

# NASA's Evolving Strategy

by Gary Steinberg

Gary Steinberg, Director of Strategic Management for NASA, borrowed from Peter Drucker to define strategic management as “an iterative, interactive and disciplined process whereby the vision, mission and goals of an organization are determined . . . so that fundamental decisions of policy, strategy and action can be made in an integrated fashion to shape and guide the future direction of the organization.” For NASA, he says, “it’s the smart way to do business” and a new way, after the Agency had been drifting essentially without a strategic plan since Apollo days.

Figure 5 depicts the vision, interlocking missions and five “strategic enterprises” of the latest NASA Strategic Plan. Figure 6 shows the framework of NASA’s plan, beginning and ending with the American public as ultimate provider and beneficiary, not just the aerospace industry. The public benefits mainly through advances in human resources, physical resources and space communication. In an even more elaborate chart, Figure 7, Steinberg shares a draft version of near-, mid- and long-term goals for NASA, stretching 21 years into the future.

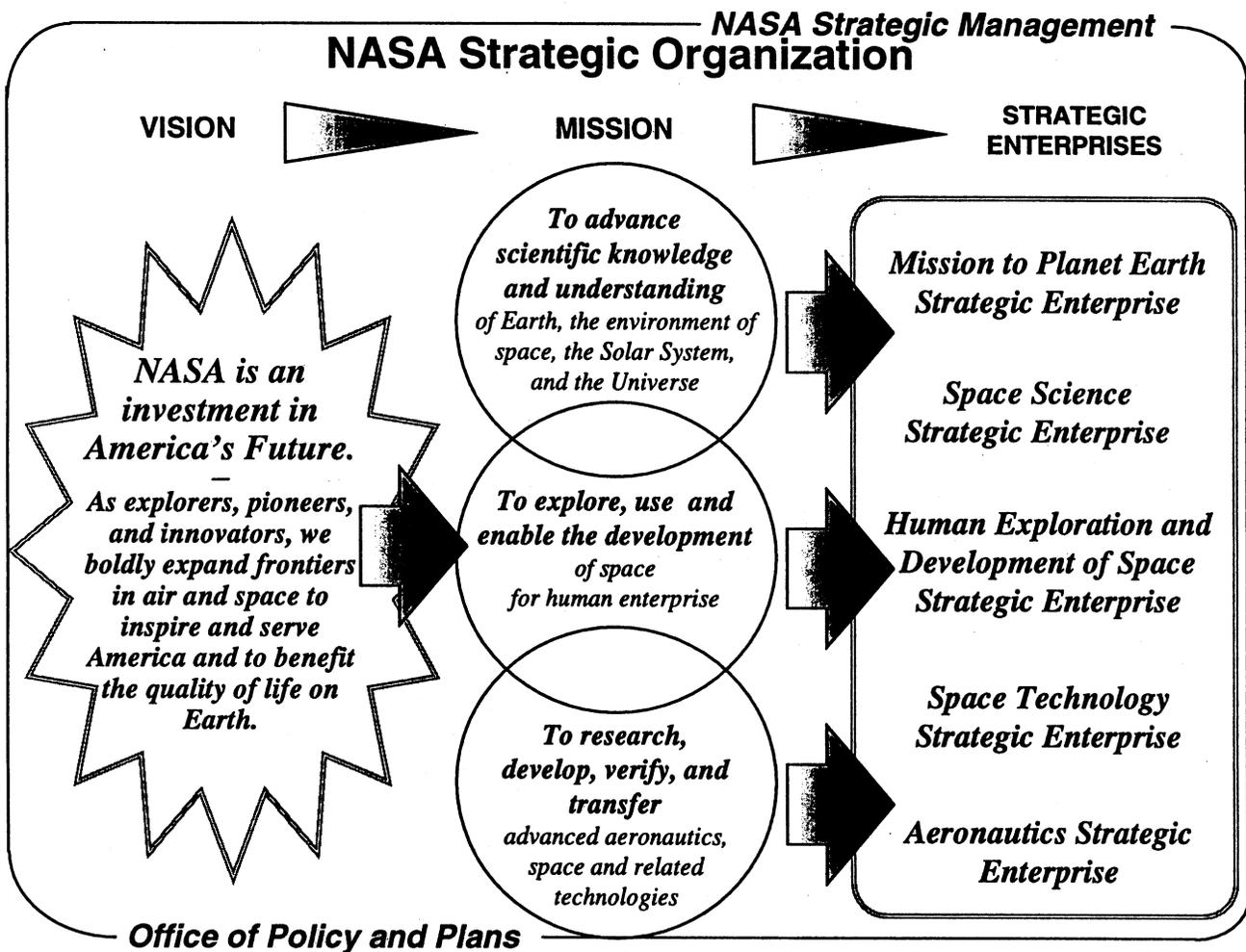


Figure 5. NASA Strategic Organization.

