

ISS U.S. National Laboratory Research Proposal External Economic Evaluation

Request for Information

About the ISS National Lab/CASIS

The Center for Advancement of Science in Space (CASIS) is a nonprofit entity responsible for management of the [International Space Station \(ISS\) U.S. National Laboratory](#) under a Cooperative Agreement with NASA. We manage the ISS National lab as a public service in order to benefit the U.S. taxpayer and to foster a scalable and sustainable low Earth orbit economy. We leverage our core competencies, facilitate public-private partnerships, and utilize the platform capabilities and unique operating environment of the space station. We create demand, incubate in-space business ventures, provide access for and awareness of discovery science and technological innovation, and promote science literacy of the future workforce.

Background

Each year, CASIS evaluates approximately 150 proposals from academia, industry, and non-NASA government agencies to conduct research on the ISS. These research proposals are focused on an ever-increasing variety of science and technology development topics. A subset of the proposals received by CASIS, approximately 30-50 per year, include an expressed intent or aspiration for downstream economic return. These economic aspirations may include the licensing of patented scientific or technologic knowledge, techniques, and hardware; the development of a commercially viable product; and/or the marketing and sale of new and improved products or services. The purpose of this request for information (RFI) is to identify potential external evaluation providers to complement the CASIS internal economic review and provide an external opinion in the evaluation and scoring of the validity and value of such proposed economic aspirations.

CASIS research proposal submissions range in length from 10 to 20 pages and include a research abstract or project summary, a technical description of the proposed flight experiment or demonstration, a discussion of economic aspirations assuming positive results, budget information (in spreadsheets), and biographic sketches of key research team members. Proposals cover a wide variety of topics, including life science, physical science, materials science, flow chemistry, and technology development. Proposed research projects also cover a range of scientific or technical maturity; however, proposals selected for economic review will likely focus on either applied research and development or technology demonstration-level studies.

Importantly, our mission area, domain, history, and strategic intent for the ISS are central to our interests and this activity. We particularly welcome responses from companies that can point to significant experience evaluating technologies relevant to low Earth orbit (LEO) research and the expanding LEO economy.

The purpose of this RFI is to obtain information on potential external evaluation providers. Following receipt of RFI responses, CASIS may release a request for quotation (RFQ).

The CASIS point of contact for this RFI is:

Dan Blaettler

Director of Portfolio Management

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Requirements

For each requested research proposal evaluation, CASIS will first provide the external evaluation provider with a proposal summary that includes the technical topic, the proposing organization, the principal investigator name(s), and the names of organizations committing resources toward the project. A sample proposal summary is included as [Attachment 1](#). Based on the content of this summary, the external evaluation provider will identify potential economic evaluators (either internal or external).

Before beginning an evaluation, economic evaluators and all external evaluation provider personnel with access to the proposal must complete and sign a CASIS evaluator agreement that stipulates conditions for nondisclosure and personal conflict of interest. A copy of the evaluator agreement is included as [Attachment 2](#).

Upon signing the agreement, CASIS will distribute the proposal to the economic evaluators via email. Evaluators should review the materials and identify any previously unrecognized conflicts.

Should such conflicts exist, the external evaluation provider will identify potential alternate economic evaluators using the proposal summary information only. Identified alternates will be required to complete CASIS evaluator agreement documents before receiving the full proposal package.

Economic evaluators will assess assigned proposals in accordance with the economic evaluator instructions provided in [Attachment 3](#) and the defined criteria and scoring rubric shown in [Attachment 4](#). Evaluators will provide an evidence-based assessment of the major strengths and weaknesses of both the proposal in general as well as the specific economic plan, relative to established market projections. Completed economic evaluations must be returned to CASIS via email within 15 working days of receipt of a proposal. A typical timeline for economic evaluation is included in the RFI presentation slides included as [Attachment 5](#).

All economic evaluation support will be virtual. No travel is required. No special computer software is required other than standard Microsoft business software and PDF-reading software.

RFI Questions

External evaluation provider replies responsive to this request for information will include the following.

1. Please provide general information about your organization, to include: the full legal name of the organization, the full address of the organization's headquarters, and the name and contact information of the person responsible for answering the RFI.
2. Describe the structure and focus of the organization, to include: background and history, size of the company and business/economic analysis team, and areas of expertise.
3. Discuss the organization's approach to performing this work, to include: identification of evaluator(s), assurance of deliverable quality and timeliness, handling of surges in proposal evaluation needs, and use of databases or other supplemental tools. In addition (optional), feel free to discuss approaches that may result in a cost savings to CASIS, such as alternative management or evaluation approaches.
4. Indicate the level(s) of personnel that would be involved in this effort (e.g., mid-level analyst, senior-level analyst, administrative) and the corresponding price range/rate for each position.
5. For the external evaluation provider and anticipated economic evaluators, please provide a description of:
 - Experience with economic, business, and/or investment plan assessments and market analysis, including experience across the relevant industry sectors (life science; advanced materials and manufacturing; satellite/telecommunications/Internet-of-Things technologies; aerospace, space, and defense technologies; remote sensing/Earth observation technologies)
 - Relevant work examples and references
 - Business, finance, and/or economic education (minimum Master of Business Administration degree or master's degree in economics or financial management, or equivalent)
6. Are the economic evaluators described in your answer to Question #5 internal or external to the organization? If the evaluators are external, how are these evaluators contracted and how is the quality of their performance assured by the organization?
7. Provide a description (and certification, if available) of the organization's control systems established to protect sensitive information such as that described in this solicitation.
8. Is five days sufficient for completing the administrative and contractual requirements of a proposal review assignment (e.g., identifying an evaluator for the proposal based on a summary of the proposal, confirming no conflicts of

interest, signing an agreement). If not, please indicate the amount of time required.

9. Is 10 days from signed agreement sufficient for completing an economic evaluation? If not, please indicate the amount of time required.
10. Relative to your organization's surge capability, what is the estimated time required to complete the entire administrative and evaluation process for 10 proposals at a time?
11. Is three weeks sufficient time to prepare and submit a quote for these consulting services once CASIS releases a request for quotation? If not, please indicate the amount of time required.
12. (Optional) Provide at least two customer references, including the names of the organizations and contact information.
13. Please submit any additional questions to CASIS.

The deadline for responses to this request for information is November 16, 2020.

Please email your response to pm@issnationallab.org.

Attachments

[Attachment 1 - Sample proposal summary](#)

[Attachment 2 - Proposal evaluator agreement](#)

[Attachment 3 - Economic evaluator instructions](#)

[Attachment 4 - Economic evaluator workbook](#)

[Attachment 5 - RFI presentation slides](#)