

Is DOD Changing Its Approach to a Common Data System?

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A key roadblock for defense contract inventory efforts revolves around the dearth of accurate and reliable data. This hindrance is linked to unresolved issues with implementation of the planned common data system. A review launched in September 2014 aims to identify and develop data collection approaches, sparking questions as to whether the DOD will abandon plans to implement a common data system modelled after the Army's.

In November 2011, the DOD released a plan to develop a common technology solution to compile and review its inventory of contracted services. This plan leveraged existing data collection approaches, like the [Army's Contractor Manpower Reporting Application \(CMRA\)](#). The DOD plan outlined objectives for meeting inventory requirements in both the short and long term. The long range elements of the plan included comprehensive guidance for components for the development, review, and use of the contracting inventories. It also provided for the formation of a working group to develop and implement a common data system for collecting and housing the information required for the inventory, including contractor manpower data. Although the plan did not include a detailed timeline or required resources, DOD expected this data system to be operational and for defense components to be reporting on their service contracts by FY 2016.

Varying requirements across the military departments and agencies have posed a challenge for developing a common data system. In September 2013, DOD fielded a system to support DOD components. Like the ones fielded for the Air Force and Navy, this system was also based on the Army's CMRA. Each of the four CMRA systems is accessible via the [Enterprise wide Contractor Manpower Reporting Application](#), which provides a common webpage. The four systems, however, are independent of one another with their own interface and separate log-ins. Currently, the department is evaluating business processes and guidance needed to standardize the approach to collecting and using inventory data.

Another factor that officials have called out as a hurdle in these efforts is the lack of dedicated resources and business processes to support the development and implementation. While the Army's program has seen a rise in funding over the past few years, this has been entirely under operations and maintenance work. In FY 2013, the Army's CMRA received \$0.411 million in operations and maintenance. That figure rose to \$0.879 million in FY 2014. The requested funding level for FY 2015 is just over half a percent higher at \$0.884 million. The move to a common approach for data collection and reporting would likely require resources for development, modernization, and enhancement. For the Army, that would be either modest amounts to make minor adjustments to align with the rest of the DOD, or it would need to be a sum large enough to support a major overhaul. Results from the DOD's September 2014 review are expected to be reported in December 2014.

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