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## **AN ALUMNI GUIDE TO THE IAF ESL GRANT WITH NASA TECHNICAL MENTORSHIP**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The International Astronautical Federation (IAF) Emerging Space Leader (ESL) Grant Programme provides early-career space professionals with opportunities to develop leadership skills, engage in interdisciplinary projects, and access international networks. Despite these opportunities, applicants often face uncertainty regarding how to effectively meet eligibility and selection criteria. This paper presents an alumni-informed guide, drawing on first-generation participation with NASA technical mentorship, aimed at supporting future ESL applicants.

The paper outlines practical strategies for maximizing success in the program, including producing an effective one-minute video to introduce oneself and one's work, crafting essays and motivation statements that demonstrate leadership potential, obtaining strong recommendations from relevant professors, and writing impactful abstracts that contribute to high rankings during the multi-month candidate evaluation process. Emphasis is placed on aligning these application components with program expectations while highlighting individual strengths, interdisciplinary engagement, and initiative.

Findings highlight that success in the ESL program stems not only from technical and scientific competence but from a synergistic combination of experience, mentorship, and strategic application preparation. The mentorship experience, in particular, guides further project execution, professional growth, and navigating complex interdisciplinary challenges.

By offering a structured framework and actionable advice for future applicants, this work contributes to space education and outreach, bridging

the gap between formal eligibility requirements and practical strategies for their achievement. This guide serves as a roadmap for the next generation of Emerging Space Leaders, helping them effectively present themselves, their work, affiliated institution, and potential to the IAF ESL evaluation committee.

*Keywords: Emerging Space Leader, IAF Grant, NASA Mentorship, Space Education and Outreach*