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## THE FAA COE CST: COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS FOR COMMERCIAL SPACE RESEARCH

**Abstract**

In support of its regulatory mission to ensure safety of commercial aviation and space transportation operations, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the United States government (USG) conducts research and development (R&D) using two distinct approaches: traditional research grants and the Centers of Excellence (COEs). Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages and the FAA's research "portfolio" is well served by using them in appropriate proportion. Isolated and episodic research may be best served by traditional grants but strategically executed research programs are well-served through COEs. The major differences between the two approaches are described and the benefits provided by COEs are detailed. In summary, COEs are well suited (better than individual traditional grants) to stimulated the creation of a research network that can exceed research goals through the stimulation of increased innovation and industry growth, two important elements of national industry competitiveness. With specific attention to commercial space safety, the COE for Commercial Space Transportation (COE CST) was established in 2010 by the FAA Office of Commercial Space Transportation. Current research tasks being conducted are listed and detailed examples are given.