



Request for Proposals (RFP)

Common Space – Humanitarian Earth Observation Mission Design (Phase 1)

Issued by: Common Space

Project: Common Space Humanitarian Satellite Mission – Preparation Phase

Website: www.commonspace.world

1. Background

Common Space is a nonprofit (501(c)(3) pending) organization building the first humanitarian satellite to radically democratize access to high-resolution imagery, making high-resolution Earth observation data freely available to crisis-affected communities, civil society organizations, and public-interest institutions.

Despite rapid growth in commercial and government satellite constellations, humanitarian stakeholders, from first responders to researchers to local communities to journalists and human rights advocates, often lack timely, usable, and shareable imagery due to cost, licensing restrictions, tasking priorities, and operational friction.

In 2025, Common Space completed a global needs assessment with 195 organizations spanning humanitarian action, human rights, research, climate justice, and global development. The assessment documents clear, consistent priorities around resolution, latency, revisit, coverage, usability, open licensing, and equitable access. We encourage all respondents to read the needs assessment to understand the scope of our mission: [Needs Assessment](#) can be accessed here.

This RFP represents mission design and preparation intended to translate those user needs into a technically credible mission architecture. This work is expected to inform and lead into subsequent phases: licensing, system build, launch, operations, and scaling subject to future procurement decisions. In addition to paid services, Common Space welcomes proposals that include in-kind contributions or philanthropic support, such as donated engineering time, access to tools or facilities, data, or other resources that could help advance the mission. Any in-kind or donated support should be clearly identified and scoped separately from paid work.



A preliminary list of the Common Space Mission phases are shared below:

Phase 0 - [Needs Assessment](#)

Phase 1 - Mission Formulation and System Design

Phase 2 - NOAA license application

Phase 3 - Build, Integration, Test

Phase 4 - Launch, Commissioning, and early operations

Phase 5 - Sustainable operations and open data delivery

Phase 6 - Scale and Stewardship

2. Purpose of This RFP

This RFP seeks qualified organizations to support Phase 1 of the Common Space mission, including formulation and delivery planning for the Common Space humanitarian EO system.

The goals of this phase are to produce:

- A defensible mission architecture grounded in the Common Space Needs Assessment
- A clear delivery and partnership framework aligned to future system build and operations
- Credible cost, schedule, and risk estimates suitable for fundraising and procurement
- Outputs that support future NOAA commercial remote sensing licensing
- A foundation for a longer-term, mission-aligned partnership

This RFP is for a paid design and planning effort. Selection under this RFP does not guarantee follow-on build or operations work, but is explicitly intended to inform and shape future procurement and partnership decisions.

3. Scope of Work

The selected partner will support Common Space across the following areas:

A. Mission Formulation & Architecture

- Translate the Common Space Needs Assessment into system-level technical and operational requirements. Vendor will be responsible for image quality metrics.
- Develop 1–3 credible mission architecture options, including key tradeoffs (e.g., single satellite vs. constellation, resolution vs. coverage, SSO vs. MIO)



- Define performance assumptions (resolution, revisit, latency, coverage, spectral capabilities) into a detailed specification suitable to fundraising, and review.
- Provide sufficient technical detail to support future NOAA commercial remote sensing licensing
The intent is to support future NOAA licensing, not to submit a complete application during this phase.

The Needs Assessment provides directional guidance rather than fixed metrics. Common Space intentionally seeks flexibility to allow vendors to propose architectures aligned with their strengths while remaining cost-conscious and mission-aligned.

B. Constraints & Tradespaces

Respondents should explicitly distinguish between:

Minimum Requirements (Non-Negotiable):

- Humanitarian-first mission purpose
- Open data licensing
- Common Space ownership of collected data

Negotiable Tradespaces (Examples):

- Resolution vs. cost
- Latency vs. operational cost
- Revisit vs. cost
- Single satellite vs. phased constellation
- Orbit selection and spectral configuration

Proposals should clearly identify which elements are fixed requirements and which are adjustable trade spaces, including implications for cost, performance, and mission risk. (Ex: optical crosslink for comms might add quantifiable risk and cost, but adds significant support to the mission, supported by the needs assessment.)

C. Translating End-User Needs to Requirements

Mission & Business Model Alignment

- Refine technical, operational, and governance requirements based on user priorities
- Address tasking workflows, data delivery, usability, and access constraints
- Explicitly account for open licensing, equitable access, and independence of mission



Alignment requirement:

Vendor operational or business models must not interfere with Common Space's core mission goal of maximizing open data availability to populations affected by climate and conflict.

Proposals should describe how contractual, operational, and incentive structures avoid creating disincentives to data release (e.g., incentives to limit collections, restrict access, or delay dissemination).

D. Mission Delivery Roadmap

- Outline a phased delivery plan (design, build, launch, operations, end-of-life)
- Identify vendor, subcontractor, and partner roles across the full mission lifecycle
 - Explain what you're responsible for, and what subcontractors are responsible for, across bus, payload, operations, launch, etc...
- Provide high-level CAPEX/OPEX ranges and schedule estimates
 - Estimates (with margins) on Total Cost of Mission (Bus, payload, comms, launch, operations, testing, etc...), with breakdowns and timelines. This will be important for follow-on fundraising.
- Address mission continuity and sustainability considerations
- Describe relevant historical delivery record on satellite missions, with priority given to experience delivering optical EO systems
- Testing plan to ensure mission success
- Plan for Commissioning, Calibration, and on-orbit performance validation.
 - Contingency and failure plan for performance misses.

