

# 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

# Competition Timeline

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Solicitation Released	April 2010
Informational Site Visit	June 17-18, 2010
Letters of Intent Due	August 2, 2010
Full Proposals Due	October 1, 2010
Proposals Reviewed	Oct 2010 – Feb 2011
DRB Review	April 2011
Transition Period Begins	June 2011
New Award	October 2011

# 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



# Sample FAQ

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.

# Key Considerations

- ◆ 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.