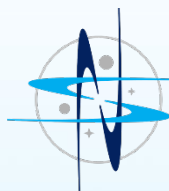




2025-2026

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

NASA Spacesuit User Interface Technologies for Students



NASA STEM

Launching Tomorrow's Aerospace Workforce

Team Name

Optional Team Logo

Academic Institution Name

Address

Team Contact

Student Name

Email Address

Phone Number

Team Members

(Please list ALL team members) Team

Member Name --- Role

Email Address --- Academic Year / Academic Major Team

Member Name --- Role

Email Address --- Academic Year / Academic Major Team

Member Name --- Role

Email Address --- Academic Year / Academic Major Team

Member Name --- Role

Email Address --- Academic Year / Academic Major Team

Member Name --- Role

Email Address --- Academic Year / Academic Major

Faculty Advisor

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

Faculty Advisor Signature

Date

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(Note: **The Technical Section is limited to 12 pages.** Include enough images within those 10 pages to describe your software. If you want to submit additional images, use an Appendix. Other sections and appendices will **not** count against your 12-page limit.)

1. Introduction

The Extravehicular Activity and Human Surface Mobility Program (EHP) and the Office of STEM Engagement at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston are excited to host our ninth year of the NASA SUITS (Spacesuit User Interface Technologies for Students) Challenge. We will conduct in-person device testing onsite at Johnson in May 2026.

This document serves as a resource and reference guide to provide potential NASA SUITS participants with the requirements needed to submit a successful proposal. Included are important steps to the challenge and required components of an official proposal. **Please also review the Mission Description for NASA SUITS at our website <https://go.nasa.gov/nasasuits>.**

2. Eligibility

Each prospective onsite team member must be enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate student at an accredited U.S. institution of higher learning (community college, military academy, technical college, or university). Note, enrollment verification may be requested and must be certified for participation at any time during the activity period.

- Team members must be at least 18 before arriving in Houston.
- Each team will be allowed **eight** badged participants to participate in the onsite culminating event. These eight individuals **MUST** be U.S. Citizens or Legal Permanent Residents. While there is no limit on the number of participants for each team, institutions are encouraged to submit multiple different proposals if they have many interested students. *Note: In previous years NASA has provided opportunities for non-badged participation in Houston. Currently there is no plan to offer an offsite option for non-badged participants in 2026.*
- Each team must be accompanied onsite by their faculty advisor or an adult, age 21 or older, serving as the faculty advisor.
- All participants **MUST** attend the Orientation at 4 p.m. CST on December 11, 2025, and the Virtual Software Design Review on April 2, 2026.
- Team members may only participate with one team in the same competition.
- Student experiments must be organized, designed, and operated by student team members alone.
- All participants *must* be enrolled for the activity in STEM Gateway and have accepted the offer by the deadline provided by the NASA SUITS team.
- Interns involved in the design of a SUITS challenge may not participate as a member of a team in that same cycle of the SUITS challenge. However, they may serve as a team advisor.

3. Letter of Intent

Please submit a letter of intent by Thursday, October 2, 2025, indicating the team's intention to submit a written proposal. You should follow the format below and write your letter in the body of an email. Send the email directly to nasa-suits@mail.nasa.gov. **Teams *may still* submit a proposal even if they do not submit a letter of intent.**

- Subject line: "NASA SUITS Challenge Letter of Intent."

- Sample Text: We are Team <name> from <Institution Name>. We intend to submit a proposal for the 2026 NASA SUITS Challenge.
- Provide team contact information – this should be a student team member.
 - a. Sample: John Doe (DoeJ@institution.edu) Sophomore / Software Engineer.
- Be sure to provide the academic institution(s) your team represents. Your team should designate a lead institution if team members come from multiple institutions.

4. Proposal Requirements

- Each team must submit one electronic copy of an original proposal for the [NASA SUITS engagement opening](#) via NASA STEM Gateway **by Thursday, October 30, 2025**.
- Your proposal must contain the following three sections: Technical, Outreach, and Administrative.
- You shall not skip/omit sections or components under any circumstance.
- The Technical section shall not exceed 12 pages.
- The report body must use 12-point font.
- All information on the title page must be complete.
- You must label and reference figures and tables within the text.

