



10th Announcement of Opportunity for Science Planners in the NASA-led IRIS Mission

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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Interface Region Imaging Spectrograph (IRIS) is a NASA Small Explorer (SMEX) mission that allows tracing the flow of solar energy and plasma from the photosphere through the chromosphere and transition region into the corona using spectroscopy and imaging in ultraviolet windows between 130 and 283 nm. IRIS can reveal the dynamics of the chromosphere and transition region and allow understanding the processes powering them. IRIS is a major leap from previous and existing solar spectrographs (e.g., SOHO/CDS or SUMER, Hinode/EIS) in terms of spatial (0.3-0.4 arcsec), temporal (2 s) and spectral (3 km/s) resolution. More information about the IRIS mission can be found at <http://iris.lmsal.com>

At its meeting in November 2014, ESA’s Science Programme Committee (SPC), approved ESA’s participation in IRIS under the form of a “Mission of Opportunity”. The SPC approved in March 2023 the extension of the participation in the mission operations for 2023-2026. The ESA participation to the IRIS mission entails the access of competitively selected scientists based in ESA Member States to the mission’s observations.

Nine Announcements of Opportunity (AO) for participation in the IRIS mission under the form of “Science Planners” were issued in April 2015, March 2016, April 2017, April 2018, April 2019, March 2020, March 2021, April 2022 and April 2023.

The present 10th Announcement of Opportunity (AO) solicits proposals for participation in the IRIS mission from scientists working in the ESA Member States, under the form of “Science Planners”, according to the duties and rights indicated in Section 2. A maximum of three scientists will be appointed through the present AO. The appointment duration will be one year.

The schedule for this AO cycle is given in Table 1.

Table 1: AO schedule and deadlines

Date	Event
29 April 2024	Release of this AO
3 June 2024 – 12:00 hrs (noon) CEST	Proposals due
July 2024	Appointment of successful proposers

2. APPOINTMENT REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS

Because of the narrow field of view of the IRIS spectrograph, planning of the observations is a critical task, necessary to achieve the best possible science output from the mission. Given also the extremely variable nature of the target (with active regions evolving on short time scales) science planning is a key element of IRIS’ exploitation, and one cannot simply decouple science observations from their planning, as can be done, e.g., in many astronomical space telescopes. For these reasons, the most effective approach is to train selected scientists to perform (in close cooperation with the IRIS team following the regular process involving a weekly science meeting) the planning for a number of weeks, during which they can execute their own science

observations as well as the regularly scheduled calibration/synoptic and coordination programmes.

This approach has the added benefit (apart from maximising the science output) of providing a unique hands-on training opportunity for the involved scientists, allowing them to operate a live instrument and to acquire the understanding necessary to best exploit the data. This planning experience may be useful e.g., in the context of understanding and preparing observations from other solar physics missions, such as Solar Orbiter and Solar-C/EUVST. The IRIS team is committed to facilitating the timing and requirements of any selected science proposals that are focused on coordinated observations with IRIS and Solar Orbiter.

The selected scientists will act as IRIS “Science Planner” and run the IRIS instrument for 2 weeks each (spread throughout the year). This involves creating and uploading the daily science plan to IRIS for the coordinated observing programmes (in particular also with Hinode and ground-based observatories) as well as regularly scheduled calibration programmes. In addition, each selected scientist will have the possibility to run their own science observing programmes during those periods.

To prepare for their first planning phase, selected scientists (unless they have previous and recent experience in IRIS planning) are expected to take part in training the week before their first planning week, and have the option to either: 1) be available remotely for 5 days (each day from 8 am to 1 pm Pacific Time) for virtual training, or 2) travel to the “Lockheed Martin Solar and Astrophysics Laboratory” – LMSAL (Palo Alto, CA, USA) for at least 5 days. Planning can be done remotely. Candidates should take into account that remote planning requires working on timelines during morning hours in Pacific time with the deadline for timeline submission at noon Pacific time (20:00/21:00 CE(S)T).

The selection of scientists responding to the present AO will be performed through a peer-review process, in coordination with the IRIS team, to ensure both optimal science return to the involved scientists and, among other things, spacecraft safety and overall science return to the mission.

The proposals should demonstrate the candidate’s scientific and technical expertise in science planning in the fields relevant for the IRIS mission and should include a brief synopsis of the science programmes the candidates plan to run.

The candidates should state their commitment to carry out the planning activities as described above.

The proposals should also include a Letter of Endorsement from the relevant Institution or Agency about the support for the accomplishment of the required activities.

The successful candidates will be appointed as “Science Planner” for the IRIS mission by the Director of Science for a period of one year. Their appointment is *ad personam*.

Each selected scientist will be required to submit at the end of the appointment a short report of their IRIS-related activities to ESA.

3. CONTENTS OF THE PROPOSAL

Proposals submitted in response to the AO are limited in length to 5 A4 pages (minimum font size 11 pt), and must contain the following information:

- A cover letter stating the proposer's name and affiliation and explicitly mentioning the proposer's title, position, affiliation, address, and e-mail address (max. 1 page).
- A brief curriculum vitae also including the most relevant publications (max. 1 page – see attached template).
- A summary of the scientific expertise and technical expertise in science planning in the fields relevant for the IRIS mission and a synopsis of the science programme the candidate plans to run, as well as a statement concerning the time availability commitment to carry out the planning activities as described in Section 2, including travelling to LMSAL (if applicable) for the required periods (max. 2 pages).
- A Letter of Endorsement from the relevant Institution or Agency about the support for the accomplishment of the required activities (max. 1 page).

4. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used (in no particular order) in assessing and evaluating individual proposals:

- Candidate's scientific and technical expertise in the fields relevant for the IRIS mission.
- Scientific merit of the programme the candidate plans to run.
- Adequacy of the time that the candidate intends to devote to the required activities.
- Adequacy of resources available to the candidate to carry out the required activities.

5. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals shall be submitted electronically in PDF format using the interface available at <http://www.cosmos.esa.int/web/iris-2024> and must be received not later than the date indicated in **Table 1**. Proposers will receive confirmation upon successful receipt of their proposals.



Further queries should be addressed to:

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