

NASA launches new citizen science website; opens challenge to participate in future Mars missions

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Credit: NASA

NASA announced Saturday the opening of registration for its Mars Balance Mass Challenge and the launch of its new website, NASA Solve, at the World Maker Faire in New York.

"NASA is committed to engaging the public, and specifically the maker community through innovative activities like the Mars Balance Mass Challenge," said NASA Chief Technologist David Miller. "And NASA Solve is a great way for members of the public, makers and other citizen scientists to see all NASA challenges and prizes in one location."

The Mars Balance Mass Challenge seeks design ideas for small science and technology payloads that could potentially provide dual purpose as ejectable balance masses on spacecraft entering the Martian atmosphere.

The payloads will serve two roles: perform scientific or technology functions that help us learn more about the Red Planet, and provide the necessary weight to balance planetary landers.

Submissions are due by Nov. 21. A winner will be announced in mid-January 2015 and receive an award of \$20,000.

"We want people to get involved in our journey to Mars," said Lisa May, lead program executive for NASA's Mars exploration program. "This challenge is a creative way to bring innovative ideas into our planning process, and perhaps help NASA find another way to pack more science and technology into a mission."

NASA Solve, which will host content for all agency challenges and prizes, features information on this new challenge at:

www.nasa.gov/solve/marsbalancechallenge

In addition to the challenge and website announcements, NASA is hosting an exhibit at the World Maker Faire through 6 p.m. EDT Sunday, Sept. 21, where [citizen scientists](#) and makers can learn about other ways to engage with the space agency, including Centennial Challenges, the CubeSat program, a 3-D printer challenge, and the Asteroid Grand Challenge.

The exhibit also features information on a NASA mission that will mark a major milestone Sunday. NASA's Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) spacecraft is scheduled to enter Mars' orbit at approximately 9:50 p.m., after a 10-month interplanetary journey of more than 440 million miles. NASA Television coverage of the orbit insertion and post-event news conference begins at 9:30 p.m. The broadcast also will be available on the agency's website.

Launched on Nov. 18, 2013, from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida, MAVEN is the first spacecraft dedicated to exploring the upper atmosphere of Mars. It is another NASA robotic

scientific explorer paving the way for the journey to Mars.

Provided by NASA

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