

Decadal Survey for Earth Science and Applications from Space 2028-2037

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated July 10, 2026

Questions can be directed to esas2028@nas.edu

Nominations

Question: Are authors of submissions to the National Academies' request for information eligible to serve on the Survey Steering Committee ("Survey Committee") and the supporting panels?

Answer: The first author of a mission- or project-focused submission may not serve on the steering committee or on any panel that might assess, prioritize, or otherwise evaluate the mission or project described in the submission. In addition, an individual who is leading, or has a significant leadership role in, the development of a mission concept for consideration by NASA may not serve on the steering committee or on any panel that might assess, prioritize, or otherwise evaluate that mission concept.

Request for Information Submissions

Question: What topics are appropriate for a Request for Information submission and/or mission or project concept?

Answer: NASA's Earth System Science Research Program (ESSRP) organizes Earth science into five interconnected "[spheres](#)"—Atmosphere, Biosphere, Cryosphere, Geosphere, and Hydrosphere—to study Earth as a unified, dynamic system. Submissions addressing science targets should focus on one or more disciplines associated with these spheres. Mission- or project-focused submissions should emphasize the science that could be accomplished and include a description of the notional mission or project; [see the RFI for additional guidance](#). Respondents should be aware of NASA's guidance to the survey, "Develop a mission-class based prioritization framework that supports a portfolio of cost-capped (largely competed) missions, while maintaining some flexibility for larger transformational investments."

Submissions may also address topics or issues of relevance to the broader Earth

science community. These may include, but are not limited to, workforce capacity, institutional readiness, modeling, data assimilation, prediction, analysis and decision-support capabilities, AI and machine learning, economic impacts of Earth observations, alignment with agency goals, partnerships with commercial, international, and other entities, data stewardship, user engagement, and approaches for assessing whether third-party data meet science and applications requirements.

The survey study panels will include a panel on the “state of the profession,” and the survey may also form internal interdisciplinary working groups. Authors may submit papers on topics that do not clearly fit within the subjects listed in the RFI. In those cases, we ask that authors explain why the topic should be considered in this survey.

Question: Does the committee give different weights to submissions based upon the number of coauthors versus contributors, senior versus junior contributors, number of endorsers, U.S. versus foreign coauthors, etc.?

Answer: No. Submissions will be evaluated based on the merit of their content, not on who is listed on the cover page, the number of authors or endorsers, or the number of similar submissions received. To streamline the review process, authors are encouraged to submit a single submission with multiple authors rather than multiple, very similar submissions from individual authors. All submissions will be read and evaluated, and the committee’s use of them will be based solely on content.

Question: If I make a submission to the Request for Information, will I be acknowledged and/or published in the decadal survey report?

Answer: No. Submissions will not be included in the survey report. However, the submissions will be part of the public record and available online during the study and for some time after the study.

Question: Can submissions include ITAR or proprietary information?

Answer: No. Your submission will be available publicly and quickly posted to the website and may not include ITAR restricted data or other sensitive materials.

Question: Will submissions be peer-reviewed by the survey committee or BAAS staff before being added to the public record and published?

Answer: No. National Academies staff will ensure that all included submissions are relevant to the activity, but there will be no peer review before submissions are added to the public record and sent to BAAS for publication.

Question: How should detailed information about implementation approaches/concepts or observing strategies be submitted to the committee? A seven-page paper (see draft specifications below) doesn't allow for information necessary for a technical evaluation.

Answer: The submissions are intended as synopses of projects and activities that are sufficient to allow the committee and panels to understand a) the scope of the project, b) the level of existing information, and c) what additional inputs will be required to evaluate the project or activity fully. When necessary to support their review, the Survey Steering Committee or supporting panels can also request additional information.

Question: Can I make an anonymous submission, such as for state of the profession-focused topics?

Answer: Submissions will be posted publicly and should not contain information of a personal, sensitive nature. Anonymous submission is not possible because the Survey committee would not be able to follow up to ask for additional information.

Question: Will the Request for Information submissions be published?

Answer: The submissions will be available via the decadal survey website. In addition, we are working with the American Astronomical Society to publish the white papers in the Bulletin of the American Astronomical Society (baas.aas.org). Once published, the white paper will receive a DOI, be citable as a journal article, and remain permanently accessible in full text through the NASA Astrophysics Data System. If you do not wish to have your white paper published in the BAAS, you may opt out when submitting it. Your submission will still be available via the decadal survey website.

Question: What is an acceptable format for responses to the RFI?

Answer: Submitted papers should be no longer than seven single-spaced pages, using at least 11-point font, excluding figures, tables, and references.

Question: I submitted a response and then found an error in the text. Can the submission be changed or updated?

Answer: If this is before the due date, please resubmit the paper and fill out the submission form completely again. If it is after the due date, please email esas2028@nas.edu.

Question: When are submissions due?

Answer: 11:59 pm, Pacific Time, August 24, 2026