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Frequently Asked Questions

ROSES-2024 A60 Earth Action: Ecological Conservation



Table of Contents

About the A60 Solicitation	3
1. Definitions: ARL Levels	3
2. Definitions: End Users	3
3. Data Sovereignty	4
4. Relevance to the Catalyst Initiative	4
Eligibility	5
5. Scope	5
6. Non-Western Science	5
7. Project Team Requirements	5
8. Eligibility Requirements	6
9. Grantee Capabilities	7
Crafting Strong Proposals	8
10. NASA Earth Action Strategy	8
11. Project Budget	9
12. Letters of Support	9
13. Requirements for Using NASA Information	10
How to Apply	11
14. ROSES and NSPIRES	11
Cost Share	13
15. Cost Share Requirement	13
16. Cost Sharing and Equity	13
17. Cost Share with Multiple End Users	14
18. Salaries: Applicable as Cost Share	14
19. Cost Share and Foreign Exchange Rate	14
20. Federal Funds: Not Applicable as Cost Share	15
21. Federal Agencies as End User	15
22. Cost Share Exemption	16
23. End User Description Form	17
24. Calculating the Exemption	17

About the A60 Solicitation

1. Definitions: ARL Levels

Question	A key difference between feasibility projects and decisional activities is the “ARL level” of the funded activity at the outset of prospective NASA funding. What does NASA mean by “ARL level”?
Answer	<p>ARL stands for Application Readiness Level. In general, ARLs 1–3 encompass discovery and feasibility; ARLs 4–6 address development, testing, and validation; and ARLs 7–9 focus on integration of the “application” into an end user’s decision-making activity. Using this scale, project teams are being asked to assess the “maturity” of their Applied Sciences project on a regular basis, starting with the project proposal.</p> <p>For more information, go to: https://above.nasa.gov/meeting_jan2017/docs/thur/1145_Larson_A_STM3%20EKL%20copy.pdf.</p>

2. Definitions: End Users

Question	There are several references in the solicitations to “end users.” How does NASA define this term?
Answer	<p>An end user is an individual or organization that uses the data, information, or other products to support their activities for their benefit and/or the benefit of others. That end user should have specific decision-making need(s) and the ability to act based on the project’s resulting information, such as by incorporating it into their decision-making processes and/or conservation actions.</p> <p>Previously funded projects have failed to achieve this objective because an intermediary body (i.e., boundary organization) that does not manage landscapes, seascapes, or species was selected as an end user, rather than the ones responsible for decision-making and conservation action. These intermediary organizations are</p>

welcome participants in project activities, but do not qualify as end users.

3. Data Sovereignty

Question	In the “What’s New in ROSES” document, two requirements have implications for data sovereignty. One is that publications that derive from ROSES must be publicly available; the other is that scientifically useful data and software development must be made publicly available. We as an Indigenous Nation have a different protocol on how to access our data. We hope NASA will honor our data sovereignty. Is that the case?
Answer	Yes, NASA honors the data sovereignty of Indigenous Nations. NASA Science Policy Documents recognize data sovereignty as a reason that data may not be open or may only have limited access. Proposers should describe data sovereignty considerations and how the data will or will not be made available within the Open Science Data Management Plan section of their proposal.

4. Relevance to the Catalyst Initiative

Question	I recall that NASA shared a draft solicitation for its Catalyst initiative last year. Is this A60 solicitation the same as, or replacing, that Catalyst effort?
Answer	<p>While the ROSES24 A60 solicitation is not the same as the draft Catalyst solicitations released in 2023, A60 is built off the work that went into constructing the Feasibility Project and Champion Activities that were core to the Catalyst calls. The key difference between A60 and Catalyst is that there is no geographic constraint for the responses to the current A60 solicitation.</p> <p>NASA is still in the process of planning other elements of Catalyst. To ensure you are on the mailing list to receive updates as they become available, go to catalyst4conservation.org and click “join our mailing list” under “Engage.”</p>

Eligibility

5.Scope

Question	Is there a preference for projects aimed at a specific geography, taxa, ecosystems, or program element?
Answer	There is no preference to any specific topic or program element. We seek to fund activities with the greatest likelihood of resulting in concrete use of NASA Earth observations for conservation-relevant decision-making by end users (see Section 2).

6.Non-Western Science

Question	Will the panel consider Indigenous knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge perspectives just as viable and valid?
Answer	We welcome projects which bring Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to the analysis and application of NASA Earth observations. After all, what NASA and Indigenous ways of knowing and being have in common is an orientation toward understanding the Earth as a system—and natural phenomena in that context.

