for a very small amount. Martin got involved in isotopic power, while others held back, because "they were into space in a big way and their programs were long range. A lot of other firms that got involved later came in when there was more money in the budgets. Like when we got going on Apollo."[2]

In the initial development period, the circle was limited, encompassing the small group at the AEC and small groups in other institutions: the isotope power experimenters and developers at Martin-Baltimore and their subcontractors at 3M; the fuel packagers at Monsanto's Mound Laboratory; and users such as the Applied Physics Laboratory of Johns Hopkins University which developed the Transit navigational satellite system for the Navy. This team proceeded to develop the SNAP-9A with its increased power requirements for the operational Transit scheduled for flight in late 1962. At the same time, a series of SNAP-7 devices were under development at Martin for use by the Navy, Coast Guard, and Weather Bureau for navigation lights and weather stations on earth.

NASA began to enter into contracts with the AEC to study possible applications of isotopic SNAPs to future space missions. Even before Apollo, NASA recognized that there would be unusually severe power system requirements for lunar missions "due to the weight and space limitations of payload, the 14-day lunar nights, and the variety of the intended experiments."[3] By the fall of 1961, NASA reconfirmed its requirements for an isotopic power unit for the Surveyor soft lunar landing mission and the AEC prepared to provide two SNAP devices—designated SNAP-11s—to NASA for missions scheduled to take place two years later.[4] In mid-1962 NASA began preliminary discussions with the AEC on the possibility that an RTG could provide primary power requirements for one of a series of satellites called Interplanetary Monitoring Probes. Along with foreseen technical advantages, NASA hoped to use the RTG to enhance its own "capability and experience in the use and application of nuclear devices."[5]

Reporting to the JCAE in September 1962 on space nuclear power applications, Commissioner Hayworth of the AEC stated "Nuclear power not only will enhance space exploration; its use, both for propulsion and for auxiliary power, is the key to extensive outer space exploration." He reviewed the developments and tests in the Rover program to develop nuclear rocket propulsion and admitted that there had been disappointments causing delays. Turning to the