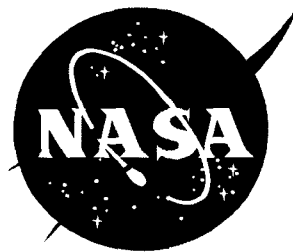

**Building Public Awareness
of
The Vision For Space Exploration**



June 2006

Enclosure

BUILDING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE VISION FOR SPACE EXPLORATION

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Section 1 – Introduction

Coordinated and managed by NASA's Chief of Strategic Communications, the Offices of Education, External Relations, Legislative Affairs, and Public Affairs lead the Agency's activities to conduct outreach and communicate its mission, goals and activities to specific audiences and the general public. The Strategic Communications function was created after President Bush announced the Vision for Space Exploration - the Nation's long-term plan to resume space travel beyond low-Earth orbit and conduct human exploration of the moon, Mars and points beyond. Strategic Communications function is responsible for effectively developing and executing Agency-wide communications strategies and programs in support of NASA's revitalized efforts to utilize the resources of the solar system to benefit life on Earth. NASA's strategic communications goal is to inform, educate and engage stakeholders and the general public to create broad understanding of the importance of taking the next steps in space exploration. Central elements of this strategy involve highlighting the role and importance of the Nation's space exploration program in ensuring U.S. economic and national security and maintaining our Nation's competitiveness through scientific and technical leadership.

Because of its unique and highly visible mission, NASA is mandated by the U.S. Congress through the Space Act of 1958, the statute that created NASA, "to provide for the widest practicable and appropriate dissemination of information concerning its activities and results thereof." Over the years NASA has been proficient in promoting its mission to the public and meeting this explicit mandate from Congress. It has developed a robust and professional communications apparatus that has positioned NASA at the forefront of national and international space activities.

In addition to the Space Act, the Agency is guided by Authorization Acts. The NASA Authorization Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-155) directs the Agency to conduct "a national awareness campaign through various media, including print, radio, television and the Internet, to articulate missions, publicize recent accomplishments and facilitate efforts to encourage young Americans to enter the fields of science, mathematics and engineering to help maintain United States leadership in those fields." The Act further directs NASA to "transmit a plan to the Committee on Science of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation of the Senate describing the activities that will be undertaken as part of the national awareness campaign ... and the expected cost of those activities." This new requirement presents NASA with the challenge to strengthen its communications activities and organization to build greater awareness for the new direction and mission the Vision calls for and achieve wider and more specific results that will contribute to American competitiveness through scientific and technical leadership and greater participation in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields. NASA welcomes this challenge and is taking several steps to meet it within the limits of its budget, resources and government status.

This document provides an overview of NASA's communications efforts and organization, provides a status report on successful news and editorial coverage, and outlines agency plans to meet its future communications commitments.

Section 2 – Present Activities

NASA's strategic communications organizations employ a broad range of programs, products and activities to promote the NASA mission that build and sustain support among the American public and serves to inspire the next generation of students to pursue careers in the STEM fields. Recent accomplishments include:

Print

- In 2005 NASA distributed 590 news releases targeted at print and other news and information outlets. So far in 2006, NASA has distributed 220 releases.
- More than 61,000 print stories were generated during the 2005 calendar year, with nearly 7,000 devoted to STS-114 in July.
- Nearly 21,000 print stories have been generated in 2006.

Radio

- For the first time since 1992, when radio programming was eliminated due to funding cutbacks, NASA has targeted radio as an important medium with which to engage the American public.
- The Agency rolled out a comprehensive radio campaign prior to the launch of STS-114 and continues to target hometown radio stations of NASA astronauts and mission managers.
- NASA now provides digital audio files for use by radio news organizations. These .mp3 files are available on the Agency's Internet portal

Television

- Shortly before Return to Flight, NASA upgraded its aging analog television infrastructure to contemporary digital standards, compressing one satellite transponder into multiple digital channels.
 - One channel is dedicated to support launch and mission operations for the Space Shuttle and International Space Station programs and provides more than 2,500 hours of programming per year.
 - One channel is dedicated to more than 4,760 hours annually for Education programming to schools, museums, and other learning institution.
 - One channel is dedicated to the support of national and international media and provides more than 5,200 hours of material per year.
 - A fourth digital TV channel has been set aside for development as a true "public channel" dedicated to creatively share the excitement and inspiration of NASA's ongoing mission of exploration and discovery.
- Signed an innovative agreement with HDNet to provide high definition television (HDTV) coverage of all space shuttle launches through the program's retirement.

Internet

- NASA's Web Portal, www.nasa.gov, continues to be an immensely popular destination for the public, providing information about the agency's missions and goals with breathtaking images, engaging stories and interactive features.
 - In 2005 and 2006, the site averaged nearly 30 million page views a week, a greater than four-fold increase from the portal's first year, 2003.
 - In continuing surveys www.nasa.gov never finishes any lower than third when compared to all federal government web sites.
- NASA missions during 2005, including the STS-114 Return to Flight and Deep Impact, are among the most widely viewed events in the history of the Internet.
- In December 2005, NASA began podcasting and today averages more than 7,500 downloads per week of Agency-related programming on the Internet.