7.Project Team Requirements

Question	Are there any requirements with respect to the composition of a project team?
Answer	The panel’s assessment of a team will hinge on its experience with respect to the proposed project and on its ability to translate information into stewardship and conservation action. For example, if a team has proposed an airborne campaign, the team should

include scientists who have experience translating airborne information into decision-making products. Additionally, project teams should have experience relevant to translating science and information into products that are useful to groups beyond those who traditionally have access to them.

Per federal statutes and NASA policy, no eligible applicant shall experience exclusion from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving financial assistance from NASA on the grounds of their race, color, creed, age, sex, national origin, or disability. NASA welcomes proposals from all qualified and eligible sources and strongly encourages proposals from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). To broaden the base of investigators involved in Science Mission Directorate (SMD) supported science and engineering, SMD especially seeks proposals from investigators who and institutions that have rarely if ever received funding from SMD. A resource that some proposers may find useful is the NASA MSI Exchange at <https://msiexchange.nasa.gov/>.

8. Eligibility Requirements

Question	Are there any requirements for what kind of organization or individual is eligible to apply?
Answer	<p>An organization needs to be headquartered in the U.S. to be eligible to apply for NASA funding. As sovereign nations, Tribal governments are eligible to apply. Federal agency staff are also eligible to serve as a principal investigator.</p> <p>As for individuals, ROSES does not require citizenship (see the ROSES Proposers Guide section 1.2). Therefore, individuals on the project team do not need to be U.S. citizens.</p>

9. Grantee Capabilities

Question	Our organization doesn't have in-house geospatial information system (GIS) capacity. Is it a requirement that we partner with someone who has those capabilities? If we don't already have a partner in mind, does NASA have any recommendations for whom we partner with?
Answer	<p>In-house capabilities for remote sensing and GIS are not requirements. However, since both Feasibility Activities and Decisional Activities require successful applicants to use NASA data in their projects, it may be difficult for a group without those capacities to be competitive. Ultimately, the relative importance of in-house remote sensing and GIS capabilities will depend on the project outlined in the proposal.</p> <p>For groups who wish to apply and who lack these capacities, we encourage you to consider including partner(s) on your project team who could lend those talents to the work as opposed to using a subcontractor.</p> <p>As for recommendations about prospective partners: NASA is unable to provide this guidance, since that could be construed as NASA favoring a particular group or groups.</p>

Crafting Strong Proposals

10. NASA Earth Action Strategy

Question	What is NASA’s new Earth Science to Action strategy, so I can keep that in mind when crafting my proposal?
Answer	<p>All NASA Earth Science program elements are working together to fulfill NASA’s mission to benefit the people of the United States and the world.</p> <p>To do this, NASA’s Biological Diversity and Ecological Conservation programs seek opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage end users early in the design of information products and services.• Identify and scale effective conservation approaches—and how NASA’s information and technologies advance them—to new disciplines, sectors, ecosystems, and geographies across the globe. (The A60 solicitation therefore includes Feasibility Activities and Decisional Activities, recognizing that the former may mature into projects that would be competitive for the latter through future solicitations.)• Work across the whole of NASA Earth (including Earth Action, Research and Analysis, Earth Science Technology Office, and Flight Program) in service of more integrated approaches representing the breadth of what NASA offers. (This is NASA’s responsibility, and the Biological Diversity and Ecological Conservation programs are taking separate steps to accomplish this in service of A60 and other NASA grantees.)• Deepen decision-makers’ understanding and use of NASA Earth observations to accelerate evidence-driven biodiversity conservation.• Fulfill the virtuous cycle, learning from a more diverse array of end users how NASA can increase the impact of the next generation of Earth observations. <p>Proposals need not speak to these themes. We share them here merely for your background.</p>

11. Project Budget

Question	Is there a maximum budget amount that can be requested?
Answer	For both Feasibility Activities and Decisional Activities, given the budget available and the expected number of new awards (given in Section 7 of A.60) we cannot afford for the average project budget to exceed about \$250,000 per year for each of the four years of this funding cycle.

