
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT FRAUNHOFER

Fraunhofer has very satisfied customers – the logical result of tremendously motivated and well-trained staff combined with extensive experience in working with both large and small companies. One indication of how successfully we work together with our customers is the high number of repeat orders. Quite simply, companies that have used Fraunhofer's services once tend to want to use them again. Plus, they often recommend Fraunhofer to other companies.

If you are considering working with Fraunhofer for the first time, you are sure to have lots of questions. We hope you will find the answers to some of your key questions below.

1.

ARE JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS REALLY WORTHWHILE?

In short, yes. Innovations offer the basis for both a successful economy and successful companies. This is especially true in industries where product life cycles are steadily getting ever shorter owing to global competition and rapid technological development. Ideas alone are not enough – you also need experienced professionals who can help you transform your ideas into innovations and, ultimately, into successful products.

2.

WHY CHOOSE FRAUNHOFER OVER OTHER RESEARCH PROVIDERS?

Contract research is the Fraunhofer Institutes' main field of business – a fact that is reflected in their employees' expertise. Fraunhofer researchers are familiar with the conditions and constraints that companies encounter on a daily basis and they understand what is important, often because they have worked in the industry themselves.

Our close cooperation with industry partners means we can constantly tailor Fraunhofer research to address the mounting challenges that companies face. The cornerstones of our approach are guaranteed confidentiality, continuity in key positions, top-class facilities, and reliable project management. Our efficient style of collaboration ensures that our customers get the agreed solution on time and ready to put into practice. We also handle the issue of usage rights with the utmost professionalism.

An increasing number of Fraunhofer Institutes are certified to EN ISO 9001; as well as making it easier to reproduce new developments, this gives customers the reassurance of knowing that the institutes operate in a way that ensures the sustainable implementation of customer specifications.

Other research providers, the bulk of whom are publicly funded, may seem like a more economical option at first glance. But what ultimately gives Fraunhofer the edge, even from an economic perspective, is its professional approach towards cooperation and its long-standing ties to industry. The high levels of customer satisfaction confirmed by survey after survey are an indication of the excellent reputation and stature that Fraunhofer enjoys as a partner to business.

3. **HOW DO CUSTOMERS AND FRAUNHOFER START WORKING TOGETHER?**

Customers tend to have a fairly concrete idea of the challenge they are facing and the deadlines they must meet, and in many cases they simply make a direct approach to the Fraunhofer Institute which they believe can best tackle that challenge. If it is not immediately apparent which institute is the best choice, they can turn to a Fraunhofer Group or Fraunhofer Alliance to get advice and contact details. Alternatively, commercial customers can simply ring the central hotline set up for this purpose.

When it comes to broader concepts such as joint technology development projects, Fraunhofer can organize a Technology Day for a specific company. This is an event that enables both sides to define and stake out a cooperative process by exchanging information.

To help companies better assess their own capacity for innovation when developing product-related services, the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO has created a tool which is available for free on the Internet: www.innoscore-service.de

4. **HOW DOES A COOPERATION PROJECT WITH FRAUNHOFER GET UNDERWAY?**

Contact with Fraunhofer is often initiated by companies themselves, but Fraunhofer seminars, events and trade fairs also provide an opportunity to get in touch. Once contact has been made, the company is invited to an initial consultation which is both free and without obligation. The goal of this initial discussion is to establish what the objectives would be for a potential cooperative venture and how the budget and schedule might look. This is followed by contract negotiations, the signing of an agreement, and commencement of the research and development work.

5. **HOW BIG DOES THE PROJECT HAVE TO BE?**

The scope and scale of cooperation with Fraunhofer is flexible, with the institutes catering to the specific needs of each particular client. Successful cooperation often begins with an entry-level project. But regardless of whether your project is large or small, you can be sure you will receive the same professional level of research and development services from Fraunhofer and its employees.

6. **HOW MUCH DOES FRAUNHOFER CHARGE FOR R&D COOPERATION?**

The initial consultation phase is free of charge. Fraunhofer only starts charging for its research and development (R&D) work once the scope of the cooperation has been defined and the corresponding agreements have been finalized.

7.

DOES THE PARTNERSHIP END ONCE THE R&D PROJECT IS COMPLETED?