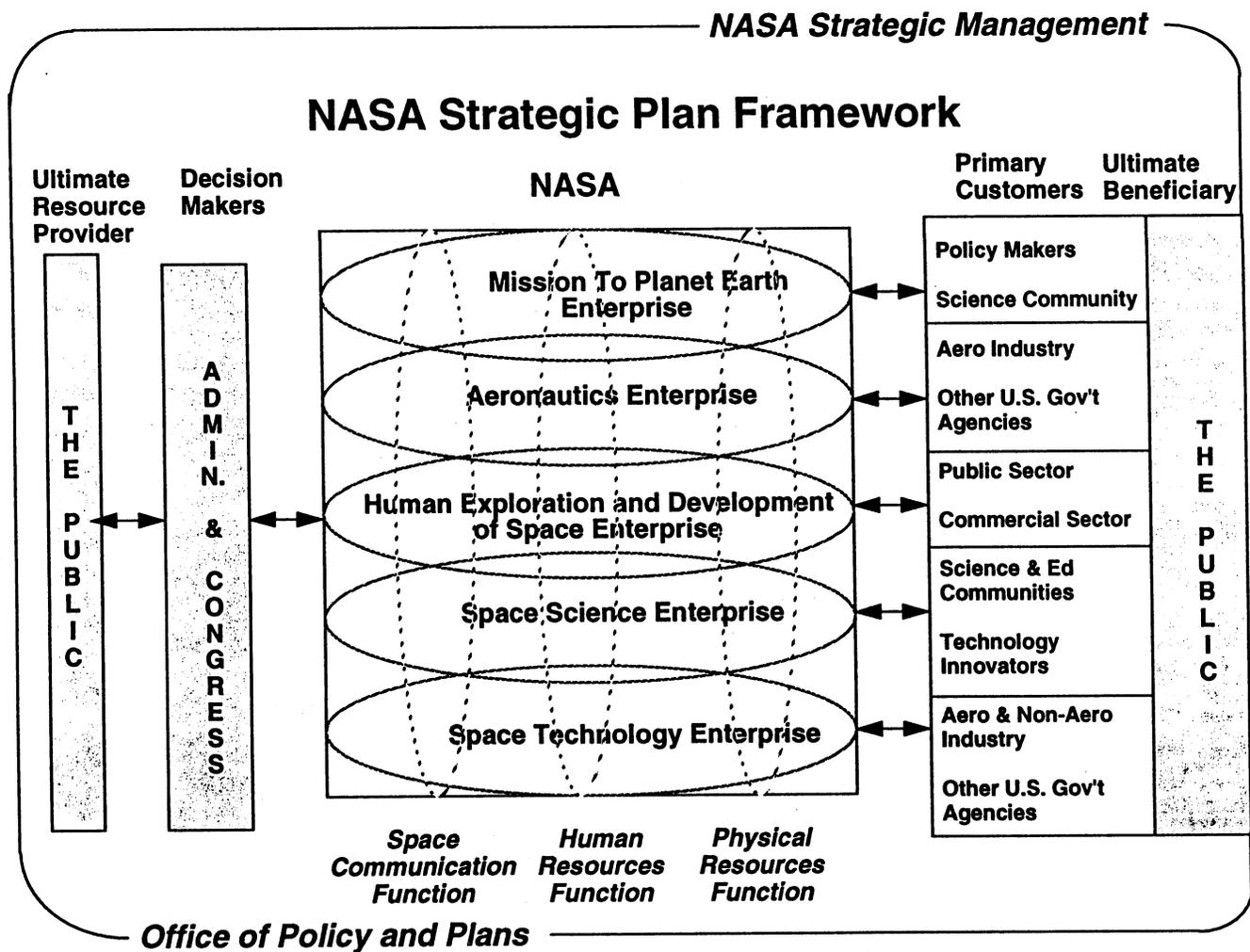


Figure 6. NASA Strategic Plan Framework.

Readers of *Issues in NASA Program and Program Management* will recall earlier versions of NASA goals, outlined in the Special Report for 1993, "Perspectives in Program and Project Management" (SP-6101-07). Steinberg presented four customer-focused outcomes of NASA's mission, each keyed to national goals:

- Economic Growth and Security,
- Preservation of the Environment,
- Educational Excellence, and
- Peaceful Exploration and Discovery.

As Dr. Charles J. Pellerin Jr. observed in 1993, the "shared vision" of NASA has changed significantly since the end of the Cold War and numerous studies, panels and commissions. Traditionally, NASA strived first to "provide inspiration and hope for the future."

