

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-467](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD's contracting process is designed to protect taxpayers' interests, among other things, and can take time. DOD leadership and contractors have expressed concern about the length of time to award contracts and DOD has proposed reducing that time.

GAO was asked to evaluate the length of time to award weapon systems contracts. This report examines (1) DOD's efforts to determine the time it takes to award contracts; (2) data on the time interval from solicitation to contract award for selected contracts; and (3) factors identified as contributing to contract award time frames.

GAO used the Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation to identify new weapon systems-related contracts awarded in fiscal years 2014 through 2016, valued over \$5 million, among other factors. GAO selected a nongeneralizable sample of 129 contracts at four DOD components with the highest total dollar value and highest number of contracts from those fiscal years for further analysis. GAO analyzed contract documentation and surveyed contracting officials on a subset of contracts to determine the factors affecting the time between solicitation issuance and award.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD develop a strategy that identifies the information it needs to collect and how it will use the information to assess contract award time frames. DOD concurred.

View [GAO-18-467](#). For more information, contact William T. Woods at (202) 512-4841 or woodsw@gao.gov.

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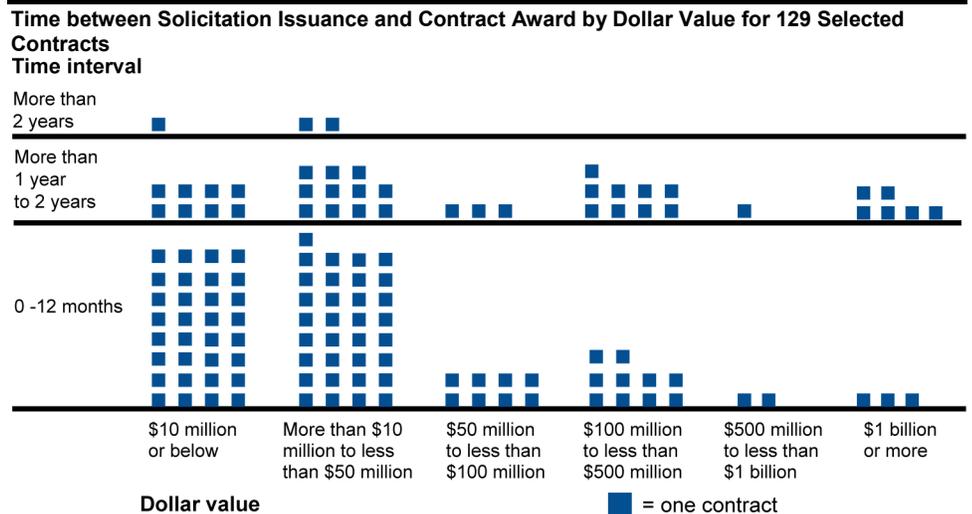
DEFENSE CONTRACTS

DOD Should Develop a Strategy for Assessing Contract Award Time Frames

What GAO Found

Although the Department of Defense (DOD) has proposed reducing the time it takes to award contracts related to weapon systems, the department has a limited understanding of how long it currently takes and therefore lacks a baseline to measure success. The DOD components GAO reviewed—Air Force, Army, Defense Logistics Agency, and Navy—collect data on their time frames for awarding contracts. However, they do so in different ways in the absence of a DOD-wide strategy for what information should be collected. For example, the Air Force measures the time to award beginning with solicitation issuance, while the other components use a different starting point. As a result, information the components collect is not comparable and is of limited use for understanding contract award time frames department-wide. Determining what information is needed to monitor time taken to award contracts consistently across components should help DOD assess its progress toward reducing the time.

GAO analyzed the time from solicitation issuance to award for 129 weapon systems-related contracts and found it ranged from less than a month to over 4 years. Although some DOD and industry officials stated that contract value could affect contract award time frames, GAO observed a wide range of time intervals and did not observe any patterns based on this characteristic. (See figure below.)



Source: GAO analysis of Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation and Department of Defense contract data. | GAO-18-467

According to DOD contracting officials GAO surveyed, factors that can help reduce—or, alternatively lengthen—the time between when a solicitation is issued to when a contract is awarded include a decision to make the contract award an office priority and how quickly contractors respond to requests for additional information after initial proposals are received.