

**Headquarters**

Washington, DC 20546-0001



## **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Vendor Communication Plan**

### **I. Background**

Since its inception, NASA has been closely linked with the private and academic sectors. NASA has contracted with the private sector for most of its products and services, including research and development services, required to meet the Agency's mission and programs. Over eighty percent of the Agency's authorized funding and the resultant direct employment is dispersed widely in the national economy through NASA contracts and grants.

NASA, historically, has had communication plans and methods in place to ensure communication of contracting information flows directly to private and academic sectors. Early, constructive communication and exchange of information with industry is imperative for NASA to accomplish its goals to: lead an innovative and sustainable program of exploration with commercial and international partners; enable human expansion across the solar system and bring new knowledge and opportunities back to Earth; to support growth of the Nation's economy in space and aeronautics; and to increase understanding of the universe and our place in it, and work with industry to improve America's aerospace technologies, and advance American leadership.

NASA recognizes that effective vendor communication requires the support of the entire acquisition workforce; contract specialist, contracting officer, procurement analyst, program manager, and project manager, small business, technical, finance and legal professionals alike.

In February 2011, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) issued a memorandum, "[Myth-Busting: Addressing Misconceptions to Improve Communication with Industry during the Acquisition Process - PDF](#)" dated February 2, 2011, requiring Federal agencies to develop a high-level vendor communication plan outlining efforts to reduce unnecessary barriers, publicize communication opportunities, and prioritize engagement opportunities for high-risk, complex programs or those that fail to attract new vendors

during re-competitions. NASA published its first Vendor Communication Plan in October 2011 and took initiative to update the plan in February 2016.

## II. Agency Commitment

This Vendor Communication Plan represents NASA’s commitment to continued and increased dialogue and exchanges of information with the vendor community from the earliest identification of a requirement through announcement of the award (see Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) subpart 15.2).

NASA understands and knows that proper communication exchanges with vendors can add significant value and create efficiencies in the acquisition process. NASA is not only committed to the requirements of OMB’s 2011 memo but also committed to continued improvement of this plan.

NASA is committed to a transparent acquisition process and is poised to engage vendors in an increasingly innovative manner during the pre-award, award, and post-award contracting phase.

## III. Roles and Responsibilities

NASA’s Senior Procurement Executive, Director of Procurement Management and Policy, along with the ten NASA Center Procurement Officers and the Industry Liaison are responsible for promoting consistent and timely vendor engagement. The acquisition workforce: contract specialists, contracting officers, contracting officer representatives, procurement analysts, small business specialists, program and project managers, finance and legal counsel all play an integral role in effective, continual vendor communication throughout the acquisition life cycle which is all a part of NASA’s acquisition partnership process. (See Appendix A).

**Assistant Administrator for Procurement and Deputy Chief Acquisition Officer, Senior Procurement Executive:** Monica Manning

**Deputy Assistant Administrator for Procurement, Procurement Ombudsman and Competition Advocate:** William Roets

**Director, Procurement Management and Policy:** Julia B. Wise

**Director of Communications:** Tabi Kabilsa

**Ten NASA Center Procurement Officers:**

Ames Research Center	Kelly Kaplan
Armstrong Flight Center	James Eastman
Glenn Research Center	Kurt Straub
Goddard Space Flight Center	Mike McGrath
Johnson Space Center	Jose Garcia, Acting
Kennedy Space Center	Laura Rochester, Acting
Langley Research Center	Susan McClain
Marshall Space Flight Center	Jason Detko

Stennis Space Center	Gerald Norris
NASA Shared Services Center	Michael Victory

**NASA’s Industry Liaison:** Dorice Kenely, Procurement Analyst is also responsible for updating this plan periodically throughout the year to ensure the plan is current and includes innovative communication practices. The Industry Liaison will consult with the Director of Communications on planned vendor communication efforts.

