



NASA SBIR 2014 Phase I Solicitation

S4.01 Planetary Entry, Descent and Landing Technology

Lead Center: JPL

Participating Center(s): ARC, JSC, LaRC

NASA seeks innovative sensor technologies to enhance success for entry, descent and landing (EDL) operations on missions to Mars. This call is not for sensor processing algorithms. Sensing technologies are desired that determine the entry point of the spacecraft in the Mars atmosphere; provide inputs to systems that control spacecraft trajectory, speed, and orientation to the surface; locate the spacecraft relative to the Martian surface; evaluate potential hazards at the landing site; and determine when the spacecraft has touched down. Appropriate sensing technologies for this subtopic should provide measurements of physical forces or properties that support some aspect of EDL operations. NASA also seeks to use measurements made during EDL to better characterize the Martian atmosphere, providing data for improving atmospheric modeling for future landers. Proposals are invited for innovative sensor technologies that improve the reliability of EDL operations.

Products or technologies are sought that can be made compatible with the environmental conditions of spaceflight, the rigors of landing on the Martian surface, and planetary protection requirements. Successful candidate sensor technologies can address this call by:

- Providing critical measurements during the entry phase (e.g., pressure and/or temperature sensors embedded into the aeroshell).
- Improving the accuracy of measurements needed for guidance decisions (e.g., surface relative velocities, altitudes, orientation, localization).
- Extending the range over which such measurements are collected (e.g., providing a method of imaging through the aeroshell or terrain-relative navigation that does not require imaging through the aeroshell).
- Enhancing situational awareness during landing by identifying hazards (rocks, craters, slopes) and/or providing indications of approach velocities and touchdown.
- Substantially reducing the amount of external processing needed to calculate the measurements.
- Significantly reducing the impact of incorporating such sensors on the spacecraft in terms of volume, mass, placement, or cost.
- For a sample-return mission, monitoring local environmental (weather) conditions on the surface prior to landing of a "fetch" rover or launch of a planetary ascent vehicle, via appropriate low-mass sensors.

Proposals should show an understanding of one or more relevant science needs and present a feasible plan to fully develop a technology and infuse it into a NASA program.