



## IAU Office of Astronomy for Development

### Annual Call for Proposals 2025: Stage 1

***Deadline for Stage 1 application is end of day (UTC-12), May 31, 2025***

*If you need support for accessibility, please write to us at [info@astro4dev.org](mailto:info@astro4dev.org).*

*Although English is the working language of the OAD, we will be happy to arrange translations of the call and documents if you need it. Please contact us at [info@astro4dev.org](mailto:info@astro4dev.org) if you would like to request a translation.*

***Kindly read through all the information presented here before proceeding to the application form. This call for proposals is for projects to be implemented in 2026.***

**All information is available on the OAD website: <https://www.astro4dev.org/cfp/>**

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## INTRODUCTION

The global Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD) is a joint partnership between the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) with the support of the Department of Science, Technology, and Innovation (DSTI). **The mission of the OAD is to further the use of astronomy, in all its aspects, as a tool for development.**

One of the primary ways the OAD implements its mission is through the **Annual Call for Proposals**. Every year, the OAD invites proposals for projects that use astronomy as a tool to address an issue or issues related to sustainable development. The call is open to anyone from anywhere in the world\*. Since 2017, the OAD Call for Proposals is a two-stage review process, where only a limited number of proposals from Stage 1 will be invited to submit a Stage 2 proposal.

\*Due to international sanctions, we are unable to send money to certain countries. Please [contact us](#) if you are unsure about your country.

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## WHAT IS ASTRONOMY FOR DEVELOPMENT?

At the OAD, we aim to encourage people to work towards development through the astronomy-based interventions executed as IAU-OAD funded projects. Our development goals are framed by the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), which are a set of globally adopted priorities to end

poverty, preserve the planet and promote peace and prosperity for all. Astronomy for Development or Astro4Dev, thus, has different objectives than the sole development or advancement of the field of astronomy itself, i.e. ***Astronomy for Development is different from the development of astronomy.***

Astronomy for Development, as indicated in its name, involves the fields of both astronomy and development. Thus, due consideration needs to be given to the guidance and involvement of experts in development and related fields. For example, if you are running an education-oriented intervention, we would expect you to include relevant education experts in your team.

**“Astronomy for Development is about PEOPLE, not the STARS”**

The OAD does not fund astronomy or astrophysics research or activities whose primary aim is to promote the field of astronomy. If you are interested in such activities, we encourage you to visit the websites of the relevant IAU structures.

International Astronomical Union (IAU): Astronomy, astrophysics, and related scientific activities, <https://www.iau.org/>

Funding for scientific symposia: <https://www.iau.org/iau/iau/Science/Scientific-Meetings-Overview.aspx?hkey=4a0d45c9-a126-44ba-a50b-f6d6ad3a1797>

IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach (OAO): astronomy outreach, public engagement, and astronomy communication, <https://www.iau.org/public/oao/>

Outreach grants for National Outreach Coordinators: [OAO URL will be ready end of April]

IAU Office of Astronomy for Education (OAE): astronomy education at school level, <https://www.astro4edu.org/>

Teacher training grants for National Astronomy Education Coordinators: <https://www.astro4edu.org/ttp/>

IAU Office for Young Astronomers (OYA): astronomy training at university level, [https://www.iau.org/OYA/OYA/About\\_OYA.aspx](https://www.iau.org/OYA/OYA/About_OYA.aspx)

International School for Young Astronomers: <https://www.iau.org/OYA/About-ISYAs>

IAU Hands-on Workshops: Grants to train young scientists in developing countries in accessing, analysing and using data for research projects. <https://www.iau.org/iau/iau/Science/Trainings---Workshops/I-HOW-Hands-On-Workshops.aspx>

The OAD works closely with our sister IAU Offices - OAO, OAE, OYA, as well as the [IAU Centre for the Protection of the Dark and Quiet Sky from Satellite Constellation Interference](#) (CPS). But the OAD itself is primarily concerned with development, not education, research or outreach. For the OAD call for proposals, we are specifically looking for projects that will have a positive impact on sustainable development. Please note that projects may still utilize astronomy outreach or education based activities as long as they are in pursuit of clear development goals. Proposals for education or outreach or astronomy training activities without a compelling case for development are not funded through this call.