5. Technical Section

The technical section must cover the design the team is proposing. This section must include any information that a Technical Reviewer will find informative or instructive in understanding the goals of the design. Evaluators ranking the proposal for its scientific and technical merit will read only this section, so teams should address all relevant factors as listed below. The Proposal Rubric is provided at the end of this document.

a. Abstract

The abstract is a brief (up to 500 words) summary that touches upon the elements of the proposed prototype design and how they relate to the requirements and EVA scenario in the Mission Description. Include any planned testing of the design and any proposed hardware or peripheral devices your team would bring to onsite testing.

b. Software and Hardware Design Description

Include a detailed description of the proposed software and how you plan to tackle each aspect of the design challenge, keeping in mind the context of the EVA scenario as stated in the Mission Description. Write in such a way that a practicing engineer or scientist can understand the design of the user interface (UI) and how you will implement a voice assistant. Present goals along with a description of the expected key components of the product (e.g., system architecture plan, hardware concepts, network diagrams). Clearly lay out how you will integrate AI (artificial intelligence) into your work and into the user experience. Show conceptual UI design ideas (portrayed via wire frames, visuals, etc.) for navigation, telemetry, rover controls, geology, EVA task instructions, etc. Also, show any peripheral

device mock-ups (e.g., external control methods, lighting methods) to help the Technical Reviewers understand the full scope of the proposed product. Be sure to highlight any unique solutions to the listed requirements your team is considering.

c. Concept of Operations (CONOPS)

Describe the overall high-level concept of how your design will meet the expectations and requirements. Describe the system from an operational perspective (i.e., the viewpoint of the astronaut) to help facilitate an understanding of the system goals. Address how the application will assist the design evaluator (or astronaut) in each aspect of the EVA scenario during testing. A flowchart of how your design operates throughout the mission may be a useful visual depiction. See the Mission Description document for more details on this section.

d. Artificial Intelligence

Provide an in-depth view of how you plan to implement AI as a force multiplier for the crew members. The goals are to increase efficiency and/or reduce cognitive load. This includes which AI models you plan to use and how you plan to control for hallucinations in mission-critical areas. This should be its own section.

e. Human-in-the-loop (HITL) testing

Discuss any pilot, user experience, human-in-the-loop, or human factors studies planned. A written HITL test plan should include a testing schedule (including proposed dates and times of planned testing), test protocol, possible metrics/measures, feasible subject pools, expected population/demographics of test subjects, and all planned safety measures to be used while conducting HITL tests. Include how the HITL test will inform your team's development plan as they prepare for the analog EVA scenario (e.g., planning for night/low-lighting testing, outdoor testing, and network/telemetry connection testing). A good HITL test plan will build towards a full test of the EVA scenario stated in the Mission Description before test week to identify any challenges ahead of the final test onsite. You do not need to repeat this section for both assets.

f. Project Management

Provide an outline of the team's development plans, along with any internal key milestones. Use a Gantt chart or similar chart. If following an Agile software development plan, outline your scrum schedule with a proposed feature development and testing plan. Describe how progress will be tracked to ensure that you meet the requirements of the EVA scenario in the Mission Description ahead of Test Week. Teams are strongly encouraged to plan time throughout their development period to test their devices in conditions close to that of the described EVA scenario before traveling to Johnson for Test Week. Expect the NASA team to hold you accountable to provided milestones.

g. Technical References

Cite referenced works in text and in a "References" section using formatting appropriate for a technical paper.

6. Community and Industry Engagement Section

As part of participating in NASA SUITS, teams are expected to engage in their local communities. This can be a mixture of Community and Industry Engagement so long as at least one of each type of engagement is planned with the expectation of four or more total events.

a. Community Engagement

Information contained in this section should focus on the outreach activities the team intends to implement as well as the target audience.

A plan is an organized way to achieve a specific objective. Random activities, even good random activities, do not constitute a plan. An engagement plan should have two major components:

- The **plan** – a description of the team’s objectives and goals, what activities are planned for the upcoming year, where and when the activities will take place, what audience you are targeting, etc.
- The **activities** – what will the team do when they get there? What materials will they refer to? What are the main points that they will make?

For maximum point value, the plan should include the following as appropriate:

- Describe how your team will engage with local civic and community leaders.
- A description of the outreach audience (K-12 class or school groups, undergraduate research symposiums, university outreach to local schools, informal groups such as Boy/Girl Scouts, after-school clubs, church groups, etc.).
- Letters or agreements from institutions that accept your invitation to address their group.
- The team’s objectives for each activity.
- Specific plans for activities (strengthened by alignment to state or national standards to help a K-12 teacher, or use of age/grade-appropriate language to engage students during the activity) Leading an “Hour of Code” in a classroom is the optimal outreach activity.
- A press and/or social media plan.
- A connection between curriculum/activity and NASA SUITS, a NASA Mission, or the team’s code.

b. Industry Engagement

Create a list of potential industry partners who align with project goals. Consider technical expertise, mentorship, skills development, certifications, or resources sought to advance project goals.

