Dare Mighty Things Together:
A Plan for JPL
First of a kind. Pathfinding. Groundbreaking. Impactful. These are words that describe JPL and the work we do every day. From launching the very first American satellite in 1958 to landing rovers on Mars, from fighting climate change to discovering exoplanets of other worlds, we do hard things and we do them well. Whether you’ve been a part of JPL for decades or if it’s like me you’re among the third of us who have become JPLers within the last five years, what brings us together is a shared passion for imagining and then achieving what others might think impossible — in other words, we Dare Mighty Things Together.

While JPL is a leader in the space exploration ecosystem, at this essential moment in time, the world around us is changing at an accelerated pace, and space exploration continues to evolve in reach, scope, and complexity. These changes present enormous and exciting opportunities, but they also can make the future feel somewhat less certain and harder to see. The purpose of this document is to help us focus on actions that enable JPL to have an expanded positive impact on the world around us is changing at an accelerated pace, and space exploration continues to evolve in reach, scope, and complexity. These changes present enormous and exciting opportunities, but they also can make the future feel somewhat less certain and harder to see. The purpose of this document is to help us focus on actions that enable JPL to have an expanded positive impact on the world around us.

So can we all be working toward common goals, we have laid out a set of strategic imperatives to guide our focus. These strategic imperatives build on the themes discussed with literally thousands of JPLers over the past years of forums like EngageJPL. They build upon our regular conversations with Caltech’s Board of Trustees, important ongoing work such as the CFO Plan, and ways in which we’ve already begun being a hard look at ourselves through the response to the Psyche IIR. They also look beyond what we’re currently doing to show us how to reach for more transformative science, inject more technology into our missions, expand our reach to create new opportunities, engage new partners, and operate in a more integrated, strategic way.

We’ve intentionally designed the strategic imperatives with a three-year time horizon, taking us to JPL’s 90th anniversary in October 2026, which allows us to be laser-focused on delivering demonstrable results and positive change in the near term. This timeline gives us the ability to regularly track our progress and have the flexibility to adapt and pivot as needed. As part of these near-term actions, we will position the Lab for the longer term, and build our successful future for decades to come. Said another way, this document is meant to be both aspirational and actionable.

Our seven strategic imperatives are intended to serve as the foundation of much work over the next three years, advancing our ability to succeed, seed, and lead well into the future. It’s incredibly important that every JPLer has visibility and clarity about where we’re headed, what we are focused on, and the culture we want to foster. We leave a full menu of mission in the coming years, and to sustain our pace of innovation and exploration, it’s critical that we’re working from a firm, unified foundation.

One more thing: This document starts with our North Star (as I always do), but it also updates and simplifies our JPL values — we as JPLers to be bold, inclusive, and trusted. You’ll see an explanation of these values right up front in this plan. The strategic imperatives are also designed to keep us “walk the talk” — to live our values. Nothing is more essential than this, which is why it’s so important that our values be simpler and easier for us all to remember.

It’s an incredibly exciting time to be at JPL, I’m thrilled to be on this journey with you, and look forward to your collaboration and partnership in these critical endeavors.

Thank you so much for your support!

Dr. Laurie Leshin

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**A message from Dr. Leshin**
We have a **North Star** that guides us. We seek to:

- **Drive** the forefront of scientific discovery and extraordinary benefit to humanity through innovative missions, technology, and research
- **Inspire** people everywhere to think bigger and imagine what is possible
- **Leverage** our unique capabilities to advance the broader space-exploration ecosystem
- **Create** a safe, inclusive, exciting workplace where all can thrive

We have big aspirations, driven by our **values**. We aim to be:

- **BOLD**
  - We are courageous explorers, driven by our conviction to take informed risks and expand the edge of possibility. We build and manage complex missions designed to tackle the most challenging scientific questions and address global challenges. We are motivated by building first-of-a-kind systems and by knowing that our discoveries will advance knowledge and drive positive change in society.

- **INCLUSIVE**
  - We create a collaborative culture where our teams, colleagues, and partners feel valued and empowered to innovate. We appreciate excellence, expertise, and experience across all disciplines. We embrace differences with respect and curiosity. We create environments where teams can achieve things not thought possible. We take pride in the breadth of our reach, engagement, and impact.

