



Office of the Administrator

Mary W. Jackson NASA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546-0001

December 2, 2022

NPS 1001.105

TO: Officials-in-Charge of Headquarters Offices
Directors, NASA Centers
NASA Acquisition Workforce

FROM: Deputy Administrator and Chief Acquisition Officer

SUBJECT: NASA Chief Acquisition Officer's Intent

As we reflect with pride on the amazing accomplishments of the last year across the Agency, we are also looking ahead to not just another exciting year but an exciting decade ahead of us. Last month, NASA released our refined Moon to Mars Objectives that will chart our future together in deep space. These objectives represent an unparalleled development effort ahead: never has humanity endeavored to simultaneously architect multinational infrastructures in lunar orbit, on the lunar surface, and at Mars. The Mars Sample Return mission will attempt a breathtakingly complex set of activities with our international partners to return the first samples from Mars to Earth. We look forward to the continued safe operations of science aboard the International Space Station while working with new partners in unprecedented ways to prepare for Commercial Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) Destinations. An array of ambitious technical demonstrations in both the Space Technology Mission Directorate and the Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate—including the first flight of two X-planes in the next year—will provide the underpinnings for both NASA's technical needs and the needs of our commercial partners.

Underscoring the success of these ambitious activities—and the delivery of NASA's numerous other complex missions—is the need to identify, design, and implement innovative and rigorous acquisition approaches, solutions, and tools that are aligned with best practices. In addition, we need to ensure that we have a trained and proficient NASA acquisition workforce that is empowered to advance these efforts. Our stakeholders increasingly demand of us not just technical excellence but excellence in delivery of programs and projects; this is essential to our mission as almost 80 percent of the Agency's budget goes to procurements. The purpose of this memo is to communicate my key acquisition priorities for the Agency in order to deliver our mission.

Consistent with NASA Policy Directive 1000.5C, NASA acquisition encompasses the end-to-end activities that allow the Agency to obtain or advance the development of systems, research, services, construction, and supplies to fulfill the Agency's mission and statutory objectives. This holistic view includes the full gamut of how we “obtain,” through our use of acquisition instruments such as Federal Acquisition Regulation-based procurements, financial assistance, and Space Act agreements and how we “advance,” through our program and project insight and oversight.

To strengthen our acquisition efforts and outcomes, under my authority as the Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO),¹ I charge NASA Officials-in-Charge and leaders to ensure resource and workforce alignment with the following priorities:

Acquisition Innovation and Rigor: In August of 2021, I directed the formation of an internal Acquisition Tiger Team to: 1) review the Agency's acquisition processes, and 2) make recommendations to strengthen performance. Based on the findings of the Tiger Team, the Agency, under the direction of the Associate Administrator, implemented several initiatives to improve acquisition for our missions, including: establishing the Chief Program Management Officer (CPMO) to fortify our program and project management policies, practices, and development; conducting regular leadership review of Category 1 projects, which represent the highest risk projects in our portfolio; and strengthening the Acquisition Strategy Council by broadening its membership to include Mission Directorate Associate Administrators, establishing a two-year forecast, enabling decision framing meetings, updating policy guidance, and enhancing decisional documentation.

Building on these efforts, our acquisition efforts will prioritize the following:

- **Strengthening our Acquisition Insight:** The complexity of our acquisition efforts necessitates that NASA consider all available solutions and tools and seek new ways of generating insights in a timely fashion without burdening the programs. Under the leadership of the Assistant Administrator for Procurement (dual-hatted as the Agency's Deputy CAO), the CPMO, the Chief Financial Officer, and the General Counsel, in partnership with Center and Mission Directorate leaders, we must look for new ways to use the immense amount of data we gather to understand the marketplace and the performance of our vendors.
- **Strengthening our Acquisition Oversight:** Under the guidance of the Associate Administrator, the Assistant Administrator for Procurement/Deputy CAO and the CPMO will work in concert with the Senior Technical Advisor to the Associate Administrator and the Office of the Executive Secretariat to strengthen our existing governance councils and policies. This includes setting clear expectations for framing decisional meetings and utilizing data and evidence to support recommendations. Decisional outcomes will be documented and tracked, aligning expectations prior to execution of acquisition activity and development of the procurement strategy.
- **Strengthening our Acquisition Performance:** NASA has developed a robust set of policies and best practices to ensure the greatest chance of successfully realizing our mission goals within schedule and budget constraints. I continue to be impressed with the cross-pollination of best practices among and between our Mission Directorates and Centers. By promoting consistency in how we apply these management policies across mission areas and implement performance metrics informed by proven analytical techniques, NASA will strive to strengthen its project management performance. This includes initiatives such as enhanced project performance early warning signals, an emphasis on commitments made at Key Decision Points, a relook at the independent review process, and a focus on the program and project management community of practice.

