

Sponsor/Title: Department of State (DOS) - Lunar Payload Design Challenge

External Link: <https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/362623>

Funding Opportunity Number: PDS-UAE-02-FY2026

Submission Limitation per Institution: One (1)

[Notre Dame Limited Submissions Listing](#)

Internal Expression of Interest Deadline: 2026-06-16

Sponsor Application Deadline: 2026-07-15

Purpose: The U.S. Department of State's U.S. Mission to the UAE announces an open competition to implement the Lunar Payload Design Challenge, a program that brings together U.S. and UAE graduate students in a hands-on, team-based initiative to develop technologies relevant to future lunar missions. The program builds advanced technical and collaborative skills while fostering partnerships between universities, industry, and research institutions. The initiative strengthens U.S.-UAE cooperation in space innovation, highlights U.S. leadership in lunar exploration, and creates pathways for continued collaboration, research advancement, and potential mission integration. This program directly advances U.S. foreign policy priorities under the "Make America More Prosperous" pillar by expanding partnerships in high-growth sectors of the space economy and reinforcing the strength, competitiveness, and collaborative nature of the U.S. innovation ecosystem, and advances Goal 2 of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs: Securing opportunities to advance U.S. commercial and strategic interests.

Project Goal: Strengthen U.S.-UAE collaboration in lunar exploration and space innovation by supporting joint development of payload and technology concepts through applied, team-based learning experiences involving institutions with existing space-related capabilities.

Project Objectives:

- Objective 1: Facilitate a collaborative Lunar Payload Design Challenge engaging at least 30 graduate students (15 Emirati and 15 U.S.) from qualified institutions in team-based development of payload or mission-support concepts aligned with lunar exploration priorities, resulting in at least 90 percent of participants demonstrating improved technical and collaborative skills through post-program assessments.
- Objective 2: Increase participants' understanding of U.S. leadership in space technology, particularly in lunar exploration initiatives, and enhance awareness of opportunities for collaboration with U.S. institutions, agencies, and industry partners.
- Objective 3: Support the development of at least 1-3 viable payload or technology concepts with potential applicability to future lunar missions, including those aligned with NASA or partner mission architectures, and facilitate continued collaboration among participating institutions, with at least 50 percent of teams maintaining engagement or advancing their concepts within six months of program completion.

Internal Application Requirements: Upload the following information to the Google Form at <https://forms.gle/2zoxahpRHDXpoGwE7> by the internal deadline:

- Name of the Principal Investigator (PI)
- Project Title
- All ND Collaborators:
 - For each ND Collaborator listed, include name, department or unit, and specific role for this project in three sentences (maximum).

- Project Summary: Three (3) pages (maximum) addressing the following Review Criteria as outlined on pages 15-16 in the NOFO.
 - Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea
 - Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives
 - Sustainability

Questions: Contact Notre Dame Research Limited Submissions at limited@nd.edu.

Unless otherwise noted, all internal applications are due by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on the internal expression of interest deadline.

Internal applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.