

NRAO USERS COMMITTEE CHARGE

December 10, 2017

OVERVIEW

The Users Committee is a scientific advisory group that provides input to the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) on issues that affect the Observatory's scientific productivity and user relations. The key roles and responsibilities of the NRAO Users Committee are described in the following sections, including the Committee's charge, membership, meetings, and annual calendar.

CHARGE

The Users Committee plays an important role in the functioning of the Observatory, advising on matters of concern to those whose research is dependent on NRAO research facilities. The specific charge to the Users Committee from the Observatory follows.

- Provide advice to NRAO on scientific, technical, operational, and development issues relating to the astronomical community's current and future use of NRAO research facilities, including the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Telescope and the Very Large Array.
- Make recommendations to NRAO that maximize the Observatory's scientific productivity and improve its effectiveness for the user community.
- Consult widely with current and potential NRAO users and communicate their requirements, recommendations, issues, and concerns to the Observatory.
- Deliver an annual report to the NRAO Director that summarizes the Committee's recommendations and concerns.

The Committee may also become involved in advocacy and outreach on NRAO's behalf. In recent years, the Committee has become increasingly active in advising the Observatory between formal meetings. This is a valuable role that NRAO welcomes and encourages.

MEMBERSHIP

The NRAO Users Committee is a group of approximately fifteen (15) to twenty (20) members of the science and engineering communities that represents a broad range of these communities' research interests and user requirements. The term of service for each Committee member is four (4) calendar years. Users Committee members are typically active users of one or more NRAO research facilities. The Observatory strives to assure that the Committee membership is balanced with respect to geography, gender, and seniority. Travel expenses for attending the face-to-face meetings are paid by NRAO.

The Committee annually elects a Chair and a Deputy Chair from its membership. The expectation is that the current year's Deputy Chair will be the following year's Chair. The Chair and Deputy Chair share the duties of organizing the Committee's business, including meetings and the annual report to the NRAO Director.

MEETINGS

The Committee meets face-to-face annually for two to three days, during which the Committee and the Observatory conduct a detailed review of NRAO telescope and instrumentation status; research & development projects; Observatory-supported software systems; policies for proposal submission, user support, and observing time allocation; and plans for future instrumentation and capabilities. This meeting concludes with an Executive Session briefing to the NRAO Director.

The annual Users Committee meeting is scheduled at a mutually agreeable time in April, May, or June that optimizes attendance by Committee members and guarantees the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair. The annual meeting rotates among the major NRAO sites: Socorro, New Mexico and Charlottesville, Virginia. The committee writes and delivers a report to the NRAO Director after each face-to-face meeting.

A tele-conference update on progress and issues affecting the Observatory's user community is scheduled as soon as practical after the winter American Astronomical Society meeting. This tele-conference update typically requires 90 minutes and includes finalizing the annual face-to-face meeting date.

ANNUAL CALENDAR

December – January: The Director's Office individually contacts nominees, finalizes the new Committee members, and communicates with the Committee and NRAO scientific staff and management regarding the new members. The annual meeting date is determined.

February: The Committee convenes via tele-conference with NRAO after the winter American Astronomical Society meeting for an update on progress and issues affecting the Observatory's user community. The annual face-to-face meeting agenda is determined.

April – May: The Users Committee convenes for a face-to-face meeting with Observatory staff. This face-to-face meeting rotates between the NRAO facilities in Charlottesville, Green Bank, and Socorro.

June – July: The Users Committee delivers its annual written report to the NRAO Director.

August – September: The NRAO Director responds to the Users Committee Report.

November: The Director's Office seeks nominations from senior NRAO scientific and management staff for new Committee members to replace those members whose terms are ending.