Strategic Alliances and Education

In consultation with the Office of the General Counsel, the Offices of Public Affairs and Education have successfully negotiated multiple strategic partnerships – Space Act Agreements (SAA) and Memoranda of Understanding -- over the last few years. The power of such internal collaborations strengthens the relationship among the offices and, in the end, provided greater return to the public.

Under the Office of Education's Communication Strategy, center Education Offices are expected to share draft agreements and potential partners with HQ/Office of Education. The intention is not to micro-manage a center's partnerships, but to remain informed and to help link resources, programs, and infrastructures for maximum benefit and value to the public.

Finally, the existing strategic alliances provide an immediate springboard as unfunded collaborators produce, market, and distribute educational information through a focused national education campaign about NASA's projects and programs. A list of existing alliances includes:

- **Bureau of National Guard** – Memorandum of Understanding: use of facilities/equipment for videoconferencing capability. (*NASA Digital Learning Network/HQ*)
- **Regal Entertainment Group** – No cost procurement: alternative means for distribution of :30 and :60 second Kids Science News Network animations. (*NASA's Center for Distance Learning (LaRC) - NASA's Kids Science News Network™*)
- **World Book (WorldBook@NASA)** – Non-reimbursable SAA (*HQ PAO*): World Book Encyclopedia and NASA are working together to provide World Book content to NASA Internet visitors. [*NASA Home page/NASA Education Technology Services (NETS)*]
- **OfficeMax** – Non-reimbursable SAA (*HQ PAO & Educ*): produce, market, and distribute consumer goods and services for the purpose of nationally disseminating

information about NASA's projects and programs. (*CORE, NETS, and NASA Educator Resource Center Network*)

- **NASA Educator Resource Center (ERC) and Regional ERC Network** – 68 Memorandum of Understanding/Agreements between numerous organizations and the NASA field centers. Complete list located at:

http://education.nasa.gov/about/contacts/ERCN_State_Listing.html

- **Nintendo of America (POKEMON)** – Non-reimbursable SAA: Enhance and enrich the teaching and learning of STEM and to leverage student interest in the popular Pokemon Trading Card Game. (*NASA's Center for Distance Learning (LaRC)*)
- **Apple Learning Interchange (ALI)** – Non-reimbursable SAA in production to provide alternative means for NASA education product distribution through video streaming. (*NASA's Center for Distance Learning (LaRC) and ARC*)
- **Society of Women Engineers (SWE)** – Non-reimbursable SAA in production to provide mentoring partner for NASA SCI Files™ (*LaRC*).
- **American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) Foundation** – Non-reimbursable SAA in production for mentoring partner for NASA CONNECT™ (*LaRC*).
- **Columbia Pictures Motion Picture Group and Houghton Mifflin** – Non-reimbursable SAA. Educational materials with focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) concepts and NASA facts in an entertaining, instructional format, and use print, the Web, and video technology to help children, parents, and educators understand the everyday phenomena of our world; and correct misconceptions and answers frequently asked questions about STEM. (*NASA HQ PAO/Edu; NASA's Center for Distance Learning, NASA Digital Learning Network, and NETS*)

Request for Entrepreneurial Opportunities (REO) -- NASA recently announced a new REO seeking one or more unfunded collaborations with organizations that would enhance NASA's ability to achieve its educational goals. Specifically, NASA is seeking proposals for creating and managing innovative activities, events, products, services, or other types of formal or informal education methods for the purpose of disseminating information nationally about NASA's projects and programs.

NASA expects to enter into as many qualified collaborations as possible, without limiting the types or categories of activities, events, products or services considered. However, if multiple offers are received in one particular category or type, NASA may need to select only one offer per category for a specific time period (defined as "limited exclusivity").

Section 3 – Outlook

The Agency continues to enjoy strong support among the American public for its space science and exploration activities.

- Polling data indicating that more than two-thirds of the American public strongly support the space program, crossing all political and economic spectrums, giving NASA a strong starting point for an exploration communications program. In a 2005 Gallup Poll, more than 77 percent of U.S. residents surveyed said they support a new plan for space exploration that would include a stepping-stone approach to return the space shuttle to flight, complete assembly of the International Space Station and build new vehicles to explore the moon, Mars and beyond.
 - *The results had increased from one year earlier, when 68 percent of the public supported such a plan.*
 - *The survey indicated support from 84 percent of Republicans and 77 percent of Democrats.*
 - *About 80 percent of respondents agreed with the statement: “America’s space program helps give America the scientific and technological edge it needs to compete with other nations in the international marketplace.”*
 - *Nearly 73 percent thought NASA’s budget should either remain at about its current level or be increased, with 37 percent advocating increase and 36 percent supporting keeping the current level.*
 - *About 76 percent agreed that the U.S. space program benefits the national economy by inspiring students to pursue careers in the technical fields.*

Section 4 – Enhancing Public Awareness

To enhance awareness of space exploration, the Office of Strategic Communications is working with Agency and mission directorate senior managers to prioritize, schedule, manage and coordinate communications and outreach initiatives in 2006 and beyond. Below are some potential opportunities that the Agency is interested in reviewing within the limits of budget and resources.