- **TRUSTED**
  - We operate with integrity and the highest professional standards. We do the right thing. We honor our commitments. We work to advance our relationships. We share information and expertise with each other, with partners, and with the world. We work together toward ambitious common goals and outcomes.
Looking forward, we see our work through the lens of:

Within this framework, we will focus on a set of strategic imperatives to guide our path forward.

**SUCCEED**
Advance science and exploration by delivering on our commitments

**SEED**
Grow our capabilities to enable the future of scientific exploration from space

**LEAD**
Be an inspiring role model and enabling industry leader

**GOALS**

**STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES**

**SI01**
WORLD CLASS WORKFORCE

**SI02**
POSITION FOR PERFORMANCE

**SI03**
TRANSFORMATIVE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**SI04**
LAB-WIDE PLANNING AND PRIORITIZATION

**SI05**
INDUSTRY LEADING WORKPLACE CULTURE

**SI06**
GLOBAL INSPIRATION

**SI07**
2036 AND BEYOND – LAUNCHING JPL'S NEXT CENTURY
Create and enable the best workforce to deliver JPL’s and NASA’s mission.

The Opportunity:

JPLers are critical to our success as a Laboratory, and supporting our world-class workforce is our number-one strategic imperative. We have both an opportunity and a responsibility to enable our people to thrive and succeed, and in doing so we will drive success of our missions and JPL as an organization. During the next three years, we will focus on ensuring that every manager is enabling our employees and teams; on enhancing our onboarding program, mentoring activities, and career-success pathways; and on creating a more compelling work environment in the new era of hybrid work. Together our actions are designed to help enable all JPLers to thrive at work.

New team members are valued for their own prior experience and are welcomed into the JPL community with a rich understanding of the history and value of our work, how we are organized, how our work is accomplished, and how they contribute to our mission.

Team members receive support, opportunities, and tools throughout their career that will allow them to pursue their aspirations and maximize their potential. These include new insights about career pathways and resources for their advancement, as well as an accessible and modern workplace equipped to enable their success.

Great leaders are developed and attracted to JPL to guide our teams in the work they do to advance JPL’s mission. Our workforce views managers as advocates who support their development and enable them to contribute to JPL’s success.

We Envision a World in Which:

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By 2026 We Will:

1. Value and enable great managers by deploying development programs that provide the resources, feedback, and support they need to focus on leadership and strategy, inspire the workforce, and empower all team members to contribute at their highest potential.

2. Develop a world-class onboarding program for new employees with orientation, training, and mentorship to improve opportunities to enable new JPLers to quickly become productive, engaged, and invested members of the JPL community.

3. Develop a robust network of career-long professional-development resources, including sustained career mentoring programs that leverage current and former JPLers, existing cross-collaboration opportunities with Caltech, and a web of job-family, levels, and progression opportunities that are aligned with the future of work.

4. Modernize our workplaces to be more accessible and collaborative, leveraging more updated physical and digital capabilities aligned with the work of today.
Sharpen processes to drive excellence and accountability in delivering our flight missions.

EMIT: Methane plume 2 miles (3 kilometers) long southeast of Carlsbad, New Mexico, as measured by EMIT from the International Space Station.

The Near-Earth Object Surveyor: NEOS is designed to help advance NASA’s planetary defense efforts to discover and characterize most of the potentially hazardous asteroids and comets that threaten our planet. The NEOS spacecraft will perform key tasks in the mission’s design to assess the potential threat of 10 meter objects and assess the near-earth 10 meter risk to Earth and humanity.

By 2026 We Will:

1. Establish a Program Analysis & Evaluation function to track technical and programmatic baselines with metrics that look ahead to predict cost and schedule performance.

2. Modify assigned mission formulation practices to make use of established, appropriate best practices from our completed mission formulation process.

3. Reform flight implementation end-game processes, specifically risk assessment/management, Verification & Validation (V&V), and Problem/Failure Reporting (PFR) to better balance efficiency with mission success.

4. Set up a Technical Logistics Organization to support prototyping and manufacturing resource planning, identify and streamline key processes and optimize supply chain capacity through intelligent inventory stocking, infrastructure investments, and supplier development.
JPL pursues scientific discoveries that benefit humanity. We seek to understand how Earth works as a system and how it is changing. We explore the many mysteries of our vast universe and how our own solar system formed and is evolving. We search for evidence of life elsewhere, past, or present. These fundamental questions drive our existence and enable our future. To pursue them, we must invent or leverage new technologies that enable more daring flight missions and scientific analyses. We must imagine a future of science from space that others can’t yet see. With our partners across the scientific community at Caltech and around the world, the nation depends on us to drive the frontiers of science and technology for the benefit of humanity.

