

Representative Task Order Number Two: *NASA Research Announcement (NRA) – Research Grants*

Period of Performance:

January 1, 2015 – October 15, 2015

Background and Summary of the Requirement:

NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD) has begun its annual solicitation and selection cycle for its Interdisciplinary Research Program (IDS) in the Earth Sciences Division. Proposers who receive grants under the NASA Research Announcement (NRA) conduct innovative research at their respective NASA center, university campus, other US government agency, or other non- or for-profit U.S. institution. The opportunities are attractive to a broad spectrum of researchers and the program receives many competitive proposals during each selection cycle. IDS is a large competition and multiple program officers (PO) at NASA Headquarters require support. While the POs will write the solicitation, select the mail and panel reviewers, and oversee the process, they require support for the following activities, as summarized below and as defined more explicitly in the NRESS SOW:

1. Solicitation planning, development, and announcement; proposal receipt and collection; NRA's proposal evaluation & review event planning; pre- and post-evaluation communication and administration with proposers; proposal workflow tracking and reporting; and reporting statistics and other specific information about the proposal pool.
2. Organizing, scheduling, and staging proposal reviews through multiple review panels that include both face-to-face meetings and virtual or teleconference participation, as well as mail-in reviews, and a proposal selection meeting for NASA program managers and selection officials; administering and facilitating these activities, including providing panel document access and collaboration tools, documentation and transcription services, and arranging panel venue and travel, and mail review access; facilitating and solving problems during the panel events and the selection meeting; and for delivering data analytics before and after these activities, especially compiling and reporting panel summaries—a document written by the panel about the proposal summarizing their deliberations, panelists' individual proposal scores and panel overall scores after activities end.
3. Task close-out, including working with the POs to send final selection decisions to proposers and to support post-selection de-briefs; providing summary information and statistics about selection decisions; and archiving proposal artifacts.

Additional Requirements:

The NRA shall be advertised via grants.gov and electronic peer-review support systems, e.g., NSPIRES, operated by the contractor.

The contractor shall document and maintain the evaluation criteria, prepare evaluation forms and instructions for peer-reviewers and panelists, and orient reviewers and panelists to proposal evaluation standards, deadlines, and performance expectations.

The contractor shall support the recruitment of peer-reviewers to rate proposals and panelists to participate on a recommendations panel.

The NRESS contractor shall operate a Help Desk to assist proposers and reviewers with solicitation, proposal submission, and/or electronic system navigation questions.

Assumptions:

The NRA will yield approximately 500 proposals. All proposals must be submitted electronically and will include a cover page and an abstract, both of which will be submitted via electronic peer-review support information technology systems (such as NSPIRES) operated by the contractor. Proposers may permissibly edit proposal documents until the proposal deadline.

The proposals will be divided into groups at the discretion of the POs, generally based on the sub-elements of the solicitation. Each group will be reviewed in its own panel, and there will be 6 panels, each with its own PO. Each proposal will be assigned to at least one panel for review, though up to 100 proposals may be reviewed in multiple panels. Each panel will have 16 panelists. Each proposal will be reviewed by four separate panelists; each reviewer will prepare and submit their reviews electronically so that other panelists and the PO may see their reviews before and during the panel meeting. Most proposals will also be sent to one or more mail reviewers, and the PO and panel will need access to those.

During the panel, all panelists will require access to all reviews. Some panelists will be participating via teleconference or other virtual participation supplied by the contractor.

The panel will collaboratively develop a panel summary.

Of the 96 panel-reviewers recruited, 30% will be NASA civil servants employed at NASA centers; the other reviewers will be non-government personnel, especially university researchers. Reviewers who withdraw from the review cycle or fail to complete their reviews must be replaced and their reviews reassigned.

The panels will require three days to complete their work. The contractor will organize the panel meeting, including venue and review panelist travel. Many panelists will participate by teleconference or other virtual system proposed by the offeror.

After the panels are completed, there will be multiple proposal review and selection meetings at NASA Headquarters. Selection meeting participants will consist of NASA Headquarters civil servants. The contractor will supply the data for the POs and support these meetings in other ways, such as taking minutes. Data required will consist of

spreadsheets and other documents summarizing the proposal and review information, as well as presentation files on the overall solicitation and review process.

After selections are made, the contractor will 1) prepare notification letters, 2) announce selections via NSPIRES and other methods; 3) prepare technical evaluation and other documents for awards; and 4) supply appropriate panel review information to all proposers.

Key Dates:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>
January 1, 2015	Task start
February 15 2015	Release NRA solicitation
May 15 2015	Solicitation closes (proposals due)
July 15, 2015	All electronic reviews complete
July 25 2015	Panel meetings
August 2015	Proposal selection meetings at NASA Headquarters
September 1 2015	Selections announced
October 1 2015	Selection phase close-out
October 15, 2015	Task end

Key Deliverables:

1. Proposal evaluation forms and instructions for reviewers and panelists
2. Plan for review, including both venue and panel mechanisms for in person and virtual participants
3. Tracking documents for proposal assignments and review status
4. Summary statistics of evaluation and selection
5. Decision support documents, presentations, and minutes for HQ selection meeting
6. Decision letters
7. Congressional Notification report
8. Announcement of selections
9. Procurement packages for use by NASA grants office
10. Expenditure report