General Background and Instructions

INTRODUCTION:

The Deputy Center Director, the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS), and the Office of the Center Chief Technologist (CCT) are pleased to announce the FY26 IRAD request for proposals.

The purpose of the IRAD is to develop strategic technical capabilities in support of the Center competencies and thereby enable science, technology and engineering efforts for future Agency missions. The advances in science and technology expected through this program will provide opportunities for technical risk reduction and/or increased cost effectiveness and initiate potentially transformational solutions.

PROPOSAL SCOPE:

This call is open to NASA Ames civil servants only. The IRAD focuses on science, technology and engineering investments that will develop skills, capabilities and systems relevant for future Ames work.

It is incumbent upon the proposer to demonstrate clearly the true innovation of the proposed project, based on existing state-of-the-art, and to demonstrate how their proposal supports Agency objectives and Center priorities.

IRAD proposals should nominally be at TRL of 4 or above (or an equivalent stage if proposing a science or research project) and have some preliminary data to support that assessment.

The IRAD proposals are open to any area of science, technology or engineering research investment relevant to Ames*. Proposals that include funded collaborations with other Centers, USGS, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz and SJSU are encouraged.

*** Ames NASA Specific Mission Focused Areas:**

- Moon-to-Mars (M2M) mission, technology and exploration science.
- Earth and Mars Entry Systems.
- Air Traffic Management & Advanced Air Mobility.
- UAV/UAS testing capability.
- Intelligent/Adaptive systems.
- Advanced Computing.
- Space Biology, Astrobiology, Space & Weather Science.

The following are not within the scope of this call and proposals will not be submitted for review:

- Augmentation of already funded programs or projects;

- Projects that have consistently failed peer review;
- Construction of facilities or general equipment purchases;
- Funding of contractor-led research.

ELIGIBILITY, FUNDING AMOUNTS, AND PROJECT DURATION:

The IRAD call is only open to NASA Ames civil servants. Requested budget are not exceed $100K (FY26) and $100K (FY27) with awards expected to be made in March 2026. Funds can be split between FTE and Procurement, including contract labor. A minimum of 70% of the budget must be allocated for work conducted at or procurement for Ames. Line management has the authority to shift contract labor requests to FTE allocations.

Please note:

- Funding may not be used to support travel;
- Co-investigators may be located at other institutions.

Proposed efforts may be for up to three years in duration. Proposals selected in FY26 will be funded for execution in FY26 and FY27. Continuation proposals for The FY27 component will not be required but progress reports and an updated FY27 budget will be requested.

Decisions regarding awards will be based on availability of funds. All FY26 funding must be obligated by the end of the FY (September 30, 2026). FY27 funding must be obligated by September 30, 2027.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

All FY26 IRAD proposers must submit the following to harry.partridge@nasa.gov and jacob.cohen-1@nasa.gov with the subject line **IRAD26_PI Last Name_Short Proposal Name** by 5:00 p.m. (pacific) on January 20, 2026:

1. Cover page (1-page)
2. Abstract (maximum of 1-page)
3. Proposal (maximum of 5-pages)
4. Alignment and ROI (maximum of 1-page)
5. Resource Requirements (maximum of 3-page)
6. Reference list (optional; 1-page)
7. Quad chart (1-page)

Templates for the cover page, proposal, budget breakdown, quad chart, and abstract are included in the package found online here. All submitted documents must adhere to instructions printed in blue. Proposers must use 1-inch margins and 12-point standard font (Times or Arial).

NOTE: Proposers have the responsibility to clearly explain critical details needed for a reviewer to properly assess the proposal. Proposers should not assume that reviewers are experts in the specific area, nor that the reviewers will look at any material other than what is provided in the proposal.

PROPOSAL APPROVAL:

Proposers must inform their direct line management about their IRAD proposals for concurrence on the strategic value, availability of labor resources, and proposal-development support. This step is important to ensure availability of resources needed to

deliver in the time allotted, if selected. Approval of a Branch Chief or higher is required for proposal submission.

GENERAL SELECTION PROCESS:

IRAD proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria: technical merit; soundness of the approach; strategic relevance and value to Ames and NASA; and future funding prospects.

The Ames Research Center Research and Technology Council (ARTC) will evaluate all submitted proposals that meet the above criteria. The technical Directors will review the ARTC's input and make programmatic recommendations to the Center Director's Office.

All awardees will be required to submit a final report and participate in the Ames Research and Technology Showcase. **Any awardee that does not submit a final report will be barred from participating in future IRAD RFPs until they submit the final report.**

Award duration includes a FY26 and FY27 components; all funding must be obligated within the given FY.

IRAD SCHEDULE:

Proposals Due Date: January 20, 2025
Start of Award: March 2026 (Anticipated)
Summary Report: October 2026
Final Report: October 2027
Participation in Ames Research and Technology Showcase (ARTS): TBA
Participation in NASA IRAD showcase: TBA.

A report template will be provided to all awardees.

FY26 IRAD proposal packages must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. (Pacific) January 20, 2026 via email to harry.partridge@nasa.gov and jacob.cohen-1@nasa.gov with "IRAD26_PI Last Name" in the subject line.

Please note that late submissions will not be accepted nor reviewed.

Technology development questions: Harry Partridge at harry.partridge@nasa.gov
Scientific research questions: Jacob Cohen at jacob.cohen-1@nasa.gov.