

PASEO Meeting

July 15-16, 2010 – Socorro, NM



NRAO Time Allocation Process

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Office of Science & Academic Affairs

Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array
Expanded Very Large Array
Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope
Very Long Baseline Array



Motivation

- To provide the wider scientific community with greater ownership of, and responsibility for, the science addressed by NRAO facilities.
- To decouple the proposal cycle from operational considerations (e.g., the EVLA configuration cycle) in order to encourage users to be solely motivated by science imperatives.
- To bring the proposal cycle into better alignment with other ground based facilities and space missions.
- To enhance the simplicity, transparency, and accountability of the proposal handling and time allocation process.



Proposal Handling and Time Allocation

The key changes are:

- Two calls for proposals* a year rather than three
 - from Feb 1, Jun 1, & Oct 1 to ~Feb 1 & ~Aug 1
- A unification of
 - Proposal submission
 - Proposal evaluation
 - Time allocation

* Note that current plans call for one call for ALMA proposals each year with a proposal deadline of Sep 1.



Proposal Submission

- Single web portal and helpdesk for all NRAO telescopes: GBT, EVLA, VLBA, ALMA (international facility)
- Consolidation of documentation and tools for proposal submission
- PST will support one proposal for use of one or more of GBT, EVLA, and VLBA
- ALMA proposal submission will require the use of the ALMA OT
- Four broad PST science categories



