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SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS – A RUBRIC FOR SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION OF NASA'S COMMERCIAL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Abstract

This paper attempts to provide to practitioners a working method for considering the application of NASA's commercial space development strategy. This strategy has been successfully used on the Commercial Orbital Transportation System (COTS) and the Commercial Crew Program (CCP). It is currently in use on the Communications Services Program and the Commercial Low Earth Orbit Destinations Program; where success has not been fully demonstrated. The authors have been approached many times in the past decade to explain the strategy and how it can be applied to an individual's planned program. The responses to such requests motivated the development of the tenets, rules and suggestions that we present in this paper.

Use of Funded Space Act Agreements combined with high-level services contracting is not a universal tonic. By applying those principles to a program without the necessary characteristics or management philosophy, programs can find that their success is fleeting. Proper strategic planning needs many different tools available for use. Even then, tailoring ideas to fit each unique program environment is necessary to maximize success. Based on the experience of the authors, we develop some general rules a program manager can apply, in the form of a questionnaire, to determine if the planned space activity would be a good fit for the strategy used previously on COTS and CCP.

A questionnaire is too simplistic by itself, in our opinion. We will provide discussion around each question to give context and allow practitioners to take advantage of the corporate knowledge of the NASA Commercial Space Division. This kind of lessons learned data is one aspect of a successful acquisition strategy for efficient space system program management.