



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 13-074

Dear Colleague Letter - National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) the Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope (GBT) and the Very Long Baseline Array (VLBA)

Date: 03/22/2013

Consistent with the National Science Board Resolution on Competition and Recompetition of National Science Foundation (NSF) Awards ([NSB-08-12](#)), NSF will compete the next cooperative agreement for the management and operation of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) and North American (NA) contributions to the international Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) through an open, merit-based review process.

The Division of Astronomical Sciences (AST) of the Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS) previously issued a Dear Colleague Letter ([NSF 12-087](#)) to provide general information regarding the upcoming competition. This letter provides an update on the competition schedule and facilities to be competed.

NSF has assessed separating the management and operation of NA ALMA from NRAO and finds that there would be significant detrimental cost, operational and community impacts with no compensatory advantages in engendering competition. Therefore, NA ALMA will remain a part of NRAO, and they shall be competed as a single entity.

MPS/AST has also recently concluded an external review of the Division's entire portfolio. The Portfolio Review Committee gave very strong support to ALMA and the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array (VLA) as key facilities in the suite of ground-based telescopes necessary for progressing on the highest-priority science identified in the National Academy of Science's Decadal Survey: *New Worlds, New Horizons in Astronomy and Astrophysics*. The Portfolio Review Committee also recommended divestment of the Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope (GBT) and the Very Long Baseline Array (VLBA).

NSF is considering the findings and recommendations of the Portfolio Review, and no decisions have yet been made regarding the recommended divestments. MPS/AST is exploring operational and management models for GBT and VLBA that could result in reduced costs to MPS/AST, including partial or full divestment. To sustain the scientific and operational synergies of NA ALMA and the VLA while increasing flexibility in exploring cost-efficient operational models and sustainable partnerships for GBT and VLBA, NSF will separate GBT and VLBA from the upcoming competition. Therefore, NSF will solicit proposals for the management and operation of NA ALMA, VLA, NRAO headquarters and associated development laboratories.

NSF expects that a broad range of organizations may be interested in collaborations, including public-private partnerships, to support research and education activities enabled by GBT and VLBA. NSF invites requests for individual conferences with NSF from individuals, groups, institutions and organizations interested in exploring ideas for the operation and management of GBT and/or VLBA. Requests should be submitted via email to the Primary Contacts listed below no later than 15 May 2013.

This notice does not constitute a solicitation; therefore, no award of any kind will result from this notice. Although the competition remains in the planning stage, NSF anticipates that a program solicitation for NA ALMA, VLA, NRAO headquarters and associated development laboratories will be issued in the summer of 2013.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

All inquiries regarding this announcement should be directed to the Primary Contacts listed below.

Sources of additional information:

- National Science Foundation, Astronomical Sciences: <http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?org=AST>
- National Radio Astronomy Observatory and NA ALMA: <http://www.nrao.edu>
- Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array: <http://www.almaobservatory.org/>

PRIMARY CONTACTS

Dana Lehr and Phil Puxley
NSF Program Directors
nraoalma-comp@nsf.gov

Sincerely,
James S. Ulvestad
Division Director, MPS/AST