

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Mary W. Jackson NASA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546-0001



Reply to Attn of: SMD Astrophysics Division

March 15, 2024

Dear Colleague Letter to seek a U.S. Scientist to serve on ESA's NewAthena Science Study Team

Dear Colleague,

NASA is soliciting applications and nominations for an individual employed by a U.S. organization to participate in the European Space Agency (ESA)-led NewAthena Science Study Team (NASST).

Background: Athena is ESA's next large X-ray astrophysics mission (see <https://sci.esa.int/athena>, <https://www.the-athena-x-ray-observatory.eu/>). ESA, with NASA as a partner, has been formulating the Athena mission since 2014. In 2022, ESA assembled an international team of scientists to review the Athena mission concept to refine the technical goals of the mission to improve design efficiency while maintaining capacity to do truly ambitious, groundbreaking science on a similar timeline to the originally envisioned Athena. This Science Redefinition Team completed its work in 2023 resulting in a revised mission concept that is referred to as NewAthena.

The ESA Director for Science is now convening a Science Study Team (the NASST) to define the science requirements of the mission and to support ESA on all aspects of the study phase related to the science return of the mission. As outlined in the [full ESA Announcement of Opportunity](#), the NASST will be charged to:

- provide scientific oversight in the fields associated to the scientific themes of the mission
- propose the mission scientific requirements
- assess the scientific aspects of the mission performance
- assist in making any top-level trade-offs related to the scientific aspects of mission performance
- support the preparation of the observing plan and calibration strategy
- assist in setting-up scientific requirements on the Science Ground Segment
- advise on the preparation of the Science Management Plan
- produce the Definition Study report (Red Book)
- act as a focus for the interests of the broad scientific community

ESA has invited NASA and JAXA to each appoint one member for the NASST. With this Dear Colleague Letter, NASA seeks to select the U.S. member to the NASST. Applicants are asked to read the [ESA Announcement of the NASST, which includes links for the terms of reference for the NASST and other relevant documents](#). The members of the NASST will monitor the development of the NewAthena mission and provide advice on all aspects of mission development as outlined above. The NASA-selected U.S. member of the NASST will represent NASA and the U.S. astrophysics community in all NASST meetings and will provide quarterly reports to NASA HQ and the U.S. Athena Project Office summarizing activities of the NASST and outlining progress and issues relative to the NASST charge outlined above. Please direct any questions to the POC at NASA HQ below.

Nomination / Application Letters:

Applications and nominations to serve as the NASA-nominated member of the NASST should consist of a single PDF which includes a cover letter (maximum two pages) that includes a statement of expertise pertinent to serving on the NASST and a statement of your availability to serve on the NASST for a three-year appointment, a resume/curriculum vitae (maximum two pages), and an updated declaration of Current and Pending Support. Appointments will be for three years (and renewable) or until Mission Adoption, whichever comes first. The cover letter should speak directly to the anticipated criteria for selection listed below.

Anticipated Criteria for Selection:

- Expertise pertinent to serving on the NASST and its mission of advising ESA in science perspectives for the NewAthena science goals as detailed in the documents linked above.
- Ability to bring a diversity of thought and fresh perspectives relative to the science achievable under the NewAthena concept.
- Commitment to and demonstrated ability in solving open questions in high energy astrophysics through creative thinking and novel approaches.

The cover letter and resume should comply with formatting guidelines in Section IV(b)ii of [the ROSES-2024 Summary of Solicitation](#).

Applications will be accepted from “U.S. persons” defined as U.S. citizens or U.S. legal permanent resident individuals at U.S.-based research and academic institutions, NASA centers, government laboratories, industry, FFRDCs, and from unaffiliated private individuals residing in the U.S. The appointment is ad personam, i.e., made to an individual and not to an institution.

A maximum of three face-to-face meetings of the NASST are anticipated each year in addition to more frequent, regular, remote meetings. NASA will provide funding for travel to the NASST meetings.

Applications are due by **April 19, 2024, at 11:59 pm EDT / 8:59 pm PDT**. Applications and questions should be submitted by email to the NewAthena Program Scientist, David Morris (david.c.morris@nasa.gov). Submissions should include “NASST Application/Nomination” in the email subject line and will be reviewed at NASA Headquarters. The Astrophysics Division Director will select the U.S. scientist for appointment to the NASST.

Dr. Mark Clampin
Astrophysics Division Director, NASA Headquarters

NASA Point of Contact:
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