**IV. PRE-AWARD Vendor Engagement**

NASA hosts various vendor engagement events throughout the year to: obtain feedback from industry on requirements; discuss the technical feasibility of a particular requirement; discuss NASA’s preliminary evaluation of a particular system; address specific requirements that significantly impact the viability or are major cost drivers to industry; obtain feedback to determine if requirements in NASA solicitations provide enough detail to design, develop, produce, and operate the articles to be procured; and identify any unnecessary, overly burdensome, and/or overly prescriptive requirements. These events include industry days, small business outreach sessions, and pre-solicitation conferences and others as detailed below.

NASA partners with the Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) to support diverse vendors in all of the Small Business Programs to ensure these vendors have a fair opportunity to compete for NASA procurements.

**a. The Acquisition Forecast**

The NASA FAR Supplement (NFS) at [1807.72, Acquisition Forecasting](#), delineates NASA’s policy regarding the preparation of an annual acquisition forecast and semiannual update of expected contract opportunities for each fiscal year to alert the public of upcoming NASA procurements. The anticipated acquisitions included in the forecasts are listed on each Center’s acquisition forecast where they may be viewed by members of the public, industry, and government officials. The NASA Acquisition Forecast, which includes the agency-wide and center-by-center acquisition forecast is available at <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/forecast/index.html>.

**b. NASA Vendor Database**

NASA vendor database is open to all vendors, both large and small, who wish to do business with the NASA. Vendors can post capability briefs in any format and sign up to receive email messages concerning business opportunities with NASA such as Source Sought Notices, the NASA Office of Small Business Programs Newsletter, Requests for Information (RFIs), and Requests for Proposals (RFPs). This database is web-based and available at [https://www.osbp.nasa.gov/vendor\\_database.html](https://www.osbp.nasa.gov/vendor_database.html).

**c. NASA OSBP Mobile**

The Office of Small Business Program's (OSBP) official mobile app is NASA OSBP Mobile. This app is designed as a user-friendly tool for contractors and

other users to learn how to do business with NASA and have all the required resources at their fingertips. Key features allow users, vendors and government officials, to easily contact NASA Center Small Business Specialists, view Active Contract Listings, and learn about upcoming networking events. This app is available for iOS and Android devices.

d. **NASA Sponsored Industry Meetings**

For complex efforts, NASA invites industry to meetings to dialogue about the contracting requirement, policy and practices. The invitation to the meeting is posted to the Federal Register or other medium. During the meetings, NASA officials and industry representatives confer and exchange ideas on contracting practices, policies, how to reduce burden and leverage commercial practices, to how to improve NASA's contracting relationships and more. Industry representatives meet with NASA officials and submit in writing their ideas on improving affordability of NASA programs. Industry feedback is also vital to the development of the acquisition strategy. Industry's representation covers the spectrum in size and role, including prime contractors, subcontractors, and entrepreneurial commercial providers, as well as non-profit organizations.

e. **Draft Request for Proposals**

Contracting Officers issue draft requests for proposal (RFP) for all competitive acquisitions expected to exceed \$10 million except for Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs), Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) solicitations, and architect-and-engineering services, unless the NASA contracting officer determines in writing that a draft RFP is not beneficial to the acquisition (see [NFS 1815.201, Exchanges with industry before receipt of proposals](#)). When a draft RFP is issued, it requests that potential offerors identify unnecessary or inefficient requirements. If the draft RFP contains government-unique standards, prospective offerors are invited to identify voluntary consensus standards that meet the government's requirements as alternatives to government-unique standards (See FAR 11.101). Comments are also requested on any perceived safety, occupational health, security (including information technology security), environmental, property, quality assurance, export control, and/or other programmatic risk issues associated with performance of the work.

Thorough acquisition planning is executed to ensure adequate time for issuance of the draft RFP, prospective offeror review and comment, and NASA evaluation and disposition of the comments. The RFP may be modified as a result of industry questions and comments provided in response to the draft RFP.

f. **Conferences and Site Tours**

NASA hosts conferences and site tours to facilitate the early exchange of information with prospective offerors before receiving proposals, in accordance with FAR [15.201](#). Such events provide a means of exchanging information to improve potential offerors' understanding of the Agency's requirements, enhance the Government's ability to obtain quality supplies/services, and increase efficiency in proposal preparation, evaluation, negotiation, and award.

