NIST-SIM Engagement Opportunity
Guidance for NIST Staff

Activity and Application Guidance
In support of NIST's strategic alliances with the institutions participating in the Inter-American System of Metrology (SIM), and our commitment to strengthening the measurement infrastructure in the Americas, we are happy to announce the time frame for our 3rd competition cycle supporting NIST-SIM collaboration. This program is aimed at supporting SIM and is limited to staff of SIM member National Metrology Institutes (NMIs) and Designated Institutes (DIs).

Based on experience from past competitions, IAAO will be accepting proposals from both our SIM counterparts and NIST staff during this competition cycle. All applications will require management approval (both from NIST and the SIM member institution), and details on the objectives and benefits of each activity. Page 2 of this document is the application. PLEASE NOTE: NIST Counterparts in the SIM community have also received guidance regarding application preparation and submission procedures and may contact NIST staff directly regarding potential activities.

IAAO highly encourages potential applicants to begin planning as soon as possible. Please feel free to contact IAAO with any questions you might have regarding administrative processing or other related considerations.

Successful SIM applicants for NIST Foreign Guest Researcher (FGRs) appointments will receive a $3500 monthly stipend for appointments up to 12 months, with priority given to smaller developing laboratories. Travel costs are expected to be covered by the SIM NMIs or hosting NIST division. FGRs must meet language proficiency requirements (see page 3 for guidance).

For potential FY2015 activities, please contact IAAO as soon as possible. For FY2016 activities, we request that each OU submit a prioritize list of applications to IAAO no later than 1 October 2015. Should you have any questions, please contact Andrew Conn (Andrew.conn@nist.gov).

Application and Administrative Review Timeline

The table below includes both deadlines for applicants and other important dates that should be kept in mind when preparing associated activity arrangements. Applicants should note that – depending on the nature of the activity being supported – administrative processes and approval times will vary.

Application Processing	Important dates & Deadlines (see explanation below)[1]
IAAO Begins Application Collection	16 July 2015
Application Deadline (all applications)	1 October 2015
Administrative Review	2 October 2015 to 30 October 2015
Applicant(s) Notified of Final Decision	6 November 2015

*ALL ACTIVITES MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF FY 2016

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[1] All applications must be received by 1 October 2015. If selected, the applicant will be   required to fill out additional paperwork and respond to other information requests regarding the activity. While IAAO is happy to assist your division with communicating and coordinating with the applicant, it will be the responsibility of your division to initiate the NAIS agreement (if applicable to activity). If the project is a non-Guest Researcher project, or includes calibrations for example, other requirements may apply; these will be handled on a case by case basis.

Application

Please do not exceed one page. Applications will be evaluated based on need and potential impact, both from the perspective of NIST and the associated SIM NMI.

NIST Applicant(s) & Host(s)	
NIST OU & Division	
NIST Email	
Associated SIM NMI	
SIM Project Partner Name(s)	
Partner Email	
Project Description *Briefly describe the project, highlighting key objectives (please indicate if calibration of an artifact will take place)*	
Tentative Dates Expected start and end dates	

Benefit to NIST

Benefit to Participating Metrology Institute

Benefit to SIM

Guidance on Language Proficiency Verification

Effective January 5, 2015, the U.S. Department of State is requiring all prospective/new exchange visitors coming to the U.S. in J-1 visa status demonstrate sufficient English proficiency. Therefore, before the International and Academic Affairs Office (IAAO) may issue the DS-2019 *(Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor J-1 Status)*, documentation must be provided by the NIST host of the potential FGR's English language proficiency.

The Department of State released the following guidance to illustrate the level of proficiency that will be required of all new J-1 scholars:

"The Department believes that not only is an exchange visitor's success in his or her particular program dependent upon sufficient English language capability, but good English communication skills are essential to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of exchange visitors. Moreover, the Department continues to find that too many exchange visitors lack sufficient English proficiency to perform their jobs or complete their exchange programs; to navigate daily life in the United States; to read and comprehend program materials; to understand fully their responsibilities, rights, and protections; and to know how to obtain assistance, if necessary. Accordingly the Department adopts a modified version of the regulatory language governing the Trainee and Intern categories as the program-wide standard for determining the English language proficiency of exchange visitors. The Department reminds sponsors to retain evidence of how they measured applicants' English language proficiency so that it may be made available to the Department upon request."

The methods established by the Department of State for determining English language proficiency are as follows:

1. Through a recognized English language test;
2. Through signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school; or
3. Through an interview "conducted by the NIST sponsor" in-person, by videoconference, by web camera.

Any one of these methods will suffice to determine English proficiency. It is **recommended** that the English proficiency verification be completed **prior to extending the invitation to participate in NIST's Exchange Program.**

1. **English Language Proficiency Test:** IAAO will accept results of the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as they are the most widely utilized tests in higher education and are available throughout the world (English Language Test results such as the TOEIC are also acceptable as determined by the NIST Host) :
   - IELTS overall score of 5.5 or higher
   - TOEFL (internet based) overall score of 65 or higher, or computer based score of 183 or higher, or paper based score of 513 or higher.

2. **Signed Documentation from an Academic Institution or English Language School:** IAAO will accept a transcript with enrollment and grades from a post-secondary academic institution where English is the primary language of instruction.

3. **Documented Interview Conducted by the NIST Sponsor:** IAAO will accept documentation of a video interview conducted by the NIST sponsor. If a video interview is not possible, a telephone interview will suffice.

The NIST sponsor must complete and sign the English Proficiency Verification Form and forward it to IAAO either as an attachment to the NAIS Process, as an email attachment or in hard copy (Building 101/Room A207, Mailstop 1090). The interviewer need not be an expert in English language testing.

Note: NIST is required to retain the English Proficiency Verification Forms confirming the method used to determine English proficiency, and including any applicable proof. Verification documents must be received before a DS-2019 may be issued. **Failure to do so may result in NIST losing Department of State certification to host J-1 exchange visitors**.