



NRAO USERS COMMITTEE CHARGE

V4

01 January 2026

OVERVIEW

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

CHARGE

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

- Provide advice to NRAO on scientific, technical, and development issues relating to the astronomical community's current and future use of NRAO research facilities, including the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array, the Very Large Array, the Very Long Baseline Array, and the Green Bank Telescope;
- Make recommendations to NRAO that will maximize the scientific community's productivity and effectiveness using data and tools from the facilities;
- Consult widely with current and potential NRAO users and communicate their requirements, recommendations, issues, and concerns to NRAO leadership;
- Comment on the NRAO research and development plans;
- Deliver an annual report to the NRAO Director that summarizes the Committee's findings, recommendations and concerns.

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

MEMBERSHIP

The NRAO UC is a group of up to 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 generally four (4) calendar years. Users Committee members are typically active users of one or more NRAO research facilities. NRAO seeks a Committee membership is balanced with respect to geography, gender, and seniority. Travel expenses for attending the face-to-face meetings are paid by NRAO; all meetings will be conducted in hybrid format (combining in-person and remote attendance) unless health and safety circumstances require shifting to fully virtual format.



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 the annual meeting and report to the NRAO Director, and any intermediate meetings.

MEETINGS

The Committee meets in hybrid format annually for two to three days, during which the Committee and the Observatory will review the NRAO facilities and instrumentation status; research & development projects; Observatory-supported software systems; policies for proposal submission, user support, and observing time allocation; plans for future instrumentation and capabilities; and other issues directly relevant to user interactions with NRAO. The meeting concludes with an Executive and/or Open Session briefing to the NRAO Director and senior observatory leadership.

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, Charlottesville, and Green Bank. The committee writes and delivers a report to the NRAO Director after each annual meeting.

A 60-min videoconference will be scheduled as soon as practical after the winter American Astronomical Society meeting to provide a quick update on Observatory status, and assist preparing the agenda for the main meeting and identifying date options.

ANNUAL CALENDAR

December – March: The NRAO Director contacts nominees, finalize the new Committee members, and communicate with the Committee and NRAO scientific staff and management regarding the new members. Annual meeting date options are proposed.

February – March: The Committee convenes via videoconference with NRAO after the winter American Astronomical Society meeting for a short update on NRAO status, and a discussion of agenda items for the Annual meeting. If possible, the Annual meeting date is set.

April – June: The NRAO Users Committee convenes for a hybrid meeting with Observatory staff. The face-to-face meeting component rotates between the NRAO facilities in Charlottesville, Green Bank, and Socorro. All UC meetings will be conducted in hybrid format (with in-person and remote attendance).

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

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

November – December: The NRAO Director seek nominations from senior NRAO scientific and management staff for new Committee members to replace those members whose terms are ending.