

# NASA selects partners for U.S. commercial lander capabilities

May 1 2014, by Rachel Kraft

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NASA announced Wednesday the selection of three U.S. companies to negotiate no-funds exchanged partnership agreements with the agency to advance lander capabilities that will enable delivery of payloads to the surface of the moon, as well as new science and exploration missions of interest to NASA and scientific and academic communities.

The selected companies are:

- Astrobotic Technology, Inc., Pittsburgh
- Masten Space Systems, Inc., Mojave, Calif.
- Moon Express, Inc., Moffett Field, Calif.

NASA made the selections following a January solicitation for proposals. The agency now will negotiate no-funds exchanged Space Act Agreements with the companies as part of the agency's Lunar Cargo Transportation and Landing by Soft Touchdown (Lunar CATALYST) initiative. NASA's contributions for an estimated three-year period may include technical expertise, access to agency test facilities, equipment loans and/or software for lander development and testing.

"NASA is making advances to push the boundaries of human exploration farther into the solar system, including to an asteroid and Mars, and continues to spur development in the commercial space sector," said Jason Crusan, director of the Advanced Exploration Systems Division at NASA Headquarters in Washington. "Robotic missions to the moon have revealed the existence of local resources, including oxygen and

water, which may be highly valuable for exploration of the solar system. The potential to use the lunar surface in partnership with our international and commercial partners may allow these resources to be characterized and used to enable future exploration and pioneering."

Commercial lunar transportation capabilities could support science and exploration objectives such as sample returns, geophysical network deployment, resource prospecting, and technology advancements.

The Advanced Exploration Systems Division of NASA's Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate manages Lunar CATALYST. Advanced Exploration Systems pioneers new approaches for rapidly developing prototype systems, demonstrating key capabilities and validating operational concepts for future human missions beyond Earth orbit.

As NASA works with U.S. industry to develop the next generation of U.S. spaceflight services, the agency also is developing the Orion spacecraft and Space Launch System (SLS), a crew capsule and heavy-lift rocket to provide an entirely new capability for [human exploration](#). Designed for launching spacecraft for crew and cargo missions, SLS and Orion will expand human presence beyond low-Earth orbit and enable new missions of exploration across the [solar system](#), including to a near-Earth asteroid and Mars.

Provided by NASA

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