

NASA Tech Proves Windfall for Army

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Under pressure to deliver cost savings and efficiency improvements, federal agencies are looking at each other's achievements with increased interest. Through a recent technology transfer, the Army is getting a boost in software development from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The Meteorology Calibration Laboratory (MCL) at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center is located on the Army's Redstone Arsenal campus in Alabama. According to [an announcement from NASA](#), Army officials "became aware" of NASA's considerable work on automated software development during a tour of the MCL. Over the past decade, NASA has generated over 2,400 automated software procedures for calibration and testing. Around 1,700 were developed for the Space Shuttle Program and another 300 were produced for general use. In the last two years, an additional 400 have been developed for NASA projects and programs including the Space Launch System. By using a standardized set of procedures, the control of instrumentation can be automated. This automation minimizes risk by reducing the probability of errors related to human involvement. Limiting the necessary human interference, it also increases the consistency in the data recorded from technician to technician.

During a period of four months, programmers at the Army's Test, Measurement and Diagnostic Equipment Activity completed around 25 automation procedures. (Assuming a constant rate, it would take several decades to amass a volume of procedures equal to the current size of NASA's collection.) With the recent transfer from NASA, the Army benefits from over twelve years of work on calibration and testing, sparing them the costs of the software development. Government officials estimate that the move marks a potential savings of nearly \$4 million. Beyond time and money, this represents a win for the service in terms improving the quality of the Army's measurements.

NASA has shared these procedures between its centers, but this Army transfer is the first to a non-NASA recipient. The agency expects additional interest from other Defense Department organizations is likely to follow. It's no surprise that sharing technology is saving agencies time and money. Various initiatives like shared services and common standards (e.g. for security or for electronic reporting) are encouraging organizations to more closely consider potential existing solutions. Going forward, we're likely to see more and more examples of agencies reaping benefits from other agency's advances. As with other cost cutting moves, the trend will eat into the contractor addressable spending in some areas but may free up funds for other investments.

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