NSF's NOIRLab Policies for the Allocation of Observing Time

Observing time for programs at the NSF's NOIRLab is allocated via peer review twice a year. Observing time is available on the Gemini North and South Telescopes, at the Cerro Tololo InterAmerican and Kitt Peak National Observatories. Community-access time on a number of nonfederal telescopes is also available; the list of these other telescopes and facilities varies from semester-to-semester and the current list can be found in the current semester's NOIRLab Call for Proposals (https://noirlab.edu/science/observing-noirlab/proposals/call-for-proposals)

Tools for applying for telescope time can be obtained at: https://time-allocation.noirlab.edu/#/

Types of Observing Proposals

Investigators may submit either **Standard or Survey** proposals for telescope time on facilities available through NOIRLab. All proposals must be anonymized. See the current Call for Proposals for details.

Standard Proposals: Proposals should be Anonymized. These are traditional proposals for observing time allocated on a semester basis. Standard proposals generally request modest amounts of time, although requests for long runs are also considered. Long-term status may be requested as part of a Standard proposal call. Long-term proposals are limited to three semesters or less.

Survey Proposals: These Proposals should be Anonymized. NOIRLab makes a substantial amount of time available on all facilities to which it provides access for surveys. Surveys are not merely large-scale projects or projects that aim to study complete samples. A survey is a significant observational program which

- addresses novel, well-focused scientific goals;
- enables scientific programs requiring large, statistically complete, and homogeneous data;
- provides a basis for planning more detailed follow-up studies;
- enables extensive archival research; and ● represents a significant enhancement over existing surveys.

Successful programs are expected to be **completed in 3 years or less**. Data must be processed with a well-tested and well-documented pipeline. Processed data, data products and other deliverables must be archived in a convenient format, and must be made publicly available no longer than one year after the data are received in the NOIRLab archive. Successful proposals will be required to deliver a detailed data plan. Data products from Surveys are expected to have significant legacy value for the community.

Deadlines for the Submission of Telescope Proposals

Proposals for telescope time at NOIRLab facilities are accepted semi-annually, nominally on 31

March for the observing period August - January and on 30 September for the observing period February - July. These dates may be changed if they fall on weekends and such changes will be noted in the Call for Proposals.

Who Can Apply for Telescope Time?

Applications for telescope time at NOIRLab facilities are welcome from all astronomers and students.

Applications from astronomers and students who work at non-U.S. institutions must indicate why the project cannot be done using other facilities available to the investigators and why U.S. national facilities are needed. This information must be included in the Team Information and Relevant Background document.

Criteria for the Evaluation of Telescope Proposals

Telescope time at NOIRLab facilities will be awarded on the basis of scientific merit. The criteria for evaluating scientific merit of proposals for time on NOIRLab facilities are: ● The relevance and importance of the proposal within the area of specialization. ● The relevance and importance of the proposal in the larger context of astronomical research.

- The suitability of the experimental design to achieve the scientific goals (including sample size, required S/N, approach to deal with difficult data reduction problems, etc.).
- The significance of the proposed observations for the completion of the project.
- The likelihood that the researchers will complete the project and publish their results and the adequacy of the resources available to them in order to do this.
- The broader impacts of the proposed research, for example, in education and public awareness of science.

In addition, the value of the proposed research to the educational and career development of the investigators may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

For Survey Proposals, additional criteria related to the broader goals of survey programs are applied, including the legacy value of the data (i.e., how the data could be used after the survey is complete) and how much of an educational component may be involved.

Proposals from Graduate Students

Travel and on-site expenses for graduate students at U.S. institutions observing as part of a Ph.D thesis, classically scheduled program at KPNO, CTIO, Gemini Observatory or at non-federal observatories through community-access programs, may be considered for reimbursement, subject to observatory access policies and availability of funding.

The first step to qualify for reimbursement is the proposal must be designated as a thesis at the time the proposal is submitted and the proposal must be accompanied by a Thesis Student Information Form (https://time-allocation.noirlab.edu/#/proposal/thesis-form/). This web-based form should be completed by the student's faculty advisor and must be submitted within two business days after the proposal deadline in order to be included for review by the TAC.

