

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From NASA to Your Boardroom: Freelancer Opens 85-Million-Mind Innovation Engine to All Enterprises

- *The platform that slashed NASA's R&D costs and compressed three-day computations into one hour is now available to any organisation*
- *First public challenge launches: \$10K for ecosystem restoration efforts*
- *Previous challenge winner's spacecraft solution is bound for space*

SAN FRANCISCO, California – January 20, 2026 – What do you do when your toughest technical problem stumps every expert in your building? If you're NASA, you throw it open to 85 million minds across 140 countries. Starting today, any company can do the same.



Freelancer (ASX: FLN) announced the **global launch of its Moonshot Innovation Program**, opening the breakthrough platform that has delivered over 20,000 solutions to NASA, NIH, and the CDC to enterprises worldwide.

The same system that helped NASA save 80-99% on R&D costs, compressed Bureau of Reclamation river modelling from 72 hours to 60 minutes, and generated 54 genome therapy breakthroughs for NIH is now available to any organization with a problem that traditional consulting can't crack.

The results speak louder than any pitch deck.

NASA's spacecraft tank venting challenge attracted 47 solutions from physicists, chemists, and aerospace engineers across multiple continents.

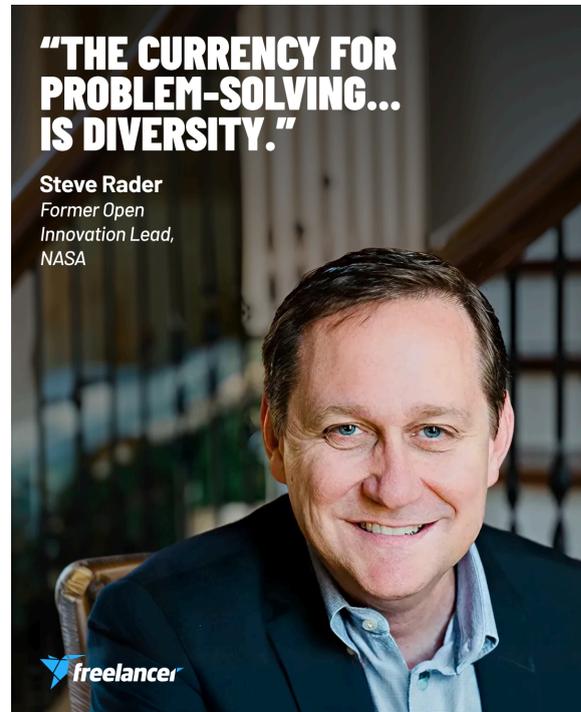
The National Institutes of Health's \$6 million gene therapy challenge pulled in teams from Harvard, MIT, Stanford, Yale, and biotech startups, delivering 30 winning approaches in the first phase alone. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation achieved a 60x performance improvement through an algorithm designed by someone outside traditional water management circles.

"We've proven something radical," said **Matt Barrie, Chief Executive of Freelancer**. "The person who can solve your impossible problem might be anywhere on Earth. They might be working in a completely different industry. They might approach it from an angle your team would never consider."

The 'Innovation Arbitrage'

[McKinsey research](#) shows 87% of executives report critical skills gaps in emerging technologies. Meanwhile, Freelancer's government clients have been quietly running a different playbook. They're not hiring consultants to give them answers their own teams could produce. They're tapping statistical diversity at scale.

"The currency for problem-solving and finding innovation is diversity," said **Steve Rader, former Program Manager at NASA's Tournament Lab**. "If you could have solved it within your domain, you would have solved it already. As soon as the speed of change is faster than your company is able to change, there is an expiration date on your company."



The platform has processed challenges across computational fluid dynamics, genome editing, spacecraft engineering, network science, emergency response systems, and data privacy. Winners have included professors from Carthage College, retired MIT engineers, heads of chemistry at aerospace startups, and self-taught innovators who discovered unexpected talents through competition.

How It Works

Unlike traditional R&D where you pay for effort regardless of outcome, **innovation challenges only pay for results**. Freelancer's team deconstructs complex problems into solvable components, designs challenges that attract the right global talent, curates responses, and manages IP transfer. Organizations choose how open to make their challenges – global, country-specific, or university-focused.

"You're not choosing one consulting firm where everyone sits in a room and comes up with the same solution," said **Trisha Epp, Director of Innovation at Freelancer**. "You're having a competition where lots of people come up with their own divergent solutions. They each have a different, unique idea. They're not influenced by each other."

