

Additional Questions Received

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Cascade Climate hosted two public informational sessions about the Coordinated Research Network (CRN) Expression of Interest (EOI). The following questions received were not directly addressed in the FAQ section and associated EOI materials, so they are listed with their answers, below. We are sharing them given our commitment to transparency, and to support those who may be interested in submitting a CRN site for consideration or who may otherwise be interested to partner with us. If you have questions not addressed here or in the FAQ section of the landing page, you are welcome to reach out to us at grants@cascadeclimate.org

About required versus preferred CRN site characteristics

Q: How strict are the site criteria (required vs. preferred)?

A: Requirements are largely “must haves” (with limited case-by-case flexibility especially where a specific criterion is near the threshold, or combinations of criteria reduce risks). Listed preferences in Document A are “nice to have” and not required. Note that we want to encourage any potentially future eligible sites to submit this light-lift EOI form.

Q: How specific do soil texture and other soil characteristics information need to be at the EOI stage?

A: Provide as much specificity as you reliably have. Exact values and methods (e.g., clay %, method used to measure pH or CEC) are helpful. If only broader classes are available (e.g., “sandy loam”), that is acceptable—share the best information you have available.

Q: Are sites eligible if soils have significant clay content, but can be demonstrated to be low-activity clays with good drainage that otherwise match the required site characteristics?

A: As above, there may be some flexibility based on the combination of characteristics described in the EOI. Indeed, clays including low-activity clays are not ideal for reasons apart from their chemical activity (e.g. preferential flow issues, hydrology/macropore flow and the potential for high immobile backgrounds). However, these soil types may be workable if they are near our required thresholds. Ideally, EOIs should share any available soil characteristics to help us determine whether they are workable sites.

Q: Does the site need to be a contiguous one hectare, or can it be split into multiple parcels that sum to ≥ 1 ha?

A: A contiguous 1-ha site is strongly preferred. Multiple parcels could be acceptable if baseline soils are demonstrably very similar across parcels, but we plan to prioritize contiguous sites.

Q: Are pastoral applications of ERW eligible?

A: Pasture sites can be submitted. However, for the first wave of sites, conventional croplands that better match the preferred criteria will generally be prioritized. Note that we are not only considering sites to prioritize to establish in 2026, but we are looking to build a pipeline of potentially aligned sites in future years.

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Q: Are there target crops for the initial sites?

A: Details are shared in Document A: Site Selection Characteristics. Note that preferred crops for the first sites are cereals (including maize) and legumes/pulses, which can be in rotation. For 2026 pilot sites, perennial systems (orchards/trees), flooded/wetland crops such as rice paddies, and sugarcane will not be prioritized. Such systems may be considered in later years.

Q: Is electricity access required specifically in the field, or is community-level access enough?

A: Power must be available at the field itself (for data loggers, sensors, a meteorological station, etc.). Grid power is not strictly required; a small solar + battery setup is acceptable as long as it reliably supports the instrumentation.

Q: Will the >12°C Mean Annual Temperature requirement remain fixed, or in future years might you include cooler sites with warm growing seasons?

A: The current focus is on sub-humid or wetter sites with MAT >12°C where weathering is expected to be faster. Slight deviations (e.g., ~11.5°C) may still be considered. Future expansions could consider cooler sites, but the initial emphasis is on warmer climates.

Q: In calculating water balance and aridity, is irrigation considered? Are irrigated sites in arid regions eligible?

A: Yes. Irrigation that effectively brings the water balance (effective aridity index above 0.5) to be sub-humid or wetter can be considered eligible.

Q: Are tropical regions (e.g., Brazil) specifically targeted, or can sites be anywhere?

A: Sites can be at any latitude as long as they meet the required climate and other criteria specified in Document A: Site Selection Characteristics.

Q: Are stepped or terraced lands eligible?

A: Potentially, but likely only where a contiguous experimental area can be laid out (e.g., within a single terrace) and hydrological considerations are manageable. These sites will be evaluated case-by-case.

Q: Are there restrictions on overlaying additional experiments on top of the ERW design (e.g., other trials at a research farm)?

A: Additional research can be layered on as long as it does not interfere with CRN objectives, measurements, or treatments. Compatibility will be evaluated case-by-case during site design.

Q: Can sites with existing ERW/remineralizer applications be used as CRN sites?

A: Possibly; such sites are not automatically excluded, but eligibility will be evaluated case-by-case based on application history and remaining undissolved rock. We are

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focusing on sites that have had little to no previous mafic rock spread to ensure that we can isolate the effects of individual rock spreading events. If there are areas in these sites with minimal rock application, and they meet the other site criteria, we would be happy to receive an EOI form submission for a site.

Q: Can CRN sites be hosted on farmland through lease agreements with farmers who plan to continue farming the land for their subsistence/livelihood?

A: While it is permissible for a site to be leased rather than owned, for us to move forward, the host must assure they would have full operational control of the land for more than 5 years (ideally 10+ years). This means that sites can not be established where farming remains at a farmer's discretion (used for subsistence or income), because this is likely incompatible with executing the randomized plot design and the necessary intensity of instrumentation and monitoring. The CRN design aligns more closely with a traditional agronomic trial in terms of land tenure security and management. If this arrangement can be assured for a >10-year lease period, we are happy to discuss the leasing costs during budget development (only if a site is short-listed to move forward). Especially where land use and access decisions could be contested, we likely prefer research stations with longer-term more secure land tenure which often also comes with past experience in agronomic trials as well.