TRANSCENDENT SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY

Pursue leading-edge science questions and boldly drive innovation and technology into flight missions

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We Envision a World in Which:

By 2026 We Will:

1. Articulate Lab-wide transformative science challenges to drive internal investments and research.
2. Expand JPL’s role as a convener, host, and promoter of the Earth- and space science communities signed with NASA missions.
3. Develop a technology infusion program that enables and leverages a set of forward-thinking technologies, developed internally or externally, that are science drivers, strategically aligned, and coordinated Lab-wide.
4. Create an innovation hub with Caltech to validate flight capabilities with greater risk tolerance to mature and have them ready them for infusion into JPL missions.

GERS/NOAA Cooperative Afloat Sensor Facility Healthcare Certification centers in developing a robust set of algorithmic tools that work together to develop an autonomous robotic simulation that is more capable of performing tasks, such as water sampling, navigation, and imaging.
Our success depends on core capabilities that keep us at the leading edge across our programmatic areas of work. However, lack of integrated understanding of our current and upcoming commitments put pressure on our people, facilities, and systems and strains our pursuit of new work. Resource realities require us to make decisions that ensure successful execution of current work, and yet we must always look to the future toward transformational science, next-generation capabilities, and the new missions that will come our way. Without a JPL-wide forum and a systematic approach to making decisions, we are inclined to overcommit, and our ability to deliver on those commitments is compromised. By embracing integrated planning with new tools, we can create more accurate resource projections (including funding, people, and infrastructure) that will enhance our ability to make smarter decisions about our future work so that we may maintain an exciting and balanced portfolio for years to come.

We understand and regularly assess our current and future capacity to enable smart decisions on future commitments and the overall health of the Lab.

We align JPL core capabilities with NASA and national priorities to enable future opportunities.

We deploy unique technology and skills to solve problems of national significance.

We undertake projects that match the Lab’s strategic capabilities and fit within the infrastructure and human resources with understood and managed institutional requirements.

Our programmatic directions work together in portfolio planning and decision-making to maximize benefit across our diverse set of impactful activities.

We make robust make-buy decisions related to workforce, systems, subsystems, and components to focus our efforts on what we do uniquely well.

Establish a Future Work Board to enable balanced, integrated decision-making about new mission activities that drive partnerships and make-buy decisions.

Develop an Integrated approach and tools for capacity management that will align resources and infrastructure with Lab priorities, respond to changes as needed, and better leverage partnerships to enable surge capacity and flexibility.

Create an Institutional Quarterly Review of the health of JPL across multiple dimensions to inform future planning and risk management.
Create an inclusive, collaborative, and engaging workplace culture that serves as a role model for the space industry.

We envision a world in which:

- People at all levels of our organization operate in an environment of trust, support and collaboration, and where our high-performing teams of all kinds are recognized for their contributions to JPL's success.
- We are defined by a talented and innovative workforce, rapid information sharing and a culture of inclusion and respect.
- We have established common values and a shared set of expectations about how we live those values within our community.

The Opportunity:

At JPL, we seek to dare mighty things together. Our social cohesion, team dynamics and ability to be seen and feel valued as colleagues are fundamentals to our existence as a high-performing organization. We believe a culture of inspiration, inclusion, respect, and belonging drives better innovation and collaboration, creates a stronger sense of purpose, positions us as an ideal employer, and is essential for mission success. We have the opportunity to lead the space ecosystem in creating a modern, inclusive workplace with a world-leading diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) culture. In doing this, we seek no less than becoming a model for the space industry.

By 2026 We Will:

1. Deliver on our commitments to an inclusive culture captured in JPL’s DEIA Plan.
2. Institute a team-building program that provides training and resources to foster new modes of collaboration and effective communication within and between teams – including Caltech, NASA, and partners – which will empower our people to deliver on our exciting work.
3. Value inclusion as a basic requirement in the selection, development, and promotion of leaders.

INDUSTRY LEADING WORKPLACE CULTURE

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Catalyze a global community to share compelling stories about space and Earth exploration that are synonymous with the future of humanity.

