

Frequently Asked Questions

Whitepapers

Question: Why is the deadline for the submission of whitepapers set to be 4 July?

Answer: The due date for the whitepapers was delayed by 6 weeks to accommodate the impact of COVID-19. The 4 July deadline is not an arbitrary date. The contract between the National Academies and NASA to conduct the decadal survey mandates that the survey report be delivered to NASA in prepublication format by the end of March 2022. Using information from the schedule for previous decadal surveys and other major studies conducted by the National Academies allows an estimate to be made of when the survey committee needs to start work to meet the specified delivery date. To deliver a survey report in March 2022 requires the survey committee to start work in early-to-mid-August 2020. In addition, the survey committee needs a minimum of one month to read and digest all of the whitepapers submitted.

Question: Are the authors of white papers eligible to serve on the steering group or one of the supporting panels?

Answer: The first (i.e., submitting) author, co-authors, and endorsers of a science-focused whitepaper are all eligible to serve on the steering group or one of its supporting panels. However, the National Academies' conflict of interest requirements preclude the first author of a mission-focused whitepaper from serving on the steering group or on a panel that might be assessing the proposed mission.

Question: Presentations made at the DPS-EPSC and AGU meetings in 2019 suggested a May 2020 deadline for the submission of white papers. Why is the deadline now early July?

Answer: The deadline moved from May to 4 July to allow the community members extra time to draft their whitepapers. In effect, the survey committee gave up 4-to-6 weeks of its schedule margin to allow members of the community facing unexpected domestic duties due to COVID-19 additional time to draft their submissions.

Question: How do we include signatories in the 7 pages of the white paper?

Answer: The white paper specifications call for the inclusion of a cover page (beyond the 7-page limit) containing the title of the white paper, the primary author's name, phone number, institution, and email address, and a list of coauthors with their respective institutions.

Question: How should supporters or endorsers of a whitepaper be acknowledged?

Answer: If a whitepaper has associated individuals who are not the primary author or co-authors they can be acknowledged via a hyperlink (noted on the cover page) to another document

Question: Do illustrations and other graphics count against with 7-page limit?

Answer: Yes. Any graphics included in the 7 pages should be sufficiently large to illustrate clearly the point being made. However, as noted in the whitepaper specifications, hyperlinks can be used to access higher-resolution graphics.

Question: Do references count against the 7-page limit?

Answer: Yes, but references beyond the absolute minimum needed to support the focus of the white paper can be included via a hyperlink to another document **and do not count in the 7-page limit.**

Question: Are different weights given by the decadal survey committee to whitepapers based upon the number of coauthors versus signatories, senior versus junior contributors, US versus foreign coauthor, etc.?

Answer: No. Whitepapers will be assessed on the merit of their content, not who is listed on the cover page. That said, a golden rule is not to annoy the readers of the whitepapers. Having 10 different authors each draft whitepapers saying the same thing is more likely to annoy readers than having those 10 authors cooperate on a single whitepaper.

Question: If I submit a whitepaper will be acknowledged and/or published in the decadal survey report?

Answer: Whitepapers will not be published in the survey report. However, the title of each whitepaper and the name of its submitting author will be listed in an appendix to the survey report. The American Astronomical Society (AAS) has agreed to publish the full text of each whitepaper submitted via the National Academies' submission site (subject to author opt out) in the *Bulletin of the AAS*.

Question: What do I do if the subject of my whitepaper does not fit neatly into one of the categories defined on the submission website?

Answer: Make use of one or more of the write-in options on the submission website.