

NORDIC OPTICAL TELESCOPE



ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

FOR MAJOR LONG-TERM RESEARCH PROJECTS

The Council of the Nordic Optical Telescope Scientific Association (NOTSA) invites proposals by consortia of primarily Nordic research groups for major projects to be executed at the Nordic Optical Telescope over a five-year period beginning in 2014. The successful consortia will be awarded a significant share of the Nordic observing time in that period and are expected in return to contribute resources to the corresponding cost of operations and/or major technical upgrades.

Background

The Nordic Optical Telescope (NOT) was installed in 1989 at Roque de Los Muchachos Observatory, La Palma, as a general-purpose northern observing facility for Nordic astronomy. Scientific and financial boundary conditions have changed dramatically since then. In preparation for the future, NOTSA has therefore *(i)* identified the scientific fields in which Nordic research groups have developed and used the strengths of the NOT to make the most competitive impact, notably in studies of transient and other variable sources, and *(ii)* promoted the creation of a coordinated network of European 2-4m telescope facilities, each one optimised to fill its scientific role most cost-effectively.

In parallel, the telescope and instrumentation have been constantly upgraded to ensure that it remains a cutting-edge tool for its community. The increasing publication rate based on data from the NOT attests to its current successful performance and will be a strong asset for the future.

A New Budget Model for NOTSA

So far, all NOTSA's funding has been provided by the Associates (i.e. the Nordic research councils). They are now under strong pressure to also fund large new astronomy projects at all wavelengths in the next decade, through ESO and/or other organisations. General funding agency policies with regard to research infrastructures are therefore changing to require future users to contribute to the cost of the research they wish to conduct, also at existing facilities, such as the NOT. The old assumption of open-ended support for an infrastructure must then be replaced by an appropriate planning horizon.

Accordingly, the NOTSA Council has developed a budget model, by which the Associates provide a financial basis (suggested to be ~75% of the net cost of operations) to secure the continued operation of the telescope for periods of nominally five years each. Consortia of users are invited to submit joint proposals for research projects over this period, detailing their science case, requested amounts of observing time, technical and operational requirements, and the resources they propose to contribute.

Announcement of Opportunity

NOTSA hereby invites proposals for pooled research projects, following the guidelines given below. It is understood that the consortia may group Nordic and other partners with different, but synergistic scientific objectives and different sources of funding, but with similar technical and operational requirements. The requested contribution to the cost of operations is equivalent to approximately €1000 per night, which will strongly depend on whether an observing run is executed in service mode or visitor mode, the latter not including the cost for the consortia to send an observer. Any extensive service observing or educational services will require additional resources, in cash and/or in kind.

Proposals received by the deadline will be evaluated as regards scientific merit and financial adequacy by an independent panel before final selection by the NOTSA Council. Successful consortia will be invited to negotiate contracts defining the modalities of their research projects for the contract period.

NB: It is emphasized that your support for the new budget model is essential to get a commitment from the Associates to continue to fund the telescope. If no acceptable proposals are received, the telescope will likely be decommissioned soon.

How to Respond to this Announcement of Opportunity

Proposals should include the following information:

- Name of the consortium and contact information for the spokesperson, with a brief description of the partners, listing their origin, size and contributions. Non-Nordic partners are welcome;
- Summary of the scientific objectives; a detailed description can be appended.
- Requirements of the project: Requested total number of observing nights over the period; any new or improved instrumentation; requirements on scheduling and NOT staff support, service observing, data delivery, pipeline processing, etc.
- A project implementation and consortium management plan, including project schedule(s).
- A financial plan.

Proposals should be submitted by e-mail to the Chair of the NOTSA Council, Prof. Nikolai Piskunov (piskunov@fysast.uu.se) with a copy to the undersigned (ja@not.iac.es). Further information can be obtained from both of the persons above. The deadline is:

March 15, 2013

NOTSA intends to organise information meetings in the Nordic communities about this Announcement well before the deadline. Details will be provided in the near future.



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January 14, 2013