

Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) are private-sector entities that have unique relationships with their sponsoring Federal Government agencies. FFRDCs operate in the public interest as strategic partners with their sponsoring agencies to ensure that the highest levels of objectivity and technical excellence are applied to the research and development they conduct on behalf of the government.

### Federal Acquisition Regulation

The U.S. Code of Federal Regulation codifies the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), which governs how FFRDCs are established, used, reviewed, and terminated. According to FAR Section 35.017(a)(2), the private-sector resources of FFRDCs “accomplish tasks that are integral to the mission and operation of the sponsoring agency.” FFRDCs bring together the expertise and outlook of government, industry, and academia to solve complex problems; thus, they are able to meet needs that cannot readily be met by governmental resources or traditional contractors.



*“An FFRDC meets some specific long-term research or development need which cannot be met as effectively by existing in-house or contractor resources.”*

—FAR Section 35.017(a)(2)

In accordance with FAR Section 35.017(a)(3), FFRDCs are administered by universities, other nonprofit organizations, or industrial firms; and each FFRDC must operate autonomously from its administering organization. Today, 42 FFRDCs are sponsored by 13 Federal agencies, primarily the Department of Energy (with 16 FFRDCs), the Department of Defense (with 10), and the National Science Foundation (with 5). Each FFRDC falls into one of three categories: study and analysis centers, systems engineering and integration centers, and research and development laboratories.

### Long-term relationships with sponsoring agencies

By developing strong, long-term relationships with their sponsoring agencies, FFRDCs attract quality personnel and maintain currency, objectivity, and independence. Long-term relationships also ensure that the FFRDCs can respond quickly to sponsor requests because they understand sponsoring agencies’ needs and how those needs change over time.

The effectiveness of the sponsor-FFRDC association is reevaluated every 5 years, after which the relationship is either renewed for another 5 years or terminated, as outlined in a legal instrument known as the sponsoring agreement. The FAR mandates that the sponsoring agreement prohibit the FFRDC from competing with non-FFRDCs and specify whether the FFRDC is permitted to work for non-sponsor organizations. Thus if the sponsoring agreement allows it, government, academic, and industry organizations other than their sponsoring agencies may contract with an FFRDC for appropriate work. See FAR Part 35.017-1(a), (c), and (e).

To be appropriate to an FFRDC's intended purpose, the work requested must require some combination of deep expertise, diverse experience, freedom from bias and conflict of interest, continuity of effort, ready access to highly sensitive information, and specialized facilities.

### **IDA operates three FFRDCs**

IDA is a private, nonprofit corporation that manages three FFRDCs with core capabilities that meet the capabilities required for FFRDC-appropriate work. The **Systems and Analyses Center**, sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the **Science and Technology Policy Institute**, sponsored by the National Science Foundation are study and analysis centers; the **Center for Communications and Computing**, sponsored by the National Security Agency, is a research and development laboratory.

### **Protection of sensitive information**

The sponsoring agreements between IDA and its sponsoring agencies give IDA access to sensitive and proprietary information necessary to carry out its work. In return, IDA agrees to protect sensitive information the government provides as long as the data remains sensitive.

All IDA employees are U.S. citizens whose employment depends on their attaining and maintaining a security clearance.



### **Reputation**

IDA FFRDCs answer the most challenging U.S. security and science policy questions with objective analysis leveraging extraordinary scientific, technical, and analytic expertise, making IDA a compelling contributor to government decision-making.

IDA has no other lines of business outside the FFRDC framework. Our sole focus is on supporting our sponsors in service to the Nation. These sponsors turn to IDA's FFRDCs time and again for four reasons: our independence; our freedom from conflicts of interest; our responsiveness; and our record of conducting rigorous, informed, data-driven analyses.



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