Your plan should assess the team’s professional development strategy (choose at least one from this category):

- Summarize mentorship arrangements your team plans to target with industry experts/partners.
- Identify skills development and certification opportunities your team members plan to seek with industry partners (e.g., software, electrical).
- Explain how your team’s industry connections would support team members’ career goals.
- Identify potential internship, fellowship, apprenticeship, or career opportunities your team members plan to seek.
- Summarize the method your team will use to raise awareness about your NASA challenge participation.

7. Administrative Section

a. Institutional Letter of Endorsement

This letter must be on the endorsing institution's letterhead and must come from the institution's president, dean of college, or department chair. It indicates the team's institution(s) has knowledge of the team's interest in participating in this activity and endorses the team's involvement. Failing to include a letter of endorsement from their institution(s) will result in a rejected proposal.

b. Statement of Supervising Faculty

A statement of support from a faculty member indicating a willingness to supervise and work with the team during all stages of the activity. There will be no consideration for teams working without a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor must also sign off on the cover of the proposal as evidence that he/she has seen the proposal and approves of the submission. The following statement should appear on an institution letterhead and include the signature of the faculty advisor:

As the faculty advisor for an experiment entitled " _____ " proposed by a team of higher education students from _____ institution, I concur with the concepts and methods by which the students plan to conduct this project. I will ensure the student team members complete all project requirements and meet deadlines in a timely manner. I understand any default by this team concerning any project requirements (including submission of final report materials) could adversely affect selection opportunities of future teams from their institution.

If your team is comprised of students from more than one institution, submit the above from the lead institution. Additionally, supply a letter of support from a faculty member of each participating institution acknowledging that they are aware of the participation of their student(s).

c. Statement of Rights of Use

These statements grant NASA, acting on behalf of the U.S. Government, rights to use the team's technical data, including computer software and design concept, in part or in entirety, for government purposes. NASA, acting on behalf of the U.S. Government, may designate for certain tasks under this engagement, including software and software documentation for certain designated tasks, to be released as "Open Source" software. This term is defined by the Open Source Definition promulgated by the Open Source Initiative on its website (see <https://opensource.org/osd>). These statements are not required. However, teams with a Statement of Rights of Use will receive greater consideration in the proposal selection. If you choose to include these statements, all team members and faculty advisors must sign. The statements read as follows:

As a team member for a proposal entitled " _____ " proposed by a team of higher education students from _____ institution, I will and hereby do grant the U.S. Government a royalty-free, nonexclusive and irrevocable license to use, reproduce, distribute (including distribution by transmission) to the public, perform publicly, prepare derivative works, and display publicly, any technical data contained in this proposal in whole or in part and in any

manner for federal purposes and to have or permit others to do so for federal purposes only. Further, with respect to all computer software designated by NASA to be released as open source which is first produced or delivered under this proposal and subsequent collaboration, if selected, shall be delivered with unlimited and unrestricted rights so as to permit further distribution as open source. For purposes of defining the rights in such computer software, “computer software” shall include source codes, object codes, executables, ancillary files, and any and all documentation related to any computer program or similar set of instructions delivered in association with this collaboration. As a team member for a proposal entitled “_____” proposed by a team of higher education students from _____ institution(s), I will and hereby do grant the U.S. Government a nonexclusive, nontransferable, irrevocable, paid-up license to practice or have practiced for or on behalf of the United States Government any invention described or made part of this proposal throughout the world.

d. Funding and Budget Statement

This section should include a simple columnar layout showing expected expenditures associated with the proposed design, such as materials, machining, operating, testing, shipping, etc. See Table 1 on the right for an example. It is imperative teams anticipate all costs involved and actively work to seek funding. List potential sources for funding, which can include institutional grants, state Space Grant funds, corporate sponsors, etc. Participants are responsible for **all** costs associated with their participation in the SUITS challenge, including but not limited to development, travel, lodging, and food. NASA SUITS will notify participants if any funding or student allowances become available.

