



March 11, 2026

Mr. Brian Stone  
Acting Director, National Science Foundation  
2415 Eisenhower Avenue  
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: Response to National Science Foundation January 23, 2026 Dear Colleague Letter –  
[Intent to Restructure Critical Weather Science Infrastructure](#)

CO-LABS is deeply concerned by proposals that could dismantle or diminish the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), including actions that might separate core capabilities, transfer major assets, or close the Mesa Laboratory in Boulder.

NCAR is not simply a public research institution - it is foundational infrastructure for a wide range of weather, public utility, transportation, airline, agriculture, public safety, and communications technology partners that depend on NCAR's research, data, and expertise.

The industries that benefit from NCAR span the nation's economy and several of its highest-growth sectors:

- **Aerospace and aviation:** Airlines, aerospace manufacturers, and logistics companies rely on NCAR's high-resolution wind and weather models for safety and operational efficiency. Thousands of companies benefit directly from NCAR's data products available to the commercial market.
- **Agriculture and water management:** Farmers, ranchers, crop insurers, water utilities, and river basin managers use NCAR's seasonal outlooks, drought modeling, and precipitation forecasts to guide planning and resource decisions. Disruption to these capabilities would carry direct financial consequences for agricultural businesses throughout the country.
- **Insurance, reinsurance, and financial risk:** Insurance-related industries and national financial firms rely on credible, long-term atmospheric data and modeling for risk assessment and pricing. NCAR's institutional continuity is itself a business

asset: these firms need assurance that the data and models they rely on today will remain accessible and maintained.

- **Private weather and environmental intelligence:** Numerous commercial weather and climate analytics firms have built business models layering proprietary tools on top of publicly accessible NCAR frameworks, including the WRF model and the Community Earth System Model. These companies represent a significant and growing segment of the commercial weather intelligence market.
- **Space weather and aerospace technology:** NCAR's space weather activities serve satellite operators, electric grid managers, defense contractors, and commercial space companies. Colorado is home to a substantial concentration of these industries, and demand for reliable space weather research and forecasting is growing.

NCAR employs approximately 830 people in highly specialized scientific, technical, and operational roles: high-wage, high-skill positions that anchor the regional economy and support contractors, suppliers, and science-adjacent businesses across Colorado and the country. A central concern for private-sector users of NCAR data and modeling is continuity. Industries that depend on NCAR have built workflows, products, and investment plans around the assumption that its core capabilities will remain stable and accessible.

NCAR's value and activities are not modular from an external user's perspective: forecasting progress depends on the interaction of data collection, model development, computational capacity, and scientific expertise working together. An entity providing only part of that system is substantially less useful to outside users than one that integrates all of them.

CO-LABS encourages NSF to hold any restructuring proposals to the standard of preserving the integrated, accessible, and stable capabilities that the private sector and public alike rely upon.

Sincerely,

Dan Powers

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