12. Letters of Support

Question	If the project lead's (or PI's) organization is the end-user organization, are letters of support still required?
Answer	<p>Yes. In addition, support letters from people at end-user organizations who are not part of the proposing team will be viewed favorably.</p> <p>For Decisional Activities applications, each end user providing cost share must provide a letter stating their need and commitment.</p>

13. Requirements for Using NASA Information

Question	Do I need to use NASA data in the proposed project? May we use external data (like the European Space Agency’s Sentinel program) in addition to NASA Earth remotely sensed data?
Answer	<p>Proposals must demonstrate a clear link to past, present, or future NASA Earth science data and/or models. This link could include but is not limited to: NASA satellite remote sensing data (including joint missions of NASA and its interagency and international partners), remote sensing data that pertains to future NASA observing systems, remote sensing and in situ data from NASA or NASA-affiliated suborbital activities such as airborne campaigns and surface-based networks, data acquired via NASA’s Commercial Small Sat Data Acquisition (CSDA) Program. NASA Earth-observing products can be found at https://www.earthdata.nasa.gov/learn/find-data or https://search.earthdata.nasa.gov/search.</p> <p>Commercial data that are acquired by or available through the NASA Commercial Satellite Data Acquisition (CSDA) Program are considered to meet this requirement. A list of current data and license agreements can be found at https://www.earthdata.nasa.gov/esds/csda/commercial-datasets. All data products available through the CSDA are provided at no cost to funded NASA investigators.</p> <p>While the use of non-NASA Earth observations is welcome, project products must leverage NASA Earth observations. All Earth observation products must be explicitly named within the proposal. Reviewers will evaluate how critical the NASA Earth observation products are to achieving the project goals.</p> <p>See Section 3.2.1 of A.60 Earth Action: Ecological Conservation (.pdf) for more information about how NASA Earth observations are defined with respect to this solicitation.</p>

How to Apply

14. ROSES and NSPIRES

Question	I am new to NASA grant-making and have never accessed materials through ROSES or applied through NSPIRES before. Where do I start, and how do I apply?
Answer	<p>First, let's start by explaining the difference between ROSES and NSPIRES. The first is the NASA omnibus solicitation itself, along with guidance for writing proposals; the second is the platform you use to apply. The acronyms stand for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research Opportunities in Space and Earth Sciences (ROSES): This is the "umbrella solicitation" under which topical calls for proposals—like A60—are released, each with its own criteria and due date. Since someone responding to the A60 solicitation is also, by extension, responding to ROSES, this solicitation directs people to relevant ROSES content and resources.• NASA Solicitation and Proposal Integrated Review and Evaluation System (NSPIRES): This is the web interface for submitting a proposal in response to a ROSES solicitation. The link for this particular solicitation is: https://nspires.nasaprs.com/external/solicitations/summary.do?solId=%7b9E6792EF-EF8C-A83B-9A10-51A35953C999%7d&path=&method=init. <p>Now, let's talk about how to use them.</p> <p>ROSES</p> <p>For an introduction to ROSES and how to use it, we suggest this introductory video featuring Dr. Max Bernstein, the lead for research with NASA's Science Mission Directorate: https://vimeo.com/720739148/a224ff4ab0.</p> <p>NASA also keeps a library of resources about ROSES at this link: https://science.nasa.gov/researchers. This site includes FAQs specific to ROSES at: https://science.nasa.gov/researchers/sara/faqs.</p>

If you have questions after reviewing this video and other resources, you can contact Dr. Bernstein and his colleagues by email at SARA@nasa.gov.

NSPIRES

We suggest beginning with “Max’s NSPIRES Helpful Hints,” at this link: <https://science.nasa.gov/researchers/sara/how-to-guide/maxs-nspires-helpful-hints>.

The NSPIRES team also provides a variety of resources, including tutorials, to orient people to the platform, at this link: [https://nspires.nasaprs.com/external/externalhelp/public/index.htm#t=Tutorials and User Guides%2Fgeneral info%2FLesson 2 Introduction to NSPIRES.htm](https://nspires.nasaprs.com/external/externalhelp/public/index.htm#t=Tutorials%20and%20User%20Guides%2Fgeneral%20info%2FLesson%202%20Introduction%20to%20NSPIRES.htm).

If you have questions about [A.60 Earth Action: Ecological Conservation](#) please direct those to keith.gaddis@nasa.gov.

If you have questions about ROSES, please contact Dr. Bernstein and his colleagues by email at SARA@nasa.gov.

Cost Share

15. Cost Share Requirement

Question	Why does NASA have a cost share requirement for Decisional Activities proposals?
Answer	The purpose of the cost share is to demonstrate a demand from the end user(s) for the proposed product(s) and their ability to maintain the product(s) beyond the term of the award. This cost share can include a variety of direct and in-kind contributions toward the project, including the salaries of end-user staff involved in the project. See Table A60-1 for other categories that count toward the cost share.