## **Webinar: to be announced soon**

*What links astronomy and development? Who can apply for funding? How to measure impact? What are some examples of astronomy-for-development?*

To answer these questions and more, the OAD will organize a webinar targeted at anyone planning to submit a proposal. We will provide an overview of the call, a quick introduction to development, and hear from a few of the past successful applicants.

Watch these videos to learn about some of our [recent projects](#).  
[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZaRaPaDLBvGSKpY5mpxBEHUMqRx\\_ihnC](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZaRaPaDLBvGSKpY5mpxBEHUMqRx_ihnC)

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## **BEFORE YOU APPLY**

Before you apply, please visit the "[Getting Started](#)" section that provides background on Astronomy for Development, resources and links to assist you with project design, monitoring, evidence and evaluation etc. You can take the free [online course on Astronomy for Development](#) designed to provide a helping hand to anyone who intends to submit a proposal. We have also published a [short course on "Introduction to Development Economics"](#) for those who are interested in gaining a deeper understanding.

You can also [search through the past projects](#) funded by the OAD to learn about the work done around the world and to check if your idea has been tried by anyone before.

### **Support to proposers:**

Although our calls for proposals are open to anyone, we understand that not everyone has training or experience in writing proposals. A potential applicant can request

- a. Proposal writing support: Applicants will be matched up with an astronomer or other expert with experience in writing proposals. The expert will guide and advise the applicant on the proposal structure and language.
- b. Translation support: We welcome proposals from people in different countries but due to practical constraints, we only accept applications in English. If that is not your first language

or if you do not feel comfortable writing a proposal in English, you can contact us to request translation support. In this case, your proposal will be translated to English exactly as you have written it in your language.

We depend on volunteers to provide the above forms of support. Hence, we cannot guarantee these services (it will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis). Neither can we provide assurance of selection if you avail this support. If you require assistance, please contact us at [info@astro4dev.org](mailto:info@astro4dev.org) by May 14 so we may make suitable arrangements.

### [More information](#)

#### **Eligibility:**

Please verify that you agree to/abide by the following before beginning your application. Contact us at [info\(at\)astro4dev.org](mailto:info(at)astro4dev.org) in case of queries.

- The proposed project should address a problem or challenge related to **development** and the project should use **Astronomy as a tool to address this problem**.
- The OAD encourages applications from groups that have not received funding from us in the past.
- The OAD also encourages applications from regions and countries where projects have not been funded. Please see a [map of our project locations](#).
- **Previously funded and completed projects or previous grant holders should have completed all reporting requirements, where applicable.** (If you are not sure, you can go to [your project page](#) and check whether your report was successfully submitted)
- One or more project deliverables should be ready by the end of the implementation year.
- All distributable project resources, materials, etc. should be released to the public under an appropriate license (e.g. [Creative Commons](#)) allowing free use and adaptation, unless otherwise agreed with the OAD.
- Proposers should be able to provide a verified bank account through which funds can be paid if the project is selected for funding.
- All projects should adhere to the [Principle of Universality of Science](#) as defined by the International Science Council, of which the IAU is a member (previously ICSU).
- All project team members listed in the proposal should have discussed the proposal and committed to executing the project. The project team should be prepared to provide verification of qualifications and/or reference letters if requested by the OAD.
- The proposers should obtain all necessary permissions and authorizations, as required by their national/local laws, to carry out their work, such as written parental consent when working with minors, permission to use copyrighted material, permission for gatherings etc.
- The project team, in consultation with the OAD, should set the expected outcomes and deliverables and corresponding measurement methods in order to determine the impact.
- **Proposals should be submitted via the online Application Form. All proposals received will be acknowledged by email. Contact us at [info@astro4dev.org](mailto:info@astro4dev.org) if you do not receive an email confirmation of your application.** If you are unable to submit the proposal online for any reason, you may contact us at [info@astro4dev.org](mailto:info@astro4dev.org) at least a week before the deadline to arrange for an alternative submission method. This includes anyone with visual or other impairments who may require assistance.

- Application forms should be complete and received at the OAD before the deadline.

