Background Information for Individuals Writing NSTGRO20 Letters of Recommendation

This guidelines document is provided to assist Letters of Recommendation writers. The text is extracted from the NSTGRO20 solicitation and reproduced here for your convenience.


NOTE: For individuals who have provided Letters via email on behalf of NSTRF proposers in the past, please note that the student must now include the Letters as part of the proposal. This means that you will need to provide the LOR directly to the student and well enough in advance of the proposal deadline to allow time for inclusion in the proposal. NASA will not accept LORs via email.

The Letters of Recommendation constitute a critical component of the proposal. They should come from individuals (professors, undergraduate/graduate advisors, mentors, internship or work supervisors, etc.) with detailed knowledge of the student’s academic and research abilities. Letters from family members are not permitted.

Each student must arrange for the inclusion of three current Letters of Recommendation. Failure to submit three Letters of Recommendation may negatively affect the evaluation of the proposal (see Section 6 - Proposal Review Information of the solicitation). Proposals with fewer than two Letters of Recommendation will be deemed non-compliant and not be sent on for review.

If the student has an advisor for their current graduate program, one of the Letters of Recommendation is expected to come from that individual.

Instructions for Writing NSTGRO20 Letters of Recommendation

Note: A Letter of Recommendation from a NASA civil servant or Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) employee is not required or expected for a successful proposal. There may be instances where a Letter of Recommendation from a NASA civil servant, JPL employee, or on- or near-site NASA contractor is appropriate (i.e., the student completed an internship at a NASA Center); however, no more than one letter from a NASA civil servant, JPL employee, or on- or near-site NASA contractor will be permitted as part of the proposal package sent on for review. In addition, Letters of Recommendation from NASA civil servants or JPL employees may not serve as requests to serve in the research collaborator role, should the proposal be selected.

a. Letters of Recommendation are NOT intended to endorse the proposed space technology research. The Letter should be about the qualifications of the student.

b. The Letter should include details explaining the nature of the Writer’s relationship to the student.
c. The Letter should provide insight into the student’s:
   • scientific acumen and creativity
   • motivation for space technology-related study
   • demonstrated or potential for academic excellence in coursework
   • potential for success, including in a research environment
   • leadership potential, including ability to collaborate
   • communication skills, including ability to disseminate research results and information

d. The Letter must be written on official letterhead, when permitted.
e. The Letter may not exceed two pages in length.
f. The Letter itself must include the student’s full name (as opposed to nicknames or shortened names).
g. Letters of Recommendation that appear to be mass produced do not generally lead to high scores from the reviewers.