National Aeronautics and
Space Administration



2026
HONOR AWARDS
Appreciation Program

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Program

Ceremony Opening

- **Leah Hollander**
  Director, HQ/GSFC Human Capital Offices

Presentation of Colors/National Anthem

- **Joint Armed Forces Color Guard and The U.S. Air Force Band**
  The Official Ceremonial Unit

Welcome and Introduction of Speaker

- **Leah Hollander**
  Director, HQ/GSFC Human Capital Offices

Featured Speaker

- **Casey Swails**
  NASA Deputy Associate Administrator

Presentation of Honorees

- **Casey Swails**
  NASA Deputy Associate Administrator

Closing Remarks

- **Leah Hollander**
  Director, HQ/GSFC Human Capital Offices

Awards

Administrative Excellence Award

This award recognizes individuals with exceptional administrative contributions that significantly improve a process, operation, method, or technique and provide substantial benefit to an office, program, or center/mission support enterprise organization (MSEO).

- **Tevin Barker** *(OCHCO, ARC)*

  For exceptional administrative leadership and human resources expertise in support of the Armstrong Flight Research Center.

- **Benjamin Hoksbergen** *(OSI, MSFC)*

  For exceptional leadership in resolving critical compliance challenges and elevating MSFC's Cultural Resources program to a model of excellence.

Awards

Certificate of Appreciation

This award recognizes significant achievements or sustained service by individuals or institutions whose contributions meaningfully support or advance the goals, initiatives, or mission of the NASA center/MSEO. Achievements may include technical contributions, mission support activities, operational assistance, collaboration, or partnership efforts.

- **Cassandra Chang** *(OCFO, GRC)*

  For outstanding cost estimating support, EVM support and overall sustained Program, Planning & Control support to key projects at Glenn Research Center.

- **Jonathan Donohoe** *(OCFO, KSC)*

  For exceptional operational readiness by delivering critical financial analysis under the Chief Financial Officer for the Center Engineering, Safety, and Operations Program.

- **Bonnie May** *(OCIO, GRC)*

  For leading a complex, high-visibility root cause analysis delivering lasting operational fixes, strengthened enterprise reliability, and ensured incident-free Agency events.

- **Andrew Sais** *(HSMD, LaRC)*

  For exemplary support to the Utilization Integration team.

Engineering Excellence Award

This award recognizes individuals with innovative achievements that directly contribute to the progress, safety, and success of engineering deliverable in support of the center mission.

- **Laura Burke** *(HSMD, GRC)*

  For exceptional, high-impact strategic technical analysis, empowering the evolution of NASA's Moon to Mars Architecture.

Awards

Excellence in Customer Service Award

This award recognizes individuals who deliver outstanding customer service through proactive support, high-quality products and services, and actions that measurably enhance the efficiency, accessibility, or overall experience of internal or external customers, resulting in substantial benefit to an office, program, or center/MSEO.

- **Jessica Duronio** *(OIIR, HQ)*

  For delivering exceptional customer service and mission-enabling support through streamlined foreign travel processes, improved user resources, and expert guidance across NASA.

- **Daren Etienne** *(OCIO, KSC)*

  For exceptional support and coordination of launch viewing requirements for the Office of Communications in support of Artemis II.

- **Jennifer Nakashiki** *(OPS, ARC)*

  For exceptional leadership, integrity, and commitment to ICAM excellence, ensuring NASA's workforce receives outstanding customer service.

- **Robert Tibbling** *(OCIO, KSC)*

  For exemplary leadership as AEGIS Technical Area Monitor, delivering rapid mastery of complex responsibilities and advancing effective coordination across the enterprise.

- **Arthur Waters** *(OCIO, KSC)*

  For emphatic and persistent efforts to expand the cellular network coverage for First Responders and the general population in support of Artemis II launch viewing.

Awards

Excellence in Group Achievement

This award recognizes groups that exemplify effective communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making throughout their work. Delivered measurable results through the team's ability to leverage dynamic skills, perspectives, and strengths of each member, resulting in timely and successful completion of a program and/or project.

- **Ames Remote Access and AI Readiness Team** *(OCIO)*

  For exceptional teamwork delivering secure, inclusive remote access solutions and advocating agency wide AI readiness through the successful Ames Copilot training initiative.

