

## BUSINESS INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM (E6)

Encouragement of Government Purchasing from Commercial Providers: Models and Examples (1)

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## THE COTS PARADIGM AS A MODEL FOR GOVERNMENT/COMMERCIAL ENGAGEMENT

**Abstract**

NASA's Commercial Orbital Transportation Services project, or "COTS", has repeatedly been held up as an example of a highly efficient and innovative engagement between the government and commercial enterprise. As such, it represents a model for future programs, offering NASA the opportunity to achieve more within existing budgets while minimizing financial risk to the government and strengthening the domestic aerospace industrial base. This paradigm shows the way forward toward an era in which space exploration is not exclusively funded by tax-payer dollars, but rather a government-commercial partnership in which costs, risks and rewards are more equally shared. This should ultimately sustain a much larger and more robust space industry than is currently possible under government sponsorship.

Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) is preparing to complete the final milestones of their COTS Agreement including a demonstration mission to deliver cargo to ISS and return cargo to Earth. This will immediately be followed by operational cargo missions under the Commercial Resupply Services contract (CRS). This paper will describe the distinguishing features and benefits of the COTS paradigm. Lesson-learned from SpaceX's perspective as it approaches completion of this project will be outlined along with observations and experiences. Finally, applicability of the paradigm to future programs will be discussed.