

Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDC) and University Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs)

The logo consists of the words "FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CENTERS" stacked vertically in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The text is contained within a thin, light-colored rectangular border.

HISTORY

FFRDCs are unique nonprofit entities sponsored and funded by the U.S. government to meet some special long-term research or development need which cannot be met as effectively by existing in-house or contractor resources. It is common for agencies to establish long-term relationships with their FFRDCs in order to provide continuity. FFRDCs operate in the industries of defense, homeland security, energy,

aviation, space, health and human services, and tax administration. FFRDCs are grouped into three categories focusing on different types of activities:

- System Engineering and Integration Centers
- Study and Analysis Centers
- Research and Development Centers (includes national laboratories)

First established during World War II, FFRDCs, formerly called Federal Contract Research Centers (FCRCs), were semi-academic laboratories and research groups created by the federal government for defense research. FFRDCs grew out of the need to obtain objective assessments of military problems or programs of increasing technical complexity.

FFRDCs are operated, managed, and/or administered by either a university or consortium of universities, other not-for-profit or nonprofit organization, or an industrial firm as an autonomous organization that does not have shareholders or partners. FFRDCs do not have a prescribed organizational structure. They can be structured around traditional contractor-owned/contractor-operated relationships, government sponsored private organizations, or government-owned/contractor-operated relationships or can reflect various balances of contractor/government control and ownership.

Two other types of Public Interest Partnerships for FFRDCs are:

- Government-Owned/Contractor-Operated (GOCO) partnership
- University Affiliated Research Center (UARC)

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

The FFRDC employs private sector resources to accomplish tasks integral to the mission and operation of the sponsoring agency and therefore have beyond normal access to Government and supplier data. They are required to conduct their business in a manner befitting their special relationship with the Government.

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An FFRDC's performance of its tasks requires that a special relationship exist between the FFRDC and its sponsor. That relationship includes:

- Comprehensive knowledge of sponsor needs – mission, culture, expertise and institutional memory regarding issues of enduring concern to the sponsor
- Adaptability – ability to respond to emerging needs of their sponsors and anticipate future critical issues
- Objectivity – ability to produce thorough, independent analyses to address complex technical and analytical problems
- Freedom from conflicts of interest and dedication to the public interest – independence from commercial, shareholder, political, or other associations
- Long-term continuity – uninterrupted, consistent support based on a continuing relationship
- Broad access to sensitive government and commercial proprietary information – absence of institutional interests that could lead to misuse of information or cause contractor reluctance to provide such information
- Quick response capability – ability to offer short-term assistance to help sponsors meet urgent and high-priority requirements

The benefit of the FFRDC is that there is no profit motive or conflict of interest, and the FFRDC can therefore function as an independent, trusted advisor and honest broker. The FFRDC is answerable only to the government customer and has no vested interest in particular technologies or solutions.

It is important to recognize that the FFRDC does not compete for federal contracts against non-FFRDCs, but may compete with other FFRDCs to become a government organization's FFRDC. The FFRDC is required to work within the purpose, mission, general scope, or competency as assigned by the sponsoring agency. The FFRDC must not perform work that is otherwise performed by a for profit corporation.

PURPOSE

In accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulation 2.101, a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) is an activity sponsored under a broad charter by a Government agency (or agencies) for the purpose of performing, analyzing, integrating, supporting, and/or managing basic or applied research and/or development, and that receives 70 percent or more of its financial support from the Government; and --

1. A long-term relationship is contemplated;
2. Most or all of the facilities are owned or funded by the Government; and
3. The FFRDC has access Government and supplier data, employees, and facilities beyond that common in a normal contractual relationship.

This page will provide information on the individual FFRDCs, how they are managed, and the role they play within with Department of Defense.

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The following link contains additional information on the FFRDCs that currently serve the U.S. Government: <http://nsf.gov/statistics/ffrdclist/>