<i>Table 1: SUITS Example Budget</i>	
Items	Costs
Flights	\$4,500
Hotel	\$2,000
Ground transportation	\$400
Operating	\$600
Software	\$500
Miscellaneous	\$500
Total	\$8,500

e. Hololens2 Loan Program

NASA SUITS has a limited number of Hololens2 devices we can loan to institutions. The loans will be subject to a loan agreement, which must be signed by your faculty/institution. Please indicate your interest in a loaned device by choosing one of the following:

- A) We do not require a loaned device because we either already have one, or plan to acquire one.
- B) We need a loaned device from NASA SUITS to participate.
- C) We have a device but would still like to be considered for a loan to aid in our development.

f. Proposal Scoring Method

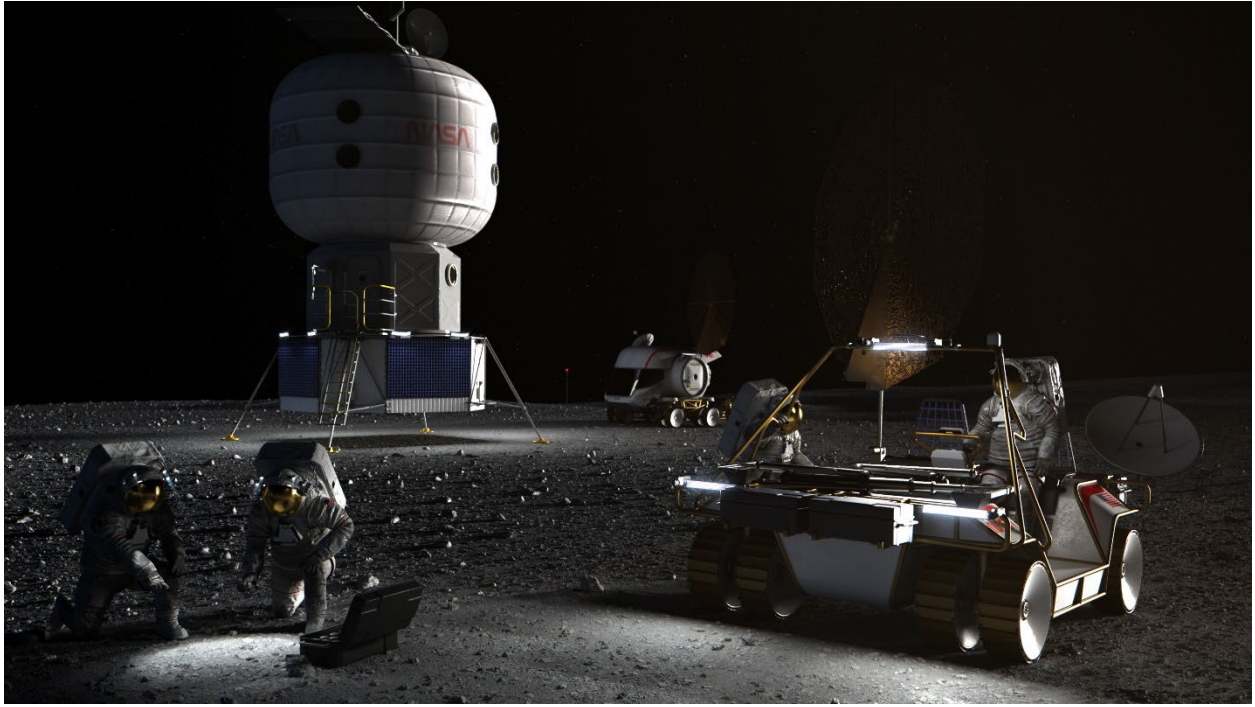
A scoring rubric, provided below, with required criteria will evaluate how well a proposal addresses each of the following required components: Technical Merit, Engagement Plan, and adherence to all proposal requirements.

g. Other Deliverables

Teams will create a first-person point of view video of their UIs in action. Teams will submit this video, along with their code, during the software design reviews occurring in April 2025. Teams are also required to submit a draft white paper illustrating the development of their visual informatics display system upon completion of the NASA SUITS challenge in June 2025.

h. Logo Use

Please supply NASA with logo files, preferably as jpg or png, for your institution(s). Please provide both a version in which your school logo and name are displayed horizontally as well as a version in which the logo and name are stacked vertically. Upload these files to your proposal in the STEM Gateway. You may also provide a public-facing link to these files.



