The goal of this topic is to enable the optimization of investments made in technologies for the development of systems to support and maintain space-based industries and for benefiting NASA’s exploration mission infrastructures. As stated in the Report of the President’s Commission on Implementation of United States Space Exploration Policy, “This new space industry will reduce the cycle time for critical technology innovation. It will immeasurably augment NASA’s ability to explore the universe.” It is anticipated that, in order to go to the Moon and beyond, a sizable in-space commercial infrastructure will be required. NASA will need this commercially driven infrastructure to build upon in order to further exploration that is affordable and sustainable. This topic seeks breakthrough technologies, concepts, and methods that reduce the cost and risks of the expansion of space-based industries. Innovative approaches are needed that identify what the space-based industries might be doing and their needed infrastructures as well as the technologies required to achieve the infrastructures.

Subtopics

X14.01 Space-Based Industries

Innovative techno-economic research proposals are sought for space-based industries ideas that identify their purpose, basic required infrastructures, and how they might complement NASA's exploration missions. The Phase 1 work must sufficiently develop one or more industry ideas to show they are sufficiently feasible, both technically and economically, for Phase 2 demonstrations of their viability. The demonstrations may use physical and mathematical modeling and other research techniques. Each industry idea may have infrastructures that include a wide variety of needed innovations that will be common to NASA's exploration goals as well as to space industries that have a wide variety of purposes like tourism, servicing and maintenance of satellites, food production, energy production, fuels and propellants production, entertainment, in-space fabrication, workshops, hotels and habitats, life support systems, vehicles, freight and warehousing, roads, and spaceports. The research should include economic business models, cost feasibility examination, and analyses that can show how innovations that are common to the multiple goals can save money for NASA as well as space industries. The technical innovations may include, but are not limited to: materials, fabrication processes, power and power distribution, communications, waste management, robotic support, and more. It is expected that the technical innovative ideas will go further than the specific exploration topics and subtopics requests made elsewhere in this 2005 solicitation due to the broader scope of applications.
The purpose of this subtopic is to develop technologies, methodologies, and tools that can support the integrated development of the software system-of-systems necessary for exploration missions. Human space flight challenges many areas of software technology, including distributed data management and control, sensor interpretation, planning and scheduling, modeling and simulation, and validation and verification of autonomous systems. This subtopic focuses on the development portion of the mission life cycle and the dependence of the eventual mission solutions on the processes and methods used to define and build vehicles and support operations. The need for such technologies, methodologies, and tools is evidenced by the low success rate of commercial and government systems, where failure occurs at delivery rather than during operation. Management of the development of such large systems is essential to integration.

The challenges of human system integration for exploration missions is strongly affected by the structure and architecture of the software systems required to provide control and status pathways to ground support systems and personnel; to support mission planning and operation; to provide crew interfaces for status, control, and operation of the vehicle systems, science, and operations, including communications, planning, task management, interpersonal activity, system configuration management, inventory, food, workflow, resource management, experiments, and vehicle operation and maintenance. Onboard software must integrate, and be interoperable with the ground support systems for planning, logistics, operations, science, medical, and engineering, as well as with subsequent exploration spirals. This requires the development of structures and methods for determining relative benefits, risks, and costs of the utilization of various engineering approaches. Project management tools are needed that can conduct and manage Exploration Mission capability and technology gap analysis; provide technology-to-capability mapping; map technology gaps to research initiatives; and provide decision support.

There is a need for new tools to support the development of non-avionic control systems throughout the program life cycle. This includes tools for managing prototyping, requirements, design, design knowledge capture, testing, and growth and maintenance across multiple development teams. Particular emphasis is placed on design methods that address the interdependencies between systems. Adapting the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) approach to systems engineering requires development of tools and methodologies that enable: surveys of current information integration practices between ground-based systems, on-board systems and crew systems; goal analysis (software task analysis); surveys of existing and proposed technologies; mapping of technology to tasks; prototyping to drive out design constraints and detailed requirements; development of testing and evaluation criteria for advanced or untried architectures and technologies and maturation of those technologies into an integrated system of systems; tracking lessons learned, methods, and processes; and development of an experienced personnel base.

Research should be conducted to demonstrate technical feasibility during the Phase 1 contract and show a path toward a Phase 2 demonstration. The contractor will, when possible, deliver a demonstration unit of the hardware and software for NASA testing before the completion of the Phase 2 contract.