National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001

March 12, 2013

Dr. Steven W. Squyres
Chairman
NASA Advisory Council
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Dr. Squyres:

Enclosed is NASA's response to a recommendation from the NASA Advisory Council meeting held November 28-30, 2012, at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center. Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Council would like further background on the response. I appreciate the Council's thoughtful consideration leading to the recommendations and welcome its continued findings, recommendations, and advice concerning the U.S. civil space program.

I look forward to working closely with you and members of the Council in the future.

Sincerely,

Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator

Enclosure:
2012-03-01 (HEOC-01) Outreach

NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

Outreach
2012-03-01 (HEOC-01)

Recommendation:
NASA should leverage its contractors in developing its overall outreach strategy. Specifically, NASA should develop an integrated outreach plan that includes actions that the Agency and its contractors can perform. NASA should also include a requirement in solicitations for offerors to submit their outreach plans as part of their proposal. An offeror's outreach plan, including flow down of the outreach requirements to subcontractors, would be evaluated and factored into the overall proposal rating. This activity should be coordinated with the Education and Public Outreach Office.

Major Reasons for Proposing the Recommendation:
NASA has a multifaceted outreach program. It could be significantly enhanced by leveraging this program with a network of NASA's contractors and their numerous sub-contractors.

Consequences of No Action on the Proposed Recommendation:
Many Americans are under the mistaken impression that the human spaceflight program has been cancelled. We risk losing support for NASA's programs if our stakeholders are not aware of the programs.

NASA Response:
NASA concurs and is implementing changes to the Agency Communications operational model and governance incorporating communications plans that include activities to be performed by both NASA personnel and our contractors. The NASA Communications community is immersed in implementing the recommendations approved by the NASA Executive Council on February 8, 2012, regarding the Agency's Communications governance and operational model. This includes changes to the approach for planning and implementation of Education and Public Outreach activities. The August 14, 2012, release of NASA Procedural Requirements 7120.5E includes a new requirement for flight programs and projects to submit Communications and Education plans. Templates for these plans have been developed. Over the past several months, Mission Directorates have initiated work to develop and put into place their approaches for Communications Plan development, approval, and implementation (including process, roles, and responsibilities). The scope of the Program/Project Communications Plan, as defined in the template, includes identification of partners and definitions of their respective roles and responsibilities in conducting the Communications function for the given program or project. This would include the roles and responsibilities of contractor teams and staff. The scope of the Communications Plan addresses all functions, including media, multimedia, social media and outreach events and activities. The goal is for Mission Directorates to have Program/Project Communications Plans completed by September 30, 2013.

Using the Program/Project Communications Plans, as well as new annual Communications Plans for Mission Directorate and Center efforts, the NASA Communications Coordinating Council (CCC) will develop and manage an integrated NASA Communications Portfolio. The purpose of the portfolio is to provide a clear picture of NASA's Communications investments, activities, events, and programs; to facilitate dialogue and decision making within the CCC regarding the Agency's communications work; and to ensure NASA develops and implements a broad and diverse set of efforts that effectively reaches and engages its stakeholders, including employees and the public. Active management of the portfolio will provide the venue to identify and address gaps, leverage resources, eliminate duplication of efforts, and ensure all efforts incorporate overarching messages and align with the Agency's overall strategy and goals.

In the context of moving to a more effective operational model, the Office of Communications will identify and evaluate additional operational changes over the course of the next year. These will include developing and establishing common metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of Communications investments across the portfolio, including infrastructural and other operational elements. In addition, completing the remaining two actions from the NASA Executive Council – to develop and establish a NASA Policy Document and NASA Procedural Requirements for Communications – will provide clarity regarding roles and responsibilities and the policies and procedures necessary to more effectively execute the Communications function.

NASA believes these new changes to the Agency Communications operational model and governance, once fully implemented, will meet the intent of the NASA Advisory Council recommendation.