Print

- Implement new technologies and services for more targeting of specific print and media outlets, including a new focus on multilingual support and niche media outlets.
- Employ new technologies to proactively make NASA and agency-related experts more readily available to meet reporters’ needs.
- Provide additional support for Editorial Boards and author Op-Ed articles in a comprehensive engagement campaign to inform the public about the Vision for Space Exploration.

Radio

- Expand existing radio campaign through use of digital technology that wasn't available to the agency in 2005 and 2006.

Television

- Identify a commercial or private broadcast partner to develop NASA's public digital television satellite signal in an effort to create a public channel devoted to space exploration.
- Provide HDTV technology to the space shuttle and International Space Station programs so high definition video can originate from space.

Internet

- Launch a redesigned Internet portal based on recent research that will allow the agency to incorporate additional interactive features.
- Implement more technologies to push NASA content to a wider, more web savvy audience.

Section 5 – A Foundation for the Future

NASA is at a critical juncture in its history. The Agency is fortunate to possess a clear vision and mission and, at the same time, faced with the challenge of aligning its efforts and resources to accomplish this new mission. NASA is currently engaged in an effort to align mission support functions strategically to the long term goals set forth in the Vision for Space Exploration. For Strategic Communications, that means developing an implementation plan that coordinates the various resources across the Agency into a sustained, targeted, efficient communications effort.

An Implementation Planning Team (IPT) for strategic communications has begun that process by developing goals and objectives for an Agency-wide integrated plan. This IPT addresses the need to ensure our stakeholders are actively involved and engaged. The full process will include setting goals and objectives for strategic communications, developing performance measures, evaluating organizational structure and funding gaps, identifying areas at risk and remediation strategies.

The following goals and objectives are a critical start to developing a comprehensive public awareness campaign that is aligned with the strategic goals of the Vision for Space Exploration and incorporates an agency-wide approach to the communications process. NASA will be updating this effort over the next weeks and months and will continue to keep the Congress abreast of all new developments and actions that impact its public awareness effectiveness.

Mission Support Goal (Strategic Communications): Inform, educate, and engage stakeholders and the general public on the importance of U.S. leadership in space exploration to economic competitiveness, national security, and science and technological leadership.

A central tenet to achieving this goal is finding and exploiting synergies among the different Strategic Communications functional offices to ensure a well-coordinated and orchestrated approach to communicating the NASA story.

Functional Goal (Communication): Effectively communicate about NASA programs and activities to media, key stakeholders and the general public.

a. Objective: Develop an integrated communications approach that effectively coordinates resources, information and activities across NASA mission support offices, Mission Directorates and Centers.

Objective: Build internal communication mechanisms aimed at building understanding and support for NASA's exploration mission among NASA employees.

b. Objective: Establish media partnerships that leverage unique resources and audiences to increase awareness of NASA activities.

c. Objective: Develop a comprehensive strategic messaging structure that effectively educates target audiences about the benefits of the Vision for Space Exploration.

Functional Goal (Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations): Develop strong support in Congress and among state and local leadership for the national goal to explore space.

a. Objective: Secure required budgetary resources for the national priorities of space exploration, scientific discovery and aeronautics research.

b. Objective: Work to educate members of Congress on the benefits of U.S. leadership in space.

c. Objective: Strengthen strategic relationships with state and local elected officials.

Functional Goal (Partnerships): Develop strategic partnerships with other space-faring nations and intergovernmental organizations, industry, and other federal agencies aimed at leveraging resources, increasing efficiencies and promoting innovation in support of pursuing the Nation's space exploration goals.

a. Objective: Facilitate international participation in the Vision for Space Exploration.

b. Objective: Enhance support for NASA interagency activities and NASA Federal Advisory Committees.

c. Objective: Build coalitions among key stakeholders including: industry representatives, trade associations, and third party organizations such as think tanks and interest groups.

Functional Goal (Education): Contribute to our Nation's efforts in achieving excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education through NASA's comprehensive Agency education portfolio implemented by the Office of Education, the Mission Directorates, and the NASA Field Centers.

- a. Objective: Provide opportunities for post-secondary students to engage in authentic NASA-related, mission based R&D activities.

- b. Objective: Provide curricular support materials that use NASA themes and content to a) enhance student skills and proficiency in STEM disciplines; b) inform students about STEM career opportunities; c) communicate information about NASA mission activities.

- c. Objective: Provide K-12 students with authentic first hand opportunities to participate in NASA mission activities, thus inspiring interest in STEM disciplines and careers.

- d. Objective: Provide informal education support materials that use NASA, themes and content to a) enhance participant skills and proficiency in STEM disciplines; b) inform participants about STEM career opportunities; c) communicate information about NASA mission activities.