**The Opportunity:**
Imagine a world where JPL generates awe and sparks imaginations at massive scale and with real societal impact. To achieve this, it is crucial that our outreach be bigger and broader than JPL, or even NASA. We must create an environment that encourages others to engage with and share stories about the value of space and Earth sciences, and exploration through different vantage points, lived experiences, and perspectives. We must look beyond our usual partners to enhance how we connect with people everywhere. By doing so, we will greatly expand our global reach and impact. As we unleash the incredible creativity that already exists across JPL and outside of the Lab, we will help shape and amplify the stories that are redefining the future of humanity through space exploration at this extraordinary moment in time.

**We Envision a World in Which:**
- We have dramatically expanded engagement of humanity in space exploration and Earth stewardship.
- We have fueled future generations’ passions in science, technology, engineering & math (STEM) education and careers, and helped those not in STEM imagine a future in which space exploration plays a much greater part than in prior decades.
- We have invested in and designed compelling visualizations, content, and immersive experiences that democratize data, allow for co-creation, and catalyze engagement and action.
- We have forged new connections and leveraged the networks of culturally relevant storytellers and influencers to magnify the awe we can create together.

**By 2026 We Will:**
1. Host a global forum that regularly catalyzes storytellers everywhere to create content connecting space exploration and stewardship of Earth with the future of humanity.
2. Build a much larger and more diverse network of content creators, influencers, industry and STEM partners to outreach beyond the traditional space community.
3. Pilot cutting-edge storytelling and outreach technologies and techniques to make space exploration both tangible and inspirational to people everywhere.
2036 AND BEYOND – LAUNCHING JPL’S NEXT CENTURY

Envision and position JPL for a bright long-term future in the space ecosystem

The Opportunity:
We face unprecedented change and new opportunities as the global landscape for Earth and space science evolves. As the commercial space industry advances, new private space economies take hold, and new national space agencies emerge, the form of science and exploration over the coming decades will be fundamentally different than in the past. Within this new, expanded, and existing space ecosystem, how should we think about the role of JPL? How should we evolve to operate and organize for this future? How and when should we develop or commercialize JPL’s product lines, lead into new forms and scales of partnerships, and otherwise adapt to new opportunities? We will take time to engage the whole Lab and beyond over the next three years to co-create a vivid picture of JPL’s longer-term future as a leader in the space ecosystem beyond the horizon of this three-year plan. In doing so, we will navigate toward our North Star and continue to drive the frontiers of scientific discovery for the benefit of humanity.

We Envision a World in Which:
We have the vision, systems, and structures to thrive. We are responsive, supportive, and agile in the face of change and opportunity while always staying aligned with our core values. We continuously focus on the future and understand the changing landscape of government and industry within the space ecosystem.

We support the democratization of space and help the new space-economy to thrive. As NASA’s FFRC, we envision the opportunity to sit at the interface between NASA’s needs and emergent commercial capabilities in alignment with scientific priorities. We increase our interaction with non-traditional partners and are more agile with impactful technology transfer and creative public-private partnerships.

As a key member of the NASA family, and in partnership with Caltech, we help enhance US leadership through multi-national science-driven endeavors and enabling nation civil space agencies to pursue their aspirations.

By 2026 We Will:
1. Strengthen JPL’s strategic foresight and advance our ability to understand and respond to political, societal, scientific, and industry trends.
2. Articulate “Who We Are” and “What We Want to Be” within the future space ecosystem. Create a roadmap focused on positioning JPL for our second century.

Carbon Plume Mapper Prototype Testing: The Carbon Plume Mapper will provide the world with a valuable new tool to find and fix methane leaks and help mitigate global warming.

Psyche: Engineers integrate the gamma ray and neutron spectrometer instrument into the agency’s Psyche spacecraft.
When We Succeed

Taken together, this plan is ambitious and exciting. It is aligned with input received from across JPL and beyond. It not only addresses needed near-term changes and focus areas, but sets up JPL, NASA, and the broader space ecosystem for long-term success. By staying focused on our strategic imperatives, we will continue to change JPL for the better and dramatically increase our impact in the world. And we will do it together. When we celebrate JPL’s 90th birthday in 2026, we will do so knowing we have embraced opportunity and taken a hard look at ourselves and look forward with pride to our coming centennials. We will truly embody the spirit of “Dare mighty things together.”
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