

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

Advisers to the Nation on Science, Engineering, and Medicine

**Polar Research Board
US National Committee for IPY**

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Dear Colleague:

The Polar Research Board of the National Academies met on May 4th and 5th, 2005 in Washington, DC. The original US National Committee for the International Polar Year 2007-8, which was established as a subcommittee of the Polar Research Board (PRB), has completed the early planning stages for the US efforts, and the funding agencies will now take on the implementation. The PRB will now serve as the U.S. National Committee for International Polar Year. Continued planning for IPY was a main agenda item: we were briefed on the outcome of the ICSU-WMO meeting in Paris (March 7-9, 2005), discussed agency plans for IPY, and outlined the next steps in the US involvement in IPY. This letter serves as a progress report and is designed to address some of the concerns expressed by parties interested in participating in IPY.

Expression of Intent Process: The ICSU-WMO Joint Committee (JC) received close to 900 expression-of-intent (EoI's) letters, which they clustered into 50+ topics related to the original six IPY themes (www.IPY.org). By now, all those who submitted EoIs should have received a letter from the IPY Programme Office informing you of your cluster, and if you have not you should contact them directly. A listing of all the topics and the clusters are available in a summary document (see "Assessment Summary" at www.ipy.org). The ICSU-WMO JC wishes to emphasize that these clusters should be considered **flexible** and should serve as an initial framework designed to facilitate the development of collaborative partnerships. Also, they encourage use of this database to identify partnerships to forge additional clusters that adhere to the IPY themes.

Why Participate in the International Planning Process: In the United States, a common question is "why participate in the JC planning process" given that this endorsement is not per se required to obtain funding through US mechanisms. The US National Committee (USNC) strongly encourages US participation in IPY and views this event as an opportunity to foster international collaborative partnerships that will further our understanding of polar systems, engage the next generation of young Earth System scientists and demonstrate the influence that the polar regions have on all citizens of the Earth.

Next Step: Deadline June 30: The next step in the international IPY planning process is to submit full proposals to the ICSU-WMO JC by June 30, 2005. Details regarding this process can be found at www.ipy.org. This site now includes a link to "Guidance notes on preparing submissions for June 30 2005" and a draft template, which ICSU-WMO intends to use for June 30th submissions. Please note that this is only a draft to give participants a clear idea of the format being used and it should not be submitted. The ICSU-WMO IPY Programme Office will advise us when the final form is available.

Although other National Committees are planning to endorse specific projects from their respective nations, the US National Committee (see www.us-ipy.org) will not serve this role and we have communicated this to the Programme Office. They understand that nations will have different needs and approaches. In the US, our community is very large and diverse, and while guidance from the US National Committee is important for setting overall direction, we are not a funding body. The US involvement in IPY will be determined by the US funding agencies. Instead of endorsing particular projects, the USNC is endorsing the process as it stands now, with the IPY Joint Committee providing broad IPY oversight and US agencies working with their international partners to fund specific activities through established procedures. As always, the USNC will do everything we can to communicate and facilitate IPY planning and implementation.

Accordingly, interested parties should submit their proposals to the ICSU-WMO JC by the June 30, 2005 deadline so that you are officially included under the IPY umbrella. It is imperative to keep in mind that endorsement by ICSU-WMO JC is not accompanied by funding and the United States peer-review process will ultimately identify US IPY proposals that will receive funding.

In Closing: IPY 2007-2008 stands to be a once-in-a-career opportunity and planning at the international and US levels is proceeding rapidly. We understand that budgets are tight. But we are convinced that the opportunities are there and that the legacy this effort produces will be significant. The US National Committee strongly encourages all interested parties to pursue all regular funding opportunities to participate in IPY and we challenge you to think "outside the box" about engaging new agencies, foundations, or others in supporting the many diverse elements of this effort. Several funding agencies, including NSF, already have specifically mentioned IPY as a part of the regular call for proposals and other calls are likely. In addition, the scientific community should seek and exploit all emerging funding opportunities.

Developments regarding IPY and potential funding opportunities will be posted on the US IPY website (www.us-ipy.org) as soon as they are made available to the US National Committee.

Sincerely,

The US National Committee for IPY