

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Q: I can only fly in during summer break. How flexible are the flight dates?**

**A:** Due to SOFIA's research schedule, flights will be assigned and there will be little or no flexibility in flight dates. Most teams will fly during the school year. However, as this new program will grow to full operations within the coming years, there will be many more opportunities in the future. Keep in contact with us for more information regarding future opportunities. Every effort will be made to fit your flight schedule into your school year as well as possible, avoiding critical weeks.

**Q: Do both of the team members submit an application?**

**A:** Yes. Part of the application is made individually and part is made jointly. Team member's applications will be compiled for the review process. The selection will be based on all materials from both team members.

**Q: Are private school educators eligible?**

**A:** Yes. Just as for public school educators, a statement of support from your school's officials is required. Also, just as for public school educators, your proposal should include a plan to promote STEM education topics in the broader community beyond your particular school.

**Q: Can a team be comprised of 2 formal educators?**

**A:** Yes. At least one must be teaching science in 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Both team members must be currently active, full-time educators, not working primarily as administrators, nor retired.

**Q: Do team members have to be co-located, teach in the same school?**

**A:** No, team members do not have to be closely located to each other or teach in the same school or even necessarily be located close to each other. However, a primary team selection criterion is the strength of team plans for collaboration in STEM education and public outreach following their SOFIA flights. Team members not co-located should especially address this in their proposal plan.

**Q: What is an informal educator?**

**A:** Informal educators are educators in museums, science centers, and other venues that people choose to visit. Informal educators may also be amateur astronomers who are currently performing extensive public outreach (for example, running a strong program of regular well-attended star parties, or partnering with a classroom or school during the year.)

**Q: What is an outreach implementation plan?**

**A:** The outreach implementation plan describes how the team will present content regarding mission related STEM education topics: the SOFIA Mission, infrared astronomy, how scientific research is conducted, NASA programs, SOFIA's engineering achievements, technical careers, and their flight experience to the community beyond the classroom.

**Q: What type of support will the program provide ambassadors for E/PO?**

**A:** The program will provide available educational and marketing materials for the classroom and/or events: SOFIA Lithos, brochures, bookmarks, stickers, and similar collateral. The program will facilitate ongoing communication with scientists, program staff and the AAA cohort. Ambassadors will also have exclusive access to select educational PowerPoint slide decks, videos, and other documents not available to the public.

**Q: What if I have already taken the MSU graduate astronomy course?**

**A:** We ask that all selected AAAs enroll in the course; the SOFIA EPO program pays all fees. A customized section will be arranged for just the AAAs. The program pays the fee, and AAAs may audit if they have already received credit for the course.

**Q: How much time will the online course require?**

**A:** approximately 8 – 12 hours per week, February 6 – May 11, 2012.

**Q: What if something happens and our team or one member of the team cannot make the trip as scheduled?**

**A:** One of the other teams or an alternate team will be scheduled if possible, or there will be no team flying that particular week. In either case, a make-up flight schedule will not be offered.

**Q: What is an alternate team?**

**A:** An alternate team will participate in the online course, and will be ‘on call’ in case one of the primary selected team cannot make their scheduled trip. Selected alternate team members will enroll in the Astronomy for Teachers online course.

**Q: Will there be space for my family to accompany me on the flight?**

**A:** No. The SOFIA AAA program is exclusively for chosen educator participants.

**Q: Will there be space for my family to accompany me during my trip to the Dryden Aircraft Operations Facility (DAOF) in Palmdale and to attend orientation trainings?**

**A:** No. Funding for travel, travel arrangements, and room/living expenses will cover the educator participants only. Only authorized individuals with “official business” will be allowed onto the NASA center for orientations, trainings, and other meetings. Ambassadors will be busy during their stay in Palmdale with program meetings and tasks, leaving no time for family or other social engagements.

**Q: If our team is selected, how will travel arrangements be handled?**

**A:** The SOFIA E/PO office staff will handle travel arrangements for participants.

**Q: What will the accommodations be like while staying in Palmdale for the flight experience?**

**A:** Accommodations while staying in Palmdale for the flight will be single-occupancy, in national chain motel rooms. The SOFIA E/PO office staff will handle arrangements for accommodations for participants.

**Q: I am a U.S. citizen, but I teach at an international school in abroad. Do I qualify for program participation this summer?**

**A:** Only educators in U.S. schools and informal learning institutions are eligible for participation in the SOFIA AAA Program. Teachers in U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) schools abroad are eligible to apply. Travel arrangements are made from a US airport only, therefore selected DoD teachers must make their own arrangements to travel to and from the U.S.

**Q: If I am AAA that has already flown on a science flight, am I eligible to re-apply, to participate and fly again on SOFIA?**

**A:** Airborne Astronomy Ambassadors may reapply to the program, but are not eligible for selection in consecutive years.