

Dear Administrator/ Supervisor,

Your school or facility could be one of the special few represented in NASA's Stratospheric Observatory For Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) Cycle 1 Airborne Astronomy Ambassador (AAA) Program. SOFIA is a 747SP aircraft carrying a 2.5 meter-diameter telescope dedicated to astronomical research. The telescope, associated equipment, and observing team are in the pressurized main cabin. AAA program participants will fly on overnight missions, at altitudes of up to 45,000 feet, in the main cabin with the instrument and telescope operators, mission director, flight path coordinator, and safety crew.

This is a unique and remarkable opportunity, and will lead to press coverage of your school/facility. The opportunity requires a commitment by the educators as described below. Please take a moment to review the information below, before initialing and signing the support letter for your educator.

*SOFIA AAA aims to-*

- Enhance Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math education in communities across the U.S.
- Support NASA's goal of inspiring the next generation of explorers.
- Contribute to general public understanding of the value of scientific research.
- Foster national and international visibility of the SOFIA program's achievements and discoveries.
- Help the SOFIA scientific staff promote SOFIA to the astronomy research community.

*SOFIA AAA Cycle 1 educator team members each commit to-*

- Flying on overnight observing mission(s) aboard SOFIA during the science flight season, Mid-2012 through Mid-2013.
- Participating in a pre- and post-flight trainings and meetings associated with the flight and scientific research.
- Traveling to SOFIA's base in Palmdale, CA (near Burbank, CA) on a Monday and departing the following Friday afternoon or Saturday. Please note, this means leaving your classroom / work site for a week.
- Regular communication with program staff and scientists prior to arrival at Dryden Aircraft Operation Facility (DAOF), in Palmdale, CA.
- Developing or modifying existing materials and Implementing a SOFIA-based classroom curriculum component / informal education curriculum component and design of their choice.
- Planning and implementation of a SOFIA-based outreach component of their design and choice.
- Participating in the online course Astronomy For Teachers, (administered by Montana State University and the National Teacher Enhancement Network (NTEN)). Course will be held from February 6 – May 11, 2012. This requires approximately 8 – 12 hours per week.
- Active participation in the formative evaluation process.

*SOFIA offers to educator Ambassador teams*

- A unique and special opportunity to be an active and important part of formative program processes.
- Access to NASA scientists and educational information via electronic communications.
- Active Astronomy Kits and Support materials for education and outreach.

*SOFIA AAAs will become-*

- Better informed regarding no the process of conducting frontier scientific research.
- Better informed regarding the breadth and depth of contemporary astrophysics research.
- Better prepared to advise students on careers in science and technology.

- Members of the SOFIA AAA educator network, contributing to continued program development and supporting communications and opportunities via electronic communications and social networking.

*Flight Dates-*

- Mid-2012 through Mid-2013, specific dates TBD. Most teams will be scheduled on science flights during the school year. SOFIA's science flight schedule will not be determined until after the application deadline and subject to change up to the actual flight date.
- Tentatively, a given AAA team will fly twice during their week's stay in Palmdale, CA.

*Support-*

- Travel expenses, housing, and meals for required pre-flight meetings, flight, and required post-flight meetings.
- Online training course registration fee and graduate course credit.
- Substitute teacher costs reimbursed to the school district.
- Letter certifying additional hours of professional development in pre- and post- flight, and flight hours.

*Two- Person Team Eligibility and Composition-*

- One member must be a full-time science teacher (formal educator), grades 6-12.
- The second member may be a grade 6 – 12 formal science, math, or technology educator, elementary educator, or informal (museum, science center, planetarium, etc.) educator.
- Complete application (including essays and support letters) received in electronic form by the deadline (**November 15, 2011**).

*Selection Process-*

- Applications received by **November 15, 2011**, via website. No faxed applications will be accepted. No mailed applications will be accepted.
- Both team members must submit the application and attachments.
- Teams will be selected based on the information in the application and in the essays.
- Selections will be announced by mid-January 2012.

We truly appreciate the support of your applicant!

Sincerely,

Dr. Dana Backman, SOFIA Outreach Manager  
Coral Clark, SOFIA Education Programs Manager  
Pamela Harman, SETI Institute Education and Outreach Manager

*FAQs are available on our website at:*

<http://www.sofia.usra.edu/Edu/programs/ambassadors/faq.html>

*For further information or questions, please contact:*

Pamela Harman (SETI Institute Education and Outreach Manager) via email at [pharman@seti.org](mailto:pharman@seti.org) or (650) 960 -4523.