

# **DRAFT: Policy guidelines for funding work within EarthCube**

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Membership Comment Period: **April 2 - April 30** (comments on the draft should be made by email to the Leadership Council Chair or the EarthCube Office Director)

Adopted by Leadership Council: (date)

**Instructions on amending:** Changes to this document may be motivated by any EarthCube member, subject to the proposed changes being approved by a Standing Committee or Team, prior to a Leadership Council's vote. The Leadership Council (LC) will consider changes and render new policies at its biannual Spring and Fall meetings (held prior to the All Hands Meeting and during the Fall AGU meeting). A simple majority of an LC quorum is sufficient to approve changes to this document.

## **1. EarthCube intramural funding**

All intramural funding decisions shall be based on and seek to advance EarthCube's goals, and fulfill its mission (working link to statements required). EarthCube's process for making targeted awards and supporting travel and Working Group activities (links to docs required) shall be transparent, equitable and inclusive. With due regard being given to all aspects of inclusivity, including, for example: ensuring representation of minorities, early-career scientists, and participation across all geoscience domains.

Intramural EarthCube funds are intended to support integrative and collaborative efforts that add value to the work of the EarthCube community; by, for example, supporting travel, communication, collaboration, and engagement. As a program funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), EarthCube cannot advance or support individual technical or research agendas. No applications that include either salary or overhead will be considered for intramural funding.

## **2. Fiduciary responsibility**

Fiduciary responsibility potentially is incumbent on any and all of the organizations and individuals who receive intramural EarthCube funding: including, but not limited to, the PI(s) on the EarthCube office cooperative agreement; the Program Office Manager; EarthCube's Leadership Council Chair, the Chairs and co-Chairs of EarthCube's Standing Committees and Teams; and the Chair(s) of Type 2 working groups. Such responsibility entails, but is not limited to, ensuring that EarthCube's intramural funds are disbursed only for the purposes and in accordance with the principles outlined (in Section 1) above, and are fully accounted for.

### **3. Appeals and Complaint handling**

Any EarthCube member may appeal the process of granting any award or appurtenant funding decision to support travel, communication, collaboration, and engagement. Appeals or complaints either should be delivered by email to the Chair of the Leadership Council or Program Office Manager (hereafter EarthCube representative), as appropriate. The email should contain a clear and concise exposition of the grounds for appeal or basis for the complaint. On receipt of an appeal or complaint the EarthCube representative will initiate a dialogue with the complainant. In addressing the appeal or complaint, the EarthCube representative's primary concern will be to reach an equitable solution with all parties concerned, in a timely manner. In the event that the appeal or complaint cannot be resolved through dialogue, the matter will be forwarded to a committee comprising three of the six following individuals: the Chair of the Leadership Council; the Program Office Manager; the Chairs and co-Chairs of EarthCube's Standing Committees. All subsequent deliberations on the appeal or complaint will be public, transparent and concluded in a timely manner. All decisions reached by this committee are final.

### **4. Funding Decisions and Workflows**

Priorities for supporting travel, communication, collaboration, and engagement that advance EarthCube's goals, and fulfill its mission can, in principle, be recognized at any time, by the Leadership Council, a Standing Committee or Team. Strategic priorities normally will be set by the Leadership Council at its biannual Spring and Fall meetings, after consultation with the Standing Committees and Teams and the at-large membership, and giving due consideration to gaps and overlaps that emerge in a Standing Committee, Team or working group activities. The annual All Hands Meeting will be the starting point for much of this discussion. Strategic decisions will include, but are not limited to, establishing new and continuing/curtailing existing Leadership Council, Standing Committee, Team and working group activities based the work that it is perceived will be accomplished during the next financial year (October 1 – September 30); and confirming EarthCube's representation at or participation in professional meetings.

Work priority decisions made by the Standing Committees and Teams should include an open call for participation and, after open discussion, either approved by a simple majority of the members participating on a call or in a poll of Standing Committee or Team members.

Established procedure (link to doc required) should be followed to establish a working group. Once the relevant documentation has been posted on the EarthCube website, a minimum of two weeks should be allowed for Standing Committee and Team members to comment on the impending decision. In the event comments are received or concerns raised, appropriate revisions should be made to the working group's scope of work, operations and activities, or explanation given as to why they could not be accommodated. Standing Committee or Team members should then be given one week's notice of an impending call or poll, which should remain open for one week.

