

Thirty Meter Telescope submits proposal for partnership with National Science Foundation

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MEDIA RELEASE

The Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project has submitted a funding proposal on April 16, 2012 to the National Science Foundation (NSF) to plan a potential partnership between the organizations.



The proposal, if approved, will allow TMT to benefit from full engagement with the United States' astronomical community in the years ahead. The community, in turn, stands to benefit from TMT becoming an integral asset to U.S. astronomy. TMT, which will be built near the summit of Mauna Kea in Hawaii, is the only next-generation, thirty-meter-class telescope slated for operation in the Northern Hemisphere.



“This NSF proposal is another major step for TMT,” said Gary Sanders, project manager for TMT. “We are very pleased with this opportunity to engage with the astronomical community in the United States.”

The newly submitted NSF proposal aims to involve the U.S. astronomical community in TMT planning, construction and eventual operation – an important and welcome development as the project progresses.

“This proposal will allow the TMT project to work with the U.S. astronomy community in developing a plan for their participation in the TMT partnership,” said Henry Yang, chancellor of the University of California, Santa Barbara, and chairman of the TMT Collaborative Board. “The broad participation and involvement with astronomers nationwide, as well as internationally, will help realize the full potential of the TMT Observatory.”

The NSF solicitation allocates \$250,000 per year for five years to partnership planning activities that include scientific workshops and community involvement. The five-year program of engagement and planning will deliver a U.S. astronomy community science plan, an integrated science and education plan, proposals for U.S. astronomy groups to collaborate in first-light and next-generation TMT science instruments, a U.S. operations and observing time allocation plan, and a U.S. TMT data management plan. These plans will be developed in a series of joint meetings bringing together all U.S. and international stakeholders.

Early next decade, NSF might also be in a position to offer significant contributions toward the costs of the thirty-meter-class telescope. In another positive sign, the TMT-NSF dialogue could provide encouragement to the project's international partners by signaling the government's commitment.

“We have a model for the construction of TMT where NSF funds come in later in the process, and we are ready to move forward with building now,” said Sanders. “We look forward to continuing to work with our international partners in this important scientific endeavor.”

TMT is the next-generation astronomical observatory that is scheduled to begin scientific operations in 2021 on Mauna Kea, Hawaii. TMT is a collaboration of California Institute of Technology, University of California, the Association of Canadian Universities for Research in Astronomy, the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, a consortium of Chinese institutions led by the National Astronomical Observatories of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and institutions in India

supported by the Department of Science and Technology of India.

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