## APPLICATION

### Two Stage Application:

The Call for Proposals is divided into two stages of application. The first stage is open to everyone while only selected proposals from Stage 1 will be invited to Stage 2. Detailed information is provided below for the Stage 1 process; more information for Stage 2 will be provided after the end of Stage 1 in August 2025.

### Stage 1:

The Stage 1 call for proposals is open to proposers from anywhere\* in the world. Projects can be proposed by a single person or by a team of people (given the real-world nature of projects, interdisciplinary teams are encouraged with relevant social scientists). Proposers submit a brief, online application with the key aspects of their project or idea. Proposals will be scored by the OAD review panel based on a set of defined criteria (see below).

Around 30 proposals will be selected from the Stage 1 applications and the proposers invited to submit a Stage 2 proposal. In addition, each of the eleven IAU OAD Regional and Language Offices will nominate any one proposal from their region to be invited to Stage 2. All proposals will receive feedback from the reviewers.

\* We are unfortunately unable to send money to countries under international sanctions. Please contact us at [info@astro4dev.org](mailto:info@astro4dev.org) if you are not sure about your country.

### Stage 2:

Selected proposals will be invited to Stage 2 during which the proposers will work with the OAD on their application. As a first step, the proposers will be asked to submit a draft Stage 2 application, accessible to the OAD team, the Regional Offices, and invited external experts, all of whom will help refine the proposal. The draft application will not be available to the review panel, who will eventually evaluate the applications.

The Regional Offices will be able to suggest ways of improving a proposal to be locally relevant, thus ensuring support from possible local collaborators who could strengthen the project. The OAD, alongside the Regional Offices, will check whether the projects are truly innovative (checking previously funded OAD projects and other initiatives addressing similar concerns) and/or whether the project idea is supported by current evidence. The OAD and Regional Offices may suggest potential collaborators if applicable. External experts, consulted by the OAD where necessary, would provide useful additional guidance on the assessment of projects, including a perspective on which projects are most likely to make an impact on development.

Based on the discussions with OAD and the Regional Offices, proposers modify their Stage 2 applications and submit them online by the final deadline. An independent review panel then scores these modified Stage 2 proposals and makes the final recommendations on the projects to be funded

and the funding amounts for each project. Upon approval by the OAD Steering Committee, all applicants are notified of the results.

### **Grant:**

The IAU has earmarked a total amount of **€80,000** for this 2025 call for proposals. In the past, individual project grants have ranged from 1,000 Euros to 15,000 Euros with an average grant of around 5000 Euros per project.

### **What can the grant be used for:**

Projects are encouraged to spend most of the grant directly on beneficiaries (target audience) and/or resources developed. In particular,

- Salaries are ~~typically~~ not funded but stipends are possible if they are well justified
- Transport and accommodation costs of organisers and participants must be justified
- Administrative fees, such institutional overheads, must be justified.
- When targeting children, projects can budget for meals and snacks, in accordance with relevant health, safety and cultural considerations.

### **Budget guidelines:**

- At stage 1, a brief budget is required with the top 3-4 highest expense items together with a description of each item
- At stage 2, a detailed budget must be submitted listing all the costs associated with the project (not only for the amount funded by the OAD)
- For transport costs, please include details such as the number of people and approximate distance
- For accommodation costs, please include the number of people x number of days x cost per day
- For stipends, please include the number of people x number of hours x cost per hour

All projects should consider their liability in running activities and make suitable indemnity provisions where possible.

### **Project Duration:**

Typically, OAD projects run for 1 year - beginning in January or February of the year following the call for proposals. For this call, selected projects are expected to start in January or February 2026(the grant will be paid by that time) and complete by January or February 2027. Projects can request a no-cost extension if there are unavoidable circumstances that cause delays.

### **Themes:**

From the experience of funding more than 200 projects (and reviewing more than 1000 proposals) since 2013, and with input from the regional offices around the world, the OAD has identified **Themes**

**and Flagship (or Signature) projects** that encapsulate the idea of astronomy for development, and which have the potential for global roll-out. Therefore, these Flagships are included as Themes in the call for proposals.

