

Scientists say NASA's budget inadequate for its goals

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The NASA logo on a protective box for a camera near the space shuttle Endeavour in 2011 at Kennedy Space Center in Florida. NASA suffers from a "mismatch" between its goals and the budget it has been given to achieve them, according to a panel that said the US space agency may need a complete overhaul.

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agency may need a complete overhaul.

The National Research Council, which convened an independent group of top US scientists, urged the [White House](#) to set a clear agenda for the agency, amid [disagreement](#) in the scientific community, and in the country as a whole, regarding just where the agency should be going.

The panel lamented "the lack of national consensus on NASA's most publicly visible human spaceflight goal," said Albert Carnesale, a professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, who chaired the committee that wrote the report.

"One stated goal for NASA's human spaceflight program is to visit an asteroid by 2025," he said, but he noted that [scientists](#) inside the agency have questioned this objective.

"We've seen limited evidence that this has been widely accepted as a compelling destination by NASA's own work force, by the nation as a whole, or by the international community," he said.

This lack of agreement, "along with budget [uncertainty](#), has undermined the agency's ability to guide program planning and allocate funding," said Carnesale.

The study, which was sponsored by NASA, called on the White House to take the lead in setting long term priorities for the [US space agency](#).

The panel flagged what it called "a mismatch between the portfolio of programs and activities assigned to the agency, and the budget allocated by Congress."

It added that "legislative restrictions inhibit NASA from more efficiently managing its personnel and infrastructure."

The panel said there were several possible ways to reduce the "mismatch," though it acknowledged any path would be difficult.

One scenario would involve "an aggressive [restructuring](#) program to reduce infrastructure and personnel costs and improve efficiency," the panel suggested.

Another would involve "more cost-sharing partnerships with other US government agencies, private sector industries, and international partners," while a third possibility would be to "increase the size of the NASA budget."

The fourth possibility the committee suggested was for the US administration to considerably reduce the size and scope of [NASA's](#) portfolio to better fit its current and anticipated budget.

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