

Executive Summary: NASA Participatory Exploration Policy Recommendations

Participatory exploration was first introduced in 2007 at the NASA Participatory Exploration Summit at Ames Research Center and was prioritized into the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 (H.R. 6063), highlighting its necessity to NASA's continued public relevance in the 21st century. Participatory exploration can be thought of as a way of "aggregating and leveraging people's contributions in ways that are useful to other people."

Participatory exploration can help NASA with some of its most pressing challenges, including the changing demographics of the workforce, the effects of globalization, the need to keep pace with accelerating technological innovations, flagging public interest in NASA's work, and the need to accomplish an increasingly audacious mission with increasingly limited resources. NASA has begun to explore participatory exploration; however, there are also many challenges to overcome. Below is a list of specific recommendations:

Eliminate the obstacles to working with the public

- Encourage open-source adoption
- Leverage the re-competition of NASA's website
- Implement single sign-on

Increase the availability of NASA knowledge and data

- Create open APIs for NASA data
- Improve internal knowledge-sharing between technical and business groups
- Develop a rich, extensible, and user-editable directory of employee information
- Implement categories and "tagging" on all NASA web content
- Provide hosting for open, public research notes
- Refine policies on controlled sensitive space-related information
- Streamline information release policies
- Encourage participatory exploration early in a mission as a Level-1 requirement

Modify communication practices:

- Integrate participatory exploration into the Agency's Strategic Communications Strategy
- Encourage open publication of all internal Agency communications
- Deploy industry proven Web 2.0 communication tools and processes agency-wide
- Benchmark against successful organizations that have adopted Web 2.0 strategies
- Provide a structure to train employees to interact with newly-contacted communities
- Consider corporate blogging and community-building skills when hiring staff
- Build and create formal processes to leverage voluntary collaborative communities
- Highlight and build on examples of successful crowdsourcing at NASA
- Open up IT ports for utilizing collaborative tools on internal NASA networks
- Avoid over-defining the use of web tools through policy

Ensure support for widespread implementation of participatory exploration:

- Create a Participatory Exploration Group at NASA Headquarters
- Encourage relevant initiatives at the Center level
- Provide a budget to create the necessary infrastructure and community