

NASA loans engine to private industry firm

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NASA officials in Washington say they are loaning a rocket engine to Rocketplane Limited Inc. of Oklahoma City as part of an industry partnership program.

The officials say the program highlights NASA's efforts to share advanced aeronautics, space and related technologies with the private sector to use ideas and investments that can lead to new capabilities.

NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston and the company signed a Space Act Agreement for use of an RS-88 engine in tests of its Rocketplane XP vehicle for three years. In exchange, the company will provide NASA with design, test and operational information.

The Rocketplane XP is a four-seat, modified Lear executive jet. It will incorporate a rocket engine for acceleration to achieve a planned peak altitude of nearly 300,000 feet.

The RS-88 engine -- capable of 50,000 pounds of thrust -- was designed and built by The Boeing Co. for use on Lockheed Martin's Pad Abort Demonstration vehicle.

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