In recommending and rendering a decision, the Standing Committee or Team should consider whether the budget is reasonable, the activities can be completed within the specified time frame, and the outcome will advance EarthCube's goals, and fulfill its mission. The provision of support in excess of the amount a Standing Committee or Team may disperse for Type 2 working group activities (\$10,000), such as might be required to cover the cost of a workshop, also requires Leadership Council approval.

After a working group has been formed its existence will be announced to all EarthCube members, and the opportunity to participate in the work activity provided to all members of the relevant Standing Committee(s) and Team(s) member.

The Leadership Council will form working groups only to expeditiously complete specialized, priority tasks. Their composition will be determined by solely the requirements of the task in hand and their budgetary requirements should not exceed \$10,000.

Once formed, the Working Group coordinates any services or other resources it requires with the EarthCube Office, who will also allocate the working group space on the EarthCube website.

The relevant Standing Committee or Team co-Chair, EarthCube Office and Leadership Council have responsibility for tracking the working group's progress (link to doc required), and may communicate with the funded team lead about any concerns. The EarthCube Office is responsible for active monitoring of working group expenses. A final report shall be delivered to the Leadership Council and/or Committee or Team that approved its formation no less than 30 days after the date the activity was concluded.

## **5. Leadership Council, Standing Committee and Team Budgets**

The Leadership Council, Standing Committees and Teams specifically will be allocated individual budgets that are sufficient to permit them to act independently. In the case of the Leadership Council, these funds will only be used to support Leadership Council members' travel to EarthCube workshops and meetings at which EarthCube is or should be represented. The cost of individual travel should not exceed \$2,500 per trip and the total Leadership Council travel budget shall not exceed \$30,000 *p.a.* In the case of the Standing Committees and Teams, these funds can be used to support targeted awards, Type 2 working group activities, and travel by the co-Chairs to EarthCube workshops and professional meetings at which EarthCube is represented, subject to the targeted award or working group budget not exceeding \$10,000 in any one financial year, and the cost of individual travel not exceeding \$2,500 per trip. The provision of support in excess of these amounts also requires Leadership Council approval. The amounts allocated to each Standing Committee and Team for the next financial year will be determined on the basis of budget explanatory notes submitted to the Leadership Council by the respective Standing Committee and Team co-Chairs, for consideration a the Leadership Council's Spring

meeting. These notes should indicate the purpose for which funding is sought and whether or not the funding is directed towards a new or existing activity. Due regard may be given to unforeseen contingencies in an amount that does not exceed 25% of the total amount requested.

## 6. Targeted Awards

Commensurate with the goals and mission (working link to charters required) Standing Committees and Teams may, with Leadership Council approval, establish targeted awards designed to encourage participation in EarthCube activities by specific membership groups including, but not limited to, early career and distinguished scientists and technologists. The budget dedicated by each Standing Committee or Team to a targeted award should not exceed \$10,000 in any one financial year (one or more Standing Committees and Teams may develop a joint budget that should not exceed \$20,000 in any one financial year). So long as sufficient funds are available in a Standing Committee or Team budget, targeted awards may be initiated at any time during the course of a financial year. If funds are required to continue the lifetime of a Targeted Award, the Standing Committee or Teams budget explanatory notes should describe the metrics used to evaluate the Targeted Award's success and the number of awards made during each year of its existence.

## 7. Individual Travel

Travel (including registration fee) to EarthCube workshops and professional meetings at which EarthCube is represented by organizing a session, town hall meeting or informational activity is provided to Leadership Council members, and Standing Committee or Team co-Chairs who are actively involved in one or more such activity. If they so desire and have no other funding mechanism to support this, Leadership Council members will receive *de facto* support to attend the All Hands Meeting and the Fall AGU meeting (the Leadership Council will normally hold a meeting in conjunction with this meeting), and all EarthCube workshops. All Standing Committee or Team co-Chairs will receive *de facto* support to attend the All Hands Meeting.

Following submission of a Travel Authorization form (link to doc required – when it is developed!) to the EarthCube Office, travel by members of the Leadership Council, and Standing Committee or Team co-Chairs to other meetings should be approved in advance by a majority vote of a quorum of the Leadership Council during one of its regularly scheduled meetings. Travel expenses will be reimbursed by the EarthCube Office providing the appropriate travel reimbursement form is completed and submitted within 30 days of any travel being completed. The following guidelines should be adhered to when planning travel and claiming expenses.