¹The role of the Chief Acquisition Officer is outlined in 41 USC Section 1702(b).

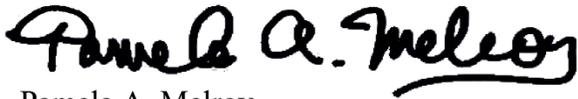
- **Increasing Equity in Procurement and Financial Assistance:** As highlighted in [NASA's 2022 Equity Action Plan](#), a key avenue for promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility is through NASA's purchasing power. NASA leaders within the Offices of Procurement and Small Business Programs, and the Centers and Mission Directorates, will continue to assess our programs and address barriers to doing business with NASA. Underserved and underrepresented communities must have the same access to information and opportunities as other industry partners to compete for NASA contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements. Similarly, I charge the acquisition community to engage in outreach activities to ensure fair, impartial access and representation for all those who seek to contribute to our Nation's great work in space.

Workforce and Culture: NASA's acquisition workforce is unparalleled in the Government. To continue to improve our acquisition management, it is imperative to invest in our workforce and to cultivate their expertise by creating Agency-wide communities of practice with access to the most up-to-date tools, networks, and best practices. It is a NASA acquisition priority to promote greater collaboration, consistency, use of tools, and access to training across NASA functions, including procurement, finance, legal, program management, program planning and control (PP&C) and others, that collectively enable our acquisition mission. Alongside honing our technical skills, NASA will continue to foster a culture of engagement, encouraging honest communication, knowledge sharing, collaborative problem solving across disciplines, and data-driven decision making. We will pursue the following approaches to advance and optimize the capability of the workforce charged with planning, overseeing, and executing NASA's acquisitions:

- **Empowering the Project Management Workforce:** We will develop and foster communities of practice within the procurement, project management, and PP&C disciplines. These communities of practice will develop and share best practices, lessons learned, data access, and tool implementation techniques. We will also invest in software and tools so that practitioners from disparate parts of the Agency can easily access shared repositories of project information, handbooks and guidance documents, and data. These workforce networks must foster an understanding of NASA's policies, best practices, and planning tools and must aid in easing and streamlining our acquisition workforce's execution and oversight of hardware and services.
- **Encouraging a Culture of Engagement and Transparency:** The breadth and diversity of expertise and experience among our workforce is one of NASA's greatest strengths. As we steward increasingly complex projects and programs forward, we need those diverse perspectives to be heard to inform critical decisions. To that end, I charge our Mission Directorate Associate Administrators, Center Directors, and other Officials-in-Charge and senior leaders to: 1) promote a culture that fosters and values honest communication, open engagement, independent review, and active discussion in meetings; 2) encourage data-driven activities that enable productive discussions; and 3) ensure access across organizational levels, and with technical authorities, to allow for open multidisciplinary discussions of issues with the potential to impact mission success.

As leaders of NASA, I appreciate each of you engaging on this critically important subject and working with your teams to strengthen our acquisition activity. The strength and agility of NASA's acquisition management and practices, and the capability of our acquisition workforce, are critical to enabling the success of NASA's complex missions and meeting the myriad expectations of our stakeholders, partners, and the Nation.

In addition, I invite employees to submit their ideas or feedback for acquisition improvement to me, the Associate Administrator, and the Deputy Chief Acquisition Officer at hq-dl-cao-acq-improvements@mail.nasa.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela A. Melroy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent underline under the last name.

Pamela A. Melroy