

IAF BUSINESS INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM (E6)
Entrepreneurship and Innovation: The Practitioners' Perspectives (1)

Author: Dr. Leopold Summerer
European Space Agency (ESA), The Netherlands

Mr. Moritz Fontaine
European Space Agency (ESA), France
Mr. Nicolas Thiry
European Space Agency (ESA), France

ESA'S OPEN SPACE INNOVATION PLATFORM - A RADICALLY NEW, OPEN, LOW THRESHOLD
ACCESS TO EARLY STAGE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Abstract

The Discovery element of ESA's Basic Activities is ESA's main tool to explore novel ideas via co-funded research activities, small studies and early technology development activities. In 2019 this has been completely restructured to fully address and benefit from the more mature, more open and more diverse space sector. Reflecting ESA's new open attitude towards early-stage concepts and early technology projects, it has been entirely changed from being driven by the ingenuity of ESA internal ideas to relying mainly on contributions of the academic community, industry, research institutions, put in contact early with ESA experts using the open innovation paradigm.

This approach was further underlined and strengthened following as part of the implementation of ESA's Agenda 2025 and specifically the role of ESA in support of boosting commercial space activities.

The New Space revolution has lowered the entrance barrier to space and increased the pace of innovation, which has multiplied the number of actors ready to take commercial risks to profitably serve growing public and private markets.

The Discovery element is now completely open to novel ideas from anybody, focussing specifically on activities supporting potentially disruptive innovation. To this end, ESA has introduced ESA's Open Space Innovation Platform (OSIP). It has allowed to invert the traditional logic by allowing users to entirely focus on describing their novel idea while ESA guides the best ideas to the most suitable implementation path, provides early feedback on the idea, linking ideas and connecting authors to experts. OSIP has established the lowest ever entry bar into ESA's innovation pipeline.

Authors of ideas are encouraged to submit them openly to benefit from exchange and comments from other users and find experts and new partners. 35

The open discovery ideas channel has developed as the preferred entry point for non classical ESA partners and has proven to be a good starting point for 'NewSpace' ideas.

The Open Discovery Ideas Channel and the Discovery Campaign become the de-facto spin-in channel for new space technology.

The present paper discuss the approach, its evolution based on user feedback, lessons learned, and the impact on ESA's innovation approach since its introduction.