Recent challenges demonstrate the range. The National Institute of Standards and Technology invested \$1 million in emergency response command systems integrating VR,

AR, and LiDAR. NIH committed \$6 million over five years to crack targeted gene therapy delivery. The Department of Commerce ran a three-year, \$975K program for data privacy certification systems that reached 14 million people globally.

The Track Record

Since 2015, Freelancer has delivered:

- 20,215 breakthrough solutions
- 8,783 participating innovators
- Challenges across 140 countries
- Winners from Harvard, MIT, Yale, Tesla, IBM
- Up to 40x return on investment vs. traditional grant programs
- NASA cost savings of 80-99% vs conventional methods

The success rate led NASA to expand Freelancer's contract from \$25 million over five years (NOIS2) to \$475 million over 10 years (NOIS3) – a 600% increase.

"As someone who leads solutioning at the intersection of digital engineering and data-driven analytics, the breadth of solutions, and varied nature of approach, received during this challenge was inspiring," said **Brian Tonge, VP Enterprise Operations at LMI**.

"This prize competition has been a great success to Reclamation - exceeding our set goals," said **Yong G. Lai, Ph.D., U.S. Bureau of Reclamation**.

Life-Changing Successes

Winners of past challenges –when Moonshot was limited to select enterprises – have enjoyed incredible benefits. Solutions have been adopted by major aerospace contractors, spun into commercial products, advanced to spaceflight, and secured additional R&D funding.



"The most valuable outcome was validation of product strategy," said **Suzanne Borders, founder of BadVR**, a woman-owned small business that won the \$1 million CommandING

Tech challenge. "The hardest part of a startup isn't the actual engineering, it's knowing what to build and when to build it. The challenge was instrumental." BadVR has since secured additional government R&D funding and turned their idea into a product for commercial and defense sectors.

Samer Hanoudi, an Assistant Professor at Davenport University who won NASA's Aftershock challenge, said: "Winning this NASA challenge has significantly boosted my professional confidence and credibility, opening new opportunities for collaborations in aerospace and advanced engineering fields."

One challenge winner's spacecraft refueling solution is now advancing to spaceflight through partnerships with Kennedy Space Center and Johnson Space Center, demonstrating the platform's ability to deliver not just theoretical solutions but flight-ready technology.

The Competitive Reality

This isn't about outsourcing. It's about what happens when the world's brightest minds compete to solve problems that keep your executives up at night. When NASA needed lunar navigation systems, they got shadow compasses, star analog navigation tools, and modular rover designs. When they needed to detect small space debris, they got plasma signature tracking, CubeSat fleets, and a rotating tethered sweeper dubbed "SPACE BAT."

In an era where competitive advantage is measured in months rather than years, the question isn't whether to embrace open innovation. It's whether you'll do it before your competitors.

Organizations ready to solve their impossible problems can visit www.freelancer.com/innovation-challenges or contact Trisha Epp, Director of Innovation, at trisha@freelancer.com

First Challenge on New Open Platform



The first challenge for the new open version of the Moonshot Innovation Program will be "**Restore Your Corner**" – a \$10,000 global ecosystem restoration challenge.

The challenge invites individuals and communities to document native habitat

restoration efforts through video – from removing invasive species to planting native vegetation.

Prizes include regional winners and a People's Choice Award, while creating an open-source library of restoration techniques adapted to diverse ecosystems worldwide.

The challenge – which goes live in the coming weeks – demonstrates that the platform is open to both enterprises posting technical challenges and public participation initiatives.

"Whether it's a Fortune 500 company posting a \$5 million computational challenge or a community documenting ecosystem restoration, the platform works the same way," said Trisha Epp, Director of Innovation at Freelancer. "'Restore Your Corner' proves anyone can participate."

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For more information, contact:

Moonshot Inquiries:

Trisha Epp
Director of Innovation, Moonshot Innovation, Freelancer
trisha@freelancer.com

Media Inquiries:

Brent O'Halloran
Director of Communications
press@freelancer.com | +1 (650) 442 3334

About Freelancer

Thirteen-time Webby award-winning Freelancer is the world's largest freelancing and crowdsourcing marketplace by total number of users and projects posted. More than 80 million registered users have posted over 25 million projects and contests to date in over 3,000 areas as diverse as website development, logo design, marketing, copywriting, astrophysics, aerospace engineering and manufacturing. Freelancer owns Escrow.com, the leading provider of secure online payments and online transaction management for consumers and businesses on the Internet with over US\$8 billion in transactions secured. Freelancer also owns Loadshift, Australia's largest heavy haulage freight marketplace with over 800 million kilometres of freight posted since inception. Freelancer Limited is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange under the ticker ASX:FLN and in the United States as FRLCY.