

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration



Mary W. Jackson Building NASA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546-0001

November 20, 2024

Reply to Attn of: General Law Practice Group

TO: Distribution

FROM: Agency Counsel for Ethics

SUBJECT: Determination Regarding Attendance by NASA employees at the Planet Labs PBC Reception on November 20, 2024

On November 20, 2024, Planet Labs PBC will host a reception at the Silver Social in Washington, D.C., from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. This is a reception to provide an opportunity for those present to network with Congressional staff, industry, and government officials while discussing shared goals for the use of Earth observation data. Planet Labs is in control of all the arrangements and invitations for the event.

Approximately 500 people are expected to attend the event. Attendees will have a diversity of views or interests and will include representatives from the legislative branch, from federal agencies, and from industry. The estimated value of the event, including all food and drink, is approximately \$35 per person. Attendance at this event will allow NASA attendees to exchange information regarding various NASA programs. I find that the event meets the requirements of a “widely attended gathering” as defined in 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(g)(2). I further determine that there is an Agency interest in having NASA personnel attend the event because it will provide an opportunity for the invited persons to exchange ideas and views pertaining to NASA’s policies, programs, and operations.

NASA employees who do not have a significant role in a matter affecting the interests of the sponsor may accept an invitation for free attendance for themselves and a guest (if invited) to the event. In those circumstances, I find that the Agency’s interest in attendance outweighs any concern that the individual may be, or may appear to be, improperly influenced in the performance of their duties. However, NASA employees in non-career positions who are required to sign the ethics pledge under Executive Order 13989, may only attend the event if they reimburse the sponsor the value of the event.

Additionally, NASA employees who have a significant role in any pending matter affecting the interests of Planet Labs, such as procurement duties, program management, or negotiating or administering a Space Act Agreement, should seek a separate determination from their local ethics counselor as to whether they may accept the invitation.

You are reminded of the \$20 gift exception at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.204(a), which provides that you may accept gifts valued at no more than \$20 per occasion (and no more than \$50 from

one source in a calendar year). We understand that PBC will have available small items with an individual value below \$10 for guests, such as: hats, socks, towels, and stickers. These items may be accepted by NASA employees other than NASA employees in non-career positions who have signed the ethics pledge, who may only accept the stickers.

Adam F. Greenstone