The guidelines outline standards and procedures for reducing travel costs while complying with Federal regulations for the reimbursement of EarthCube-related expenses. The intent is to maintain consistency and ensure fair treatment for all members of the EarthCube community whose travel will be reimbursed or paid for by the organization. That is, they

apply equally to all EarthCube members who receive travel support to attend EarthCube workshops, professional meetings, *etc.*

Travel expenses incurred while on EarthCube business will be paid for by the organization if they are reasonable, properly approved and well-documented. As a result, approved persons who incur such expenses should neither lose nor gain funds. All requests for EarthCube-related travel should be made on the EarthCube Travel Authorization form (link to doc required – when it is developed!).

The EarthCube Office is responsible for tracking travel expenses and travel reimbursement review.

Actual reasonable expenses will be reimbursed subject to any limits set forth in these guidelines.

**a) Air Travel**

Expenses for commercial air travel are reimbursed on the basis of the actual cost incurred by the traveler using normally traveled routes in compliance with the ‘Fly America Act’ <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/103191>, and at the most economical rate (not first or business class). A ‘passenger receipt’ is required for reimbursement, or in the case of E-tickets, the receipt provided at the time of booking. If a checked baggage or seat selection fee applies the receipt should also include details of these items. Except with prior agreement of the EarthCube Office or Leadership Council, change fees are not normally reimbursable.

**b) Rental Cars**

Rental car use should be limited to situations where other means of transportation are not practical, economical or available. Travelers should choose compact or mid-sized cars whenever possible, and refill the gas tank before returning the vehicle. The traveler is responsible for collision and liability insurance. Prior approval is required if the traveler needs to accept the rental car company’s Liability and Physical Damage coverage. Itemized rental car receipts are required for reimbursement.

**c) Bus, Train, Taxi and Limousine Services**

A receipt should be requested to document these expenses. Limousine service to and from airports should only be used when other means of transportation are not practical or available.

**d) Personal Vehicles**

The use of personal vehicles is discouraged, except for regional travel, and to and from a ‘home’ airport. Prior approval is required for all other journeys, and such personal vehicle travel shall be reimbursed in accordance with the GSA guidelines in effect at the time of travel.

**e) Lodging**

In the event that there is no scheduled conference or workshop hotel, travelers are encouraged to book ordinary accommodations at mid-market hotels or motels, and to take advantage of any available discounts. Original itemized hotel receipts are required for reimbursement.

**f) Conference/Workshop Registration**

Original receipts or proof of registration payments are required. Prior approval must be obtained if the traveler wishes to attend optional conference field trips or events that involve costs in excess of the standard registration fee.

**g) Meals and Incidental Expenses**

EarthCube reimburses meal and incidental expenses based on standard GSA per-diem rates in effect at the time of travel and according to the geographic area involved. Incidental expenses include fees and gratuities for persons providing services, such as food servers and hotel housekeeping. Prior approval is required for business meals where additional professional guests are present, and reimbursement will be made on actual cost basis. Meal receipts are required for reimbursement.

**h) Miscellaneous Expenses**

Miscellaneous expenses, such as charges for ground transportation and parking, are reimbursable upon submission of original receipts.

**i) Non-Reimbursable Expenses**

Non-reimbursable expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Personal entertainment expenses (*e.g.*, movies, games, health club or spa)
- Optional conference activities not included in the standard conference fee, for which prior approval has not been sought
- Valet parking, unless a hotel prohibits guests from parking their own vehicles
- Travel accident insurance premiums
- Costs incurred by failure to cancel transportation or hotel reservations
- Traffic and/or parking violation fines
- Rental car accessories (*e.g.*, navigation system, infant car seat)
- Repairs to personal vehicles used for EarthCube-related travel
- Spouse, partner or other family member's expenses
- Laundry service
- Room service

All requests for reimbursements of travel related expenses must be properly documented and submitted to the EarthCube Office within 30 days of the travel being completed. In the event of discrepancies in a reimbursement request (*e.g.*, an absence of original receipts, non-matching receipted and requested amounts, *etc.*) the request for reimbursement will be reviewed by the EarthCube Office Director. If a request for reimbursement is denied in full or in part, an appeal may be made to the Chair of the Leadership Council who will review the business rationale for the exception.

