

# GOGOS, GOCOS, AND FFRDCs...OH MY!

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The moment you set foot in a federal laboratory, it's only a matter of time before you fall into the acronym alphabet soup. What exactly is a Federal Laboratory, GOGO, GOCO, FFRDC, or National Laboratory (see Table 1)? Each of these designations carries with it specific attributes that allow a federal laboratory to carry out its research mission in a defined way. And, adding to the confusion, a single federal laboratory may carry multiple designations.

The “federal laboratory” is at the highest level, with any additional designation attaching to it like a medal. In the end, these organizations with specialty designations are at the heart still a federal laboratory. A federal laboratory is "any laboratory, any federally funded research and development center (FFRDC), or any center that is owned, leased, or otherwise used by a Federal agency and funded by the Federal Government, whether operated by the Government or by a contractor" (15 USCS § 3703).

Federal laboratories are further distinguished by who operates the laboratory. Government-owned, government-operated (GOGO) facilities are owned or leased by the United States Government, and managed and primarily staffed by employees of the federal government. These GOGO laboratories are bound by federal laws and policies directed to the federal government and its agencies. They conduct their business representing the federal government. Conversely, government-owned, contractor-operated (GOCO) facilities are owned or leased by the United States Government, but managed by third-party contractors. GOCO contractors operate the GOCO facility and are subject to the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). While they operate within a government-owned facility, GOCO contractors do not represent the government. The GOCO is run by a contractor that ultimately delivers to the Government the products and services in its statement of work.

FFRDCs are very special GOCOs. All FFRDCs are GOCOs, but not all GOCOs are FFRDCs. An FFRDC is designed to meet a special long-term research and development need that could not be met as effectively by existing in-house or contractor resources. The authorities given to an FFRDC (FAR 35.017) enable the agency, through the FFRDC contractor, to further use private-sector resources to accomplish tasks that are integral to its mission and operation. An FFRDC is authorized and designed to operate such that it can adapt quickly to provide new and cutting-edge scientific support and technical expertise.

What about a National Laboratory? A National Laboratory is not an identified legal entity, and it does not arise from a separate authority. Rather, a National Laboratory is a brand identified with a collection of unique research facilities, most of which are also FFRDCs and therefore GOCOs. These facilities, such as Los Alamos National Laboratory or the Frederick National Laboratory for Cancer Research, are mission-driven; they provide leadership in solving fundamental problems that impact the broader research community. The National Laboratory brand conveys stature and standing, but the underlying operation and authorities are those afforded an FFRDC or GOCO.

What federal laboratories have in common is a specific research and development mission with the physical facilities and resources to achieve that mission—albeit along different paths. Federal laboratories, in all their different flavors, are the cornerstones of federally funded research and development, and serve the research community as a national resource.

**Table 1**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>GOCO</b>	<b>GOGO</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Management	GOCOs are owned or leased by the federal government and operated by contractors	GOGOs are owned or leased by the federal government and operated by government employees	
Allowable Agreements	Federal and nonfederal WFOs (when authorized), CRADAs, licenses	Federal and nonfederal WFOs (when authorized), CRADAs, licenses	*Processes may vary between GOCO and GOGO, for example, necessary approvals
Copyrights	Can assert copyright	Cannot assert copyright (Copyright protection not available to federal employees)	
Consulting by Lab Personnel	In certain cases contractor employees can consult with approved outside activity request	Federal employees may not consult	*Federal employees may collaborate as an approved official duty (i.e., CRADA)
Invention Rights	Owned by the contractor per Bayh-Dole unless otherwise directed by a Determination of Exceptional Circumstances or statute	Owned by the government	
Employees	Staff is employed by the private or public contractor that operates the laboratory	Staff is employed by the government and supported by nonfederal employees	
Licensing	Requires public posting for the required time period	Requires posting in <i>Federal Register</i>	

## **Acronym Guide**

CRADA	Cooperative Research and Development Agreement
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulations
FFRDC	Federally funded research and development center
GOCO	Government-owned, contractor-operated
GOGO	Government-owned, government-operated
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
NIH	National Institutes of Health
WFO	Work for Others