Proposals submitted without an accompanying completed Thesis Student Information Form will not be considered as Thesis proposals by the TAC and will not be considered for travel reimbursement. Completion of the Thesis Student Information Form does not guarantee travel reimbursement.

Once a thesis proposal has been approved and scheduled, the thesis student travel **must** be coordinated with the respective observatories: for KPNO, Jessica Harris (jessica.harris@noirlab.edu), for CTIO, Ximena Herreros (ximena.herreros@noirlab.edu), and for CSDC for Gemini travel and community-access time at private observatories, Alexus Abbott (Alexus Abbott@noirlab.edu) **prior** to making any travel arrangements. Once the travel is approved by the observatory, the thesis student can begin making travel arrangements within the allocated costs.

Once travel is completed, Please email your respective observatory contact within 10 days to arrange for reimbursement. The student (or organization) should receive reimbursement within three to four weeks of submission.

If a proposal is not a Thesis Proposal, but a graduate student is the principal investigator or is to be primarily responsible for the observing, the student's faculty advisor must complete the Thesis Student Information Form (https://time-allocation.noirlab.edu/#/proposal/thesis-form/) stating that the student has the requisite experience and competence to carry out the observations.

Proposals for Long-Term Status

NOIRLab will accept proposals for scientific programs that extend beyond a single semester. Long-term status may be granted to a proposal for which the principal science goal of the proposal cannot be achieved without the full allocation of time over multiple semesters. An investigator who wishes to request long-term status should include a summary of the request (e.g., 2-3 nights per semester for three semesters) in the appropriate section of the proposal form. **Long-term status is limited to three semesters.**

If long-term status is granted, a progress report must be submitted each subsequent semester to inform the TAC that appropriate progress is being made. The progress report form can be found here https://time-allocation.noirlab.edu/ - /proposal/progress-report/ Progress reports should briefly summarize the scientific justification, provide a detailed discussion of progress to date, restate the number of observing runs still needed to complete the project, and give details needed for scheduling the proposal in the next semester. Failure to submit a progress report could result in termination of the long-term program.

Although the granting of long-term status by the TAC does carry with it a commitment for observing time in future semesters, NOIRLab reserves the right to terminate long-term status on the advice of the TAC if insufficient information concerning the progress of the project has been supplied by the Principal Investigator or in the event of telescope closures.

CTIO Long Term Requests

All investigators applying for long-term status for programs at CTIO must consult with the appropriate instrument scientist(s) (https://noirlab.edu/science/programs/ctio/instruments) regarding long-term requests well before the proposal deadline and before submitting the proposal.

Proposals for Community Access Time

NOIRLab accepts proposals from the astronomical community for time at non-federal observatories, with the list varying over time, depending on funding or time-exchange agreements. These proposals are reviewed by the NOIRLab TAC and recommendations for scheduling are forwarded to the respective observatories.

Proposals from all investigators, including those with access through other channels, will be accepted and reviewed without prejudice.

The NOIRLab TAC process assigns time on many telescopes that are also scheduled by other TACs; thus PIs can sometimes propose for the same resource for the same project through independent routes. The NOIRLab policy is not to schedule time through its TAC for a proposal by a PI/team that has already been granted time by a different TAC on the same telescope/instrument during the same observing season. Hence, to ensure that the same proposal is not on multiply scheduled, the Director will, when possible, review the NOIRLab TAC recommendations along with the results of other TACs and work with the proposal PIs as necessary to resolve possible conflicts.

Data obtained under this program may be placed in the NOIRLab's data archives under the same ground rules as data obtained at NOIRLab's own telescopes.

Proprietary Periods

The duration of the proprietary period is normally 18 months for proposals submitted through the NOIRLab proposal form and 12 months for proposals submitted through the Gemini Phase 1 Tool (PIT) from the time the data is collected at the telescopes. Investigators may also decide to voluntarily shorten or waive the proprietary period. Requests to extend the proprietary period must be approved by the NOIRLab Director.

Comments and/or suggestions, may be directed to proposal-help@noirlab.edu