



NNH26ZDA011O Complement

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2026 ASTROPHYSICS SMEX OPPORTUNITY CLARIFICATION RESPONSE DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS

This document complements the 2026 Astrophysics SMEX AO.

Section 7.1.1 of the AO states “Proposers should be aware that, during the evaluation and selection process, NASA plans to request clarification of specific points in a proposal; if so, such a request from NASA and the proposer’s response must be in writing.”

In particular, before finalizing the evaluation of the *Scientific Merit of the Proposed Investigation* (Form A, see Section 7.2.2), the *Scientific Implementation Merit and Feasibility of the Proposed Investigation* (Form B, see Section 7.2.3) and, the *TMC Feasibility of the Proposed Mission Implementation* (Form C, see Section 7.2.4), NASA will request clarification on specific, potential major weaknesses (PMWs) that have been identified in the proposal for each Form. NASA will request clarification in a uniform manner from all proposers. NASA will provide the proposers with PMWs and proposers will be allowed to provide updates to their proposal that will address these PMWs or any other topic in the proposal.

For this opportunity, NASA will allow two distinct rounds of clarifications to address Factors A, B, and C PMWs. This document details the requirements that apply to the clarification responses proposers can provide as part of this clarification process.

Requirement CL-1. The first round of clarification responses must be received within 72 hours after provision of the first round of PMW documents. The second round of clarification responses must be received within 24 hours after provision of the second round of PMW documents.

Requirement CL-2. In each round, the clarification responses shall consist of two documents: one Clarification Response Document that addresses the PMWs for the A and B Factors (combined) and one Clarification Response Document that addresses the PMWs for the C Factors.

Requirement CL-3. Each Clarification Response Document shall be a single unlocked (e.g., without digital signatures) searchable Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) file, composed of the response text, figures, and/or tables. Images (e.g., figures and scans) shall be

converted into machine-encoded text using optical character recognition. Animations shall not be included. Links to materials outside of the response are not permitted. Comment fields shall not be inserted.

Requirement CL-4. The Clarification Response Documents shall be formatted for printing in 8.5 x 11-inch paper (or A4). Text shall not exceed 5.5 lines per vertical inch and page numbers shall be specified. Margins at the top, both sides, and bottom of each page shall be no less than 1 inch if formatted for 8.5 x 11-inch paper; no less than 2.5 cm at the top and both sides, and 4 cm at the bottom if formatted for A4 paper. Type fonts for text, tables, and figure captions shall be no smaller than 12-point (*i.e.*, no more than 15 characters per horizontal inch; six characters per horizontal centimeter). Fonts used within figures shall be no smaller than 8-point.

Requirement CL-5. For the PMWs for the A and B Factors combined, the Clarification Response Documents shall not exceed ten pages in the first round, and six pages in the second round of clarifications. For the PMWs for the C Factor, the Clarification Response Documents shall not exceed eight pages in the first round, and five pages in the second round of clarifications. Text, table(s) and figure(s) are permitted; however, all material shall be within the page limits specified above and shall abide by limitations in Requirements CL-2, CL-3 and CL-9.

Requirement CL-6. The Clarification Response Documents shall not contain International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), Export Administration Regulations (EAR), or classified material.

Requirement CL-7. The Clarification Response Documents shall label each PMW response with the PMW number provided but need not repeat the PMW text. Each PMW clarification response shall contain only information specific to the PMW. A clarification response may point back to references in the proposal; however, PMWs' references to locations in the proposal indicate that they have already been evaluated and a re-reference alone does not obligate a re-consideration of those data. References to proposal material is expected to use the proposal section numbers and page number on the proposal page (as opposed to the electronic PDF file page number).

Requirement CL-8. Each Clarification Response Document may include additional information on any criteria or requirements relevant to the proposed investigation (*e.g.*, for *TMC Feasibility of the Proposed Investigation Implementation*, advances in proposed technologies since proposal submission). However, this additional information counts against the total page limitation for the Clarification Response Document that contains it.

Requirement CL-9. New references included in clarification responses shall be limited to two per PMW. Two additional references may be included in each clarification response document. All references shall be to peer-reviewed literature, or to full conference proceeding papers (not just abstracts) that are published and accessible. References included in the proposal do not constitute new references. References shall be restricted to those with a publication or release date before the PMW sent date.

Requirement CL-10. Each round of the clarification responses may include, outside the three Clarification Response Documents, complete versions of the following content, if and only if modified by a response:

- a. Science Traceability Matrix (STM; Table B1),
- b. Mission Traceability Matrix (MTM; Table B2),
- c. Total Mission Cost Profile table (Tables B3 and B3a in Excel format),
- d. Master Equipment List (MEL; Table B5 in Excel format),
- e. Schedule foldout (AO Requirements B-44) and associated table of dates (AO Requirement B-45 in Excel format),
- f. Summary of Proposed Program Cooperative Contributions table (AO Requirement B-65),
- g. Quad Chart (AO Requirement B-16),
- h. and/or Letters of Commitment (AO Requirement B-63).

These modified fold-out(s)/table(s)/chart(s) shall have modifications clearly marked by the use of a different color font or by a colored-bordered box (labeled “PMW Clarification”). The page-limited Clarification Response Documents shall provide the description of the updates and changes to the modified fold-out(s)/table(s)/chart(s) as text. The complete versions of the modified STM, MTM, Total Mission Cost Profile table, MEL, and schedule, Summary of Proposed Program Cooperative Contributions table, Quad Chart, and Letters of Commitment will not count against the page limit.

Requirement CL-11. Any new or other fold-out(s) will each count as two pages against the response page limit.