

By: ~~April 2008~~ ~~April 2008~~ Bai, Games Editor

[NASA Explains Free MMO Request](#)

The company developing the MMO for free will still be able to make profit, apparently

We have already told you about NASA's desire to create an [educational MMO](#) for youngsters who want to learn more about space - back then, NASA said it had \$3 million for the project, but things have changed a little bit and the project seems further away from becoming reality. Let's see the whole story. Last week, NASA released a Request for Proposals (or RFP - [click here](#) to read the full .pdf format), where it said that, actually, the \$3 million budget didn't exist anymore and it wanted the MMO created for free - or, in their own language, "using a non-reimbursable Space Act Agreement (defined as one with no exchange of funds)". Back then, NASA admitted that the development partner would still get something in exchange: "brand placement, limited exclusivity and other opportunities". But things are not exactly as they seem to be in the first place, since website GameCyte has contacted Daniel Laughlin, Project Manager at NASA Learning Technologies, the same person who wrote the RFP and asked for details. It seems that the \$3 million budget did not just vanish - it was the budget provided for the year 2007, and most of it is still available in 2008: according to Laughlin, NASA still has a little over \$2 million for the project, but the money is not going to be given for development. \$1.5 million dollars are meant to "attracting education experts to the project," while \$350,000 are allocated to buying time from NASA experts who will offer knowledge and experience to game developers. Also, Laughlin explained that the Space Act Agreement is a tool used by NASA to remove restrictions on profitability, because it would be illegal for a government contract to be paid twice (once by the government and second by the consumers). So, even though developers will not be paid for their work, they will be free to profit from their work - selling the product in game stores will be a possibility. Also, brand placement and everything else noted in the initial RFP still stand and might offer further profit to the developer. What remains to be seen now is if anybody considers this a good idea and starts working.