E. Partnership Approach

Common Space seeks a long-term, mission-aligned partner. While successful execution of the mission formulation phase (phase 1) does not guarantee follow-on work, we will show preference based on phase 1 support and success. Common Space anticipates proposals from satellite manufacturers, current satellite operators, system integrators, mission design firms, or consortia with demonstrated experience delivering optical Earth observation systems from formulation through on-orbit operations. Proposals should describe:

- Preferred partnership and engagement model
 - Details on contract and deliverables
- Experience working with nonprofits or public-interest infrastructure
- How performance, accountability, and incentives would align across the mission lifecycle
- Potential role in future phases (build, operations, partnerships, scaling, fundraising support, in-kind donations or discounts due to the non-profit status and humanitarian focus mission)
- Shared Communications planning.



4. Expected Deliverables

At a minimum, the selected partner will deliver:

- Mission Architecture Options Brief
1–3 architecture options with performance, cost, schedule, and tradeoffs
- Preferred Mission Architecture for Common Space Phase 1
- Preliminary Cost & Schedule Model
High-level budget ranges and indicative timelines for initial mission and scale-up, with margins.
- Strategic Mission Roadmap
Executive-ready roadmap outlining phases, decisions, and partnership structure moving into phase 2 & 3 (NOAA Licensing and Build, Integration, and Test Phase)

All assumptions, models, and analyses should be delivered in transparent, reusable formats and will be reviewed by Common Space and independent advisors. We expect these deliverables to be used for fundraising, marketing, and available on our website and to our community. If there are any portions of the mission that you wish to keep proprietary, please indicate this within the deliverables.

Intellectual Property

All work products created under this Phase 1 contract, including mission architecture, cost models, analyses, and documentation, shall be owned by Common Space, with vendors retaining rights to their pre-existing proprietary tools, software, or methods. Vendors grant Common Space a perpetual, royalty-free license to use deliverables for fundraising, public communication, and future procurement.

5. Proposal Format

Proposals should include:

- Organization profile and relevant experience, with emphasis on other humanitarian, non profit, or public benefit missions.
- Methodology and phased work plan
- Team composition and key personnel
- Budget and timeline
 - Vendors may propose pricing structures of their choosing, including fixed-price, milestone-based, or time-and-materials, and may include discounted nonprofit pricing or in-kind contributions. All pricing assumptions must be clearly stated.



Preference on milestone based pricing structures which would align with fundraising efforts.

- Vendors may propose their own pricing for this RFP, with justification
- At least two relevant references
- “Secret sauce”: what differentiates your approach from the competition, and how will that enable Common Space to be successful.
- Vendors must disclose any financial, contractual, or ownership relationships that may create conflicts of interest with Common Space’s mission or open-data commitments.

Appendices are optional. Common Space will retain rights to all mission architecture outputs and analyses, with vendors retaining pre-existing IP.

6. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on:

- Alignment with the Common Space Needs Assessment and mission
- Technical expertise and relevance of past work
- Clarity, feasibility, and realism of the approach
- Demonstrated mission and business model alignment, including partnership plan
- Transparency and value for money
- Ability to communicate with technical and non-technical stakeholders
- Support for fundraising efforts
- Risk mitigation plans throughout the mission

7. Process & Timeline

- Questions and conversations are welcome throughout the RFP period
 - We will issue public responses to questions throughout the proposal period, on or around March 2, 2026.
- One partner will be selected for this Phase 1 effort
- Contingent on Common Space Fundraising, in alignment with proposed contract size.
- Proposals reviewed by Common Space and independent advisors. Independent advisors will be shared with vendors before the evaluation and down selection process.



Dates	Phase	Description
February 16	RFP Released	RFP distributed to invited vendors; process officially opens.
February 16 – March 18 (30 days)	RFP window - Open Q&A for the entire window	We want to be open and available to anyone responding to this RFP throughout the RFP window. Hit us up with any questions or clarifications
March 2	Clarifications Issued	Common Space distributes consolidated clarifications and reminder email.
March 18	Proposals Due	Final proposals submitted by vendors.
March 18 – April 3	Evaluation & Down-Selection	Technical, operational, and mission-fit review; shortlist 1–3 vendors.
April 3 – April 30	Deep Dives & Negotiations	Technical deep dives, cost reviews, factory/operations reviews (if applicable), and independent technical review of finalist proposals.
April 30	Preferred Vendor Selected	Selection of preferred vendors for contracting.
May 1 – May 29	Contracting & Final Negotiation	Finalize scope, milestones, pricing, legal terms, and performance metrics.
Late May (Target)	Contract Execution & Formulation Kickoff	Contract execution and mission formulation phase begins.

Submission: PDF to Bill@commonspace.world

Subject:

RFP – Common Space Mission Preparation Phase – [Organization Name]

8. Additional Notes

- NDAs will be required with all vendors
 - Proposal materials will be treated as confidential unless otherwise agreed. Common Space may share proposals with independent technical advisors under NDA.
- Puns in your responses are appreciated
- Future Deliverable Contracts will prioritize performance-based milestones
- Payment structures aligned with long-term mission success are strongly preferred
- This RFP covers a paid Phase 1 mission design effort. Advancement to future phases is expected but will be subject to funding availability, performance during Phase 0, and Common Space's governance and procurement decisions.
- Common Space may terminate negotiations or contracts for convenience with written notice, subject to payment for work completed.



- This RFP and resulting contracts will be governed by the laws of the State of Colorado, without regard to conflict-of-law principles.
- This RFP does not constitute an offer or commitment to contract.