

Andrew Hunter – NASA Deputy Chief Financial Officer for Strategy, Budget and Performance

Mr. Hunter joined NASA in 1988. He has served as NASA's Deputy Chief Financial Officer since 2010. In this role he leads the implementation and integration of Agency budget, performance and strategic investment analysis. Over the last several years his focus has included increasing employee engagement, executive effectiveness, organizational transformation and professional development across the CFO community at NASA.

Prior to his current position, Mr. Hunter served as Director of Resources for NASA's Exploration Systems Mission Directorate from 2005 to 2010. He was the Budget Director for the Earth Science Program for 7 years. Mr. Hunter has had several leadership development activities including a detail with the CFO of the National Geographic Society, and as Deputy for Human Resources at NASA's Langley Research Center.

Mr. Hunter spent three years working in the Agency's independent assessment group where he co-led several Independent Annual Reviews of major agency programs whose status was briefed annually to the Deputy Administrator. Mr. Hunter also served as an analyst in the Office of Human Space Flight for several years and started with NASA as a Presidential Management Intern with the Space Shuttle Program. During this period he also spent a year detail at the Executive Office of the President's Office of Management and Budget and 6 months working with the Spacelab project office at Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville Alabama.

Mr. Hunter graduated with a BA in Anthropology from the University of Colorado/Boulder. He served two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer and an additional year with the US Agency for International Development training new volunteers in West Africa. After return to the US, he earned a Masters degree in Public Administration from the American University in Washington DC. While getting his Masters degree, he worked at the Government Accountability Office and at the Department of the Treasury, before joining NASA.

He co-authored a chapter on Budgeting and Budget Strategy in the latest 2008 edition of Applied Project Management for Space Systems, Space Technology Series. He is married with four children and enjoys kayaking and bicycling. He is currently enrolled in the Executive Coaching program at Georgetown University to become a certified coach.

United States Senate Committee on
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Roundtable
“Progress is Possible: Tackling the Challenges on GAO’s High Risk List
to Make Government Work Better”

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Remarks by Andrew Hunter
Deputy Chief Financial Officer for Strategy and Performance
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NASA would like to thank Senator Carper and Members of the Committee for hosting today’s roundtable to discuss the progress select agencies have made addressing their High Risk designations. As the GAO noted in their 2015 High Risk Report and the subsequent report “Key Actions to Make Progress Addressing High-Risk Issues (GAO-16-480R),” NASA has fully met the leadership commitment, action plan, and monitoring criteria. The remaining two criteria, capacity and demonstrated progress, were partially met and we are actively working to implement additional changes across the Agency that are responsive to the GAO.

By the very nature of our mission and the work we do, NASA’s activities are inherently “high risk” endeavors, as we are constantly looking to expand the frontiers of human knowledge. As we develop the unique missions and capabilities to explore space, and advance understanding of Earth and develop technologies to improve the quality of life on our home planet, we also recognize the need to be responsible stewards of taxpayers’ dollars. This means delivering missions on cost and on schedule, consistent with the baselines that Congress has approved, and identifying risks as quickly as possible so we can implement appropriate corrective action.

When NASA was first added to the GAO’s High Risk List in 1990, our project management and oversight practices did not have the same level of rigor as they do today, leading to more frequent and severe cost overruns and schedule delays than we experience today. Since then, we have made significant improvements to how we manage projects and prepare people to manage, leading to a dramatic reduction in the number of projects that exceed their baselines. Multiple projects have launched within their baselines over the past several years, and the majority of projects still in development are on track to be completed within their baselines. One such project is Origins-Spectral Interpretation-Resource Identification-Security-Regolith Explorer (OSIRIS-REx), which is scheduled to launch in September. In the instances where a project does experience issues, the percentage of growth relative to the total project cost has greatly diminished as well. This is a trend that the GAO has observed over the past several years in their annual “Assessments of Selected Large-Scale Projects.”

However, NASA still has challenges and is working to implement seven initiatives to improve acquisition management through a High Risk Corrective Action Plan developed in 2007. Those initiatives are: (1) Program/Project Requirements and Implementation Practices; (2) Agency Strategic Acquisition Approach; (3) Contractor Cost Performance Monitoring; (4) Project Management Training and Development; (5) Improve Life-Cycle Cost/Schedule Management Processes; (6) Integrated Enterprise Management Program (IEMP) Process Improvement; and (7) Procurement Processes and Policies. Six of these seven initiatives are considered operational, as NASA has put in place new requirements, policies, procedures, training, and other tools to improve how we manage our major acquisitions and ensure our workforce has the necessary associated tools. Even though these initiatives are considered operational, we continually look for new ways to refine how we do business and share best practices and lessons learned within the project management community.

In 2014, NASA declared that the one outstanding initiative, Contractor Cost Performance Monitoring, was closed. This initiative was originally designed to improve the availability of contractor data to support performance monitoring of programs and projects. The initiative would be accomplished through the use of enhanced business systems and changes to the contractor cost reporting process. NASA performed analyses at that time to identify gaps in the existing key business systems and concepts and courses of action that could be implemented to address those gaps. As a result of this analysis, NASA and GAO agreed to replace the original objective, and instead instituted several process improvements designed to achieve greater insight into project performance, including contractor cost performance. In particular, developments in the areas of Joint Confidence Levels (JCLs) and earned value management (EVM) have been critical. These are both areas where NASA has devoted significant resources over the past several years to evolve and improve our capabilities, which we believe will lead to better management of our projects.

As part of the Corrective Action Plan, NASA established in 2008 a set of metrics to assess performance on a semi-annual basis. These metrics consider performance against the established cost and schedule baselines and annual performance indicators, as well whether new projects are being implemented in accordance with NASA policy. As of the most recent performance report provided to the GAO, based on NASA's performance as of the second quarter of 2016, NASA is fully on track to meet all of these metrics.

NASA has many forums where the underlying data is routinely reviewed to ensure that projects remain on track or that issues are identified and resolved in a timely manner. This includes formal, regularly recurring reviews at the project, center, mission directorate, and Agency level, as well as ad hoc meetings should issues arise. We also are improving our communities of practice to share best practices and lessons learned across organizations so that projects can learn from each other.

As NASA seeks to undertake a bold new era of discovery, it is important to remember that we are developing one-of-a-kind technologies and capabilities. We therefore rely on

the iterative knowledge we gain with each new project in order to improve our project management practices and introduce new tools to assess whether our projects are on track to meet their cost and schedule commitments. We appreciate the open dialog we have had over the past several years with the GAO as we have refined our project management requirements and discussed best practices that might apply to our projects at different stages in their lifecycles. As the GAO has acknowledged, these improvements are already yielding the desired results with our small and medium-class missions. Our larger, more complex projects typically involve the development of a significant number of new technologies, which present greater risk and are more difficult to assess at the outset. As a result, while there is still work to be done, we believe that we are on the right track and that we will continue to manage projects without the significant cost growth and schedule delays that originally put us on the High Risk List.