After-sales service is an important aspect of customer satisfaction. Once the innovation has been launched, you can request specific information from the Fraunhofer Institute concerned to address your ongoing needs, for example in the form of staff training and development. Special Fraunhofer spin-offs can also help to lock in the technological support companies often need in larger-scale projects.

8.

WHO HOLDS THE RIGHTS TO THE DEVELOPMENT?

Customers that embark on a cooperation project with Fraunhofer receive the rights to the products, prototypes and other material objects that are developed on their behalf. Customers also receive the rights they need to use the inventions, intellectual property rights and know-how generated by Fraunhofer in the course of the project. These rights and licenses are made available to the customer either non-exclusively or exclusively for the application that formed the basis of the contract research project.

Exclusive, application-specific rights of use give the customer optimum protection against competition. Outside the scope of this "customer zone", Fraunhofer reserves the opportunity to further develop and otherwise exploit its own know-how, inventions and intellectual property rights. This means all customers can benefit from the broad technological background that Fraunhofer brings to the table in all its cooperation projects.

9.

IS IT FEASIBLE FOR FRAUNHOFER TO COOPERATE WITH COMPETING COMPANIES? FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE KNOW-HOW A COMPANY SHARES WITH FRAUNHOFER DURING A COOPERATION PROJECT?

Data and information from customers who use our services is always treated in the strictest confidentiality. Fraunhofer bases its work on the need-to-know principle: confidential customer information is passed only to those Fraunhofer staff who need it to carry out their specific project. We use separate facilities and closed-off laboratory areas wherever necessary to ensure confidentiality.

In some cases, competitors from the same industry deliberately choose to work with Fraunhofer in order to create an independent, pre-competitive environment that allows synergies to be exploited.

10.

ARE COOPERATION PROJECTS KEPT SECRET OR DOES FRAUNHOFER USE THEM FOR ADVERTISING PURPOSES?

Fraunhofer only uses the name of a customer for its PR work if it has obtained the express consent of the customer in question. Otherwise, any information contained in project reports is edited to ensure the customer cannot be identified.

11.

IS FRAUNHOFER TECHNOLOGICALLY UP-TO-DATE?

Yes. We always use the very latest, state-of-the-art technical equipment. And thanks to the close collaboration between Fraunhofer Institutes and universities we get access to the most recent developments in each field. Our international activities keep us in touch with the cutting-edge aspects of each field of technology – and of course, in many fields, the latest technological developments are being pioneered by Fraunhofer itself.

12.

FRAUNHOFER IS A PUBLIC SERVICE. WHAT DO PEOPLE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE CHALLENGES FACING BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY?

Cooperation with companies is the bread and butter of Fraunhofer employees' work. They see it as their fundamental duty to ensure their work always focuses on practical applications. Thanks to their broad customer base, Fraunhofer researchers also have plenty of experience in how companies think and work and have been able to gain major insights into different corporate cultures. Many of our staff worked in industry before they joined Fraunhofer.

Fraunhofer research can best be compared to a company's outsourced research department, another environment where application of the results is the primary goal. And that is how we define ourselves at Fraunhofer, too: We work for businesses, and we help our customers transform knowledge into profit.

13.

DOES FRAUNHOFER HAVE ACCESS TO DEVELOPMENT GRANTS OR PUBLIC FUNDING?

To a certain degree Fraunhofer can inject its own funds into future-relevant projects through the Fraunhofer-Zukunftstiftung (Fraunhofer Future Foundation). But what really interests our customers is the fact that many of the cooperation projects in which Fraunhofer plays a major part receive funding from the German state or the EU. An initial consultation with Fraunhofer can help customers sound out the concrete opportunities to work together on these kinds of projects.

14.

WHY DOES FRAUNHOFER WORK INTERNATIONALLY? DON'T YOU RUN THE RISK OF LOSING MONEY OR KNOW-HOW TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES?

We apply the same principle of confidentiality internationally as we do nationally. We ensure that all our international research activities offer clear advantages to our customers and our sponsors. Working in international teams and dealing with global market requirements in projects abroad provides our researchers with invaluable experience – and that ultimately benefits our domestic customers, too.