

NAIC Guidelines for ALFA Consortia Proposals

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At the May 6, 2004 teleconference of the ALFA System Advisory and Planning (ASAP) committee several issues were identified as being critical to informing the process by which guidelines are developed by NAIC for handling the ALFA consortia proposals. These issues include the following:

1. Each ALFA Consortium is working to its own schedule getting prepared for its ALFA surveys. In part this is due to the fact that...
2. The specialized ALFA backend hardware construction is progressing at different rates for the three consortia. In part this impacts...
3. Planning for shared-risk precursor observations, a primary purpose of which is to demonstrate the readiness of the survey teams to conduct their planned survey observations. This includes the required software system, calibration and analysis plan, and plan for the data products;
4. All consortia are planning multiple surveys (i.e. there is not one GALFA survey, one EALFA survey and one PALFA survey, but multiple surveys planned by each consortium the preparations required for each, in general, are different);
5. The WAPP backend can support some of the survey requirements but not all;
6. Ultimately, the goal is to schedule as much commensal observing as possible;
7. Commensal observing requires two or more backends (and data storage systems?). The capability for commensal observing itself needs planning and testing by NAIC before it can become part of the ALFA observing system;
8. NAIC has a need to demonstrate to the NSF that “early survey science” is being achieved by ALFA.

From this list of issues comes NAIC priorities for (a) building the backend hardware as quickly as possible; (b) allocating the needed telescope time to the precursor observations; (c) getting the survey observations underway as early as it is possible to do so; and (d) coordinating with the three ALFA consortia to establish a detailed plan for commensal observing.

In order to realize these priorities the NAIC will take the following actions.

1. Reserve telescope time for competitive allocation to the ALFA precursor proposals that were received at the February proposal deadline as follows:
 - Up to 100 hours in July
 - Up to 150 hours in August
 - Up to 150 hours in September

A total of ~400 hours of ALFA precursor observations requested at the February 2004 proposal deadline received a referee’s score of “B” or better and the above time will support these requests.

2. Accept additional ALFA precursor proposals from the ALFA Consortia survey teams (only) at the 1 June 2004 proposal deadline for scheduling in the period 1 Oct 2004 – 31 Jan 2005. These proposals will be refereed by the current NAIC proposal review process.
3. Accept revisions/extensions of any of the existing and approved (grade B or better) ALFA precursor proposals at the 1 October 2004 deadline with an explanation from the proposers as to what they intend to accomplish with additional telescope time. These requests for revised or extended work will not be re-refereed externally; time will be assigned on a competitive basis in the period 1 October 2004 – 31 January 2005. *[Note that all ALFA precursor proposals must feature development of observing techniques, software or organizational issues necessary for conduct of the actual surveys themselves in addition to the science goals].*
4. Reserve telescope time for competitive allocation to the ALFA precursor proposals as follows:
 - Up to 150 hours in October
 - Up to 150 hours in November
 - Up to 175 hours in December
 - Up to 175 hours in January 2005
5. Also accept at the 1 October 2004 proposal deadline proposals from the ALFA Consortia survey teams (only) to begin those particular ALFA survey observations that can be done solely with the WAPP and that the proposers believe are scientifically and organizationally ready to proceed. These proposals will be refereed by a TBD process. The proposal review criteria will include all of the following:
 - Survey science goals and the plan to achieve those goals;
 - Survey plan completeness;
 - Plan for early science (**very important**);
 - Organization of the survey data taking process;
 - Calibration plan;
 - Software plan and plan for making software available to others;
 - Survey personnel plan (who will do what?);
 - Plan for student involvement;
 - Resource plan (what financial support is needed and what is its source?);
 - Clarity of the definition of the survey data products (for actual survey observations, not applicable to precursor observations);
 - Data archive plan (for actual survey observations, not applicable to precursor observations).

These proposals will compete for telescope time assignment in the period beginning 1 February 2005. Annual progress reports, to be refereed, are a mandatory requirement for the survey to continue.

6. Up to 200 hours of telescope time in February 2005 and in each month thereafter will be reserved for competitive allocation to ALFA survey observations and ALFA survey development proposals. 200 hours per month is approximately one-half of the time currently scheduled for radio astronomical research on the Arecibo telescope.

7. Accept the first proposals for use of ALFA by non-consortium users at the 1 February 2005 proposal deadline.

Summary

ALFA Proposals and Proposal Scheduling

1 June 2004 Proposal Deadline

NAIC Accepts:

- Additional precursor proposals for competitive scheduling in the period 1 October 2004 – 31 January 2005

1 October 2004 Proposal Deadline

NAIC Accepts:

- Revisions/extensions of the ALFA precursor proposals submitted at the Feb 2004 deadline for scheduling in the period 1 October 2004 – 31 January 2005.
- Proposals to begin ALFA survey observations using the WAPP. These proposals will compete for telescope time in the period beginning 1 February 2005.

1 February 2005 Proposal Deadline and at Proposal Deadlines Thereafter

NAIC Accepts:

- Proposals for further ALFA survey precursor observations;
- Proposals to begin ALFA survey observations using the GALFA spectrometer, the PALFA spectrometer or the WAPP. These proposals will compete for telescope time beginning 4 months after each proposal deadline;
- ALFA proposals from single investigators and teams (not ALFA consortium groups).

Telescope Time for ALFA Survey and Precursor Proposals

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|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • July 2004 | Up to 100 hours |
| • August – November 2004 | Up to 150 hours per month |
| • December 2004 and January 2005 | Up to 175 hours per month |
| • February 2005 and thereafter | Up to 200 hours per month |

[Background: For the past several years at Arecibo approximately 4800 hours of telescope time has been allocated to radio astronomy research proposals. This is 400 hours per month, meaning that the allocation proposed above for ALFA survey observations of 200 hours per month represents approximately 50% of the time to be used for radio astronomy each month].