

## NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

### Public Outreach for Commercial Activities 2011-01-01 (CSC-01)

**Recommendation:** The Council recommends that NASA encourage existing Commercial Orbital Transportation Services contractors to work with NASA's Office of Communications to integrate public outreach into mission planning and operations. The Council also recommends that NASA's Office of Communications draft a recommended commercial partner public outreach and participatory exploration policy (including contingency media/communications plans) to serve as a guideline when developing future partner agreements.

**Major Reasons for the Recommendation:** Current Commercial Orbital Transportation Services contracts between NASA and private sector space entities do not include any guidelines to insure reasonable public access to mission activities. The Space Act of 1958 requires NASA to "provide for the widest practicable and appropriate dissemination of information concerning its activities and the results thereof." Public participation in space exploration remains a NASA priority to insure continued funding, recruit talent and inspire interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education. Therefore, it is in the mutual interest of the space agency and its commercial partners to ensure the public is granted a "front row seat" to future missions, providing such access is legal and does not compromise the intellectual property rights of the commercial entity, or unnecessarily divert resources away from higher priority mission activities.

**Consequences of No Action on the Recommendation:** NASA may not be able to effectively "provide for the widest practicable and appropriate dissemination of information concerning its activities and the results thereof" as required by the Space Act of 1958.

**NASA Response:** NASA concurs with the recommendation. Immediately following the release of the Fiscal Year 2011 budget, the Office of Communications reached out to the new generation of commercial space providers to begin a coordinated effort to integrate their public outreach activities into a broader story, spotlighting the importance of this new space economy in the future of exploration. These ongoing discussions are now resulting in a much more open, transparent, and positive working relationship between all parties. Specific examples include live and extended media events with rocket engine tests for Orbital at Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. In the past, Orbital would take days or weeks to release images and information regarding any hardware tests. Now, media is encouraged to attend live engine firing tests in support of the Commercial Orbital Transportation Services (COTS) and other commercial spaceflight activities. Perhaps the greatest strides made in the Government/commercial relationship is with SpaceX. The Office of Communications initiated discussions with new SpaceX communications personnel to collaborate on mission coverage of its historic

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Falcon 9 launch and Dragon capsule splashdown. NASA Television was provided access to the launch, which was carried live on both satellite systems and streamed on <http://www.nasa.gov>. Since this launch was a COTS demonstration flight, NASA was able to convince SpaceX to provide media access to the vehicle on L-1, have company leadership participate in preflight briefings, and after the successful launch, founder Elon Musk personally participated on the post-launch news conference. Since then, we have established more direct communications with Orbital, provided extended coverage and access to its new mission control center in Virginia, and helped provide media access to hardware for its Taurus II launch vehicle for the Commercial Crew Development 2 announcement, the Office of Communications coordinated a media event for the companies awarded a Space Act Agreement as part of the preflight briefings at the upcoming Space Shuttle launch (STS-134). We are dedicated to providing greater public access to these new commercial partners while at the same time protecting their intellectual property rights. Also, there is a new Public Engagement Web site, scheduled to be launched in the fall, that will help illustrate public outreach activities for our new commercial partners.