The themes for this call are:

### 1. Sustainable, local socio-economic development through Astronomy

This theme aims to use an astronomical facility, such as an observatory or planetarium, as a “hub” within a small town or village to stimulate various associated socio-economic benefits for the local community. Benefits could include job creation through astronomy-related tourism; community skills development; educational programmes; stimulation of local innovation; alternative activities for youth in order to keep away from negative/harmful activities; and infrastructure development. The establishment of such a facility in close collaboration with relevant government, industry, academic and development partners, including local and traditional leadership, will ensure the sustainability of the initiative.

#### [More information](#)

### 2. Science diplomacy through Astronomy: Celebrating our Common Humanity

Astronomy brings us a perspective of the beauty and scale of the universe. Most famously, Carl Sagan used this perspective to try to positively influence how people interact with their fellow human beings, and our planet, through his description of the earth as a “pale blue dot”. This theme aims to take the inspiring potential of astronomy and use it to stimulate a sense of tolerance and common humanity in all parts of the world.

#### [More information](#)

### 3. Knowledge and Skills for Development

This theme focuses on the use of skills such as data handling, data analysis and machine learning, as well as computing technologies/infrastructure widely used in astronomy, to tackle development challenges. This may be executed in the form of educational programmes, hackathons, competitions or other original interventions that focus on skills and technology transfer.

#### [More information](#)

It is not a requirement that your project aligns with one of these themes.

Proposals may also overlap with more than one theme but we request you to choose the primary or most significant theme. For more information and queries on the themes, please contact us at [info@astro4dev.org](mailto:info@astro4dev.org).

## SELECTION

All applications submitted by the deadline will be anonymized by the OAD and sent to the independent [review panel](#) for evaluation.

Selection Criterion	Corresponding questions in the application form (guideline only – information relating to a particular criterion may come from other questions also)	Scoring
Challenge	<p>5. Which countries will your project target?</p> <p>8 a. Describe the developmental challenge you aim to address in this project</p> <p>8 b. To which of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will your project respond ? Choose up to 3 SDGs</p>	<p>Does the proposal aim to solve one or more development challenges in the target location?</p>
Solution	<p>6. Project Summary</p> <p>9. How will you achieve your goals using Astronomy?</p> <p>14 a. Have you or any of your team members submitted this same idea in a past call for proposal? If Yes, briefly describe the idea?</p> <p>14 c. Are you building upon previous work, done either by you or others ? If Yes, please provide more details or a link to the project.</p> <p>15. Will your proposal be a pilot project for one of the below Theme(s)?</p>	<p>Is it an innovative idea or suitably building upon past work?</p> <p>Does it align with one or more Themes?</p> <p>Is there a clear solution and plan that uses astronomy for development?</p>



<p>Outcomes &amp; Deliverables</p>	<p>10 a. What are the intended Deliverables of your project?</p> <p>10 b. What are the intended Outcomes of your project?</p>	<p>Are the deliverables and outcomes clearly defined and suitable?</p>
<p>People</p>	<p>7. Choose the primary target audience for your project</p> <p>11. In which languages will your project be delivered and/or written?</p> <p>12. How will you ensure a diverse audience for your project?</p> <p>13. Comment on the qualifications, experience, and diversity of your team.</p>	<p>Is the project targeting the right audience and using the appropriate languages?</p> <p>Is the project team well qualified?</p> <p>Is diversity of project team and audience taken into consideration?</p>
<p>Finance</p>	<p>14 b. Have you received funding from the IAU (OAD or OAE or OAO or other) for this idea?</p> <p>16 a. b. c. Budget</p>	<p>Does the budget make sense?</p> <p>Have they received funding in the past from IAU?</p>

Reviewer overall score	<p>17. Why should we fund your project?</p> <p>Overall impression</p>	What is your overall impression?
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## TIMELINE

The timeline below will be followed for the 2025 call:

<b>Stage 1</b>	
April 25	Open call for proposals issued
<b>May 31</b>	<b>Deadline for Stage 1 applications</b>
June - July	Proposals scored by reviewers with input from OAD Regional Offices
August first week	Announcement of Stage 1 results. All proposers notified
<b>Stage 2</b>	
August first week	Selected proposals invited for Stage 2
August - September 07	OAD and Regional Offices work with proposers to review/revise proposal, in consultation with external experts where relevant
September 07	Last date for any consultation with the OAD and Regional Offices
<b>September 15</b>	<b>Deadline for Stage 2 applications</b>

