality and feasibility of the project, including: strength and clarity of activities, milestones, and funding roadmap timelines; extent to which the project needs interdisciplinary approaches, cross-sector partnerships, and community/stakeholder engagement for success; extent to which near/mid/long-term goals and accomplishments align with program expectations.
- **Funding Potential:** Probability and degree to which the project will result in submission of large-scale proposals during the program period and ultimately receive substantial extramural funding, as a direct result of the **Catalyst Go** investment.
- **Other Impacts:** The likelihood and degree to which the project will translate its research and knowledge into other tangible outcomes with high impact (e.g., high-caliber research/scholarly outputs, new/stronger partnerships, substantial workforce and economic development success, and/or public policy actions).
- **Trajectory:** Likelihood of upward trajectory and sustainability, including: probability of continued follow-on funding success after the program period; alignment with institutional, funder, partner, or other community-engaged ecosystem priorities.

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## Go – SUBMISSION PROCESS

**Submit proposals via CSU's InfoReady Review system by 5:00 p.m. MT on March 9, 2026. The system will not accept applications after this time.**

**Accessing the CSU InfoReady Review system to submit:**

1. From the opportunities list found at <https://colostate.infoready4.com/>, locate the **"CSU – OVPR Catalyst Program – Go"** and click the title to open the information page.
2. From the opportunity page, click "Apply".
3. Use your CSU NetID and password to log into the system.
4. Complete all fields and upload all required components. You can save your application as a draft prior to submission.
5. Be sure to "Submit" your application. Applications left as "draft" will not be reviewed.

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## CONTACT

**Program questions, including requests for other planning materials, should be directed to:**  
Dinaida Egan, Research Acceleration Office (RAO) Director: [dinaida.lopez@colostate.edu](mailto:dinaida.lopez@colostate.edu)