



NASA SBIR 2017 Phase I Solicitation

S3.01 Power Generation and Conversion

Lead Center: GRC

Participating Center(s): ARC, JPL, JSC

Technology Area: TA3 Space Power and Energy Storage

Future NASA science missions will employ Earth orbiting spacecraft, planetary spacecraft, balloons, aircraft, surface assets, and marine craft as observation platforms. Proposals are solicited to develop advanced power-generation and conversion technologies to enable or enhance the capabilities of future science missions. Requirements for these missions are varied and include long life, high reliability, significantly lower mass and volume, higher mass specific power, and improved efficiency over the state of practice for components and systems. Other desired capabilities are high radiation tolerance and the ability to operate in extreme environments (high and low temperatures and over wide temperature ranges).

While power-generation technology affects a wide range of NASA missions and operational environments, technologies that provide substantial benefits for key mission applications/capabilities are being sought in the following areas:

Photovoltaic Energy Conversion

Photovoltaic cell, blanket, and array technologies that lead to significant improvements in overall solar array performance (i.e., conversion efficiency >33%, array mass specific power >300watts/kilogram, decreased stowed volume, reduced initial and recurring cost, long-term operation in high radiation environments, high power arrays, and a wide range of space environmental operating conditions) are solicited. Photovoltaic technologies that provide enhancing and/or enabling capabilities for a wide range of aerospace mission applications will be considered. Technologies that address specific NASA Science mission needs include:

- Photovoltaic cell and blanket technologies capable of low intensity, low-temperature operation applicable to outer planetary (low solar intensity) missions.
- Photovoltaic cell, blanket and array technologies capable of enhancing solar array operation in a high intensity, high-temperature environment (i.e., inner planetary and solar probe-type missions).
- Solar arrays to support Extreme Environments Solar Power type missions, including long-lived, radiation tolerant, cell and blanket technologies capable of operating in environments characterized by varying degrees of light intensity and temperature.
- Lightweight solar array technologies applicable to science missions using solar electric propulsion. Current science missions being studied require solar arrays that provide 1 to 20 kilowatts of power at 1 AU, greater than 300 watts/kilogram specific power, operation in the range of 0.7 to 3 AU, low stowed volume, and the ability to provide operational array voltages up to 300 volts.

Stirling Power Conversion

Advances in, but not limited to, the following:

- Novel Stirling convertor configurations that provide high efficiency (>25%), low mass, long life (>10 yrs), and high reliability for use in 100-500 We Stirling radioisotope generators.
- Advanced Stirling convertor components including hot-end heat exchangers, cold-end heat exchangers, regenerators, linear alternators, engine controllers, and radiators.
- Innovative Stirling generator features that improve the fault tolerance (e.g., heat source backup cooling devices, mechanical balancers) or expand the mission applications (e.g., duplex power and cooling systems).

Direct Energy Conversion

Advances in, but not limited to, the following:

Recent advancements in alpha/beta-voltaic energy conversion devices have the potential to increase the power level, improve reliability, and increase the lifetime of this power technology. The increased use of cubesat/smallsat technology and autonomous remote sensors in support of NASA Science Mission goals has demonstrated the need for low-power, non-solar energy sources. The area of Direct Energy Conversion seeks technology advancements that address, but are not limited to:

- Experimental demonstration of long life (multiyear) alpha-voltaic and beta-voltaic devices with device-level conversion efficiencies in excess of 10%, high reliability, minimal operational performance degradation, and the ability to scale up to 1-10 W of electrical power output with system-level specific power of 5 W/kg or higher.