- **Artemis II Mission Imagery Team** *(OCIO)*

  For advancing Artemis II readiness by sustaining reliable imagery systems, strengthening operational awareness, & delivering stability enhancements during wet dress rehearsal.

- **Artemis II Optical Communications Team** *(HSMD)*

  NASA's Artemis II optical team enabled Orion to transmit 475+ GB of data, outperforming traditional comms and allowing near real-time views of the lunar flyby worldwide.

- **Commercial IT Management Team** *(OCIO)*

  For exceptional execution of NASA IT acquisitions through high-volume processing, strengthened compliance, and enhanced mission-aligned procurement efficiency.

- **ERO Rapid Transformation Team** *(OCFO)*

  For transformation of OCFO MSEO operations by centralizing processes, driving innovation, cost savings, and consistency, enhancing transparency and efficiency Enterprise-wide.

- **ESDMD Budget Team** *(HSMD)*

  For exceptional contributions reducing the fiscal year 2026 cost risk to Artemis while maintaining critical capabilities shared with the ISS program.

Awards

- **External Reporting Branch Team** *(OCFO)*

  For exceptional commitment, ownership, and expertise in delivering accurate NASA financial statements and the AFR under unprecedented challenges.

- **Federal Acquisition Regulation Overhaul Team** *(OP)*

  For exceptional leadership in implementing EO 14275 to restore statutory foundations and modernize Federal procurement for faster acquisition delivery.

- **Goddard Center Consolidation Team** *(OSI)*

  For outstanding leadership and excellence in Goddard's reorganization.

- **KSC Tactical Plan Team** *(OCIO)*

  For superlative support developing KSC Tactical Plans and Partnering Sessions, enabling meticulous planning and coordination of critical IT projects across OCIO disciplines.

- **NASA Leads Leadership Team** *(SMD)*

  For exceptional delivery of an innovative leadership program strengthening NASA scientific leadership pipeline with stewardship, collaboration, and mission-driven excellence.

- **NASA Open Science Curriculum Team** *(SMD)*

  For outstanding achievement in developing and delivering a comprehensive open science curriculum, advancing scientific rigor and transparency across the research community.

- **NASA SBIR/STTR Leadership Team** *(RTMD)*

  For exceptional leadership and proven dedication to expanding the U.S. space economy and addressing NASA's most difficult challenges through small-business innovation.

- **OCIO Network and Telecommunications Services Team** *(OCIO)*

  For ensuring flawless MNGV support for Artemis through integrated oversight, rapid issue resolution, and proactive system improvements enabling zero-impact communications.

Awards

- **OCIO Strategic Customer Planning and Support Team** *(OCIO)*

  For outstanding and continual support of strategic planning and mission customer partnership initiatives at Kennedy Space Center.

- **OLIA Artemis II Day on the Hill** *(OLIA)*

  For exceptional performance in support of NASA's Legislative posture in the congressional arena through Artemis II post-flight astronaut engagement with Congress.

- **PACE SWOT and Partners Team** *(SMD)*

  For exceptional discovery of major, unknown biological zones in the Earth's oceans enabled by extraordinary technical achievements.

- **Software License and Asset Management Team** *(OCIO)*

  For modernizing software lifecycle and asset management, achieving significant cost avoidance, improving compliance, and strengthening enterprise efficiency.

- **SPHEREX Team** *(SMD)*

  For exceptional achievement collecting the First All-Sky Infrared Spectroscopic Survey of the Universe.

- **The Swift Reboost Mission Team** *(SMD)*

  For outstanding achievement as a first-of-its kind mission that advances U.S. leadership in spacecraft servicing, and strengthens America's commercial space ecosystem.

- **WB-57 Mishap Award** *(MSD)*

  For exceptional contributions enabling rapid, high quality completion of the WB 57 mishap investigation, ensuring safety improvements and fleet readiness.

Awards

Excellence in Innovation Award

This award recognizes exemplary individuals for their contribution of turning innovative ideas into value, or who have developed or implemented positive changes in the operations or the programs of a center/MSEO or enhanced the center/MSEOs business and work processes and improved the quality of products and services. These innovations are not limited to technology but can also represent novel business practices that save the center/MSEO valuable resources and ensure mission success.

