



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
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NSF 13-133

Dear Colleague Letter: Revised Schedule for Recompetition of the Management of the Gemini Observatory

Date: September 26, 2013

Dear Colleague:

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 Gemini Observatory 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 (DCL; [NSF 13-031](#)) to provide general information regarding the upcoming competition. This letter revises the anticipated schedule for that competition.

In addition to the planned competition for the management of the Gemini Observatory, AST has announced the intent to carry out virtually simultaneous competitions for the management of the National Optical Astronomy Observatory (NOAO; [NSF 13-582](#)) and the National Radio Astronomy Observatory/Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (NRAO/ALMA; [NSF 12-087](#)). In order to provide for the most effective competition for the management of all three observatories, we have determined that it is appropriate to defer the Gemini competition for one year. Thus, we now expect to issue a program solicitation for the Management of the Gemini Observatory which is one year later than the date provided in the previous Gemini DCL ([NSF 13-031](#)). This solicitation is anticipated to be for a cooperative agreement covering a 6-year time period beginning at the start of calendar year 2017. The one-year delay has the added benefit of deferring the start of the new management agreement until one year after a new Gemini international agreement goes into force at the beginning of 2016. Discussions provided in the previous Gemini DCL ([NSF 13-031](#)) related to proposer eligibility, program description, and observatory operations remain unchanged and interested organizations should refer to those sections for relevant information.

The NOAO and NRAO/ALMA management competitions are expected to proceed as scheduled; the solicitation for the NOAO management competition was released in July 2013, while the solicitation for the NRAO/ALMA management competition is expected to be released late in the third quarter or early in the fourth quarter of calendar year 2013.

REVISED ANTICIPATED COMPETITION SCHEDULE

This notice does not constitute a solicitation; therefore, no award of any kind will result from this notice. Although the competition is still in the planning stage, NSF anticipates that a program solicitation will be issued in the third quarter of calendar year 2014. The solicitation will specify program guidelines and proposal requirements, including budgetary information, review criteria, exceptions to [NSF Grant Proposal Guide](#) proposal preparation instructions, and a schedule for site visits and meetings for potential proposers. Also provided as part of the solicitation will be descriptions of the scope of the program, the physical and intellectual property, the expected level of service and expertise, and the

nature of international agreements, property arrangements and leases, labor agreements, etc. Much of this will be included in a resource library to ensure equal access to all proposers.

It is anticipated that the program solicitation will call for the submission of required Letters of Intent, due 90 days after publication of the solicitation. The Letters are expected to provide a statement and documentation of the organization's capabilities to carry out the management and operation of the Gemini Observatory, as well as an outline of the organization's vision and design concept for its future. The Letters would be intended to provide an overview of the applicant's approach, and as such will be limited in length. The anticipated due date for full proposals in response to the program solicitation is six months following publication of the solicitation.

In keeping with current National Science Board guidelines, NSF expects that management competitions such as this will occur on a regular basis during the foreseeable future, with a process for Gemini Observatory likely recommencing in 2020 for an award starting in 2023.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

All inquiries regarding this announcement and the competition for the management and operation of the Gemini Observatory should be directed to the Primary Contact listed below.

NSF invites requests for individual conferences with NSF from eligible organizations interested in this competition. At the conferences, organizations may request clarification of general aspects of the competition or identify to NSF any information needed for proposal preparation, however the program solicitation and accompanying FAQs shall serve as the ultimate reference. Requests should be submitted via email to the Primary Contact no later than 1 March 2014.

Sources of additional information:

- National Science Foundation, Astronomical Sciences: <http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?org=AST>
- The Gemini Observatory: <http://www.gemini.edu>

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Sincerely,

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