About Personnel and Partners on CRN sites

Q: Can there be multiple PIs or co-PIs for a single site, including early-career scientists?

A: Yes, multiple PIs/co-PIs are allowed as long as roles and time commitments are clear and reasonable.

Q: Can a PhD or Master's student serve as the Site Manager and use the data for their thesis?

A: Yes, if they are full-time, based on site, and can fulfill all site manager responsibilities and the data sharing expectations as outlined elsewhere in the EOI materials.

Q: Is there a limit on the number of local collaborators or partner institutions?

A: No hard cap; what matters is a realistic team/partnership structure that covers all needed capacities at a reasonable cost.

Q: How will authorship work on publications? How does this relate to involvement of commercial actors (alignment with the Conflict of Interest Policy)?

A: Local PIs/site teams are likely to be lead or senior authors on site-level papers, but authorship will be determined at site launch. Authorship will follow American Geophysical Union (AGU) guidelines. Commercial actors can be co-authors if they abide by both AGU authorship standards and the Conflict of Interest policy (which prevents them serving as the Principal Investigator, Site Manager, or host institution leading research operations).

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About budgeting and logistics of CRN sites and their establishment

Q: Once a site passes the EOI stage, how is budget negotiation handled? Is there co-development of a detailed, site-specific budget, and how much flexibility exists?

A: After EoIs are reviewed (March 10 deadline; review in April–May), Cascade will shortlist sites and enter a co-design phase. At that stage we will request more detailed information and co-develop site-specific budgets together for sites that are shortlisted for consideration. The process is intentionally flexible so we can accommodate different institutional contexts while ensuring budgets are adequate for high-quality operations.

Q: Are indirect costs or overheads allowed, and are there budget and indirect cost caps? What costs can be included?

A: No fixed budget cap has been given; but note that funding is expected to cover all core site operations (personnel including a full-time site manager, equipment, analyses, logistics) without expectation of co-funding. Indirect costs will be allowed, but final rates will be set during budgeting with selected partners. Because this is philanthropy-funded public-good research across multiple global sites, there will be variations across contexts, but we do not anticipate more than ~10% of indirect costs.

Q: What is the anticipated funding structure—annual disbursements or milestone-based?

A: There is no single rigid template. Disbursement schedules will be designed during contracting to match each institution's needs while ensuring funds are available when required for field implementation and instrumentation.

Q: Will Cascade provide standardized instrumentation (soil moisture sensors, lysimeters, weather stations), or must hosts procure locally?

A: Cascade expects to provide core instrumentation (e.g., lysimeters, soil moisture sensors, met stations). In some cases existing equipment may be used, but we prefer standardized packages across sites to maximize comparability. Applicants do not need to pre-purchase equipment at the EOI stage; Cascade will coordinate standardized equipment and SOPs later.

Q: How much flexibility do sites have to adapt standardized protocols to local conditions?

A: Global collaboration and intercompatibility is central to the CRN. However we acknowledge there will need to be room for adaptation. Local teams, a global working group, Cascade, and a Scientific Advisory Board will co-design how sites will remain inter-comparable while being practical in local conditions.

Q: Are environmental impact assessments (EIAs) required before deployment?

A: EIAs, particularly around heavy metals and regulatory thresholds, will be handled in later project stages for selected sites; they are not required at the EOI stage.

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Q: Given the small plot scale, is there a plan for a phase two with whole-field applications and broader agronomic/CDR measurements?

A: Not within the current CRN design. This network focuses on small, highly replicated, intensively monitored plots. Larger-scale trials are important and are being run by other academic and commercial groups, but are not planned as a “phase two” of this CRN at present.

Q: Are there already CRN sites operating, or will these be the first?

A: These will be the first CRN sites; there are no existing CRN field sites yet.

Q: Do applicants need to secure their own ERW feedstock supply?

A: No. Cascade will help coordinate feedstock supply with industry and the local team as needed.

Q: Is there a maximum distance allowed between feedstock source and site?

A: There is a preference (not a requirement) for sites within roughly 100 km of a feedstock source.

Q: How will agronomic co-benefits beyond yield be quantified, given different potential crops?

A: In addition to yield, we expect measurements will include soil properties (pH, texture, nutrients, SOC), pore water chemistry, and nutrient content in harvested material. This will help distinguish mechanisms (e.g., silica, macro/micronutrients) and crop-specific vs broadly generalizable benefits.

Q: Will there be specialized training and workshops for capacity building?

A: Yes. Because many measurements and sampling techniques are specialized, Cascade will provide training and ongoing support to local operating teams so protocols are applied consistently across sites.

Q: What reporting will be required during the project?

A: There will be regular scientific and financial progress reporting, plus ongoing, collaborative engagement with Cascade and the global working group.

Q: Will there be meetings to exchange experiences and get advice during the project?

A: Yes. Participating teams will join a global working group for protocol refinement, troubleshooting, and cross-site learning.

Q: When could the first trials realistically start (first rock spread)?

A: The target for the first 1–2 pilot sites is to spread rock before the next relevant planting season occurring approximately between October 2026–March 2027, with additional sites coming later.