

24th SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE ACTIVITY AND SOCIETY (E5)
Space Technologies - Earth Applications (3)

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LAUNCH SUSTAINABILITY FORUMS SEEK NOVEL INNOVATIONS

Abstract

Sparks fly when innovative thinkers join together to address critical issues — like solving the world’s sustainability problems. Think of what we can ignite when the sustainability community embraces the connection between Earth and space?

LAUNCH, is just this kind of innovative collaboration ignition. LAUNCH: Collaborative Genius for a Better World, is a unique initiative formed with NASA, USAID, Department of State, and NIKE to identify technology solutions to the world’s most urgent sustainability challenges. We identify innovations poised to create transformational change in critical sustainability issues, and connect innovators to 30-40 thought leaders and advisors. After each forum, we work with the innovators to take recommendations compiled during the 2-day at the Forum, and implement the recommendations through the LAUNCH Accelerator to help propel the innovations toward success.

NASA’s problem-solving expertise and the convening power of the NASA brand enables us to host a crucial conversation about transformative technologies that may solve problems we share as global citizens on and off this planet. Not only can NASA promote innovative solutions for the problems facing humanity, we have an opportunity to demonstrate the relevance between the extreme environment of space and constrained resources on Earth, while creating new ways of conducting public-private partnerships that other government agencies can follow.

We, in the space industry, must learn to engage our fellow humans in their passion languages – with engagements that feel real and meaningful. Sustainability is a passion language – a core connection between what our fellow citizens care about, and what we do in space. LAUNCH offers NASA a chance to speak this language in conversations where none existed before within niche sustainability circles. This non-traditional participatory engagement approach lets us share the sustainability story of space exploration while allowing participants to make personal, unique connections between human existence in the extreme environment of space and gravity-bound realities of citizens living on this planet. As thought leaders in their fields, LAUNCH participants share these insights and experiences back home within their communities.

To date, NASA hosted four topic-specific forums with ten innovators for each of the sustainability topics: Water, Health, Energy, and Beyond Waste. Looking forward to LAUNCH 2020, we’re shifting to a materials systems innovation approach. By September 2013, we will have selected an additional 10 innovators with low-impact materials solutions. This paper will highlight several of the innovators who have potential to test their solutions in space.