Arecibo Observatory (NAIC) Management Competition

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NAIC Management and Operations (M&O)

- NAIC/Arecibo Observatory is supported through a cooperative agreement, which funds a managing organization to staff, manage, operate, maintain and develop NAIC as a multidisciplinary research center.

- Cooperative agreements are a type of Federal assistance award, distinct from grants or contracts.
Management Competition

- Consistent with NSB policy, NSF solicited proposals for a new, five-year cooperative agreement for NAIC M&O through an open, competitive, merit-based review process.
- Competition resulted in the selection of a single managing organization (potentially consisting of multiple collaborating institutions) to manage, operate, staff and maintain NAIC as a center of excellence for research and education.
Core Expectations

The awardee will be responsible for the overall management and performance of NAIC, including the infrastructure, instrumentation and staff, and for maximizing the benefits to the scientific research community through a strategically planned scope of activities.

NSF program solicitation (NSF 10-562) delineated all awardee expectations, eligibility requirements, proposal preparation and submission instructions, award information, and proposal review and selection process.
NAIC M&O Program Solicitation

Proposals were extensive undertakings:
- Overall Management Concept
- Organization and Operations
- Human Resources, Workforce and Diversity
- Science and Facility Plan
- Education and Outreach Plan
- Transition Plan
- Financial Capability Package

Proposals were evaluated in all areas above to inform NSF funding decision
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<td>Informational Site Visit</td>
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<td>Letters of Intent Due</td>
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Informational Site Visits

- All eligible proposing organizations were invited to a comprehensive site visit.
- During site visit, all facility infrastructure open to proposers with NSF escort.
- Technical experts provided at each station.
- Questions answered on site as much as possible and through public FAQ for all nonproprietary information.
Resource Library

- Password accessible for all eligible proposing orgs
- FAQ provided equivalent information to all potential proposers; based on requested information
- Library of site and facility information:
  - CA, funded proposals, program plans, annual reports
  - Third-party studies, structural surveys and inspections
  - Property and equipment inventories, example work orders, major maintenance requirements
  - Master site plan, as-built drawings, systems diagrams
  - Encumbrances such as leases, agreements, subcontracts
  - Utilities and other fixed costs, site licenses
Q1: Please provide the reports from the Arecibo Users and Scientific Advisory Committee (AUSAC) from the last five years.

A: The AUSAC advises the NAIC Director on matters concerning the operation of Arecibo Observatory. The AUSAC does not report to NSF, and their reports are confidential to the incumbent.

Q2: Is the Piña Colada Shack operated by the Visitor Center?

A: Yes.
Required Letters of Intent

- Non-binding; identified potential proposers to NSF, each with broad description of management and operational vision
- Allowed early consideration of potential reviewers and conflicts of interest
- Prepared NSF to consider novel management structures, operations models, partnering agreements, etc.
Proposal Review Process

- Proposals were reviewed by over 20 experts who provided detailed comments to NSF
- A review panel met to consider these comments and provide advice to NSF
- Proposal teams responded in writing to reviewer questions before and during panel
- Proposal teams met with NSF staff to discuss questions based on reviewer comments
Proposal Review Process, cont.

- Program Officers’ Review Analysis and Recommendation forwarded via MPS and GEO leadership to Director’s Review Board
- MPS and GEO met with DRB to discuss review process and recommendation
- DRB approved recommendation and forwarded to NSF Director for final approval
- Note that for many NSF large facilities, NSB approval required
Transition Activities

- Awardee established transition team to implement the approved transition plan.
- NSF assembled a team of experts to assist with and oversee the transition.
- Awardee and incumbent coordinated to conduct transition activities and keep staff informed.
- Awardee prioritized a seamless transition of science operations and re-employment of staff.
Establish and announce the competition schedule as early as possible; make every effort to adhere to the anticipated timeline.

Publish a detailed, comprehensive solicitation to establish specific awardee requirements, proposal preparation instructions and review criteria. Balance constraints with flexibility to enable innovation.

Establish clear guidelines for facility staff engagement with potential proposers, including expectations regarding letters of commitment from key personnel.
Key Considerations, cont.

- Clearly delineate proprietary and non-proprietary information; to the latter provide equal access for all proposers. Consider requiring publicly available versions of annual reports and program plans.
- Identify all property and equipment that is necessary for the operation of the facility, including ownership, location, value, etc. Prepare for potential transition or disposition of excess equipment.
- To the extent possible, make available to all potential proposers the results of independent studies and analyses related to the facility.
- Establish timely transition planning among incumbent, proposers and NSF.