A pre-proposal conference to brief prospective offerors may be conducted after a solicitation has been issued, but before proposals are received, in accordance with FAR [15.201](#). NASA contracting officers, in coordination with management and the Source Evaluation Board (SEB), decide, prior to issuance of the RFP, whether a pre-proposal conference is required. These conferences benefit both the Government and prospective offerors in acquisitions where it is necessary to explain or clarify specifications and requirements. Prospective offerors have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to network with other industry representatives.

**V. POST AWARD, Ongoing Enterprise Vendor Engagement**

NASA continues to promote industry engagement after award in an effort to remove barriers, enhance innovation, and maximize the business relationship between industry and government. NASA post award vendor engagement are detailed below.

a. **Biannual Regional Outreach Conference**

NASA hosts two conferences annually in geographic areas in which it has not traditionally had a large presence. In FY 2018, for example, NASA selected two regional outreach events in the Rust Belt region of the United States. The purpose of the conferences are to promote small business awareness and participation, utilizing innovative techniques at nontraditional venues in geographically targeted areas, to enhance all categories of small business. In FY 2020, the first outreach conference, "NASA Business Opportunities Expo" was held in Port Canaveral Florida with approximately 2000 participants, including over 200 exhibitors, both large and small businesses. It provided an opportunity for large and small business wanting to do business with NASA to get information from the Office of Procurement and the Office of Small Business Programs on how to do business with NASA as well as network with their vendor counterparts and exchange innovative ideas on contracting practices.

b. **Oral Debriefings**

Face to face debriefings give offerors a better understanding of the source evaluation board findings and how the source selection authority reached their decision.

c. **The Small Business Industry Awards Program**

The Small Business Industry Awards (SBIA) recognize the outstanding Small Business Prime Contractor, Small Business Subcontractor, Large Business Prime Contractor, and Mentor-Protégé Agreement that support NASA in achieving its mission. Small Business Industry Awards (SBIA) is given in four categories: (1) Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year, (2) Small Business Subcontractor of the Year, (3) Large Business Prime Contractor of the Year, and (4) Mentor-Protégé Agreement of the Year.

d. **Small Business Showcase**

The small business showcase is hosted quarterly and allows vendors to display their capabilities. In addition to showcasing their talents, vendors also inquire about potential opportunities at NASA. Attendees include, as available, the Small Business Specialists, Small Business Technical Advisor, available Contracting Officers and Prime Contractor representatives.

e. **Contractor Steering Council**

The Council (consisting of on/near site contractors and civil service employees) provides an informal framework in which contractors with a vested interest and existing business near the hosting Center can establish working relationships to enhance the partnership bond that already exists. The Council meetings are held monthly or quarterly, depending on the NASA Centers, and provides timely information and advice on Center-wide requirements and issues of mutual interest and acts as a forum for ad hoc communications between the Center and the local contractor community. An Executive Committee provides assistance and guidance for the Council Co-Chairs.

## VI. **New Vendor Engagement Efforts**

NASA is continually looking for innovative and cost effective ways to procure its science, aeronautics and space exploration requirements. Effective vendor engagement positions the organization to procure and manage business relationships effectively. NASA is exploring the following new methods and events to enhance NASA's vendor engagement.

a. **Ask Me Anything Q&A**

An event where industry can "ask anything" of NASA's CAO/SPE - Monica Manning in person as well as via social media, using the OP Twitter Account. Vendors will be able to ask Monica an acquisition or contracting questions.

b. **Update to the NASA Acquisition Forecast**

OFPP presented the Professional Services Council's article entitled, "PSC Business Forecast Scorecard 2019." to the Industry Liaisons at the October 2019, *OFPP Industry Liaisons Roundtable* and encouraged the group to be mindful of and consider incorporating the findings. The updated NASA Acquisition Forecast will include all of the attributes rated as user friendly and

most effective by vendors as reported by Professional Services Council in the aforementioned article.

c. **Update to the “Doing Business with NASA” Page**

The updated [“Doing Business with NASA”](#) page will include: the agency’s Industry Liaison’s and Acquisition Advocate’s names and email addresses; Procurement Ombudsman and Competition Advocate name and email address; the NASA Vendor Database link; the NASA OSBP Mobile app; instructions on how to use the NASA Vendor database and the NASA Mobile App; the list of NASA active contract list, and an “Events for Vendors” corner which will advertise all of the vendor events happening across NASA. The following features will also be added to the web page.