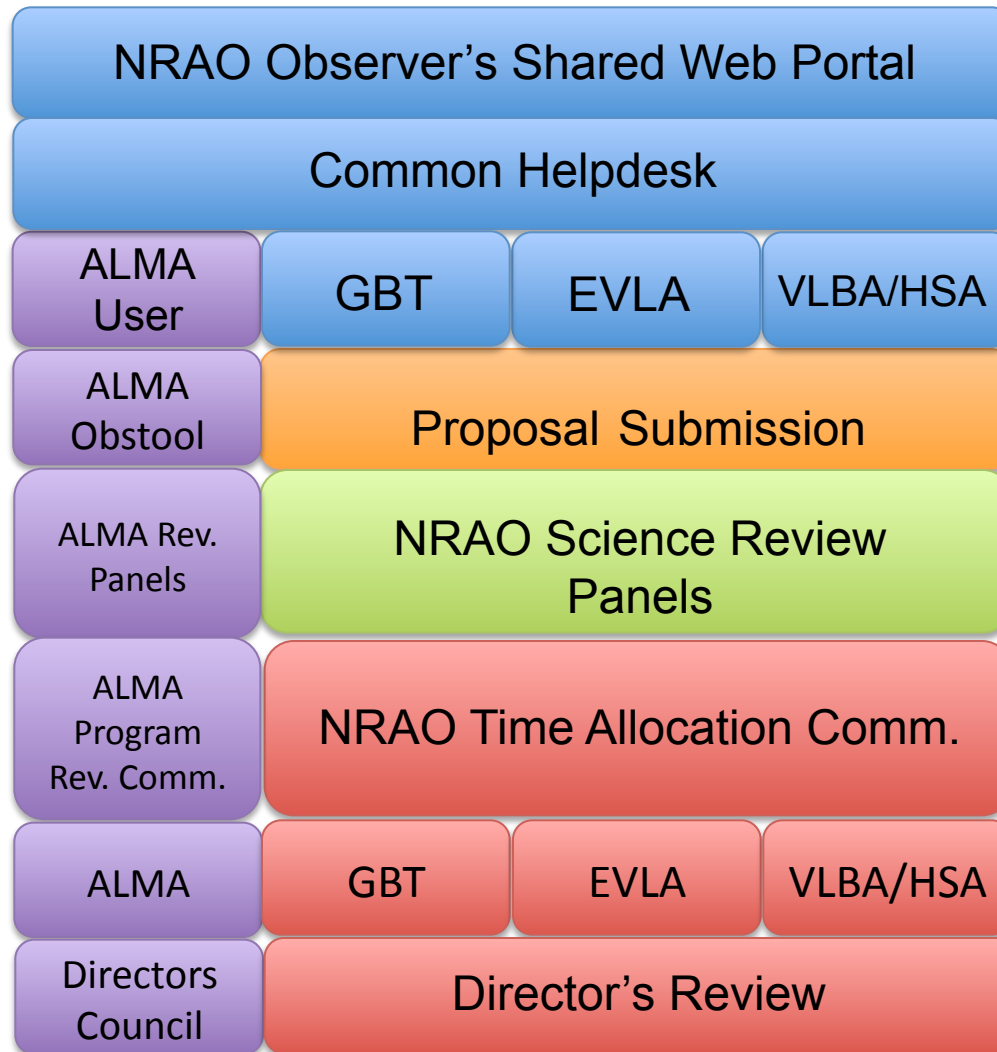
Proposal Evaluation

- Eight science sub-categories (revisited periodically)
- Proposal review and ranking by *Science Review Panels* organized around science categories
- Each SRP is responsible for
 - reviewing the proposals within the science subcategory
 - providing a rank order list of proposals within the subcategory based on science merit.
- The Chair of the SRP is also a member of the TAC

Time Allocation

- The TAC meets f2f twice a year to:
 - Cross-reconcile the SRP rankings
 - Discuss and rank large proposals
 - Assess input from technical reviews
 - Produce a list of recommended allocations for the GBT, EVLA, and VLBA
- The NRAO Director, OSAA Head, Chief Scientist, and site Directors meet to review and approve TAC recommendations.





Proposal types

- Proposal types currently are:
 - Regular (<200 hrs)
 - Large (>200 hrs)
 - Rapid response (Known transients, Target of Opportunity*, Exploratory*)
- New types are:
 - Regular (<200 hrs)
 - Large (>200 hrs)
 - Triggered
 - Directors Discretionary Time* (ToO and Exploratory)

* Proposal types that may be submitted any time.



Director Discretionary Time

- DDT proposals can be submitted to the NRAO Director at any time via the PST.
- DDT proposals are intended to address targets of opportunity, high-risk/high-return exploratory proposals, or other science opportunities deemed sufficiently urgent to justify prompt action.
- Up to 5% of available observing time reserved for DDT.
- If necessary, the NRAO Director will consult with the Director's Review members or relevant SRP members before deciding on DDT requests.



Revision of proprietary periods

- Regular proposals: 12 months
- Large proposals: up to 12 months, proposers encouraged to release data sooner
- Triggered proposals: case-by-case assessment*, but no more than 6 months
- DDT proposals: case by case assessment*, but no more than 6 months

* Including waiving the proprietary period entirely



Key Science Projects

- An NRAO *Key Science Project* designation is intended to identify those projects that are timely, fundamental, and will have a significant science impact.
- KSPs are currently nominated by the Proposal Selection Committees and approved by the Director's Review.
- NRAO provides resources to ensure success of project:
 - Observation planning support
 - Assistance with enabling special observing modes
 - Data quality assurance
- The concept has been evolving since its introduction in Oct 2009 – the goal is to increase/optimize the science impact of NRAO facilities



Under consideration

- With ALMA and the EVLA coming online, would NRAO *Legacy Programs*, analogous to those supported by Spitzer, be a better model?
 - *Large and coherent science projects*, not reproducible by any reasonable number or combination of smaller regular proposals;
 - Projects of *general and lasting importance* to the broad astronomical community, yielding a substantial and coherent database; and
 - The reduced *data enter the public domain immediately upon processing and validation*, thereby enabling timely and effective opportunities for follow-on observations and for archival research.
- Unlike Spitzer, NRAO does not currently fund KSP or possible Legacy programs
- NRAO KSP/Legacy can perhaps leverage funding from NSF



A Phased Implementation

The NRAO proposal handling and time allocation process under the OSO will be implemented in three overlapping phases, two of which are visible to the users:

1. Consolidation of proposal submission under the NRAO User Portal
2. Unification of proposal review and time allocation process
 - Proposal management infrastructure
 - SRP and TAC formation, consolidation of referee pools
3. Replacement of data bases and software tools in support of scheduling



Schedule

Proposal Deadline	Activities
Jun 1, 2010	Normal trimester proposal deadline; implementation of new proposal evaluation and time allocation process begins; Socorro employs PST for review management
Oct 1, 2010	Normal trimester proposal deadline; consolidation of proposal submission documentation and tools under user web portal; implement and test GB PST review management
Feb 1, 2011	First semester proposal deadline; SRP and TAC review process begins
Aug 1, 2011	Second semester proposal deadline with fully unified SRP and TAC

