

Dr. Bhavya Lal, Senior Advisor for Budget and Finance, NASA

Dr. Bhavya Lal serves as the senior advisor to the NASA Administrator for budget and finance. She was the seniormost White House appointee and Acting Chief of Staff at NASA for the first 100 days of the Biden Administration, the agency's transition under the administration of President Joe Biden. Before that, she served as a member of the Biden Presidential Transition Agency Review Teams for both NASA and the Department of Defense.

Lal brings extensive experience in engineering and space technology, serving as a member of the research staff at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) Science and Technology Policy Institute (STPI) from 2005 to 2020. There, she led analysis of space technology, strategy, and policy for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and National Space Council, as well as federal space-oriented organizations, including NASA, the Department of Defense, and the intelligence community. She has applied her expertise in engineering systems and innovation theory and practice to topics in space, with recent projects on commercial activities in low-Earth orbit and deep space, in-orbit servicing assembly and manufacturing, small satellites, human exploration, space nuclear power, space exploration, and space science. She has published more than 50 papers in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings.

Before joining STPI, Lal served as president of C-STPS LLC, a science and technology policy research and consulting firm in Waltham, Massachusetts. Prior to that, she served as director of the Center for Science and Technology Policy Studies at Abt Associates Inc. in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Lal is an active member of the space technology and policy community, having chaired, co-chaired, or served on five high-impact National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) Committees including, most recently, one on Space Nuclear Propulsion Technologies released in 2021. She served two consecutive terms on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Federal Advisory Committee on Commercial Remote Sensing (ACCRES) and was an External Council member of NASA's Innovative Advanced Concepts (NIAC) Program and the Technology, Innovation and Engineering Advisory Committee of the NASA Advisory Council (NAC). She co-founded and is co-chair of the policy track of the American Nuclear Society's annual conference on Nuclear and Emerging Technologies in Space (NETS) and co-organizes a seminar series on space history and policy with the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. For her many contributions to the space sector, she was nominated and selected to be a Corresponding Member of the International Academy of Astronautics.

Lal earned Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in nuclear engineering, as well as a Master of Science degree in technology and policy, from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and holds a doctorate in public policy and public administration from George Washington University. She is a member of both the nuclear engineering and public policy honor societies.