



Center for Defense Acquisition Research
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The Limits of Competition in Defense Acquisition

Research Symposium



Call for Papers

DAU Campus, Fort Belvoir VA,

September 18-19, 2012

Abstracts (400 words or less) due:

January 30, 2012

Selection and notification in February 2012; Papers (10,000 words, APA format) due: June 29, 2012

The recent Carter initiatives on efficiency and affordability are the latest in a number of efforts to foster competition among DoD suppliers in order to hold down costs. With the supplier base shrinking, the opportunities for competition have become more challenging. The change in acquisition environment brings to the fore the question of whether competition is, in fact, an efficient means of managing costs, especially in a single buyer market (i.e., DoD) that limits the options for suppliers.

The Limits of Competition symposium is intended to address these issues by calling for thoughtful, analytical research and discussion that can assess ramifications and risks of competition in defense acquisition, and provide insights that can inform policymaking on the subject. A panel of subject matter experts was convened to develop the specific questions that can guide potential researchers.

The following list of research questions is provided to indicate the range of areas of interest for this symposium. Researchers may propose other topics as well.

Measuring the effects of competition

- › What means are there (or can be developed) to measure the effect on defense acquisition costs of maintaining industrial base in various sectors?
- › What means are there (or can be developed) of measuring the effect of utilizing defense industrial infrastructure for commercial manufacture, in particular in growth industries? In other words, can we measure the effect of using defense manufacturing to expand the buyer base?
- › What means are there (or can be developed) to determine the degree of openness that exists in competitive awards?
- › What is the effect on program cost, schedule and performance of awarding based on best value versus lowest-cost-technically acceptable (LCTA)?

Strategic competition

- › Is there evidence that competition between system portfolios is an effective means of controlling price and costs?
- › Does lack of competition automatically mean higher prices? For example, is there evidence that sole source can result in lower overall administrative costs at both the government and industry levels, to the effect of lowering total costs?
- › What are long-term historical trends for competition guidance and practice in defense acquisition policies and practices?
- › To what extent are contracts being awarded non-competitively

by congressional mandate, for policy interest reasons?

What is the effect on contract price and performance?

- › What means are there (or can be developed) to determine the degree to which competitive program costs are negatively affected by laws and regulations such as the Berry Amendment, Buy-America Acts, etc?
- › The DoD should have enormous buying power and the ability to influence supplier prices. Is this the case? Examine the potential change in cost performance due to greater centralization of buying organizations or strategies.

Effects of industrial base

- › What are the effects on program cost, schedule, and performance of having more or fewer competitors? What measures are there to determine these effects?
- › What means are there (or can be developed) to measure the breadth and depth of the industrial base in various sectors, that goes beyond simple head-count of providers?
- › Has the change in industrial base resulted in actual change in output? How is that measured?

Competitive contracting

- › Commercial industry often cultivates long-term, exclusive (non-competitive) supply chain relationships. Does this model have any application to defense acquisition? Under what conditions/circumstances?
- › What is the effect on program cost performance of awards based on varying levels of competition: 1."Real" competition (two or more competitors, winner take all); 2. Split awards; 3. Sole source?

Comparative studies

- › Compare the industrial policies of military acquisition in different nations and the policy impacts on acquisition outcomes.
- › Compare the cost and contract performance of highly regulated public utilities with non-regulated "natural monopolies", (e.g., military satellites, warship building).
- › Compare contracting/competition practices between DoD and complex, custom-built commercial products (e.g., offshore oil platforms).
- › Compare program cost performance in various market sectors: highly competitive (multiple offerors), limited (two of three offerors), monopoly.
- › Compare the cost and contract performance of military acquisition programs in nations having single "purple" acquisition organizations with those having service-level acquisition agencies.



Send abstracts via e-mail to:
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