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Announcement of Opportunity for China-Chile Joint Research Fund 2023

Issue date: 29th December 2023

Deadline of submission: 15th March 2024

1. Overview

The China-Chile Joint Research Fund (CCJRF) has been implemented since 2015, and has successfully awarded a total of 23 two-year projects involving China-Chile collaboration in astronomical research. This opportunity is provided based on the principles established in a 2013 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the National Commission of Scientific and Technological Research of the Republic of Chile (formerly CONICYT), and the more specific guidelines described in the Agreement between the National Astronomical Observatories of China (NAOC), the Chinese Astronomical Society, the Chilean Astronomical Society (SOCHIAS) and CONICYT (now ANID) to support proposals that involve collaboration in astronomical research from both Chinese and Chilean astronomy communities.

In response to this Announcement of Opportunity, funding requests for research projects proposed based on a collaboration including astronomers from both China and Chile will be considered. The PI of the proposal must be from either country, with the Co-PI from the other country. The subject of research can be in any area of astronomy, including observation, theory, instrument development and site testing. Projects that help expand capabilities in astro-engineering are encouraged.

2. Funding

Duration of each project should be two years at maximum, but requests for extension of a currently-funded, successful project may be considered. The funds provided by CASSACA are to be used as seed money for larger projects or to cover exploratory efforts. The expected funding level per project is \$75,000 USD per year at maximum, and we expect to fund 3 projects for this call. The possible items to support include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Support for exchanges of students and/or visitors between China and Chile, including the corresponding travel expense and per diem, but excluding regular salaries for faculty or postdocs.
- 2) Purchases of small equipment for lab, observing and data storage/reduction/analysis, but not for regular

office equipment/supplies such as printers.

3) Academic activities such as travel to conferences, observations, small scientific meetings/workshops and special training.

4) Site testing activities for astronomical observatories.

5) A standard overhead as compensation for the administrative support at host institution(s) of the PIs and Co-PIs.

3. Evaluation and Assignment of Funds

The Joint China-Chile Committee (JCCC) is composed of Chinese and Chilean astronomers with the mission to define the framework of cooperative research and evaluate the proposals to be supported by the Joint Fund. For this Announcement of Opportunity, each proposal will be evaluated by at least four experts, with approximately equal representation of Chinese and Chilean reviewers. In order to avoid conflict of interests, PI, Co-PI and Co-Is of proposals in this year's Call are not allowed to take part in the evaluations.

The evaluation criteria will follow these given weights to obtain final scores, with each criteria being qualified from 1 to 5, with 5 as the best grade and 1 the lowest. Half points are allowed but lesser fractions are not.

a) Evaluation criteria for Scientific Projects:

- 60% Merit of the project.
- 20% Scientific/technical expertise of the team, and its qualifications to conduct the project.
- 20% Feasibility and budget appropriateness.

b) Evaluation criteria for Instrumentation/site testing Projects

- 50% Merit of the project.
- 20% Scientific/technical expertise of the team, and its qualifications to conduct the project.
- 30% Feasibility and budget appropriateness.

The final ranking will be reached by the JCCC with consensus, and will be sent to the Director of CASSACA for consideration. The final selection will be communicated to the JCCC made public on a dedicated CASSACA webpage. The Director will be responsible to verify that the budgets of approved proposals comply with the financial rules of the funding agencies, and communicate to JCCC the written procedure, timescale and rendering of the allocated fund and expected date for transferring the funds to the grantees. Once notified, the Chilean PI or Co-PI should obtain the consent of his/her host institution in the form of an official letter and will need to sign a contract with CASSACA before the grant is awarded. One mid-term report (for 2-year projects) and one final report will be required to be submitted to CASSACA for tracking and progress evaluation purposes.

4. Proposal Structure

All proposals must include the following essential elements:

1. Proposal cover page (one page), including:
 - a. Project title and an abstract.
 - b. Type of project (Scientific or Instrumentation) and Area of Research (e.g., Planets, Stars, Interstellar Medium, Galaxies, Cosmology, Instrumentation, Experiment, Site surveys, etc.).
 - c. Project duration (one or two years)
 - d. Names and titles of PI, Co-PI and Co-Is, including their home institutions.

2. Scientific Justification (up to five single-spaced pages, including text, graphics, tables and references, using font size 11pt or larger). Supporting evidence such as allocated observing times, approved experiment plans, etc. are welcome. When writing, please consider that the referee might not be an expert on your specific field.
3. Implementation Plan of research including project duration (up to two pages).
4. Itemized budget requested for the project with justifications (for each year if it is multi-year). The budget plan should specify how the fund is distributed to the Chinese and Chilean sides for each item (up to two pages). If the project is selected, a detailed budget may be required for the full selection process.
5. CV of the PI and Co-PI, a list of currently supported research programs, and a list of the proposer's publications relevant to the proposal (up to two pages).

5. Submission

All proposals should be submitted electronically to CASSACA's Santiago office at ccjrf@nao.cas.cn. The deadline of submission is March 15th, 2024. Inquiries can be directed to Dr. Jiasheng Huang, Deputy Director and Chief Scientist of CASSACA, at jhuang@nao.cas.cn, Dr. Lei Zhu, coordinator of CASSACA, at lzhu@nao.cas.cn, Dr. Bruno Dias, president of SOCHIAS, at presidencia.sochias@gmail.com, or Dr. Sergio Vasquez, executive director of SOCHIAS, at direccion.ejecutiva.sochias@gmail.com.

*Please be aware that we experienced technical issues in the past with emails going to the spam folder. We strongly suggest that you make sure that your message was received, and that you acknowledge the receipt of emails, and check your spam folders.

6. Important dates

The 2022 call delivered the results very late, which did not allow the 2023 to come out by April 2023 as it was the target date. Therefore we are adapting the schedule dates for the process, and also proposing an alternative solution considering the bottlenecks from 2022. This 2023 call process will be done during the first semester of 2024 for projects starting in July-Aug. We are doing our best to try to recover the original schedule during the next few years. The tentative dates for the 2023 call are detailed below:

- **29/Dec/2023 call release**
- **15/Mar/2024: submission deadline, and referee process start**
- **May/2024: JCCC meeting to finalize ranking and selection, highly ranked projects request to send extra details**
- **Jun/2024: NAOC budget evaluation and final results released**