

JPL Visitor Center Upgrade  
Administered by JPL Education Office  
Type of Agreement: Task Order  
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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Upgrade JPL's existing von Karman Visitor Center

**Goal:** Through a facilitated or self-guided experience in the von Karman Visitor Center, guests gain an appreciation and understanding of the diversity and scale of our solar system and the universe, why we explore, and how we explore.

**Objectives:** Use the Visitor Center and its exhibits to explain the process of space exploration as conducted by NASA/JPL, for a variety of visitors ranging from elementary students to heads of state. Provide the context for the other stops on a typical tour of JPL (which usually includes mission control and the spacecraft assembly facility) while giving them a sense of the human talent, skill and creativity necessary to study and explore our home planet, our solar system, and the universe. Tell the story of space exploration in a clear, engaging, and visual way. Provide educational opportunities.

**Outcome:** In FY08, an exhibit design concept was developed, specifications were identified, and a Request for Proposal (RFP) was released. Contractor selection is pending.

**Detail**

In FY2008, an RFP was developed and was released. Key elements include:

- Replace "trade-show" portable exhibit structures with sturdier, more sophisticated structures that allow flexibility in terms of updating images, text, video, or computer content.
- Refresh content with current images and text.
- Include a scale model solar system (planets to scale) and universe
- Install one or two new interactive exhibits

The RFP is on hold due to unforeseen facilities issues that JPL needs to address before installing new exhibits. A revised RFP will be released while these issues are being resolved.

**PROJECT BENEFIT TO OUTCOME (1, 2, OR 3)**

The Visitor Center upgrade primarily benefits Outcome 3 (Inspire, Engage) by telling the story of space exploration for varied audiences in an engaging and compelling way. Since school children and other students constitute a large number of JPL's annual visitors, the upgrade also serves the intentions/spirit of Outcomes 1 (Employ) and 2 (Educate) indirectly.

PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS (*CONNECTION BACK TO ANNUAL PERFORMANCE GOALS AND PLANS*)

Developed and released RFP for exhibit upgrades. The RFP is an open process that promotes competition among local and national vendors.

Supported Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Washington, D.C., June/July 2008.

PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO PART MEASURES (*INCLUDE DATA PLUS EXPLANATION*)

Fiscal year 2008 (Oct 2007 – September 2008)

Tour groups: 654 tour groups (nearly 22,000 people)

including 346 student groups (more than 11,000 students, teachers, chaperones)

Open House: 30,000 people (over two days)

JPL is a member of the NASA Museum Alliance and is included in the number of museums that host NASA events. JPL hosts events such as a monthly public lecture series, regular educator workshops (primarily on weekends), career nights, major mission events (e.g., landing on Mars), and other mission-related events.

IMPROVEMENTS (e.g. project management, efficiencies, etc.) MADE IN THE PAST YEAR

The project promoted internal conversations at JPL about understanding our visitors and their needs, how better to tell the story of NASA/JPL, and resulted in closer working relationships between the Education Office (which is responsible for the funding) and the Public Services Office (which is responsible for the facility and tours), as well as the Audio/Visual Office and Office of Communications and Education.

PROJECT PARTNERS AND ROLE OF PARTNERS IN PROJECT EXECUTION  
*(THIS IS WHERE FURTHER FOLLOW-UP TO OCCUR FOR COLLECTING 2008 GRANTEE PERFORMANCE SUMMARIES FOR PUBLISHING TO OUR EDUCATION HOME PAGE)*

Internal partners:

Office of Communications and Education

Education Office

Public Services Office

Audio/Visual Services Office

Acquisitions Section

Facilities Division