



Call for Expressions of Interest in Participating in the Expansion of LINCC

Background

In 2019, the Executive Board of the LSST Discovery Alliance (then LSST Corporation) unanimously approved a vision for an interconnected suite of programs called the LSST Interdisciplinary Network for Collaboration and Computing (LINCC). That vision included a plan for LSST-DA's staff to work intensively on LINCC with a small set of Alliance member institutions that would grow over time. Now that multiple flagship LINCC programs have been launched, and with Rubin Observatory's first light just around the corner in 2025, it is time for LINCC to expand and evolve.

2024 Call for Expressions of Interest (Eoi)

LSST-DA seeks to identify several additional LSST-DA member institutions or consortia with interest in, and capacity for, hosting promising new LINCC projects or programs. LSST-DA personnel and faculty from the founding nodes will work closely with representatives from these institutions to expand the suite of interconnected LINCC programs in a way that benefits all LSST-DA members. Thus, as a direct result of this Call for Eoi, LSST-DA will designate a small number of member institutions as new *nodes* or *provisional nodes*¹ of LINCC. LSST-DA will work with new nodes and provisional nodes to develop their project ideas, to seek external funding for those projects if needed, and to launch those projects as new flagship programs within LINCC.

Through this same call, the DA also seeks ideas for and input on new programs that members feel would be appropriate and advantageous for the DA to run directly as the hub of LINCC.

Instructions

- **Eligibility.** All LSST-DA members in good standing are invited to submit Eoi, either individually or in pairs. For pairs of institutions submitting Eoi, one institution should be designated the *lead* and the other the *partner*². If an institution would like to join an existing node as a partner, the existing node and the interested partner should submit an Eoi together.

¹ If the program to be delivered by a node requires external funding, that node will be considered provisional until the funding is secured.

² In the one original LINCC Node that consists of a pair of institutions, Carnegie Mellon University is the lead and University of Pittsburgh is the partner.

- **Phase 1:** Letter of Intent (required), emailed to Cheri Winfield (cwinfield@lsst-da.org) and Jenó Sokoloski (jsokoloski@lsst-da.org) by **2024 June 21**. All member institutions or consortia that plan to submit Eol must inform LSST-DA with a one-to-two page letter of intent by **June 21** (5:00pm PDT). Letters of intent should include: 1) a sketch of the project or program the member would like to deliver as part of LINCC; 2) whether the project would be internally funded by the member institution or require external funds; 3) the names of at least three local faculty or senior researchers that would work with DA staff to fund (if necessary) and launch the project or program (*the local team*). The letter should also list the rough 3-5 year cost of the project or program.

At the same deadline, we also welcome one-to-two page letters from member institutions, or teams of researchers from a mix of member institutions, suggesting ideas for major projects or programs they would like to see run by the LINCC hub (e.g., the way the DA runs the Catalyst Fellowship) and why. If submitting a letter suggesting a program to be run through the hub, please indicate whether any of the signatories would like to participate in the leadership or guidance of the suggested program, e.g., as part of a program steering or advisory committee. These letters should be sent to the same email addresses as listed above.

After reviewing the letters of intent, LSST-DA will provide feedback to individual teams to the extent possible. There will be no down-select at this stage.

- **Phase 2:** Detailed Eol, emailed to Cheri Winfield (cwinfield@lsst-da.org) and Jenó Sokoloski (jsokoloski@lsst-da.org), by **2024 Aug 8**.

Page limit: 4 pages, plus 1 page rough 3-5 year budget (bullet list is sufficient; this rough budget is for general informational purposes only and should not go through your institution's sponsored projects office).

Recommended sections for Eol:

- Project:
 - Description of project idea;
 - Motivation or need for the project in the LSST research community (including description of any Science Collaboration involvement or endorsement), and why it is timely or urgent;
 - Why the project should be delivered by a university or national lab (rather than by the hub, as the Catalyst Fellowship, Science Catalyst Grants, etc, are);

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- How the project aligns with LSST-DA's mission and strengths;
 - How the project would both be inclusive and also provide extra benefits to members.
 - Institution and local team:
 - Project team (typically at least three faculty or senior researchers) at the member institution or consortia that commit to participate actively in LINCC-related activities such as proposal writing and monthly Zoom calls;
 - Particular scientific and/or technical expertise of the institution and/or local team;
 - Institution's record of community-mindedness;
 - If seeking external funding, some level of matching contribution from the member institution (such as space, personnel, computing resources, etc);
 - Diversity and inclusiveness that the institution would bring to LINCC.
 - Resources sought:
 - Rough budget for the project and whether costs would be covered by the member institution or sought from an external source. List direct costs only, and include the amount (in units of FTE) of administrative support needed as a distinct line item in the budget.
 - Any evidence that this project would be attractive to potential donors.

Review process

As described above, the LSST-DA expects to conduct a two-stage review process. The full (phase 2) EoI will be reviewed by a panel of experts most likely including: 1) representation from current LINCC nodes and hub; 2) representation from unconflicted member institutions; 3) representation from the LSST Science Collaborations; 4) a fundraising expert or a representative from a private foundation; and 5) an expert in community-based software. LSST-DA will ask the review panel to provide input on a rubric for assessing EoI; to identify EoI that are highly promising and those that are potentially promising; and to compile follow-up questions for some teams. Taking into account the recommendations of the review panel, LSST-DA will select a well-balanced, small set of new nodes and provisional nodes and negotiate MOUs with those institutions or consortia.



Expected timeline

2024 mid-May	Call for Expressions of Interest
2024 June 21 (5:00pm PDT)	Deadline for receipt of Phase 1 Letters of Intent
2024 July	Additional guidance from LSST-DA
2024 August 8 (5:00 PDT)	Deadline for receipt of Phase 2 Expressions of Interest
2024 October	Follow-up conversations with some teams
2024 mid-November	Announcement of new node(s) and provisional node(s)

Long-term plan. LSST-DA aims to carry out a process such as this call again in the future, with the timing depending upon the speed with which new Provisional Nodes' programs get funded and launched and the evolving needs of the LSST research community.

Find this information online. Faculty, staff, and students at Alliance member institutions can find this document and the companion document, "LSST Interdisciplinary Network for Collaboration and Computing (LINCC): A Hub and Nodes Structure," online through the Institutional and Board Members Portal of the LSST-DA website, in the Proposal Opportunities section.