

**Opportunity Title:** Solar System Exploration: Grain Catalysis in the Protosolar Nebula

**Opportunity Reference Code:** 0157-NPP-MAR24-GSFC-Astrophys

**Organization** National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

**Reference Code** 0157-NPP-MAR24-GSFC-Astrophys

**Application Deadline** 3/1/2024 6:00:59 PM Eastern Time Zone

**Description** The origin of life on Earth (and possibly elsewhere) was either influenced by or a product of organic compounds from space. These vital compounds were delivered by comets, meteorites, and IDPs to the early Earth. Such material is delivered today. To understand the results of analyses of organics in natural samples and help us interpret their significance, we perform laboratory experiments to simulate processes, which we suspect contribute to the formation of these organics. In the laboratory, we simulate gas-grain Fischer-Tropsch and Haber-Bosch type reactions catalyzed by synthetic mineral grains and ground minerals, which are similar to those in the proto-Solar nebula. These produce a variety of organic compounds, including amines, nitriles, alkanes, alkynes, amino acids, lipid-like species, alcohols, amines, and amides. These reactions deposit significant amounts of carbonaceous matter onto the grain surfaces and these coatings have been shown to trap noble gases. We believe that such coated grains were incorporated into forming solar system planetesimals, were modified by internal heating and hydration processes and then accreted to the ancient Earth. Thus, we are striving to realistically simulate exogenous processes and characterize the organic material of pre-biotic interest produced therein, including the ratios of trapped noble gases and compare this data to authentic extraterrestrial samples to constrain their formation conditions and their potential impact on the origin of life.

**Location:**

Goddard Space Flight Center  
Greenbelt, Maryland

**Field of Science:** Astrophysics

**Advisors:**

Joseph Andrew Nuth  
joseph.a.nuth@nasa.gov  
301-286-9467

Natasha Johnson  
Natasha.M.Johnson@nasa.gov  
301-286-3919

**Applications with citizens from Designated Countries will not be accepted at this time, unless they are Legal Permanent Residents of the United States.** A complete list of Designated Countries can be found at: <https://www.nasa.gov/oii/export-control>.

Eligibility is currently open to:



Whether you are just starting your career or already at a senior level, ORAU offers internships, fellowships, research opportunities, and contract positions that can provide you with invaluable experience. Download the ORAU Pathfinder mobile app and find the right opportunity to propel you along your career path!

Visit ORAU Pathfinder [↗](#)



**Opportunity Title:** Solar System Exploration: Grain Catalysis in the Protosolar  
Nebula

**Opportunity Reference Code:** 0157-NPP-MAR24-GSFC-Astrophys

- U.S. Citizens;
- U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR);
- Foreign Nationals eligible for an Exchange Visitor J-1 visa status; and,
- Applicants for LPR, asylees, or refugees in the U.S. at the time of application with 1) a valid EAD card and 2) I-485 or I-589 forms in pending status

**Eligibility Requirements**

- **Degree:** Doctoral Degree.