- **Cedric Anderson** *(OCIO, MSFC)*

  For exemplary innovation advancing MSFC mission support through auditable AI, Artemis operations, ISS crew safety, and secure edge computing.

- **Whitney Dorning** *(RTMD, HQ)*

  For improving the efficiency of ARMD's innovation initiatives.

- **Jordan Douthitt** *(OCHCO, HQ)*

  For your innovative leadership in developing the HERA analytics dashboard.

- **Janel Kasper-Wolfe** *(OCOMM, HQ)*

  For outstanding innovation in establishing an enterprise communications metrics program that advanced agency-wide measurement, reporting, and mission support.

- **Emoree Luchten** *(OCFO, KSC)*

  For exceptional early career achievements creating efficiency for the Office of the Chief Financial Officer.

- **Emily Mcleod** *(OCOMM, HQ)*

  For exceptional customer service and proactive leadership in modernizing OCOMM enterprise systems, streamlining workflows, and advancing NASA's public engagement programs.

Awards

- **Karen Northon** *(OCOMM, HQ)*

  For outstanding innovation that unified enterprise communications operations, improved processes, and delivered measurable organizational impact.

- **David Rager** *(OCOMM, HQ)*

  For innovative leadership and creative solutions that improved agency mission readiness and engagement during high-visibility Artemis II efforts.

- **Ariel Vargas** *(OCIO, JSC)*

  For transforming NASA's export control operations through innovative leadership and driving the successful development and deployment of the NEXUS system.

Excellence in National Benefits Award

Recognizes government and non-government individuals for exceptional achievements enabling economic and societal benefits based on NASA endeavors. The award celebrates those who make novel contributions in their NASA activities that have resulted in clear, tangible benefits realized by external organizations, communities, or society at large. The award includes activities spanning NASA directorates or centers in generating external benefits. The award includes exceptional efforts in partnerships, communications, administrative practices, and related areas that enable and contribute to the national benefits of NASA.

- **Jessica Burnett** *(SMD, HQ)*

  For exceptional initiative collaborative leadership connecting NASA's applied Earth science mission to natural resource management through strategic interagency partnerships.

- **Jeffrey Heninger** *(OGC, HQ)*

  For excellence promoting NASA's partnerships and public image.

Awards

Executive's Excellence Award

This award recognizes individuals for significant achievement or service that advances the goals, initiatives, and mission of the center/MSEOs. Achievements may come from any functional area, including mission support, technical mission roles, operational integration, or cross center collaboration.

- **Katherine Bowman** *(OCIO, GRC)*

  For exceptional leadership transforming GRC IT investment management through innovative process design, improved data accuracy, and direct advancement of Agency IT planning.

- **Tiffani Danner** *(OCFO, MSFC)*

  For outstanding leadership and strategic financial execution accelerating NASA's Moon to Mars initiatives and enabling critical Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) missions.

- **Kimberly Sanders** *(OCFO, JSC)*

  For outstanding leadership and technical expertise in the discipline of Property Accounting.

Awards

Influential Leaders Award

Recognizes government and non-government individuals who exemplify the qualities of great leadership behavior performing in a non-leadership role. The individual should demonstrate a high level of commitment when taking on new initiatives. Creates a working environment that compels others to see a new vision for the future and helps others understand their role in achieving said vision. Takes prompt and decisive action to resolve issues quickly, inclusively, and effectively.

- **Matthew Curtin** *(RTMD, HQ)*

  For recognition of exemplary leadership.

- **Lauren Demirijan** *(OCHCO, HQ)*

  For your commitment during organizational transition and serving as a trusted force whose influence has had a lasting impact across the organization.

- **Esther Kim** *(OGC, ARC)*

  For exemplary leadership and employment law support.

- **Erik Lundin** *(OGC, AFRC)*

  For exceptional legal leadership and mission support advancing NASA partnerships, procurement integrity, and complex JPL OCI oversight.

- **Mary Skow** *(OSMA, HQ)*

  For exceptional leadership advancing NASA's Enterprise Risk Management, Transforming Risk Insight, Collaboration, and Mission Decision-Making for the Agency.