Gary Steinberg then described the planning process, emphasizing that the *NASA Strategic Plan* is the product "not of a senior management group but all of us." Seven thousand employees participated in the process that resulted in the NASA vision, mission and values. All of the NASA Associate Administrators and Center Directors hammered out a draft plan in a series of two-day offsite retreats over an eight-month

period. A draft plan was published in February 1995. Subsequently, several things were added to the plan, including additional focus on technology transfer and commercialization issues, plus an Agency-level goal to communicate the results of NASA science and technology development to the public.

In progress was a *NASA Strategic Management System Handbook* to show a new way of doing business at NASA, including the use of metric perfor-

mance evaluation and improvement. "If we can't measure it, we can't manage it," noted Steinberg.

He concluded with practical suggestions, urging participants to study the forthcoming NASA Strategic Plan, "know who our customers are and what they require . . . develop measurable objectives to satisfy customer requirements . . . measure our own performance . . . [and] operate as part of the NASA team to support the Agency's mission, goals and objectives at all levels."

## Strategic Roadmap for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Rev. 5'

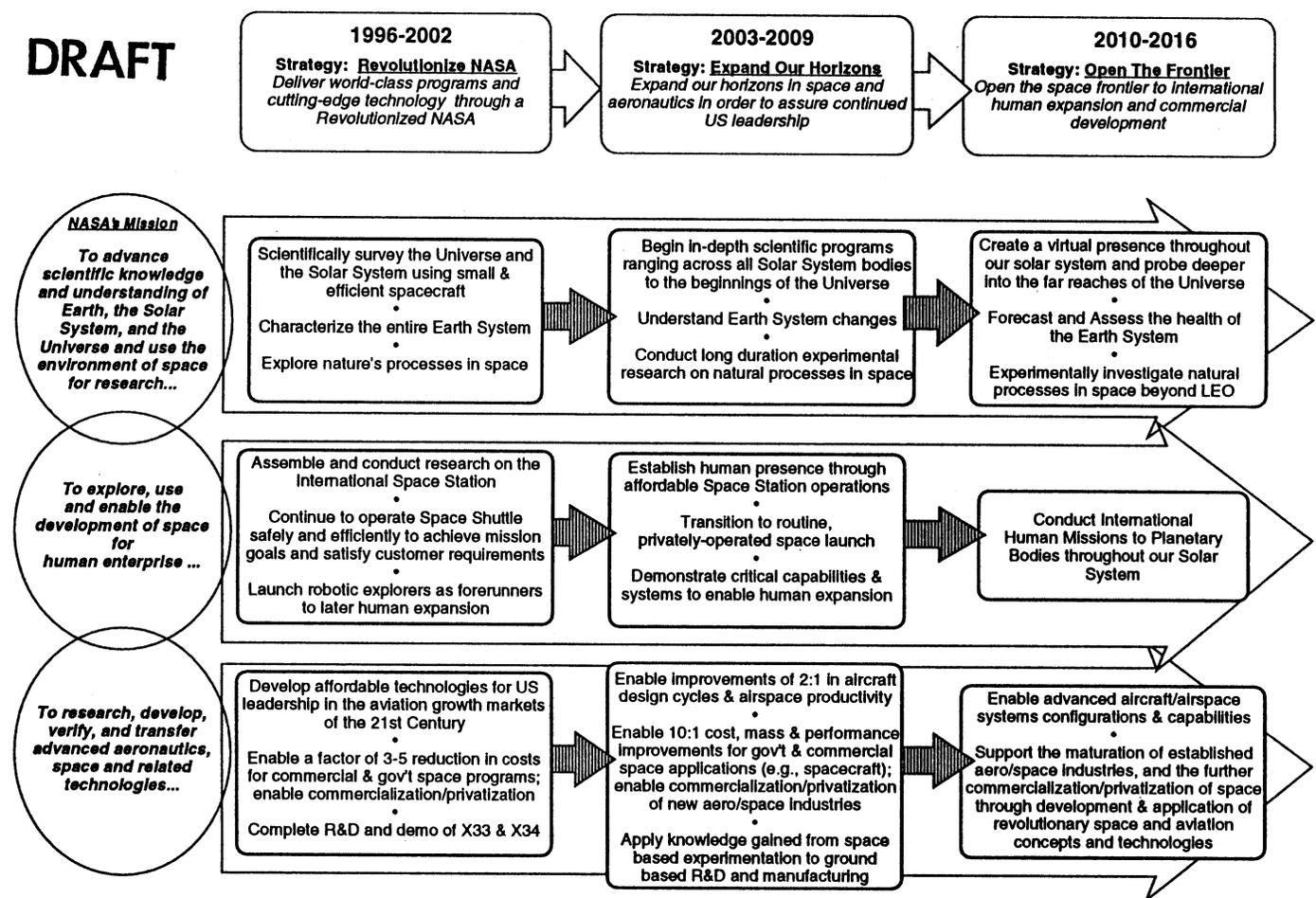


Figure 7. Draft NASA Strategic Roadmap.