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INVESTMENT IN OPEN INNOVATION SERVICE PROVIDERS: NASA’S INNOVATIVE STRATEGY  
FOR SOLVING SPACE EXPLORATION CHALLENGES

**Abstract**

In an effort to expand routes for open communication and create additional opportunities for public involvement with NASA’s Open Innovation Service Provider (OISP), methodologies have been incorporated as a tool in NASA’s problem solving strategy. NASA engaged the services of two OISP providers, InnoCentive and Yet2.com, to test this novel approach and its feasibility in solving NASA’s spaceflight challenges. The OISPs were chosen based on multiple factors including: network size and knowledge area span, established process, methodology, experience base, and cost. InnoCentive and Yet2.com each met the desired criteria; however, each company’s approach to Open Innovation is distinctly different. InnoCentive focuses on posting individual challenges to an established web-based network of 200,000 solvers; viable solutions are sought and granted a financial award if found. Based on a specific technological need, Yet2.com acts as a “talent scout” providing a broad external network of experts as potential collaborators to NASA. A relationship can be established with these contacts to develop technologies and/or maintained as an established network of future collaborators. The results from the first phase of the pilot study have shown great promise for long-term efficacy of utilizing the OISP methodologies. Solution proposals have been received for the challenges posted on InnoCentive and are currently under review for final disposition. In addition, Yet2.com has identified new external partners for NASA and we are in the process of understanding and acting upon these new opportunities. Compared to NASA’s traditional routes for external problem solving, the OISP methodologies offered NASA a substantial savings in terms of time and resources invested. In addition, these strategies will help NASA extend beyond its current borders to build an ever expanding network of experts and global solvers.