

Together Academia and Industry Create a Win-Win Situation - ACT

Written by Major Christophe Dufey, France, Ingénieur Principal des Etudes et Techniques de l'Armement, Office for Collaboration with Academia and Industry, Capability Engineering Division, Future Solution and Modeling & Simulation Branch



After nearly three years of existence, the Framework For Collaborative Interaction has proved to be an efficient tool for the ACT capability developers and all their support activities ... for no cost!

Industry and Academia are multifaceted worlds of importance for Transformation. A "one-size-fits-all" approach in any academia-industry engagement will not produce satisfactory results for NATO. Therefore, multiple approaches have been devised within the Alliance; the collaborative approach being one of these. Collaboration is limited to projects conscribed in time and scope, and ones that do not involve procurement. Nonetheless, collaborative interaction allows for teamwork to emerge between ACT and Academia or Industry and to participate in solving shared concerns. Collaboration is guided by the Framework For Collaborative Interaction (FFCI), which provides principles, tools and coordination for this effort.

Framework For Collaborative Interaction for "Free"

FFCI was set up in 2009 and the implementation team, the Office for Collaboration with Academia and Industry (OCAI), was created in 2010. Since then, FFCI has been providing great support to many projects from cloud computing to countering hybrid threats, medical support to operations, distributed networked battle lab, missile defence and many more.

FFCI is an additional resource for anyone in ACT working on projects; be it capability development related or any other ACT mission driven project. Additionally, FFCI is available to those projects with privately contracted support, NATO Industrial Advisory Group studies or any NATO agency contracted support.

FFCI is not a programme, it is an enabler to achieve results similarly to the way contracting supports projects. But there is an exception to FFCI; there is no exchange of money between the involved parties for services. Resources are provided with respect to their level of ambition into the project. Interestingly, skeptics have long thought that this model would not be viable, but the successes have proven them wrong.

Academia and Industry have engaged in many FFCI projects without directly receiving any financial contributions. These organisations find benefits beyond the financial aspect; a

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"collective benefit" perspective. This action brings awareness of the current capabilities within industry to NATO. As a result of the collaboration, NATO and industry can then take into account the capability development effort, for example, and the industry organisation can understand what NATO is expecting; thus the company could lead its research and development efforts accordingly.

The word "collaboration" is not to be taken as a non procurement related and delimited in t

It is About Teamwork

Setting up collaboration is by essence teamwork between different parties. The ACT Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and Academia and Industry representatives have to manage each others expectations to find a fair basis for collaboration. The OCAI team provides advices and coordination, with great support and assistance from the Legal and Contracting & Purchasing branches and ACT Office of Security. The OCAI team will appear officially in the new [Peace Establishment](#)

(PE) of ACT with permanent positions, which will enforce setting up new milestones in the recognition of collaboration efficiency. Over time, those Voluntary National Contribution (VNC) and the contractor personnel positions will be filled by peacetime positions provided by the nation's military personnel.

Industry Engagement Beyond ACT

Discussions are currently underway on how to extend industry collaboration beyond ACT and extend it throughout NATO.

The principles of FFCI (fairness, openness, transparency, and a zero-to-low cost benefit) should be applied to all possible frameworks. But such frameworks should first fit the requirement of each NATO body that would like to work towards a collaborative effort. At that point, the implementation would adjust as necessary considering the requirements of each entity and, more particularly, their level of involvement into the capability development effort.

When considering collaboration with industry, it will be necessary to address the role of the NATO Industrial Advisory Group (NIAG). Could NIAG play the role of the OCAI at the NATO level? Could NIAG coordinate all the collaboration efforts?

The Future of FFCI

FFCI has endured the long journey and this 'stop for refuelling' and 'taking on new equipment', will be short and worthwhile. Then, just like a plane's mission is to fly, once the PE is fully implemented, FFCI will take-off again!

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