



FAQ: FFRDCS AND THE CENTER FOR NAVAL ANALYSES

Q: WHAT IS THE CENTER FOR NAVAL ANALYSES?

A: The Center for Naval Analyses is a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) that performs directed research and analysis for the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and other Department of Defense organizations. It is part of CNA, a nonprofit research and analysis organization based in Arlington, Virginia.

Q: WHAT IS A FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER (FFRDC)?

A: An FFRDC is a research organization that is dedicated to the mission success of a particular government department or agency sponsor. FFRDCs have long-term relationships with their sponsors that allow them to develop deep expertise and to work on research projects that may span decades and even anticipate issues the sponsor will face in the future. They are also on-call with quick-response capability when speed is critical, including in national emergencies. FFRDCs are established under contracting authority in Federal Acquisition Regulation, Part 35.

Q: HOW LONG HAVE FFRDCS EXISTED?

A: The military created the first FFRDCs in the 1940s and '50s. Many of them evolved from research groups formed during World War II to assist the armed forces. The Center for Naval Analyses began in 1942 as the Antisubmarine Warfare Operations Research Group, civilian scientists helping the U.S. Navy deal with the U-boat threat.

Q: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN FFRDC AND A COMMERCIAL CONTRACTOR?

A: Commercial contractors also conduct research for the government, but FFRDCs are different in several ways. FFRDCs have long-term contracts with their sponsoring agencies, and may not compete for other federal requests for proposals. FFRDCS are also prohibited from most com-

mercial work and cannot manufacture or market products that the government uses. Under the Federal Acquisition Regulations, FFRDC contracts establish a "special relationship" between an FFRDC and its sponsor, including "access beyond that which is common to the normal contractual relationship to government and supplier data."

Q: WHY ISN'T THIS WORK DONE BY FEDERAL EMPLOYEES?

A: Federal Acquisition Regulations stipulate that "an FFRDC meets some special long-term research or development need which cannot be met as effectively by existing in-house or contractor resources." Many FFRDCs are staffed by highly-trained scientists. (70 percent of CNA analysts have Ph.D.s.) The regulations also highlight the importance of the "objectivity and independence" of FFRDCs. Analysts at FFRDCs can challenge conventional wisdom and current practices in ways that may be difficult for civil servants and military subordinates.

Q: WHICH AGENCIES HAVE FFRDCS?

A: There are 42 FFRDCs in total, with the largest number sponsored by the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy. Other agencies with FFRDCs are the Departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Transportation, Treasury and Veterans Affairs, as well as NASA, the National Science Foundation, the National Security Agency, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the U.S. Courts.

Q: WHO OWNS THE FFRDCS?

A: Nearly all FFRDCs are administered by nonprofit corporations, such as CNA, RAND and MITRE, or by universities. DOD-sponsored FFRDCs must be operated by nonprofit entities to prevent conflicts of interest.

Q: HOW ARE FFRDCS FUNDED?

A: Most FFRDC research projects are contracted and funded by offices within the sponsoring department or agency, using their own budgets. Center for Naval Analyses funding includes “core” or line-item funding in the Navy’s budget, as well as “above core” or task-order funding provided by sponsors across the DOD. Line-item funding covers the cost of the Center for Naval Analyses’ annual plan for the Navy and Marine Corps: studies support, the field program of on-site analysts to Navy and Marine Corps fleet and operating-force commands, exercise support, ad hoc support, independent research and the scientific analyst program — headquarters analysts supporting the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) and Headquarters Marine Corps. Task orders allow the Center for Naval Analyses to meet additional Navy and Marine Corps demand for analysis that the line-item funding cannot cover and to provide analysis to organizations across the DOD.

Q: CAN MY ORGANIZATION ENGAGE THE SERVICES OF THE CENTER FOR NAVAL ANALYSES?

A: Any DOD organization can request and fund analytical support from the Center for Naval Analyses. The work must be suitable for an FFRDC and in line with the mission and core capabilities of the Center for Naval Analyses, which must also be uniquely qualified to conduct the work. The request process is intended to be quick and easy: First, the requesting organization completes two forms noting their interest in the work and the Center for Naval Analyses’ unique qualifications to conduct it. Next, the FFRDC and sponsoring organization jointly develop a proposal, including a detailed budget. Once approved by the Navy, the requesting organization transmits the required funding to the Office of Naval Research and work can begin.

ABOUT CNA

CNA is a nonprofit research and analysis organization dedicated to the safety and security of the nation. It operates the Center for Naval Analyses — the only Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) serving the Department of the Navy — as well as the Institute for Public Research. CNA is dedicated to developing actionable solutions to complex problems of national importance. With nearly 700 scientists, analysts and professional staff, CNA takes a real-world approach to gathering data. Its one-of-a-kind field program places analysts on carriers and military bases, in squad rooms and crisis centers, working side-by-side with operators and decision-makers around the world. CNA supports naval operations, fleet readiness and great power competition. Its non-defense research portfolio includes criminal justice, homeland security and data management.

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