○ **Q&A with NASA Procurement SMEs**

Create an email box for industry to submit general questions about doing business with NASA. This email box will be managed by the Industry Liaison and a team of subject matter experts (SMEs) from the Procurement Management and Policy Division.

○ **Advertisement of Industry Engagements**

Advertise the various, enterprise wide vendor engagement events on the “Doing Business with NASA” page and other approved social media outlets.

d. **NASA HQ Vendor Engagement Meetings**

NASA HQ engagement events will include periodic outreach efforts such as virtual meetings, webinars, conference calls and face to face smaller round-table discussions or larger industry town hall meetings with vendors and industry associations on topics such as: the role of the Procurement Ombudsman; innovations in Supply Chain Management practices, novel and complex FAR and NASA FAR Supplement policy updates and how they affect industry, to name a few. These meetings will be listening sessions and will also allow exchanges between government and industry as well as industry to industry on topics that are helpful but rarely discussed in these type of forums.

e. **NASA Promotes Diversity and Inclusion in Contracting**

NASA promotes diversity in contracting efforts by working to ensure large vendors work with diverse small vendors for subcontracting opportunities. Also, encouraging large contractors to partner with, mentor, and team with smaller contractors for Federal Government contracting opportunities. NASA has a long-standing practice of promoting equal employment opportunity and diversity, and will continue to work to foster diversity in procurement, with a focus on minority-owned and women-owned businesses. Industry Liaison will partner with NASA mission directorates and their targeted program and project initiatives and outreach efforts and coordinate and support as appropriate.

## **Excellence and Innovations at HBCU and Minority Serving Institutions and STEM organizations**

NASA's current policy, as of 2001, is to attain an Agency-wide goal of one percent of total contract value of prime and subcontracting awards for acquisitions to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Minority institutions (MI), pursuant to 51 U.S.C. 30304 (Pub. L. 111-314). To accomplish this goal NASA attends events at HBCUs and MIs to inform, educate and solicit the institutions about contracting opportunities, and doing business with NASA.

Additionally, NASA will establish a plan and launch a campaign to implement the President's Executive Order (E.O.) 13779, White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) issued on February 28, 2017. NASA's plan will focus on exceeding the current, aforementioned goal working with HBCUs to promote knowledge of contracting opportunities at NASA; providing to HBCU community, to the maximum extent practicable, opportunities to participate in NASA contracts; and providing information and guidance to HBCUs that will enhance their probability of doing business with NASA. NASA will partner with other agencies to support and implement the requirements of this E.O.

### **VII. Publication of Engagement Events**

Vendor engagement events are advertised publicly using, one or more of the following methods to maximize attendance.

- <https://beta.sam.gov/> - FedBizOpps, using the Special Notice capability function;
- <https://www.sbir.gov> - Government portal for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Information;
- <http://sbir.gsfc.nasa.gov/> - NASA SBIR/STTR portal;
- <http://www.sba.gov/> - US Small Business Administration;
- <http://www.grants.gov/> - Grants.gov is the portal for federal grants;
- <https://nspires.nasaprs.com/external/> - The NASA web interface for submitting proposals in response to NASA Research Opportunities; and
- [https://www.osbp.nasa.gov/vendor\\_database.html](https://www.osbp.nasa.gov/vendor_database.html) - NASA vendor database
- NASA OSBP Mobile
- <https://www.nasa.gov/office/procurement/doingbusiness>, Doing Business with NASA webpage.

Questions regarding this plan or related topics may be directed to the Assistant Administrator for Procurement at [Procurement@hq.nasa.gov](mailto:Procurement@hq.nasa.gov) or (202) 358-2090.



# NASA Acquisition Partnership Process



Return to OP Transformation Activities from MAP to Operational

