

SOFIA User's Group Perspective

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SOFIA Users Group (SUG) was chartered during 2012, replacing the SOFIA Science Steering Committee

The SUG is chartered by USRA to advise the SMO Director on matters pertaining to SOFIA mission effectiveness.

- Serves as a conduit for the interests, priorities and concerns of the astronomy community that is using, or is interested in using SOFIA.

The SUG is NOT chartered by NASA and does not advise NASA.

- Roughly 80% of the SOFIA mission scope is NASA cost that is outside of the SMO contract

- Many aspects/issues/concerns impacting SOFIA effectiveness are outside the SUG advisory purview

The SUG meets biannually, and held its 10th meeting during Nov 2016

- Committee and Project polled for topics ahead of each meeting

- Agenda then discussed with Project and corresponding presentations developed for the SUG

Each SUG meeting yields a written report to the SMO Director

- All reports are publically available on the SUG website along with presentations by the Project:

- <https://sofia.usra.edu/science/sofia-overview/advisory-groups/sofia-users-group-sug>

The SMO has been generally responsive to SUG advice and provides excellent support for conducting SUG meetings

- Example topics for which change was effected: adequacy of GO funding, NRA rather than AO-based instrument solicitation, thermal stray light control, software staffing, rapid L3 data product delivery, gender diversity

Opportunities to improve the SOFIA advisory structure and function

The SUG is one of 4 standing advisory committees:

- SOFIA NASA Observatory and Program Assessment Council (SNOPAC)
 - Chartered by the NASA SOFIA Program Office
- SOFIA Science Council (SSC)
 - Chartered by the USRA Board of Trustees
- German SOFIA Science Working Group (GSSWG)
 - Chartered by DLR

Opportunities for improved advisory committee awareness:

1. There is no communication between the SUG and the other committees
2. Three of 4 committees do not post any work product to their public websites
 - Cannot tell what they are advising or what issues they are working on
3. Three US advisory committees may be excessive
 - Are the SNOPAC, SUG, and SSC orthogonal?
4. Science instrument Principle Investigators are not exofficio members on any SOFIA advisory committees

SOFIA mission success depends on performance of the USRA and NASA team elements

Current open issues wrt the NASA team (i.e., outside of SUG advisory prevue):

- . Roles & relationship among SOFIA ITA and PM appears to be suboptimal
 - Management of cost and schedule risk should be exclusive purview of PM
 - Appears to be limiting ability to tailor science instrument development for SOFIA suborbital mission context
- . Must incorporate lessons learned from prior 3rd Gen instrument solicitation into upcoming solicitation
 - Not clear that lessons learned have been captured and documented
 - Should incorporate input from both 3rd Gen teams and their organizations (JPL & GSFC)
- . ARC Office of Communications does not appear to be fully engaged in SOFIA
 - Are outreach roles and responsibilities among ARC and USRA clearly defined?
 - An annual report synopsizing NASA-led mission outreach activities may be a practical way to assess above engagement