



NASA SBIR 2011 Phase I Solicitation

S2.03 Precision Deployable Optical Structures and Metrology

Lead Center: JPL

Participating Center(s): GSFC, LaRC

Planned future NASA Missions in astrophysics, such as: Wide-Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST) and the New Worlds Technology Development Program (coronagraph, external occulter and interferometer technologies) will push the state of the art in current optomechanical technologies. Mission concepts for New Worlds science would require 10 - 30 m class, cost-effective telescope observatories that are diffraction limited at wavelengths from the visible to the far IR, and operate at temperatures from 4 - 300 K. In addition, ground based telescopes such as the Cerro Chajnantor Atacama Telescope (CCAT) require similar technology development.

The desired areal density is 1 - 10 kg/m² with a packaging efficiency of 3-10 deployed/stowed diameter. Static and dynamic wavefront error tolerances to thermal and dynamic perturbations may be achieved through passive means (e.g., via a high stiffness system, passive thermal control, jitter isolation or damping) or through active opto-mechanical control. Large deployable multi-layer structures in support of sunshades for passive thermal control and 20m to 50m class planet finding external occulters are also relevant technologies. Potential architecture implementations must package into an existing launch volume, deploy and be self-aligning to the micron level. The target space environment is expected to be the Earth-Sun L2.

This subtopic solicits proposals to develop enabling, cost effective component and subsystem technology for deploying large aperture telescopes with low cost. Research areas of interest include:

- Precision deployable structures and metrology for optical telescopes (e.g., innovative active or passive deployable primary or secondary support structures).
- Architectures, packaging and deployment designs for large sunshields and external occulters.

In particular, important subsystem considerations may include:

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- Innovative concepts for packaging fully integrated subsystems (e.g., power distribution, sensing, and control components).
 - Mechanical, inflatable, or other precision deployable technologies.
 - Thermally-stable materials (CTE)
 - Innovative systems, which minimize complexity, mass, power and cost.
 - Innovative testing and verification methodologies.

The goal for this effort is to mature technologies that can be used to fabricate 16 m class or greater, lightweight, ambient or cryogenic flight-qualified observatory systems. Proposals to fabricate demonstration components and subsystems with direct scalability to flight systems through validated models will be given preference. The target launch volume and expected disturbances, along with the estimate of system performance, should be included in the discussion. Proposals with system solutions for large sunshields and external occulter will also be accepted. A successful proposal shows a path toward a Phase II delivery of demonstration hardware scalable to 5 meter diameter for ground test characterization.

Proposals should show an understanding of one or more relevant science needs, and present a feasible plan to fully develop the relevant subsystem technologies and to transition into future NASA program(s).