National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Mary W. Jackson Building NASA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546-0001

January 5, 2025

Reply to Attn of: SMD Astrophysics Division

Subject: Dear Colleague Letter to Solicit Self-Nominations for the Habitable Worlds Observatory Community Science & Instrument Team

Dear Colleague,

NASA is soliciting self-nominations from interested individuals to participate as members of the Community Science and Instrument Team (CSIT) for the Habitable Worlds Observatory (HWO). As recommended by the 2020 Decadal Survey on Astronomy and Astrophysics (hereafter Astro2020), the HWO large space telescope concept will be designed to search for habitable planets and life outside the solar system as well as a wide range of transformative astrophysics. The CSIT will collaborate with the Habitable Worlds Observatory Technology Maturation Project Office (HTMPO) to mature the HWO technologies and mission concept in preparation for the Mission Concept Review (MCR) to proceed into Phase A, honoring the guidance from Astro2020 and the NASA Science Mission Directorate Large Mission Study.

CSIT Roles & Scope

The CSIT will help HTMPO take the next steps in maturing the HWO technologies and mission concept. The CSIT will execute scientific studies needed to support definition of a baseline mission concept, analyze potential science instruments, and provide input to HTMPO's technology maturation plans. Furthermore, the CSIT will play an important role as mission ambassadors to the broader science and technology communities.

The CSIT will be composed of about 20 members, under the leadership of two Co-Chairs. Additional members may be added to address unanticipated expertise needs. The HWO Project Scientist and Pre-Formulation Scientists will be ex-officio members of the CSIT. The CSIT Co-Chairs will report to the HWO Project Scientist, as the primary interface with the interdisciplinary science community. The Pre-Formulation Scientists will manage and support CSIT activities, coordinating them with the HTMPO activities. Travel support for CSIT members will be provided, and labor support for members and their designated collaborators is anticipated, subject to availability of funding. The CSIT will exist through MCR, nominally planned by the end of the decade and contingent upon availability of funding, then disband to be succeeded by a new community group.

Self-Nominations & Eligibility

NASA is seeking a diversity of expertise for the CSIT in the following areas: UV/O/IR astrophysics, exoplanets, astrobiology, and laboratory astrophysics; scientific instrumentation and technologies for UV/O/IR space observatories; and other areas of expertise that should be clearly justified as to relevance to the CSIT in the self-nomination package. Community members past the terminal degree in their career path are eligible for CSIT membership.

Self-nominations are solicited from individuals at U.S.-based research and academic institutions, science centers, NASA Centers, government laboratories, and Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). Only U.S. persons (i.e., U.S. citizens and permanent residents) are eligible for CSIT membership. Representatives of international space agencies/organizations may be appointed as ex-officio members of the CSIT.

Self-nomination packages must include:

1. Cover letter (2 pages maximum) stating:
    a. Interest in serving as a CSIT Co-Chair, if applicable;
    b. Expertise, capabilities, & experience the submitter would bring to the CSIT;
    c. Level of effort the submitter can commit to;
    d. Brief statement of the submitter's approach to mentorship;
    e. Commitment to act in a manner consistent with the NASA Astrophysics Division's Statement of Principles
2. Resume (2 pages maximum) highlighting relevant activities.

Cover letters and resumes must use the standard page size (8.5x11 inches), line spacing (single-spaced), and font size (12-point) listed in Section 10.0 of the NASA Grant and Cooperative Agreement Manual (GCAM).

Self-nomination packages must be sent as a single PDF file to Dr. Megan Ansdell (HWO Program Scientist; megan.c.ansdell@nasa.gov) by 11:59 PM EST on **March 17, 2025**.

Selection Process

Independent reviewers will evaluate self-nominations using the following criteria:

- Demonstrated expertise in the science/technical areas identified above (40%)
- Experience participating in and/or leading large, multi-disciplinary science/technical collaborations (20%)
- Demonstrated experience in science/technology community engagement (20%)
- Effectiveness of mentorship approach (20%)

Evaluations will be used to guide selection of CSIT membership that spans needed topical areas and skill sets. Attention will be paid to bringing new perspectives on the HTMPO efforts. Announcement of CSIT membership and initiation of their efforts are anticipated in July 2025.

Self-nomination does not commit the submitter to serve on the CSIT and does not prevent the submission of responses to any NASA solicitations. NASA reserves the right to cancel the issuance of this "Dear Colleague Letter" at any time should programmatic and/or other reasons warrant it. Prospective CSIT members will be required to complete a Conflicts of Interest (COI) questionnaire prior to participation on the CSIT.

Questions about the CSIT or the self-nomination process may be directed to Dr. Megan Ansdell (HWO Program Scientist; megan.c.ansdell@nasa.gov).

Dr. Eric Smith
Astrophysics Division Director, Acting
NASA Headquarters