



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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**NSF 22-084**

## Dear Colleague Letter: Opportunities to Participate in the Construction and Operation of a new Antarctic Research Vessel

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May 9, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

The purpose of this Dear Colleague Letter is to announce the opportunity to participate in a developing project, and to invite statements of interest and capability that will inform future plans for an Antarctic Research Vessel (ARV).

The Southern Ocean and Antarctic continental margin play critical roles in the global distribution of heat, the ocean's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide, and the cycling nutrients that support living marine resources. In addition, ocean-ice interactions and ice sheet loss in the West Antarctic region are key determinants of global sea level rise that will affect coastal communities and economies worldwide. These thematic areas and related questions are critical to U.S. research interests and inform policy decisions both nationally and internationally.

For nearly thirty years, the U.S. Antarctic Program's (USAP) icebreaking research vessel, the *Nathaniel B. Palmer*, has successfully supported critical research in this region; however, it is nearing the end of its service life. The USAP intends to uphold its longstanding commitment to support cutting-edge marine science, provide crucial scientific access to remote and otherwise inaccessible regions around the Antarctic Continent, and maintain U.S. leadership in the region. Accordingly, the NSF Office of Polar Programs (OPP) has funded preliminary design<sup>[1]</sup> of a replacement vessel for possible future funding as a Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction (MREFC) project.

This announcement invites participation in the development and operation of this prospective ARV, through the issue of two Requests for Information, or RFIs. RFIs are used by federal agencies to gather information about the capabilities available in the marketplace - i.e., educational and research institutions, contractors, vendors. The RFIs can be found at the following links:

<https://sam.gov/opp/879507ad46a444329946a46f4e2d1003/view> (for the vessel integrator)

<https://sam.gov/opp/4f0500a831934c83b4ff38765c103bb4/view> (for the vessel operator)

We invite organizations to review the RFIs and express their interest in partnering with us on this effort. Please provide responses to one or both RFIs according to the instructions described therein by June 6, 2022. **Responses to the RFIs will be used to plan the future path for constructing and operating the vessel, and it is important that we hear from all interested parties at this early planning stage.** Please note that this Dear Colleague Letter is a supplement to a previous announcement, and organizations that have already responded need not submit additional information. Responding to the RFI does not obligate your organization in any way.

Responses and any questions regarding this DCL should be submitted to [arv.procurement@nsf.gov](mailto:arv.procurement@nsf.gov), consistent with the above RFIs.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Isern  
Assistant Director, Directorate for Geosciences

Roberta Marinelli  
Director, Office of Polar Programs

## REFERENCES

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[1] <https://future.usap.gov/new-antarctic-vessel-approved/>