September 16 - October 31	Evaluation by reviewers
mid November	Results announced
December	OAD works with winning projects to address concerns of review panel; Grant agreements sent to successful projects
January - February 2026	Project plans co-developed with each project; Funds transferred to projects and project activities begin
July 2026	Mid year reports due
January - February 2027	Final reports due

**Deadline for Stage 1 is end of day May 31, 2025**

As long as it is May 31 somewhere in the world, we will continue to accept applications

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SDGS:**

The following is a list of the 17 SDGs (successors to the Millennium Development Goals) adopted by the United Nations in 2015. **Please look through the SDG indicators that links the goals to concrete outcomes** <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

1. **Poverty**– End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. **Hunger**– End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
3. **Health**– Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages
4. **Education**– Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. **Women**– Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. **Water**– Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. **Energy**– Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. **Employment & Economic Growth**– Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
9. **Infrastructure & Innovation**– Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation
10. **Inequality**– Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. **Urban Safety & Welfare**– Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. **Production & Consumption**– Ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns
13. **Climate Change**– Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

14. **Marine Conservation**– Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. **Environment preservation**– Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss
16. **Peace, security, equality**– Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. **Implementation**– Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

It can be difficult to conceptualise how astronomy, a seemingly esoteric and specialised science, can contribute to the above immediate and real challenges facing society today, but there are many ways in which it can. Some examples are:

- Using astronomy to support a sense of common humanity to contribute to goals 16 (Peace, Security) and 10 (Inequality)
- Leveraging the attraction of astronomy in order to support the economy, such as in astro tourism, to contribute to goal 8 (Employment, Economic growth)
- Projects that build science/technology skills and human capital to further goals 8 (Employment) and 9 (Infrastructure & Innovation), as well as 17 (Implementation)
- Repurposing astronomy compute facilities to run models for disease outbreaks addresses goals 3 (Health and Well being) and 17 (Partnerships for the goals).

The diagram below gives examples of ways in which past projects have tried to influence the SDGs. More in this [blog post](#) and our [webpages](#).



## FAQ:

1. Can I propose a project even though I do not have any astronomy background?

Yes, the call is open to anyone regardless of background. Having said that, you are expected to have team members with the right expertise, whether that is astronomy, development, coding, teaching etc., required to carry out your project.

2. I have conducted numerous outreach activities in my city and country. Can I apply for funding?

The call is specifically aimed at projects with a development focus. Outreach projects can have development objectives (see examples in the [CAP journal](#)). But if it is a purely outreach project with the aim of promoting awareness of astronomy, your activities are more relevant to the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach.

3. Can I apply for funding to purchase a telescope or other infrastructure?

The call does not explicitly exclude any type of project as long as the objectives are focused on development. For example, if you need funds to acquire a telescope or other instrument, your proposal should clearly demonstrate how this instrument will improve development outcomes. The telescope or instrument must simply be a means to the end goal of development. We are more interested in how you will use this telescope to impact on the SDGs. You must also bear in mind that OAD project grants are around 5000 euros on average, so big instrumentation or infrastructure is out of scope.

4. What is the ceiling on the grant amount?

We have not defined a maximum amount that can be requested by a project. The total amount available for the call is 80,000 Euros. Typically, this will be split across 10-12 projects, so the individual grants are small to medium.

5. Does it matter if English is not my first language?

We welcome proposals from people all around the world. But due to practical constraints we only accept applications in English. If that is not your first language or if you do not feel comfortable writing a proposal in English, you can contact us at [info\(at\)astro4dev.org](mailto:info(at)astro4dev.org) to request proposal writing support. Remember that a good idea still needs to be communicated well.

6. I still do not understand what you mean by development. What is the link to astronomy?

We adopt a broad definition of development. Go through our [Getting Started](#) section as well as read up on specific examples of past projects – recent [Case Studies \(2022\)](#), [Projects booklet \(2020\)](#), [Projects booklet \(2018\)](#), [Coffee table book](#), [Yearbook 2016](#), [Yearbook 2017](#), [CAP Journal Mar 2020](#).