

Information on Solar Orbiter Mission

ESA and NASA are discussing the potential benefits of contributions by NASA to ESA's Solar Orbiter mission, planned for launch in 2015. Although negotiations between the Agencies continue at this time, we are informing the community of two relevant actions that will be completed in the near future.

First, we anticipate that in mid-September ESA and NASA will release the draft report of the Solar Orbiter/Solar Sentinels Joint Science and Technology Definition Team. This draft report will describe the exciting science achievable by combining the two missions, it will specify potential science goals of the combined missions, and it will prioritize the measurements necessary to accomplish these goals. The community will be informed how to obtain a copy of this report when it is released.

Second, the Small Explorer (SMEX) AO, planned for release in late September will include two distinct opportunities for providing contributions to the Solar Orbiter science payload.

1. The first opportunity for providing contributions to the Solar Orbiter payload will be a Focused Opportunity for the Solar Orbiter mission (FOSO). Through this FOSO opportunity, NASA will solicit one or more specific scientific investigation(s) and measurement set(s) that have been prioritized by the Solar Orbiter/Solar Sentinels Joint Science and Technology Definition Team and are complimentary to planned European contributions to the Solar Orbiter payload. FOSO proposals will be evaluated just like SMEX Mission of Opportunity proposals with a few exceptions: (a) the science investigation must be responsive to the Solar Orbiter science goals, (b) the proposal must meet the technical constraints imposed by the Solar Orbiter mission, and (c) FOSO will have its own cost cap and any FOSO selections will be funded by NASA's Heliophysics program rather than the Explorer program. The FOSO opportunity will be described in an amendment to the SMEX AO that will be released shortly after the release of the AO; details of the FOSO opportunity will appear in that amendment.

2. The second opportunity for providing contributions to the Solar Orbiter payload will be through the SMEX AO's Mission of Opportunity proposal category. A proposal submitted as a Mission of Opportunity will have to meet all of the Mission of Opportunity requirements in the SMEX AO and will be handled the same as all other Mission of Opportunity proposals. NASA assumes that Solar Orbiter contributions submitted as Mission of Opportunity proposals will be those that do not meet the intent or requirements for FOSO proposals.

FOSO will be part of the SMEX Announce of Opportunity. All questions related to this opportunity should be addressed to:

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