



## Science Mission Directorate Policy

### Policy and Requirements for SMD Communications for Flight Missions

#### SMD Policy Document SPD-26

Recommended by SMD Science Management Council,

Approved by SMD Associate Administrator,

Responsible SMD Official: Director, Science Engagement & Partnerships

Responsible Office of Communications Official: SMD Senior Public Affairs Officer

#### **1. Overview**

This policy defines roles and responsibilities for all public communication activities related to NASA Science Mission Directorate's flight missions. NASA defines communications as a comprehensive set of activities to effectively convey, and provide an understanding and inspiration about NASA's work, its objectives and benefits to target audiences, the public and other stakeholders, including NASA employees. These efforts are intended to promote interest and foster participation in NASA's endeavors and to develop exposure to - and appreciation for - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). This diverse, broad, and integrated set of activities includes media products and services, multimedia products and services (including Web, social media and non-technical publications), and public engagement (outreach) activities and events.

Public communications that reference "NASA", "Science Mission Directorate", the name of the mission, the activities of the mission, or specific mission roles (mission project manager, principal investigator, etc.) are considered to be mission-related and are covered by this policy.

This policy does not cover technical communications directed primarily at the scientific and technical community including scientific papers, technical reports, and web sites serving mission data and other technical information.

#### **2. Requirements**

NASA's communications activities are governed by the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1213 - Release of Information to News and Information Media. The following language from section 1213.103 is specifically related to this policy:

(j) All NASA-funded missions will have a public affairs plan, approved by the Assistant Administrator for Public Affairs, which will be managed by Headquarters and/or a designated NASA Center.

(k) Public affairs activities for NASA-funded missions will not be managed by non-NASA institutions, unless authorized by the Assistant Administrator for Public Affairs.

The scope of NASA's communications programs and how they are reviewed, approved, and managed are governed by NASA documents NPD and NPR 7120.5E, NPD 1380, NPD 1388.1, and the SMD Management Handbook. This Science Policy Document supplements these documents to provide SMD-specific policies and requirements.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### NASA Center or JPL Office of Communications

Each flight mission must utilize the communications office of a NASA center or JPL to manage the communications plan and activities. Missions managed by a NASA center or JPL will assign the management role to that center's communications office. For missions not managed by a NASA center or JPL, the center where the program office resides will fill the communications management role.

These communications offices will be responsible for leading, coordinating, and executing mission communications activities -- in coordination with the mission's Principal Investigator (PI) for PI-led missions -- and with approval of Headquarters SMD and Office of Communications.

#### Principal Investigators

For PI-led missions, the PI fills a challenging, multidisciplinary role which demands excellent communication, team building, and management skills. The PI is a key spokesperson for the mission -- along with NASA officials -- and is integral in communicating mission updates, science, and new discoveries.

The PI provides content, analysis, and context for communication campaigns and news stories. In keeping with NASA's communications goals, this content should convey an understanding of the mission, its objectives and benefits to target audiences, the public, and other stakeholders.

The PI will coordinate with the designated NASA center communications office for all mission-related communications activities. The PI, or his or her designee, shall review all news releases issued for the mission. In case of incompatible views, NASA will have final decision on release of public products, while ensuring that scientific and technical information remains accurate and unfiltered.

#### NASA Headquarters

NASA Headquarters personnel provide the necessary oversight and funding for communications in accordance with NASA and SMD policies.

### **4. Funding Requirements**

Mission-related communications are funded from the project budget directly through the NASA center but are not within the PI's mission cost cap. Funding for communications activities prior to mission confirmation must be approved by the SMD Division Director.

## 5. Development and Approval of Mission Communications Plans

The assigned Center's communications office will develop the mission communications plan, in cooperation with the project and PI, in accordance with the following guidance.

- The communications plan must be developed during Phase B of the mission. The plan must include topline messaging, target audiences, and media processes linked to reaching target audiences and associated detailed budgets, milestones, metrics and timelines, and reporting requirements.
- The approved communications plan is a required product for KDP-C. Approval is provided by the SMD Science Division Director, the Associate Administrator for the Office of Communications or the SMD Senior Public Affairs Officer, and the SMD Director, Science Engagement & Partnerships.
- A communications plan for extended missions must be submitted following the Division's Senior Review. The approval process is the same as outlined above for prime missions.

Approved:

  
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John M. Grunsfeld  
Associate Administrator  
for Science Mission Directorate

29 SEPTEMBER 2015  
Date