

# Program Excellence

Presented by Dr .C. Howard Robins Jr.  
Deputy Associate Assistant Administrator

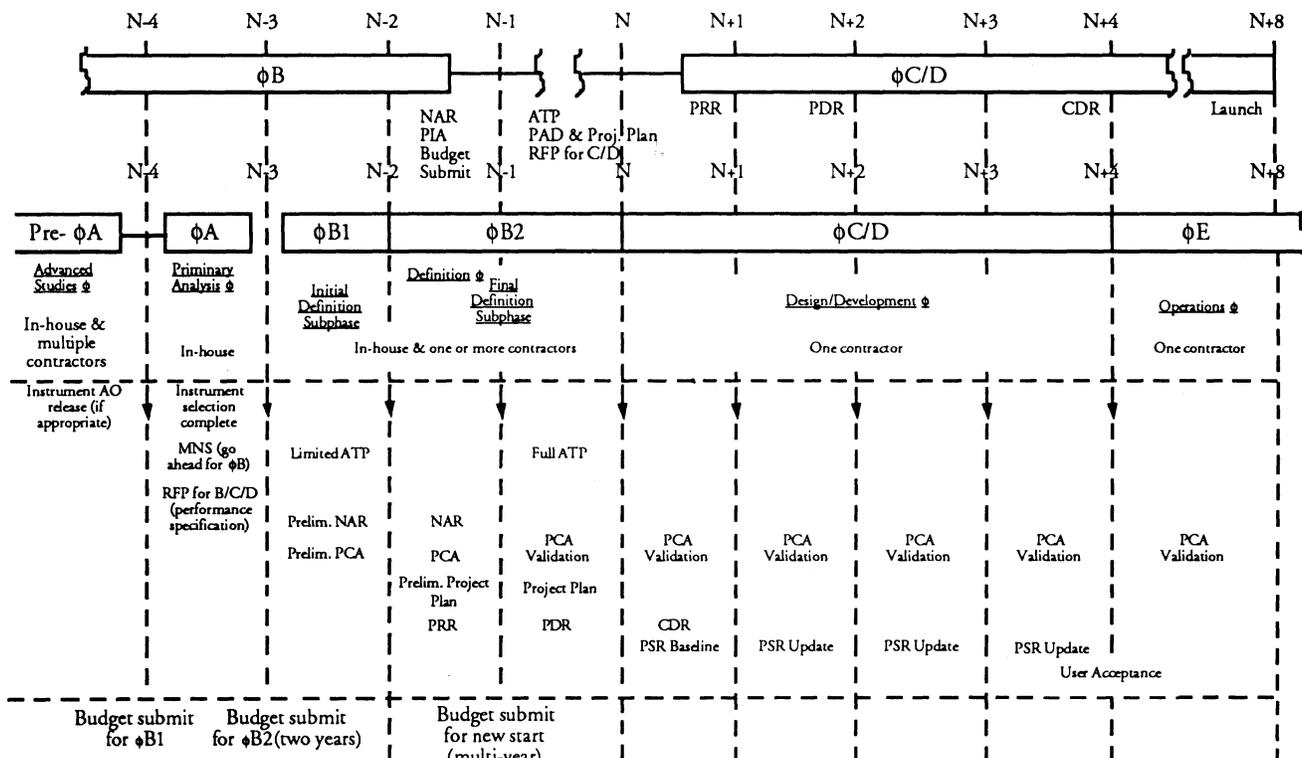
**A**n update of the ongoing effort to strengthen and streamline the policies and the processes of program/project management in NASA was presented by Howard Robins, the team leader for the Program Excellence Team (PET), currently rewriting NASA NMIs on program management.

Robins pointed to factors identified for at least the last 15 years that lead to poor management. These include: new starts that exceeded available resources, inadequate definition, contractor and NASA "buy-in," and failure and/or inability to control to a defined baseline. He noted that current median cost growth for NASA projects is 37 percent (average of 63 percent) and median schedule growth is 40 percent (average of 63 percent), while the nominal length of major projects is 12 years. The PET proposes to shorten life-cycle time and enhance delivery of performance on schedule and within budget.

To accomplish this, the team proposes change in the policies and processes of project management. The end product will be a consolidated NMI replacing three previous ones on project management, acquisition, and the Program Approval Document (PAD). Replacing the PAD will be the PCA (Program Commitment Agreement). New start approval will require not only a formal commitment to deliverables, schedule and budget (the PCA process), but also a requirement showing compatibility with the Agency strategic plan.

Preliminary design is being moved from Phase C to Phase B, and Phase B (definition) initiation approval will have to come from the Deputy Administrator rather than the Program Associate Administrator. The design/cost basis is also changed, from "development" to "life cycle." Agency-level go-ahead approval reviews will be established for Phase B and Phase C/D. These proposals for change are "better" because they will

Nominal Life Cycle For Major NASA Projects (By Fiscal Year)



reduce or eliminate the number of premature Phase B starts, establish program commitment as a two way process, as well as several other benefits. Phase C/D (design/development) time will be shortened by about four years, making the project "faster." The project should be "cheaper" because of less time in development through better definitions, a down-select acquisition process and improved cost control.



Robins noted that several issues remain unresolved for OMB/Congress, contractors, and the Agency, involving major cultural change, but adoption of the new policy and process can lead to aggressive, high-visibility improvement in NASA program/project management. Next steps for the Program Excellence Team include a complete review of proposals with senior management, completion of the NMI process, and then the enormous task of institutionalizing the whole process.

*Dr. C. Howard Robins Jr. began his NASA career more than 30 years ago at the Langley Research Center. In 1984 he was appointed Deputy Associate Administrator for Management. He was promoted to Associate Administrator for Management in January 1989 and was appointed to his current position as Deputy Associate Administrator for Space Systems Development in October 1991.*

### Program/Project Management Chain of Command

