

September 27, 2019

The NuSTAR Users Committee (NUC) met via telecon on September 27, 2019. The following includes a list of attendees from the NUC, a list of ex-officio attendees, and minutes of the discussion.

**NUC attendees:**

John Tomsick (chair)  
Marco Ajello  
Fred Baganoff  
Slavko Bogdanov  
Enrico Bozzo  
Stephanie LaMassa  
Anne Lohfink  
Jack Steiner

**Ex-Officio attendees:**

Karl Forster (SOC manager)  
Daniel Stern (Project Scientist)  
Hashima Hasan (NASA HQ Program Scientist)  
Rich Terrile (Project Manager)

**Telecon agenda:**

1. the double-blind (dual-anonymous) system
2. allowing multi-cycle proposals
3. reducing the minimum exposure time
4. can a change be made to the cycle 6 AO to allow for direct funding of Co-Is?
5. should the page limit for large proposals be 5 or 6 pages?

**Telecon minutes:**

Topic#1: For cycle 6, NuSTAR is changing to the dual-anonymous proposal system. PI names and institutions will not be shared with reviewers, and PIs will need to follow guidelines for anonymous proposals. An AO amendment will be written, and the purpose of the NUC discussion is to understand what might need to be more or less emphasized in the amendment.

- Six members of the NuSTAR team attended a workshop at STScI, including Karl, Hashima, and Rich. Karl presented slides about the meeting to explain how HST has implemented this and what the outcomes have been.
- The positive outcomes have been better gender balance for proposal acceptance rates, reviewer discussions more focused on the science, and easier conflict of interest mitigation.
- Some important points: proposals will need to be written to try to remove self-identifying language; there will be a separate "team expertise" page that is not anonymous, which panels receive after grading; another person will be added to the

review panels with the job of making sure that the panel discussion does not veer into discussions of the identity of proposers.

- Questions were raised by the NUC, such as: what are the consequences for not properly anonymizing the proposal? (answer varies depending on severity from warnings to proposal rejection). What if access to data from other facilities is necessary to do the science? (probably needs to be included in the team expertise page...proposals may be rejected if it cannot be determined that the observers will have the necessary data)
- The NUC emphasized the need to get the word out about this change early and often (e.g., e-mail to NuSTAR Users, NSPIRES informational e-mail, emphasis during AAS Town Hall sessions, possibly a webinar for people to understand that guidelines and to ask questions)
- Related to the previous bullet, it is also important to make sure that the message reaches non-US proposers.
- The NUC offered to read the AO draft when it is ready (likely in a couple weeks)

Topic#2: In cycle 6, should it be allowed to check a box on the proposal form to make an observing program (TOO or non-TOO) active over multiple observing cycles?

- Generally, the NUC thought that it would be good to allow for programs to be active over two cycles
- Some concerns discussed were: if TOOs are carried over automatically, is there a risk of exceeding the time allocated for TOOs? Can the analysis be funded for a TOO triggered in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, or do funds need to be provided in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of each cycle? Science priorities probably change too rapidly to keep programs active for more than 2 years. From experience with other observatories, this does increase the complexity for making sure that duplicate observations are not approved.

Topic#3: In cycle 6, should the minimum exposure time be reduced below 20 ks?

- The NUC does not see a strong reason to reduce the minimum exposure time when comparing NuSTAR observing capabilities to those of other operating observatories. For instance, short observations with Swift/XRT can be used to obtain an X-ray flux measurement, or a Chandra observation for localizing a source.

Topic#4: With the larger funding amounts for large proposals, there are more cases where successful proposers will want to share funding between two or more institutions. Currently, it is necessary to do this as a subaward, which is an inefficient use of NuSTAR funding due to extra indirect costs. The NUC would like the NuSTAR project to explore the possibility of funding co-Is directly (at least in some cases, e.g., large proposals).

Topic#5: In cycle 5, large program proposals were allowed 5 pages. However, some other observatories, such as Chandra, have limits of 6 pages for their large programs? Should NuSTAR consider going to 6 pages for cycle 6?

- To date, the NUC has not heard of proposers asking for the 6 page limit, but people should contact a NUC member if they would like to see this change.