NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

Explore Expanded Use of Cooperative Research and Development Agreements
2013-01-06 (CSC-02)

Recommendation:
The Council recommends that NASA explore expanded use of Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADAs) with its commercial partners. Initially, NASA should identify an office (or a person) at Headquarters that would: (1) identify the current number of active CRADAs between (a) a party and Headquarters and (b) a party and each of the Centers; (2) assess the success of each of these CRADAs; and (3) evaluate the benefits of promoting use of CRADAs.

Major Reasons for Proposing the Recommendation:
CRADAs were designed to promote technology transfer in a way that protects the intellectual property that the partner brings to the project and advances the commercial application of such technology. NASA should ensure that its commercial partners are aware of the CRADA option and use this tool to the maximum extent appropriate to encourage relationships with commercial partners.

Consequences of No Action on the Proposed Recommendation:
NASA and its commercial partners may miss an opportunity to work together if the parties do not realize that CRADAs are available.

NASA Response:
NASA concurs with the recommendation as noted below:

- The Council recommends that NASA explore expanded use of CRADAs with its commercial partners.

NASA concurs. The Agency has already begun steps to put in place expanded use of CRADAs. In October 2011, the Mission Support Council approved the request of the Office of Chief Technologist (OCT) and Office of General Counsel (OGC) to delegate the authority to negotiate, execute, amend, and terminate CRADAs with domestic entities to the Center Directors. This was recommended with the consensus of the Center Directors to increase technology transfer and commercialization at NASA consistent with the NASA Strategic Plan and Presidential guidance (See October 2011 Presidential Memo, "Accelerating Technology Transfer and Commercialization of Federal Research in Support of High Growth Businesses.") OGC and OCT issued a draft NASA Policy Directive (NPD) and is completing a Program Information Package that will be released this summer/early fall, coincident with the NPD delegation policy explaining to Centers how to implement CRADA processes to ensure efficiency and consistency across the Agency. Training will also be provided to the Centers with the goal of having wider use of CRADAs to encourage economic growth and stimulate innovation while meeting Agency mission needs.

- The Council recommends identification of an office (or a person) at Headquarters that would: (1) identify the current number of active CRADAs between (a) a party and Headquarters and (b) a party and each of the Centers; (2) assess the success of each of these CRADAs; and (3) evaluate the benefits of promoting use of CRADAs.

NASA concurs. The appropriate office for that role is within OCT, which currently administers the Agency's technology transfer program in conjunction with OGC. This recommendation will supplement OCT's existing analyses of technology transfer and commercialization activities, including an annual report on technology transfer-related partnerships that is provided to the Office of Management and Budget and published by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. In addition, the NASA Technology Transfer System (NTTS), a workflow tool for managing all of NASA's technology transfer and intellectual property management activities, will be updated to include CRADA tracking, and metrics will be posted online quarterly at http://technology.nasa.gov. In addition to these tools, NASA's Technology Transfer Program Executive will be responsible also for specifically addressing on a semiannual basis for provision to the NAC: the elements included in the NAC recommendation related to the number of active CRADAs, their success, and the overall benefits of promoting CRADAs.