- **John White** *(OGC, MSFC)*

  For exemplary influential leadership in role of technical lead for General Law at MSFC during period of unprecedented workload increases supporting Artemis II.

- **Colleen Wilson** *(OCHCO, HQ)*

  For recognition of exemplary leadership, dedication, and collaboration, advancing excellence and fostering innovation during transformative periods to advance NASA's mission.

Awards

Leadership Excellence Award

This award recognizes individuals whose vision and initiative inspire others to shape a bold and forward-looking organizational future aligned with NASA's mission, goals, strategies, and values. It represents the highest level of center honor leadership recognition, celebrating leaders who, through their management behavior, style, and approach, demonstrate exceptional achievement while fostering a positive, inclusive, and highly productive work environment.

- **Tamiko Fletcher** *(OCIO, HQ)*

  For exceptional leadership, vision, and strategic foresight in advancing agency cybersecurity resilience and strengthening organizational readiness as Acting SAISO.

- **Zahyra Lebron** *(OCHCO, KSC)*

  For exceptional leadership and technical acumen developing NASA's $15.9M training budeget strategy and cross center collaboration efforts.

- **Gerald Traster** *(OCHCO, GRC)*

  For extraordinary leadership of Glenn Research Center's Human Capital Office.

- **Kathleen Vander Kaaden** *(SMD, HQ)*

  For exceptional leadership and successfully evolving Planetary Science Division Research Programs with efficient consolidation and transparent communications.

Awards

Technical Excellence Award

This award recognizes individuals who demonstrate technical expertise, precision, innovation, and problem-solving ability to significantly improve processes, systems, testing, fabrication, research, or operational capabilities. Their work reflects exceptional skill and professional discipline, and their contributions yield measurable improvements in performance, quality, safety, mission readiness, or scientific and engineering advancement.

- **Debra Berdich** *(OCHCO, HQ)*

  For outstanding technical leadership as NASA's lead health & medical technical authority ensuring operational readiness and safety for commercial crew & ISS missions.

- **Justin Grosso** *(OCIO, ARC)*

  For exceptional initiative and leadership in modernizing critical communications infrastructure and resolving life-safety systems challenges at Ames.

Awards

Unsung Hero Award

Recognizes government and non-government individuals who help achieve success in ways that may not be easily seen or measured in goals and objectives. Work often takes place "behind-the-scenes". Recognition extends to outstanding volunteer community efforts where time and talent are devoted without compensation to enhance the NASA image and mission (e.g., involved in a NASA formal mentoring program, mentoring at schools, or supporting NASA outreach activities, such as NASA Day on the Mall and similar activities).

- **Cody Flowers** *(OCFO, LaRC)*

  For outstanding leadership and teamwork demonstrating technical expertise, strategic solutions, and advancement of analytics capabilities across the OCFO, LaRC and Enterprise.

- **Steven Lloyd** *(OP, GSFC)*

  For exceptional contributions ensuring uninterrupted support for Roman Space Telescope and critical missions across NASA's Office of Procurement.

- **Yvonne Simonsen** *(OCFO, ARC)*

  For exceptional responsiveness and cross-center coordination that ensured timely delivery of critical program materials and enabled uninterrupted mission support.

- **Pavithra Tumbapura** *(OP, GSFC)*

  For exceptional leadership in executing the Landsat 10 Spacecraft Draft Request for Proposal and advancing NASA Office of Procurement priorities.

Special Appreciation

Thank You!

Special appreciation is extended to the following:

- *NASA Deputy Associate Administrator,* **Casey Swails**
- *Director, HQ/GSFC Human Capital Office,* **Leah Hollander**
- *Deputy Director, Human Capital Office,* **Nadeeka Jayatilake**
- *Talent Management and Development,* **Brandon Haygood**
- *Headquarters and Mission Support Enterprise Offices Awards Program Manager,* **Jennifer L. Heeke**
- **Headquarters Audiovisual Team**
- **Headquarters Facilities Team**
- **EIC Program Managers**
- *And to our ceremony* **volunteers** *for their contributions to making today's recognition event a success.*

We would like to extend a special thanks to the **NASA Shared Services Center** *for coordinating award mementos.*

To the extraordinary **Honorees**, *we thank you for participating in today's event and wish you much continued success in all of your endeavors.*



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