

2019 NCRAL MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT MINI GRANT

TWIN CITY AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS (\$250)

Pursuant to the requirements for transparency in all NCRAL approved mini grants, the Twin City Amateur Astronomers (recipients of \$250 at NCRAL 2019) provided the following information about their grant:

Please describe the proposed recruitment and retention activities.

In 2015, TCAA member (and now NCRAL Chair) Carl Wenning wrote a 56-page guide titled *Introduction to Amateur Astronomy* (TCAA Guide #1). This guide explains what one needs to know to become a practicing amateur astronomer; it should not be confused with an astronomy textbook. The TCAA has used this guide three times as the basis of a course introducing members of the general public to the hobby of amateur astronomy – how to use eyes, binoculars, and telescopes to view celestial objects. The course and its resources (we train everyone using a CPC 11" GOTO telescope under a motorized 10' dome; those who become club members receive an observatory key) are valuable adjuncts to gaining and keeping new members. We will use this mini grant to print as many copies of TCAA Guide #1 as possible thereby decreasing the cost of enrolling in the course and increasing the likelihood that more non-members will take the course and become active members of the TCAA. We will use a series of 8 public observing sessions this summer (typically attended by 50 to 100 enthusiasts) to recruit participants for an autumn course. The course will be taught the Illinois State University Planetarium with follow-up observing and telescope training at Sugar Grove Nature Center, a dark-sky location where we maintain two observatories.

Please explain the extent to which these activities would be replicable by other NCRAL affiliates.

This proposed process for recruiting and retaining new astronomy club members can be easily replicated by other NCRAL affiliates. TCAA Guide #1 publication is available on the TCAA website (and has been both described and offered through the NCRAL's *Northern Lights* newsletter). Affiliates would merely need to download the document and get the publication printed and bound, and then offer a course in introductory amateur astronomy which most affiliates should be readily able to do. TCAA Guide #1 is available through the following web address: http://tcaa.us/Download/Intro_to_Amateur_Astronomy.pdf



Describe benchmark and baseline data that you will use to determine if the proposed activities are successful.

In the past, we have had about 8-10 people attend each of our three *Introduction to Amateur Astronomy* courses. Typically, we get 2-3 members of the course to become active club members of the TCAA and regular observers. Our goal would be to at least double the number of people attending an autumn 2019 course (and future courses) and at least double the number of participants who become active TCAA members as a result of that course.

Please explain in detail how you expect the mini-grant's funds to be spent given restriction to contractual and commodity expenses.

We will be using 100% of the funds allocated for contractual printing services. We will use Kinko's to print, provide covers for, and bind the TCAA Guide #1 publication. We will purchase as many guides as possible given the allocation. Guides typically cost about \$8-\$10 each, so we should be able to print anywhere from 25 to 30 copies, the number we will need for a larger autumn 2019 *Introduction to Amateur Astronomy* course.

Feel free to address any of the other factors that you feel should be taken into account by proposal reviews that relate to the merit of the proposal (feasibility of activities, likelihood of success, and potential impact on the Region).

Participants will be asked to pay a substantially lower registration fee for this course as compared to the past. The former fee was \$25/household; the new fee will be \$15/household due to the cost savings on printing. Only one printed copy of the guide will be made available to each household.

N.B. The activities of this mini grant are fully documented in the Autumn 2019 and Winter 2020 issues of *Northern Lights*.