8. PROPOSAL SCORING RUBRIC	Lowest Score			Highest Score	Score	Comments
<p>DESIGN DESCRIPTION.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Describe the goals of the design concept and expected results. ✓ Provide roadmap for integrating AI for autonomous functions. ✓ Tackle the following components of the challenge: UIs for both spacesuit and pressurized rover, navigation, and implementation of the autonomy and interoperability requirements. <p>Total 25 points</p>	<p>0-6 points</p> <p>The design concept description is insufficient or lacks clarity with respect to design goals and/or expected results. Proposer provides little to no evidence for an innovative UI design or display interaction method/technology. At least one component of the challenge was met successfully.</p>	<p>7-13 points</p> <p>The proposed design concept goals and/or the expected results of the design are vague. Proposer provides minimal evidence for an innovative UI design or display interaction method/technology. At least two components of the challenge were met successfully.</p>	<p>14-19 points</p> <p>The proposed design concept goals and/or the expected results of the design are generally described. Proposer provides some evidence for an innovative UI design or display interaction method/technology. At least three components of the challenge were met successfully.</p>	<p>20-25 points</p> <p>The proposed design concept goals and results are clearly and concisely written. Proposer demonstrates substantial evidence of innovative display interaction methods/technologies with visuals, etc., to support their concept. Most, if not all, components of the challenge were met successfully.</p>		
<p>CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Describe the user interfaces, autonomy, and interoperability from an operational perspective (Pressurized Rover and spacesuit). <p>Total 10 points</p>	<p>0-2 points</p> <p>The proposed concept description of the user interface is <u>unclear and insufficient</u> from an operational perspective.</p>	<p>3-5 points</p> <p>The proposed concept description of the user interface <u>contains few details and is difficult to comprehend</u> from an operational perspective.</p>	<p>6-8 points</p> <p>The proposed concept description of the user interface <u>provides general details and provides a minimal or basic understanding of the concept</u> from an operational perspective.</p>	<p>9-10 points</p> <p>The proposed concept description of the user interface is <u>clearly and concisely written in full detail and effectively explains the concept</u> from an operational perspective.</p>		
<p>FEASIBILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Concept demonstrates a viable solution to the technical need. ✓ Plan describes how the concept would be produced. <p>Total 10 points</p>	<p>0-1 points</p> <p>The proposed concept <u>lacks viability</u> and/or fails to meet the technical need. <u>No evidence</u> is provided to demonstrate how the concept would be produced.</p>	<p>2-4 points</p> <p>The proposed concept demonstrates <u>low viability</u> and minor/insignificant contributions to the technical need. <u>Little evidence</u> is provided to demonstrate how the concept would be produced.</p>	<p>5-7 points</p> <p>The proposed concept demonstrates <u>sufficient viability</u> and describes some contributions to the technical need. <u>Minimal evidence</u> is provided to demonstrate how the concept would be produced.</p>	<p>8-10 points</p> <p>The proposed concept demonstrates <u>high viability</u> and describes significant contributions to the technical need. <u>Ample evidence</u> is provided to clearly demonstrate in detail how the concept would be produced.</p>		

<p><u>ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INTEGRATION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Concept includes how and where AI will be included. ✓ Includes which LLMs etc. will be used and why. ✓ Includes plans to mitigate hallucinations which would pose a danger to mission success. <p>Total 15 points</p>	<p>0-3 points</p> <p>The proposal fails to adequately explain how and where AI will be included. It shows a lack of understanding of the problem and provides no practical solutions.</p> <p>The proposal fails to specify which LLMs or other AI models will be used or provides no justification for their selection. It shows a lack of understanding of the models' capabilities.</p> <p>The proposal fails to include a plan to mitigate AI hallucinations, or the plan is inadequate. It shows a lack of understanding of the risks and provides no practical strategies to address them.</p>	<p>4-7 points</p> <p>The proposal provides a basic explanation of AI integration, but it is vague or lacks depth. The solutions may be impractical or not well thought out.</p> <p>The proposal mentions the LLMs or other AI models to be used but provides little or no justification for their selection. The rationale is weak or unclear.</p> <p>The proposal includes a basic plan to mitigate AI hallucinations, but it is vague or lacks depth. The strategies may be impractical or not well thought out.</p>	<p>8-11 points</p> <p>The proposal explains how and where AI will be included but lacks some detail or innovation. The solutions are practical but not particularly novel.</p> <p>The proposal specifies the LLMs or other AI models to be used, with some justification for their selection. The rationale is reasonable but not thoroughly convincing.</p> <p>The proposal includes a plan to mitigate AI hallucinations, but it lacks some detail or depth. The strategies are practical but not particularly innovative.</p>	<p>12-15 points</p> <p>The proposal clearly and comprehensively explains how and where AI will be integrated. It demonstrates a deep understanding of the problem and provides innovative and practical AI solutions.</p> <p>The proposal specifies the LLMs or other AI models to be used, with a clear and well-justified rationale for their selection. It demonstrates a strong understanding of the models' capabilities and relevance to the problem.</p> <p>The proposal includes a comprehensive and well-thought-out plan to mitigate AI hallucinations. It demonstrates a deep understanding of potential risks and provides practical, effective strategies to address them.</p>		
<p><u>EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT SCHEDULE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Comprehensive project schedule. ✓ Effective use of available resources. ✓ Labor distribution. ✓ Documents proposed schedule for meeting objectives. ✓ Detailed plan to achieve each objective or task. <p>Total 5 points</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>The proposed project schedule does not demonstrate effective planning. The plan includes little to no description for meeting objectives and completing the task.</p>	<p>1-2 points</p> <p>The proposed project schedule includes few details to demonstrate effective planning. The plan vaguely describes to meet the objectives and complete the task.</p>	<p>3-4 points</p> <p>The proposed project schedule includes minimum details to demonstrate effective planning. The plan minimally describes how the task and objectives will be met.</p>	<p>5 points</p> <p>The proposed project schedule is highly detailed and effective to meet objectives. Describes a comprehensive plan that demonstrates how to meet the objectives and complete the task.</p>		

