

BUSINESS INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM (E6)

New space individuals, projects, programs, or business units: innovation, entrepreneurship & investment at the microscopic level of analysis (1)

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ESA PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS: AN INITIATIVE TO FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
COMMERCIAL LOW-EARTH ORBIT ECONOMY

Abstract

In the next decades, ESA will seek to expand its space exploration goals in Low Earth Orbit beyond the International Space Station as indicated in the ESA's Space Exploration Strategy: as part of an intended push outward into the solar system, ESA is working towards a commercialization of Low Earth Orbit and of products/services enabled by space applications and systems. In line with such strategic objective, ESA initiated in 2015, through a Call for Ideas (CFI), a comprehensive process for launching strategic partnerships with the private sector, further position ESA as Business Partner of carefully selected private sector initiatives in the field of space exploration.

The process involved a pre-selection of a number of ideas, out of which 8 were down-selected at the end of an internal consultation process and classified as worthy of being inserted into a pilot phase. The broader objectives of this initiative includes fostering innovation in outreach; promoting innovative approaches into ESA space exploration missions; kickstarting the gradual establishment of private sector services led by European companies for LEO exploitation and in the process strengthening the competitiveness of European industry in providing exploration enabling services at global level. Also objective of the initiative is to test innovative funding sources (crowd funding, sponsorship, prize schemes) for space exploration. The partnership proposal initiative involves the set-up of dedicated process within ESA to subcontract to PwC the supporting assessments of the underlying business plans and, ex-ante, of expected economic impacts that will be brought upon by the implementation of the ideas, and then to include the results of the assessment in an internal review cycle.

This paper describes the overall ESA initiative, the main concepts behind the call for the idea, as well as the set-up of the internal structure and process within the Agency. Results of the business plan review and of the ex-ante impact assessment for the first ideas received are presented as well.