

## Program Scientist Opportunity in the Planetary Science Division at NASA Headquarters

NASA's Science Mission Directorate has an immediate need for one or more scientists with expertise in planetary science to serve as Program Scientists in the Planetary Science Division at NASA Headquarters in Washington, DC. The Division is responsible for the scientific exploration of our Solar System and for improving our understanding of planets. These opportunities are being made available under a standard detail arrangement if you are a NASA civil servant, or under the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA).

NASA Program Scientists tackle a wide variety of challenges. These include: developing, operating, and maintaining Research & Analysis grants programs; serving as the Headquarters scientific lead for one or more Planetary Science missions; and helping implement and communicate the Planetary Science Division's strategic goals. Program scientists can have substantial influence on strategic planning and can help shape the long-term scientific direction of missions and programs that they oversee.

Under authority granted to NASA in the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004 (Pub. L. 108-201, 118 Stat. 461 (5 U.S.C. 9801 et seq.)), the initial IPA appointment will be for up to two years, with the possibility of reappointment up to a total of six years. The Intergovernmental Personnel Act provides for the temporary assignment of personnel between the Federal Government and state and local governments, colleges and universities, Indian tribal governments, federally funded research and development centers, and other eligible organizations; all applicants must be from an IPA-eligible organization.

This provides a unique opportunity for scientists to gain insight into Planetary Science policy and programs, to better understand the proposal review process, and to run scientific programs with multimillion-dollar budgets.

The time spent at NASA Headquarters allows visiting scientists excellent career growth: some return to their home institutions to continue academic research, while others move on to management and leadership positions in the Federal government, academia, at observatories, or in the non-profit sector. Training and mentoring programs are available, on both a formal and informal basis, which further enables our visiting scientists to advance their careers. NASA also offers its visiting scientists regular travel back to their home institutions.

It is preferable for most Program Scientists in the Planetary Science Division have at least 6 years of post-Ph.D. experience. The ideal candidate will be skilled at working in a collaborative team environment; will be able to adapt to work simultaneously on numerous programs and missions; and will be able to foster productive relationships with staff working on the space missions they oversee, and with the US astrophysics community at large. Disciplinary expertise in one or more areas of planetary science is essential, but the ability to place this knowledge in the broader context of planetary science is equally important for the success of the Division's programs.

### Applicant Eligibility

Not every employee of a non-Federal entity is eligible to participate in the IPA program. The following lists indicate which employees of eligible non-Federal entities are eligible and which are not eligible to participate in the IPA program:

#### Eligible:

- Employees of non-Federal entities provided that they occupy a career position and have been with the entity for at least 90 days.
- If an employee changes from one non-Federal entity to another, he or she does not have to begin a new 90-day period provided that both organizations are eligible to participate in the IPA program.
- Since non-Federal entities do not always use the precise terms that are used in the Federal Government, it is important to examine the actual situation. For example, a university professor may not be called permanent, but may have worked at an institution for many years and is expected to continue working there. In such a case, the individual would be eligible to participate.

#### Not Eligible:

Students employed at institutions of higher education in research, graduate, or teaching assistant positions.  
Elected officials of state and local governments.

#### Conflicts of interest

Duties and responsibilities to be performed for NASA must take into account possible conflicts of interest that may arise as a result of the assignee's continued employment at his or her home institution. Before selection of an assignee, SMD will consider the particular matters on which the assignee would work, the interest of the assignee's home institution in those matters, and how the assignee's participation may affect the home institution's interest. SMD will also consider whether the applicant is involved in any outside activities that may create additional conflicts. These conflicts of interest arise as part of the Program Scientist's role in the proposal review process, flight project lifecycle reviews, and policy implementations that may affect future procurements.

Additionally, assignees will not communicate on NASA's behalf with their home institution, continue to work on matters for their home institution, or represent their home institution or other third party to NASA or any other federal agency. Part-time IPAs may present unique conflict and representational concerns given their continued work with their home institution.

As previously mentioned, these opportunities may also be filled by NASA employees on detail from their Center. Individual research time while serving as a visiting scientist is negotiable. Positions are available from June 2020, though the start date is flexible. Applicants should email a curriculum vitae and cover letter as a single PDF file by April 10, 2020 to [stephen.a.rinehart@nasa.gov](mailto:stephen.a.rinehart@nasa.gov). For more information about the position, please contact Stephen Rinehart at [stephen.a.rinehart@nasa.gov](mailto:stephen.a.rinehart@nasa.gov).