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NASA Policy Directive

NPD 7120.4CEffective Date: December 06, 1999
Expiration Date: September 30, 2008**COMPLIANCE IS MANDATORY**[Printable Format \(PDF\)](#)

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Subject: Program/Project Management

Responsible Office: Office of the Chief Engineer[Policy for Improvement in Execution of Program Management Responsibilities, NM 7120-3.](#)

1. POLICY

a. Purpose

This NASA Policy Directive (NPD) describes the management system by which NASA shall formulate, approve, implement, and evaluate all programs and projects established for safe development and operation of aeronautical and space ground and flight systems and technologies. This management system is intended to be flexible, adaptable, and tailorable to the many types of programs and projects that NASA manages. A more extensive description of the management system requirements is provided in the NASA Procedural Requirements (NPR) 7120.5.

b. Definitions

NASA programs are activities within an Enterprise that have defined goals, objectives, requirements, and funding levels. Programs may consist of one or more projects. Projects are significant activities within a program having defined goals, objectives, requirements, life-cycle cost estimates, a beginning, and an end.

c. Scope

NASA shall undertake only programs and projects whose objectives are clearly articulated and consistent with its Strategic Plan and for which cost, schedule, and content commitment can be made. Programs and projects that develop and operate aeronautical and space ground and flight systems and technologies shall be planned and executed using risk management decision processes including safety and security of personnel, systems and assets.

d. Oversight

NASA shall have a system of Governing Program Management Councils (GPMC) responsible for assessing program and project formulation and implementation, and providing oversight and direction. Programs shall be endorsed by the Agency Program Management Council and approved by the NASA Administrator. Programs shall report to the Agency Program Management Council, unless delegated to a lower level GPMC. Projects shall report to the Lead Center Program Management Council unless selected for oversight by the Agency Program Management Council, or delegated to a lower level GPMC.

e. Process

NASA programs and projects shall follow four standard subprocesses: formulation, approval, implementation, and evaluation.

(1) Formulation:

The purpose of the formulation subprocess is to develop a program or project concept and define a plan for implementation to meet mission objectives or technology goals specified in either the NASA or Enterprise Strategic Plans. Program Formulation shall be initiated through a Formulation Authorization Document (FAD). The products of the Program formulation subprocess shall be the proposed Program Commitment Agreement (PCA) and Program Plan. Project formulation shall be initiated as defined in the Program Plan. The product of Project formulation shall

be a proposed Project Plan.

(2) Approval:

The purpose of the approval subprocess is to decide on a program/project's readiness to proceed from formulation to implementation. This subprocess shall be conducted by the GPMC. The products of this subprocess shall be the approved PCA and Program/Project Plans including revisions based on safety, budgetary, technical issues, or strategic redirection. The GPMC shall continue oversight of the program/project after approval. The Administrator is the sole authority to approve new programs.

(3) Implementation:

The purpose of the implementation subprocess is to execute the approved program and project(s). The implementation subprocess shall deliver program and project products and capabilities, within approved resources, that meet the needs of the customer.

(4) Evaluation:

The purpose of the evaluation subprocess is to provide an independent assessment of the ability of the program or project to meet its technical and programmatic commitments. The evaluation subprocess shall ensure the benefits of peer experiences and provide opportunities for customer participation. The evaluation subprocess shall occur throughout the program or project to ensure the successful completion of the formulation, approval, and implementation subprocesses. This subprocess provides recommendations for proceeding with, modifying, or terminating the program or project.

f. Termination

Whenever a program/project is in jeopardy of being unable to meet its commitments within the predefined criteria, it may be subject to a termination review by the Governing Program Management Council (GPMC). Criteria for a termination review shall be specified in the Program Commitment Agreement.

g. Tailoring

Tailoring is the documentation and approval of the adaptation of the process and requirements specified in NPR 7120.5 to specific program or project needs. The results of this activity shall be documented in the PCA, Program Plan, and/or Project Plan. All programs and projects shall comply with requirements established by pertinent statute, regulations, OMB Circulars, Executive Orders, and Agency Directives. Program and project managers shall assess all process activities and requirements, and may tailor them to the specific needs of the program/project consistent with program/project size, complexity, criticality, and risk.

2. APPLICABILITY

This NPD is applicable to NASA Headquarters and NASA Centers, including Component Facilities, and to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory to the extent specified in the contract.

3. AUTHORITY

42 U.S.C. 2473(c)(1), Section 203(c)(1) of the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958, as amended.

4. REFERENCES

- a. NPD 1000.1, Strategic Plan.
- b. NPR 1000.2, NASA Strategic Management System
- c. NPR 1000.3, The NASA Organization
- d. NPR 7120.5, NASA Program and Project Management Processes and Requirements

5. RESPONSIBILITY

Program/Project management responsibility in NASA spans the management chain from the Administrator through the Associate Deputy Administrator, Associate Administrators, Center Directors, Program Managers, Project Managers, and other line management officials, all of whom are responsible for the implementation of this NPD. Specific responsibilities are identified in NPR 1000.2, NPR 1000.3, and NPR 7120.5.

6. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

None

7. MEASUREMENTS

The Chief Engineer will establish Process Metrics for inclusion into the Agency's Performance Plan to evaluate the successful implementation of this policy.

8. CANCELLATION

NPD 7120.4B dated December 6, 1999.

**Revalidated December 6, 2004, original signed by
/s/ Sean O'Keefe
Administrator**

ATTACHMENT A: (TEXT)

None

(URL for Graphic)

None

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