



NASA SBIR 2008 Phase I Solicitation

S4.01 NanoSat Launch Vehicle Technologies

Lead Center: ARC

The space transportation industry is in need of low-cost, reliable, on-demand, routine space access. Both government and private entities are pursuing various launch systems and architectures aimed at addressing this market need. Significant technical risk and cost exists in new system development and operations - reducing incentive for private capital investment in this still-nascent industry. Public and private sector goals are aligned in reducing these risks and enabling the development of launch systems capable of reliably delivering payloads to low Earth orbit. The NanoSat Launch Vehicle Technology subtopic will particularly focus on higher risk entrepreneurial projects for dedicated nano and small spacecraft launch vehicles. This subtopic is seeking proposals in the following, but not limited, areas:

- Conceptual designs of system/architectures capable of reducing the mission costs associated with small payload delivery to LEO.
- Maturation of hypersonic and small launch vehicle design and analysis tools or tool-sets aimed at increasing the state-of-the-art while reducing the required design cycle time and human interaction.
- Maturation of key technologies/processes for hypersonic and small launch vehicles including, but not limited to:
 - Thermal protection systems;
 - Airframe and subsystem structures that increase system performance and propellant mass fraction;
 - Vehicle sensor networks.
- Novel, low-cost modular adapters and release mechanisms.
- Lightweight interstage designs.

Applications of wireless networking technologies for small launch vehicles are also specifically of interest to this subtopic. This technology could be used for vehicle to ground communications (spread-spectrum and non-licensed technologies), as well as within the vehicle itself. We desire new architectures for intelligent on-board communications as well as satellite-to-satellite communication using machine-to-machine (M2M) solutions. The traditional wire harness architecture could be replaced by the wireless technology for command and control, which would reduce vehicle mass and improve reliability. Also stage-to-stage interfaces and vehicle-payload interfaces are of interest. These wireless technologies can include but are not limited to WIMAX™ and ZIGBEE™.

Non-propulsive approaches and architectures for new launch vehicles can also achieve increases in launch vehicle payload mass delivered to orbit for small spacecraft missions. Offerors should consider development, test, and operational factors to show improvements in development and operational costs, payload mass fraction, and mission assurance. Special attention should be given to improved integration between the launch vehicle and payloads to further reduce operational costs. Furthermore, non-propulsive launch vehicle technologies have a dramatic impact on launch vehicle performance and constitute a large percentage of development and operational costs.

They include, but are not limited to:

- Robust on-board Guidance, Navigation and Control (GN&C) avionics. GN&C should be modular (including modular software architectures) and make use of modern architectures, including high-performance low-weight avionics hardware, and modern software tools. Emphasis is on low-weight architecture to allow maximum payload capacity.
- Range safety solutions and operational concepts to lower costs. These may include alternative solutions to expensive explosive destruct packages, including, but not limited to propulsion-cutoff systems, autonomous flight-abort systems, etc.

Research should be conducted to demonstrate technical feasibility during Phase 1 and show a path toward a Phase 2 hardware and software demonstration, and when possible, deliver a demonstration unit or software package for NASA testing at the completion of the Phase 2 contract.

Phase 2 emphasis should be placed on developing and demonstrating the technology under relevant test conditions. Additionally, a path should be outlined that shows how the technology could be commercialized or further developed into space-worthy systems.

Proposals should show an understanding of one or more relevant science needs, and present a feasible plan to fully develop a technology and infuse it into a NASA program.Â