<u>HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP (HITL) TESTING</u> ✓ Provide a test plan for all HITL testing to be conducted by the team. ✓ Include all the requested components for the HITL plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule of proposed test events. • Test protocol. • Possible metrics/measures. • Feasible subject. pools/demographic. • How test event evaluates design's ability to meet challenge requirements. ✓ All HITL tests should be conducted safely. Total 10 points	1-2 points No HITL plan provided, or the components of the plan are insufficient, unsafe or unclear.	3-5 points The proposed HITL plan includes a few of the components listed and deemed necessary to implement an effective and safe HITL test.	6-7 points The proposed HITL plan includes most but not all the components listed and deemed necessary to implement an effective and safe HITL test.	8-10 points The proposed HITL plan clearly and concisely describes each of the components listed and deemed necessary to implement an effective and safe HITL test.		
<u>TECHNICAL REFERENCES</u> ✓ Referenced works are cited in text and are relevant to the proposal. ✓ A bibliography is provided. Total 5 points	0 points No references are included.	1-2 points 1 reference is cited. Not formatted correctly.	3-4 points At least 1 reference is cited. Citation(s) and reference entry(ies) follow a recognized format.	5 points 2 or more references are cited. Citation(s) and reference entry(ies) follow a recognized format.		
Total Technical Score						

PROPOSAL SCORING RUBRIC	Lowest Score			Highest Score	Score	Comments
<p>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Diverse list of events and activities planned. ✓ Includes projected audience type and number of participants. ✓ Includes community leaders who have been engaged. ✓ Detailed implementation plan. <p>INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ List of potential partners and alignment with project goals. ✓ Assesses the team's professional development strategy. 	<p>1-5 points</p> <p>Only <u>one</u> outreach event or industry engagement is planned.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Plan provides <u>no details</u> of implementation plan, projected audience, and number of participants.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Plan provides <u>no details</u> of potential industry partners and how they will align to project goals.</p>	<p>6-10 points</p> <p>Minimum of <u>two</u> events are planned. This can be any combination of outreach events and industry engagements.</p> <p>Proposer provides <u>minimal details</u> of implementation plan, projected audience, and number of participants.</p> <p>AND/OR</p> <p>Proposer provides <u>minimal details</u> of potential industry partners and how they will align to project goals.</p>	<p>11-15 points</p> <p>Minimum of <u>three</u> events are planned. This can be any combination of outreach events and industry engagements.</p> <p>Proposer provides a <u>sufficiently detailed</u> implementation plan including a projected audience, and number of participants.</p> <p>AND/OR</p> <p>Proposer provides <u>sufficient detailed</u> list of potential industry partners and how they will align to project goals.</p>	<p>16-20 points</p> <p>Minimum of <u>four</u> events are planned. This can be any combination of outreach events and industry engagements.</p> <p>Proposer provides a <u>highly descriptive and relevant</u> implementation plan including a projected audience, and number of participants.</p> <p>AND/OR</p> <p>Proposer provides <u>highly descriptive and relevant</u> list of potential industry partners and how they will align to project goals.</p>		
Engagement Total Score						

Note: Check the NASA SUITS website for the most-up-to-date activity documents <http://go.nasa.gov/nasasuits>.

Send questions and responses to nasa-suits@mail.nasa.gov