



National Science Foundation
Office of the Director

October 12, 2022

The Honorable Jenniffer González-Colón
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman González-Colón:

Thank you for your letter of September 9, 2022, inquiring about the NSF's plans for the future management and operations of the Arecibo Observatory (AO) as the end of the current cooperative agreement approaches.

Since the collapse of the 305-meter radio telescope receiver platform at AO, NSF has explored various options to continue the legacy and impact of the important programs that have been developed there, both in the areas of fundamental research in astronomy and atmospheric sciences as well as its outstanding program of education and public outreach. In the first half of 2021, NSF organized a workshop to engage the community in exploring novel ideas for future scientific, educational, and cultural activities at the site. A strong common thread in the discussions was the need to support and strengthen the broader impacts and workforce development elements of any eventual initiative.

After extensive evaluation of the opportunities, and in recognition of the significance of the AO site to the Puerto Rican community, NSF has decided to announce a solicitation for a proposed new educational initiative, an Arecibo center for STEM education and research. NSF will not be renewing the existing cooperative agreement with our current awardee, UCF. However, we are planning to extend the cooperative agreement by six months, through September 30, 2023, in order to provide a full year to work with UCF to ensure a smooth closeout and a successful transition to the next stage.

In order to maximize our flexibility to potentially incorporate additional initiatives at the site, we are also planning to support the site maintenance through a separate contract. NSF will be exploring options to identify an appropriate local contractor or contractors that can provide the site services to support the proposed educational center and possibly other future initiatives at the site that may grow out of conversations between NSF and the Puerto Rican community.

We greatly appreciate your interest in the work of the National Science Foundation. Please feel free to contact Amanda Hallberg Greenwell, Head of the Office of Legislative and Public Affairs, at (703) 292- 8070 if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Panchanathan", with a stylized, cursive script.

Sethuraman Panchanathan
Director

Identical letter to:

The Honorable Darren Soto
The Honorable Michael Waltz
The Honorable Stephanie Murphy
The Honorable Maria Elvira Salazar
The Honorable Brian Babin
The Honorable Steven M. Palazzo