16. Cost Sharing and Equity

Question	Does NASA have advice for how to construe a cost share so it is fair and equitable across end users?
Answer	<p>Cost sharing should reflect the diversity, heterogeneity, and complexity of the end users your project would engage. Project proposals can distribute the cost share across end users—with more or less paid by each according to their differing needs and abilities.</p> <p>We recommend planning and negotiating respective cost shares openly and transparently with end users, and as aligned with the purpose and objectives of the project. This way, financial resources can flow through the project in ways that help advance the impact your project seeks.</p>

17. Cost Share with Multiple End Users

Question	How is the cost share requirement affected if a project works with more than one end user?
Answer	The total expected cost share does not increase if there is more than one end user in a proposal. As outlined in section 3.1.5, end users must collectively contribute at least 30 percent of the total activity cost each year of the award. This may be distributed among the end users. For example, if a project works with two end-user organizations, one can contribute 10 percent and the other 20 percent of the annual total.

18. Salaries: Applicable as Cost Share

Question	May salary paid to a member of the end-user organization for work on the project be considered cost share for the project?
Answer	Yes, labor time spent by the end user on the proposed activities can be considered as part of the end-user organization’s contribution to cost share. Table A60-1 outlines the major categories of financial or in-kind contributions to a project. Labor is the first line in this table.

19. Cost Share and Foreign Exchange Rate

Question	How is cost share calculated when the end-user entity is a foreign organization? Does the cost share change if a foreign currency exchange rate changes?
Answer	Cost share is calculated in U.S. dollar amounts regardless of the end-user organization. The cost share is not affected by changes in foreign exchange rates.

20. Federal Funds: Not Applicable as Cost Share

Question	An end user involved in our project has federal funds from another grant. Can they use those funds toward their cost share?
Answer	<p>The short answer is: No. Federal regulation 2 CFR 200.306(b)(5) prohibits the use of funds, goods, or services provided through a federal award to meet the cost share requirements for another federal award.</p> <p>The longer answer is: If the applying organization enters into a partnership agreement with an end user that is a federal agency and this agreement does not involve the transfer of any funds, goods, or services to the applying entity, then that agreement is not considered a federal award. Therefore, the applying entity may use the federal agency’s in-kind support to meet the cost share requirements for this funding opportunity. 2 CFR 200.306 explains how to determine the monetary value of the support provided by the partner agency. Proposers should use the budget narrative section to explain that this support is provided under a partnership relationship and not through a federal award.</p> <p>End-user organizations that receive U.S. federal funding (via, for example, Pittman-Robertson Act, Multistate Conservation Grants, or the Land and Water Conservation Fund) may be exempt from contributing cost share on a case-by-case basis.</p>

21. Federal Agencies as End User

Question	Can a federal agency be an end user?
Answer	Yes. Federal agencies can serve as end users.

22. Cost Share Exemption

Question	For Decisional Activities (but not Feasibility Activities), the solicitation references a cost share requirement and that, as outlined in section 3.1.6, an exemption is possible. Can you elaborate further on how the exemption works?
Answer	<p>First, let's talk about to whom the exemption applies. The purpose of the exemption is to ensure NASA engages with and supports groups that have been traditionally underserved and marginalized, in accordance with Executive Order 13985 and definitions therein. End-user organizations that receive U.S. federal funding (via, for example, Pittman-Robertson Act, Multistate Conservation Grants, or the Land and Water Conservation Fund) may be exempt from contributing cost share on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Second, let's talk about the exemption process. We have endeavored to make the process of applying for the exception as easy as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicants need only answer one question via the End User Description Form on the NSPIRES page for the A60 solicitation at this link: https://nspires.nasaprs.com/external/solicitations/summary.do?solId=%7b9E6792EF-EF8C-A83B-9A10-51A35953C999%7d&path=&method=init.• Proposers may request early approval for their cost share exemption by emailing the program manager (keith.gaddis@NASA.gov). NASA will review these requests on a rolling basis.

23. End User Description Form

Question	Do proposers need to submit one End User Description Form for each end user?
Answer	No. Only one End User Description Form describing all end users should be submitted.

24. Calculating the Exemption

Question	How is the cost share requirement affected if a project works with more than one end user and at least one end user is eligible for a cost share exemption (Section 3.1.6)?
Answer	<p>To incentivize enhanced engagement with end users who are traditionally underserved and marginalized (see question 6 above), a proportional exemption is available to applicants who do not meet the exemption but will engage with Tribal communities.</p> <p>For instance, a proposal with three end users, one of which is a Tribal organization or sovereign nation, would have a 20 percent cost share requirement (a one-third reduction from the 30 percent required in the solicitation, Section 3.1.5) to be paid by the non-Tribal end users. A proposal with six end users, one of which is a Tribal organization, would have a 25 percent cost-share requirement (a one-sixth reduction from the 30 percent required in the solicitation) to be paid by the non-Tribal end users.</p>

With any other questions, please contact Keith Gaddis at keith.gaddis@NASA.gov.